Afghan National Army

The CIA-Proxy Militias, Fatemyoun Division, Taliban and the Islamic State of Khorasan

MUSA KHAN JALALZAI

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Introduction

Credible evidence of serious human rights abuses and war crimes linked to Afghan Defense Minister Asadullah Khalid has followed him throughout his government career. Reports first came to light during Khalid's tenure as governor of Kandahar – a time when thousands of Canadian troops were based in the province. An official internal Canadian document described the allegations of human rights abuses attributable to Khalid as "numerous and consistent." Canadian diplomat Richard Colvin testified to a Canadian parliamentary commission in 2009 that Khalid perpetrated enforced disappearances and held people in private prisons. The testimony included evidence of Khalid's personal involvement in the torture of detainees. Chris Alexander, a senior Canadian official working with the United Nations in Afghanistan at the time, alleged that Khalid ordered the killing of five UN workers in a roadside bombing in Kandahar in April 2007. There is also strong evidence directly implicating Khalid in acts of sexual violence against women and girls when he was governor of Ghazni and Kandahar. Khalid allegedly threatened his victims, saying "they would be killed and their families destroyed if they told anyone what had happened."

– Brad Adams, Human Rights Watch Asia Director,
12 January 2019

The US and NATO self-styled war on terrorism in Afghanistan has entered a critical juncture. Afghans have become sick and tired with this brutal war that has been taking lives of their dearest and nearest ones in different acts of violence since 2001. For long, Afghans are whimpering for peace, but no terrorist group is willing to halt killings of innocent civilians for their half-done sin. The United States Army and its strategies failed to bring Gallus-Gallus chicken to Afghanistan. Now, the only point of conversation for analysts, observers, and military experts is by how much and who is to blame-for. Washington's peace plan is still in the air. After 18 years of its imposed war, thousands of lives lost, and hundreds

of billions of dollars squandered, but its army achieved nothing.

NATO has also failed to fully investigate its unlawful airstrikes in Afghanistan. The United States and Afghan governments, however, did not adequately investigate their unlawful airstrikes as well. The NATO Resolute Support Mission's civilian casualty team once said that they do not conduct on-site investigations after attacks resulting in civilian casualties, they rely instead on visual and satellite imagery and typically Afghan security forces reports. The families of thousands of Afghan civilians killed by NATO forces have been left without justice, Amnesty International warned. Bomb blast, US army's intentional attacks, and suicide bombers have been killing innocent civilians since 2001.

In September 2019, Taliban carried out suicide attacks in Kabul city in which more than 14 people were killed and 145 injured. The bloodshed in Afghanistan's capital came during an ongoing surge in attacks across the country, where more than 1,500 people were killed or wounded. The ISIS terrorist group has also been involved in the killing of children and women since 2014. The group launched a deadly explosion in the Shiite section of western Kabul, killing about 69 civilians. During peace negotiations between Taliban and Mr. Khalilzad, President Donald Trump issued an irresponsible statement-which said, Afghanistan "would be wiped off the face of the earth" if he wanted to win the war. At one point in his Oval Office remarks, Trump referred to dropping America's largest non-nuclear bomb (Nuclear Bomb) on Afghanistan in 2017 and said that dropping more of them would be the "easiest solution" to ending the conflict there. The relationship between Kabul and Washington stood based on misunderstanding after his hinny and hee-haw. In 2019, alone, the Taliban terrorist group killed more than 1,666 civilians in the first six months, while more than 900 Afghan were killed by the US drones.

On 19 October 2019, the explosion at the mosque in Haska Mina district of Nangarhar province, which resulted in the death of 72 civilians, provoked strongly-worded responses from Afghan leaders and the international community. Civilian

casualties continue unabated as the US sponsored terrorist groups; such as Taliban and Islamic State adopted their hit-and-run strategy. They seek to put pressure on the Kabul government through this way, which outraged the public conscience. Within the last 18 years of conflict, the Taliban terrorist group has been widely engaged in killing non-combatants, including women and children. Their terrorist activities put the public rights and freedoms at stake. A large number of Afghan civilians have been killed and amputated as a result of the Taliban's indiscriminate attacks and suicide bombings. The Nangarhar mosque blast, which killed and wounded dozens of people, was carried out by the ISIS terrorist group.

Retrospectively speaking, a US war criminal Sergeant Robert Bales on 11 March 2012 murdered sixteen civilians and wounded six others in the Panjwayi District of Kandahar Province. Some of the corpses were partially burned. Robert Bales was taken into custody when he told authorities, "I did it" A woman who lost four family members in the incident said, "We don't know why this foreign soldier came and killed our innocent family members. Either he was drunk or he enjoyed killing of civilians." Abdul Samad, a 60-year-old farmer who lost eleven family members, eight of whom were children, spoke about the incident: "I don't know why they killed them. Our government told us to come back to the village, and then they let the Americans kill us."

On 19 September, 2019, responding to the reported killing of numerous farmers in a US drone strike in Afghanistan, Human Rights Director Daphne Eviatar said: "On yet another deadly day in Afghanistan, once again it is civilians who bear the brunt of the violence involving armed groups, the Afghan government and their backers in the US military. "That a US drone strike purportedly targeting ISIS militants could instead result in the deaths of scores of farmers is unacceptable and suggests a shocking disregard for civilian life. "US forces in Afghanistan must ensure that all possible precautions are taken to avoid civilian casualties in military operations."

On 30 July 2019, New York Times reported civilian casualties in US-Afghan joint military operations: "Afghan security

forces and their American-led international allies have killed more civilians so far this year than the Taliban have, the United Nations noted in its report, once again raising alarm that ordinary Afghans are bearing the brunt of an increasingly deadly 18-year war. In the first six months of the year, the conflict killed nearly 1,400 civilians and wounded about 2,400 more. Afghan forces and their allies caused 52 percent of the civilian deaths compared with 39 percent attributable to militants—mostly the Taliban, but also the Islamic State. The figures do not total 100 percent because responsibility for some deaths could not be definitively established".

However, on 09 October 2019, UN News in its Special Report elucidated the damage to more than 60 sites in Bakwa district of Farah province, and in neighbouring Delaram district. Investigators from the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) verified 39 civilian casualties–30 deaths, five injured and four "undetermined". The toll included 14 children and one woman. On 25 September 2019, CNN Television reported the deaths of more than 40 civilians attending a wedding were killed by the NDS-02 murderous Unit. The attack took place in the Musa Qala district of Helmand province. "We are saddened and devastated to hear that civilians have lost their lives in an incident in Helmand despite President Ashraf Ghani's repeated call for extra cautions in conducting military operations," Sediq Sediqqi, the President's spokesman, said on Twitter.

On November 25, 2018, an Afghan woman-Fariba, representative of the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA) in her interview with Edu Montesanti accused that the US army intentionally killing Afghan civilians. The UN reports already warned the dramatic increase on civilians' killings in Afghanistan, and International Criminal Court failed to investigate such crimes. Fariba stated that the US deliberately destroyed her country. The objective is political domination: "Such disproportionate use of force can only be titled as intentional attacks on civilian populations." "The lives of Afghans have no value for the US," Friba said: "UNAMA, as the UN in general is a US-dominated entity and a small tool in its hands for its

imperialist pursuits. The ICC has yet to earn this unpopular status.” The ISIS and Taliban serve a dual purpose for the US in Afghanistan.”She said.

The RAWA representative uncovered the real face of US army war criminals: “Most of the troops and private company contractors sent in the Afghan war were brainwashed with hatred for Afghans and motivated by revenge for 9/11. This made innocent Afghan civilians easy prey for them to fulfill their sick hatred. There are numerous examples of murderous, intentional attacks on innocent people by such troops and contractors in Afghanistan, as well as the other US victim, Iraq, where people have been killed, decapitated, and humiliated for fun. The infamous “Kill Team” and the Panjwai massacre are only two incidents that were exposed and investigated. Many incidents, especially in botched raids and night raids, go un-investigated. The consistence of these war crimes is not surprising since the US military has avoided investigation and prosecution of war crimes in Afghanistan, providing untrue accounts of events and protecting the troops who are involved in crimes. US troops also have immunity from prosecution in Afghanistan under the Bilateral Security Agreement signed between the traitorous Afghan government and the US in 2014”.

In 2019, Afghanistan witnessed waves of terror attacks that targeted innocent civilians. These heinous and brazen acts which are against all humanitarian principles, as well as Islamic teachings, have recently spiked to record-high levels. In October 2019, figures released by the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) indicated that more than 2,563 civilians were killed and 5,676 wounded in the first nine months of the year. The fact is, proxy wars are no more workable, and those who think they could win its deputation are in deep misunderstanding. In 2005, and 2008, there were several proxy militias-serving the US and NATO forces in Afghanistan, but they committed war crimes in different provinces. One of these criminal militias was the 888 Brigade of former Governor of Kandahar-present Defence Minister Asadullah Khalid. Mr. Khalid used his militia against civilians in Kandahar, sexually abused women and killed opponents

brutally. Canadian journalist Graeme Smith from The Globe and Mail newspaper conducted investigation on war crimes of Brigade 888. Graeme Smith claimed that Asadullah Khalid's governor palace contained private detention centres and said Canadian Generals knew about the brutal technique employed to torture the detainees in those cells. Human Rights Watch in its investigative report (Today We Shall All Die: Afghanistan's Strongmen and the Legacy of Impunity, 2015) revealed important facts of Afghan Defence Minister Asadullah Khalid's war crimes and sexual abuses:

> "…….Asadullah Khalid was also accused being involved in act of sexual violence against the women and the girls. Human Right Watch claims that there is 'strong evidence' which suggests that Khalid was involved in act of sexual violence against women and girls, when he was governor of Ghazni and Kandahar. Khalid allegedly threatened the victims with consequences if they told anyone about what happened. There is strong evidence directly implicating Asadullah Khalid in acts of sexual violence against women and girls. A well-placed and credible source who sought anonymity because of security concerns told Human Rights Watch that while Khalid was governor of Ghazni, forces under his command used a false pretext to bring a group of several young women and at least one girl of 16 to a residence where the governor and several other men were present. The source said that Khalid offered the women and girls money to have sex with him and the other men, which they refused. The men were drinking alcohol, and Khalid pressured the women to drink as well. When they refused, the men, including Khalid, raped the women and girls".

According to the Human Rights Watch (2015) report, Afghan Defence Minister Asadullah Khalid was also involved in drug trafficking, murder, and sexual abuse in Kandahar province. The Canadian army supported his business: "Asadullah Khalid was also accused of being involved in drug trafficking. Kabul Press in 2009, cited sources from the presidential palace which claimed that Khalid was "the most crucial member of a narcotics producing and smuggling syndicate". The story of

Canada's military and financial support to the criminal militias and warlords of southern Afghanistan was very painful. Its support to the warlords like Assadullah Khalid brought disrepute to the country. Afghans ask whether Canada was involved with their criminal business or just vittled them. Canada spent more than $41 million on hired criminals and much of this fund went to security companies slammed by the US Senate for having warlords on their payroll. The issue was kept secret from the general public and parliament for a long time, because Canadian forces were receiving assistance from 11 private security contractors in Kabul and Kandahar since 2006.

A report of the US Senate investigation committee revealed that relying on Afghan warlords militias resulted in murder, kidnapping, bribery and anti-coalition activities. Governor Assadullah Khalid's Brigade 888 was accused of human rights abuses, rape and torture during his governorship time. Canada supported Brigade 888 and its torture of civilians and considered the gang to be a trusted ally. The Canadians who knew them said they witnessed no abuses because they supported Brigade 888 and they were protected. Common Afghans ask why the Canadian army was abetting the crimes of Brigade 888. A Canadian newspaper The Globe and Mail reported that the Canadian soldiers "lived beside" Brigade 888 personnel in the Kandahar governor's palace and "helped to train Afghans who routinely committed torture".

The fact is, that the war in Afghanistan has now embroiled with a dangerous dragnet of private criminal militias that operate out of the legal boundaries of the state. These militias emerged after the fall of Taliban government in 2001 to consolidate the US and NATO imperialist hegemony in the country, and further their treacherous designs. The CIA darling militia (Ground Branch) was trained and equipped with sophisticated weapons to expand the war to the borders of Central Asia. The militias were used for sensitive and covert missions. Pakistani and Iranian militias also operated on the same streaks. The CIA backed criminal militias such as the National Directorate of Security Unit (NDS-Unit-02) has been running the business of killing and torture in Afghanistan since

a decade. As this criminal intelligence unit does not operate under the Afghan Defence Ministry; it kills and tortures innocent women and children with impunity in night operations. In Afghanistan, journalists, writers, social workers, politicians, the UN, human rights organizations, and families of victims have no access to CIA representatives to register their complaints against their backed criminal militias, because, there is no spokesperson or liaison office to contact when innocent civilians are killed and property destroyed. On 06 October 2019, associated Press reported the killings of innocent men and women in Jalalabad by the NDS Unit-02:

> "The workers were sleeping on the mountainside where they had spent a long day harvesting pine nuts in eastern Afghanistan. Some were in tents; others lay outside under the stars, when the U.S. airstrike tore into them. The businessman who hired them had heard there was a drone over the mountain and called Afghanistan's intelligence agency to remind an official his workers were there-as he'd notified the agency days earlier. "He laughed and said, 'don't worry they are not going to bomb you," the businessman, Aziz Rahman, recalled. Twenty workers were killed in the strike, including seven members of one family. A relative, Mohammed Hasan, angrily described body parts they found scattered on the ground, gesturing at his arm, his leg, his head. "This is not their (Americans) first mistake," said Hasan. "They say 'sorry'. What are we supposed to do with 'sorry……..People now are angry? They are so angry with the foreigners, with this government."

Increasing civilian deaths by the NDS Unit-02 and US army enraged all social and political stratifications in Afghanistan. Complaints have also grown over abuses and killings in night raids. The problem associated with NDS Unit-02 is that communities view this criminal militia as troublesome. In their analysis of the CIA backed Unit-02, Astri Suhrke and Antonio De Lauri Chr 21 August 2019) have raised the issue of human rights violation:

> "In 2015, the CIA helped its Afghan counterpart, the National Directorate of Security (NDS), to establish new

> Afghan paramilitary units to fight militants allegedly aligned with the Islamic State who reportedly were active in the north-eastern part of the country. The new NDS unit added significantly to the total number of irregular forces supported by the CIA. Two years later, in 2017, then-CIA Director Mike Pompeo publicly announced that a policy change to use the militias more intensely was underway. The CIA would expand its operations in Afghanistan, targeting Taliban as well as al-Qaeda. Small teams of CIA-rostered officers would spread out alongside Afghan units. There is no public disclosure of the size of the CIA-supported units, but they probably have more than doubled since the 3,000 estimate used by Woodward in 2010. One well-informed analyst maintained in 2017 that NDS-02 alone had 1,200 men. Among the older units, the Khost Protection Force was said to have 4,000 members in 2015. Three years later, in 2018, estimates of the KPF size were "anywhere from 3,000 to over 10,000." Other than that, all we know is that the CIA-sponsored forces are uniformed and well-equipped, sometimes work with American English-speaking men during raids, use English phrases, and have also been able to call in air strikes, likely by the American military, which executes most of these strikes. The paramilitary forces are also very well paid, which may be a principal reason why highly skilled and capable Afghans would want to join the units".

The New York Times also documented abuses carried out by the NDS Unit-02 during ground raids: "In one particularly brutal incident two brothers were hooded and executed in the corner of a room which was then detonated. But even more destruction is possible if air strikes can be called in by such groups on their targets. An investigation by the Bureau of Investigative Journalism also uncovered instances where this happened. Journalists Jessica Purkiss, Abigail Fielding-Smith and Emran Feroz (February 8 2019), in their investigative report for the Bureau of Investigative Journalism documented heart-breaking stories of the brutal war of NDS-Unit-02 against innocent Afghan civilians:

> “We focused on a branch of special forces working under the Afghan intelligence agency (known as the NDS) It operates from the Jalalabad air-base in Nangarhar province and is backed by the CIA. Known by many as the “02” unit, its onthe-ground activities are supported by air strikes carried out by both US and Afghan forces, senior Afghan intelligence officials told the Bureau. One of those caught up in the raid told the Bureau it started with an air strike. “First, they attacked us with bombs. Then they entered the living room and started to shoot around,” said Jamal Khan. “They didn’t care about who they were killing. They killed my uncle and his 9-year-old son. His wife and his other child were injured.” Khan said his uncle was a guard at a government run school in Rodat, the Nangarhar district where the incident took place. Another man told us he lost seven relatives in the same operation. “My uncles had a pharmacy in our village,” said Abdul Samad. “Nobody had any connections with insurgent groups. They were innocent people.” According to some tribal elders and activists, last September and October more than 260 civilians were killed in the 02 unit’s search operations in Nangarhar. A civil society activist in the province told the Bureau: “The 02 unit conducts operations with impunity and no regard for civilian lives; they destroy civilian homes that those people put so much effort into building, burn cars and use explosives and air strikes at will.”

Now, Afghan army, US military commanders and Taliban torture and humiliate detainees in their secret prisons. They also run the business of drug trafficking and plundering of Afghanistan’s natural resources to finance their dirty war in the country. In his analysis in the War of the Rocks on US failure in Afghanistan, Jason Dempsey who served in Afghanistan in 2009, 2012-2013, hammered Washington for hiding facts of its defeat in the country:

“During his remarks on the state of Afghanistan in late 2018, General Nicholson repeatedly outlined the failure of the Taliban to achieve its objectives, echoing a common theme that the Taliban cannot win. Over the years this statement has

served as a rallying cry for staying the course, but never addressed is the fact that it is increasingly clear that the Afghan security forces cannot "win" either. Even with massive coalition support the war is in stalemate. And without massive external support, the Afghan security forces have repeatedly demonstrated that, despite nearly a decade of intense support and training from the Coalition, they have a hard time holding off a numerically inferior force that possesses far fewer resources. These failures of the Afghan security forces have been attributed to the Afghans, and not those tasked with training the force. As Gen. John Campbell, the commander in Afghanistan prior to Nicholson, remarked to Afghan leadership as he was departing Afghanistan in early 2016, "You've got to want it more than we do." Never considered, however, was that maybe the Afghans want peace as much, or even more, than visiting Americans, but that our chosen path to achieving peace is incompatible with Afghan culture and unachievable given internal political divisions and the state of the Afghan government".

Afghanistan Times documented all US and Taliban atrocities in its latest report: "One can conclude that this curious paradox–talking and fighting at the same—of the belligerent parties is aimed at demonstrating the superiority of power in order to supposedly negotiate on a level playing field and thus take the lion's share in the peace negotiations. While in fact targeting non-combatant doesn't do any good to the warring parties other than revealing their contempt for innocent lives. Afghans have pinned high hopes on the peace negotiations and wish to witness tranquility by Eidul-Adha because the Taliban showed flexibility to sit on the table with Kabul administration – which also formed a 15-member negotiating team on Wednesday – after a deal with the US. But at such a time of increased violence, the fifth columnists and some war-mongers are exploiting the aggravated unrest – which civilians bear the brunt of – and strive to derail the peace efforts".

Afghanistan's Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) argued that such inattention and carelessness on the part of international military forces would result in people's wrath and anger and would pose serious challenges to their

mission in Afghanistan. The AIHRC, while strongly condemning these terrible incidents, called on the government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to conduct a thorough investigation into these incidents and, asked senior international military officials in Afghanistan for the required explanations that why such events happened repeatedly in the country. The 40 years old war continues to inflict fatalities on civilians. Many Afghans born in the war, many have suffered, and the new generation is getting grown in the war. This US torturous war must come to an end and the peace must be given a chance. A new report from the Costs of War Project at Brown University's Watson Institute argues that: "Militias that operate outside the control of the central state and the chain of command of its armed forces will undermine the process of state formation and the prospects for a sustainable peace".

The US War Crimes in Afghanistan can be viewed as a war on Afghan children and women. The rogue army of the United States used dogs to sexually abuse Afghan prisoners but International Criminal Court of Justice demonstrated weakness to investigate Pentagon and CIA crimes against humanity. On 15 March 2019, U.S. Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo announced plans to implement a travel ban against International Criminal Court officials working on the Afghanistan situation. It is worth citing that International Criminal Court is a court designed only to try the gravest crimes of concern to the international community— including genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. It means Pentagon and CIA has committed war crimes in Afghanistan and do not allow the ICC to thoroughly investigate it. In her written statement to the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs on 19 September 2019, the Crisis Group's Program Director for Asia, Laurel Miller assessed the Trump Administration's efforts to secure a peace deal with the Taliban and the prospective risks and rewards of such a deal:

> "The conflict would continue without U.S. direct involvement. Indeed, in the aftermath of a U.S. withdrawal the conflict would likely intensify and become more chaotic. Moreover, there is a strong chance

that anti-Taliban political and security elements would fracture, particularly if U.S. funding and diplomatic engagement diminishes. The speed of fracturing would likely depend on the extent to which the government in Kabul continues to receive foreign donor resources and be in a position to distribute them; the government is currently heavily dependent on such resources for its operations and especially its security forces. If the anti-Taliban alliance does fracture, the conflict could begin to resemble the multi-sided civil war of the early to mid 1990s, which led to the emergence of the Taliban……. Even among those who accept the desirability in principle of a negotiated settlement, many have criticized the Administration for negotiating exclusively with the Taliban, cutting out (so the argument goes) the Afghan government, and failing to secure an early ceasefire. This approach is seen as dismissive of the long-standing U.S. rhetoric that a peace process should be "Afghan-led and Afghan-owned." Understandably, the Administration's approach is deeply frustrating to many Afghans opposed to the Taliban who feel that their fate is being determined without the involvement of those who represent their interests and who want to see a rapid reduction in violence".

Musa Khan Jalalzai

London, January 2020

Chapter 1

Afghan National Army, the United States, NATO and their Business of Torture and Humiliation in Afghanistan

……..I spoke to an Afghan named Mohammad who worked as an interpreter in Bagram and insisted on anonymity for fear of reprisals. He told me Todenhoefer's account of dogs being used to rape prisoners in the jail was "absolutely realistic." Mohammad worked primarily with US forces in Bagram, taking the job out of financial desperation. He soon learned what a mistake he had made. "When I translated for them, I often knew that the detainee was anything but a terrorist," he recalled. "Most of them were poor farmers or average guys." However, Mohammad was compelled to keep silent while his fellow countrymen were brutally tortured before his eyes. "I often felt like a traitor, but I needed the money," he told me. "I was forced to feed my family. Many Afghan interpreters are in the very same situation." (German author and former politician Juergen Todenhoefer noted in his book, "Thou shalt not kill").

In 1978, the Saur revolution was a welcome development for the Afghan Army to design modern reorganization strategies and operational mechanism. The PDPA government introduced security sector reforms, and restructured the country's armed forces to make them professional in the fight against so-called Mujahideen groups. However, in April 1979, more than 4,500 Russian advisors arrived in Afghanistan to train the army and its auxiliary forces. The Russian competent intelligence agency KGB started reorganization of Afghan intelligence to fit it to the fight against the US war against Afghanistan, but mass migration from violence-affected regions during military operations caused consternation. On 15 March 1979, the Herat uprising broke out, ANA, The US, NATO and attacks on security forces in Kunar and Paktia were also irksome. Professionalization of the Afghan Army was a key focus of Russian efforts, and throughout the 1980s, the

Afghan armed forces saw numerous reorganization processes. On 15 February 1989, Russian forces started leaving Afghanistan, but its support to Dr. Najibullah government forged ahead-in the form of weapons, equipment, and other material. Some 30 advisors and associated interpreters and specialists also remained in place. The World Peace Foundation on 07 August 2015 highlighted the Soviet war in Afghanistan:

> "As unrest widened, so did the scope of Soviet involvement. Soviet combat forces increased their direct operations in 1979, deploying across the country by 1981 in combat against the Mujahideen, or national resistance. The Mujahideen, comprised of several fractious entities organized around personalities and often on ethnic lines, expanded attacks against Soviet-backed forces. Demographic evidence suggests that fatal violence increased between 1983 and 1986, when large-scale Soviet offensives were at their peak, with particularly large actions in March 1980, July 1981, August 1984, and August 1985. One potential explanation for the increase after 1983 comes from William Maley, who argues that in 1983, the Soviets shifted from a tactic of driving the Mujahedin from the countryside, to forcing the population out of contested areas, with widespread use of aerial bombardment".[1]

After the fall of the Najeebullah government in 1992, violence flared up and Mujahideen leaders committed war crimes by killing officers, children and women in villages and towns. They killed more than 50,000 innocent civilians in Kabul alone, looted houses, shops, and markets, raped girls and elderly women in their houses. Analyst, Mr. Gilles Dorronsoro in his paper (Kabul at War-1992-1996: State, Ethnicity and Social Classes) described the Mujahideen failure to control Kabul: "In the early years, the guerrilla – who, at the time, enjoyed popular support – easily penetrated most cities? From the very beginning, however, fighter groups were absent from Kabul, which had benefited from a strong police and military presence. Besides undertaking specific military operations and attacks in the bazaar, the essential activity of the resistance in

the capital was to gather information. Bombardments were relatively limited since the Soviets progressively added security belts around the city after the mujahideen had acquired more effective rocket launchers. Apart from these limited changes, it is a largely intact city that the mujahideen entered and – for many – discovered in April 19923. From 1992 to the arrival of the Taliban in September 1996, controlling the capital became the principal military and political objective of the military actors".[2]

Clashes happened therefore mostly in Kabul, where Pakistan purveyed missiles and sophisticated weapon to war criminal Gulbaddin Hekmatyar who brutally targeted hospitals, houses, markets, and national critical infrastructure. Most provinces, on the other hand, experienced a significant decrease in military activity as hundreds of thousands of people had already gone into exile in Pakistan and Iran. The bombings destroyed a large part of western and southern districts of Kabul and most of the infrastructures, such as water and electricity installations were seriously damaged. According to the International Committee of the Red Cross, the fighting caused thousands of deaths in the capital. Moreover, the state of permanent insecurity linked to rocket fire by war criminals prompted many people to leave the city. Out of a population estimated at 1.6 million in 1992, 500,000 people left the capital in the months following the fall of the city in April 1992".[3]

After the fall of Dr. Najeebullah government and civil war in 1992, the Taliban also joined the chorus in 1994. The Taliban defeated all armed groups and imposed Sharia law in Afghanistan. Their government neglected social services and other basic state functions even as its Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice enforced forced women to wear the head-totoe banning music and television; and jailing men whose beards it deemed too short. In 1998, they were isolated worldwide, and two UN Security Council Resolutions passed in 1998 urging Taliban to end their abusive treatment of women. In 2001, the US and NATO allies invaded the country, and on 01 December 2002, Afghan National Army was established with the decree by President

Hamid Karzai. The Afghan New Beginnings Programme (ANBP) was launched on 6 April 2003 and begin disarmament of former Army personnel in October 2003.[4]

In 2007, and 2008, Afghan rogue army soldiers and officers started attacking foreign forces, which caused a bigger headache for the US and its NATO allies. The former ISAF spokesperson warned that the threat of green on blue attack was constant, and the growing frequency of these attacks was alarming. There are many reasons Afghan soldiers' targeted US army soldiers including the urination on dead bodies, raiding houses in night and the killing of innocent women and children in drone attacks. These attacks reached an epidemic proportion. Western analysts said that something was wrong with the battlefield relationship between ANA and foreign forces. While nothing was wrong, it was the reprisal against the war crimes of the US forces. President Obama said in a White House meeting, "Obviously we've been watching with deep concern these attacks." Senior police officers like General Muhammad Zaman said that these attacks were simply a product of a violent society because no one is safe and everyone gets killed. The Long War Journal reported the attacks and according to US military sources, the coalition casualties were now 13 percent while in 2011, it was only 6% percent.[5]

Coalition forces in Afghanistan felt more threatened by the Afghan National Army than the Taliban, as Afghan army established close contacts with Taliban networks for more attacks to force them for immediate withdrawal. Commanders of ANA provided arms and military information including counter-insurgency strategies to Taliban. They even killed their coalition partners in battlefield. The former ISAF Commander General Allen did not really know about the causes of these attacks. These attacks were similar to the epidemic of military suicides. General Allen understood that his forces had not enough data about the insider attacks but said the reason for these attacks was complex. In his media briefing, the former ISAF Commander provided a new perspective about the insider killings of the US forces. News reports about the drug smuggling of Afghan Air Force were

too irksome. On 12 March 2012, the US Today reported Afghan official's denial the air force planes involvement in drug and weapon smuggling, but the Wall Street Journal confirmed an investigation of the NATO-led forces about this case.[6]

According to military experts in Afghanistan, all Afghans want a genuine and legitimate role of the ANA in state defense and counter-insurgency. Majority of Afghans see the military presence of NATO and the US as the main reason behind their problems of poverty, illiteracy and disease. The NATO, the UN and the US have not been able to bring peace and stability, but collaborated with terrorist groups in destroying Afghanistan's national critical infrastructure. They even intentionally killed civilians by targeting hospitals and villages. As there were concerns about the capability of Afghan security forces to take on the responsibilities of security of entire nation, at the same time there were serious concerns about financing the forces without enough revenue support.[7]

These consecutive attacks of the Afghan army against the US and NATO forces caused more troubles. However, in 2017, the challenges of Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) became irksome, while wide-ranging differences with the US army on its long-term negligence and reluctance to adorn it with modern weapons also became matter of great concern. Afghans complained that the US army often stopped attempts of arming Afghan army by some friendly states, and even bombed its units on many occasions. The ANA leadership, political parties, and parliamentarians often expressed concern against the under-equipment campaign of US and NATO military leadership to keep Afghan army dependent on their financial and military resources for a long time.[8]

They warned that international military commanders never shared their military plans with the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) or at least to share plans ahead of the operation fearing that the ANSF might tip off the insurgents. They never tried to provide better training to Afghan soldiers and officers, or fit the NDS to the fight against insurgents. At the ANA squad, company and platoon levels, tactical training remained

inconsistent in all units, and its leadership was unable to move its forces freely across the country. Cooperation between the US Army, NATO, ANA and civilian leadership was a bigger challenge to its existence. This resentment of the US commanders towards the ANA forces raised many questions including complaints that the ANA generals were being treated by US and NATO commanders as inferiors at best and enemies at worst.[9]

Deputy Director of research at the Centre for Conflict and Peace Studies (CAPS), Dr. Zubair Popalzai in his recent paper (Insider Attacks: Some Perspectives of the Afghan Security Forces) noted the complaints of Afghan military and police officers that they were not even provided the same quality of medical treatment and care in the US-run hospitals, and even not being airlifted when wounded in the battlefield. "They have, instead, shown preference for treatment in Afghan National army hospitals where they say the chances of their limbs getting amputated are low" Dr. Zubair Popalzai also noted resentment of Afghan Security Forces towards NATO and US forces:

> "Resentment on the Afghan side range from issues related to honour and dignity such as insult, profanity and generally being vulgar to ANSF members, publicly searching and disarming ANSF members when they enter coalition military bases, coalition convoys not allowing traffic including ANSF vehicles to pass while the former are using the road to other such cultural issues as indecent exposure while urinating in public or urinating in stream water, arrogance, breaking doors before someone can answer, unnecessarily shooting animals spatially barking dogs even when they are tied……".[10]

The attitude of the Unity Government was also understandable from the fact that President Ghani and his Chief Executive Mr. Abdullah never attempted to equip and adorn ANA with modern weapons, or request the United States and its NATO allies for sophisticated weapons to make the operational mechanism of the army more effective against the unending insurgency in the country. Afghan President has also been reluctant to support his army against Daesh terrorist group and

Taliban, and never changed his soft-corner towards Taliban and his colleague war criminals. The President also ordered Afghan armed forces to support the ISIS war against Taliban, and no one was allowed to criticize the terrorist group or arrest its fighters.

The President's resentment towards the Afghan armed forces was evident from the complaints raised by parliamentarians and civil society that his Ministries, parliamentarians, governors and elements with the Defense and Interior Ministries were arming the ISIS forces across the country, and transporting them to the borders of Tajikistan, and accommodating them in their own houses. They even purveyed young girls to the ISIS commanders. These questions were also raised by Deputy Speaker of Afghan Parliament, Mr. Zahir Qadir who openly accused national security advisor, Mr. Hanif Atmar of providing arms and financial assistance to Islamic States terrorist in 2016.[11]

Mr. Hanif Atmar was acting like the ISIS leader. He provided financial support and in-door information about the planning and strategies of the Afghan army and government to the ISIS commanders and purveyed sophisticated weapons to its units. The growing military and political influence of Daesh in Afghanistan, and Taliban's influence in the south meant that the government and its allies failed to bring stability to the country. In October 2016, a number of Afghan law makers also accused President Ghani and his Defense Ministry for supporting terrorist organization-the ISIS, while Afghan Air Force was directed to transport sophisticated weapon to the Daesh centers. They also alleged that military commanders were providing arms, financial assistance and sanctuaries to the ISIS terrorist groups, and transporting their suicide bombers to their destinations. Miss Fatima Aziz, an MP from the Kunduz province, accused some police and military commanders for facilitating ISIS fighters against the Army positions. "All Afghan officials in the Kunduz province, including the ANA, police and local government officials in cooperation with the people from central government, handed the city to the Taliban," said Fatima Aziz.[12]

However, Afghan military commanders in Helmand province admitted that their colleagues were selling weapons to the ISIS terrorist group, while some commanders willingly purveyed sophisticated weapons to Daesh. Afghan National Army (ANA) spokesman said that the sellers of heavy weapons were their military commanders who had open access to weapon depots. Since 2015, Afghan soldiers and police officers also faced many challenges including the delay of their salaries, logistic and air support in the battlefield. The Ghani government forced soldiers and officers of armed forces to join the Daesh terrorist group. The issues of insider attacks, weapon smuggling, child sexual abuse and desertion badly affected the image of ANA leadership in the eyes of civil society. Weapons purveyance to enemy to feed their children and taking arms against their own officers in cities and towns were stories that deeply affected the unity of their command and loyalty to the state. In February 2016, the ANA arrested and disarmed 30 cops with alleged ISIS ties, including the police chief of Helmand's Sangin district.[13]

The Afghan Defence Ministry never strived to investigate the case of widows of Afghan security personnel killed in war against terrorists, who were forced to offer sexual favours to officials before they could receive pension benefits, US watchdog (24 September 2017) warned. US Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) John Sopko raised the issue calling the anecdotes evidence of the US military's need to focus its efforts on building up an effective security force. General Sopko painted a bleak picture of morale within the Afghan forces, facing a historic challenge in securing the country, despite the presence of thousands of US troops.

However, the shame culture of Bacha Bazi (child sexual abuse) within the ranks of Afghan armed forces continues to make the lives of young boys and children vulnerable within the Afghan army centers. This institutionalized culture of Bacha Bazi, sexual exploitation and playboy business introduced Afghanistan in international community as an insecure state for children and women. Afghan army commanders, police officers and war criminals were deeply

involved in drug trafficking, kidnapping and sexual abuse of children and teen soldiers. Insiders' reports indicated that before sex with a child or a teen, outdated sexual encasement medicines were being used which caused HIV and Aids in the ranks of armed forces and the police officers. These cases were kept secret from media access, but one thing is clear that the number of HIV and Aids cases crossed the official figure, and at present, there are a thousand cases of HIV and Aids existing in the rank of the army.[14]

Vice President of Afghanistan General Rashed Dostum also publicly abused Ahmad Eshchi, while Afghan army besieged the house of war criminal and Vice President Abdul Rashid Dostum to arrest his bodyguards involved in the sexual abuse of former governor of Jowzjan province Ahmad Eshchi. Mr. Eshchi was beaten, abused for hours and pictured in mobile phone by the bodyguards of Afghan Vice President. The Vice President was also accused of having sex with the governor in his guest-room in the presence of his bodyguards. "You will not believe what I will say. He (Dostum) said first I want to have sex with him (Eshchi). He (Dostum) ordered his guys to lift me up, Eshchi said. In an interview with Tolo News Eshchi said: "I took Gen Dostum hand and greeted him. From that point, he started abusing me verbally. He told me that he knows what I have done. He told me he knows what my son has done. Who will look for you if I kill you here? I will throw you under the horses and do Buzkashi game on you. He called on his bodyguards and told them to grab me and beat me. He (Dostum) laid me on the ground and put his foot on my neck, Eshchi said.

According to AFP report, warlords, commanders, politicians and other members of the elite forces keep young boys, abuse them and take them to their houses-sleep with them. Members of parliament, members of local councils, provincial governors, mayors, judges, army officers and commanders, police officers, and local elders, all are directly or indirectly involved in sexual abuse case or Bacha Bazi across the country. Transgender, gaymen, and transsexual people are under heavy pressure from the above-mentioned state sponsored shame business of child sex and Bacha Bazi in

Afghanistan. Numerous gay men from West and Europe also enjoyed the nightclubs and safe houses in big cities. More than 100,000 street children and young girls were under threat from these wolves. Recent studies gave us valid information on the national and provincial level with regards to vulnerable young children within the armed forces, police and work placed who are being forcefully abused by the day.[15]

Journalist Hujatullah Zia in one of his articles recently reported: “The outpouring of pain and anguish of Afghan women continues and they are still the inferior creature in the patriarchal system. Their voice and concerns fall on deaf ears. Their tendency towards democratization and their ideas regarding their own rights are considered brazen and against the social norm”. The exponentially growing number of HIV and Aids cases has threatened the lives of poor and backward Afghan nation where thousands suffer these diseases. More than 3,000 new cases of HIV and 6, 0000 cases of Aids appeared in local media in 2016. The Department of Public Health in southern Herat recorded 33 cases of HIV/AIDS with four deaths, which showed 14 percent increase compared to 2016”. Khaama press reported official in the Ministry of Health confirmed the increase in HIV/AIDS positive cases in the country. Deputy Public Health Minister Najia Tariq told reporters that the HIV/AIDS cases had increased by 38 percent as compared to last year. Speaking on the eve of world aid day, Mr. Najia Tariq said at least 162 HIV/AIDS positive cases had been recorded across the country during the current year, while around 117 HIV positive cases were recorded in 2016.

The army that was nurtured under foreign tutelage is still dependent on American and NATO stipendiary. But one thing is clear that the Afghan army has lost the support of civilian population. Civilian causalities rose to a record level as the Taliban retrieved sophisticated weapons from their allies within the army headquarters. Desertion and retention have become a persistent challenge for ANA commanders as thousands of soldiers and officers joined either Taliban or Daesh terrorist groups. The Afghan defense ministry is losing as many as 5,000 soldiers and officers every month in cases of

desertion and casualties, while only 3,000 soldiers have been recruited.

Those who fought against insurgents during the last 18 years were removed from their posts and those who enjoyed a comfortable life in Kabul were promoted to the rank of general. The ambassador of the European Union to Afghanistan expressed his dismay that the number of Afghan army generals exceeded several times than those in Britain, Italy, Germany and France. Spokesman for the Defense Ministry General Dawlat Waziri told the ToloNews that Prime Minister Gul Buddin Hekmatyar, President Burhanuddin Rabbani and President Hamid Karzai promoted hundreds of their political allies to the rank of general. Having sensed the flow of troubled waters, the Afghan president took serious notice of the issue, and warned that anyone who interferes in the selection process would be considered a criminal.

On 11 October 2016, President Ashraf Ghani sternly criticized appointments of unprofessional officers and soldiers within the ranks of the Afghan armed forces. The law on personal affairs of commissioned and non-commissioned ANA officers states that promotion of an officer takes place when there is a vacant post. This way of unmerited promotion created uncontrollable corruption within the force as the military headquarters turned into a wholesale market, fixing the price for promotion of every single officer and soldier. President Ghani once stated that promotions must not be delayed. He also stressed the need of bringing about professional reforms within the ANA infrastructure. “The problem we saw in Kunduz, Uruzgan, Helmand and the rest of the country over the past two years shouldn’t mean our officers and soldiers do not have the ability to fight the enemy, but it is because of assigning duties to those who were not professional in their job but assigned to posts without considering skills and qualifications,” Ghani said.[16]

On 15 October 2016, a number of MPs in the lower house of parliament also warned that the lack of war strategy resulted in the exchange of districts between ANA commanders and Taliban insurgents. “Our political leaders both on higher and lower level failed to manage war against insurgents,” MP

Saleh Muhammad said. In view of these misgivings, President Ghani asked ANA commanders to stay committed to the security of their country and stay aloof from politics. In fact, President Ghani has no control over his government machinery, and is helpless to dismantle clandestine links between ministers, parliamentarians and war criminals with terrorist groups in all provinces. The news of collaboration of police and ANA commanders with ISIS in Helmand, Wardak, Jalalabad, Kunar, Kunduz and Badakhshan provinces recently appeared in Afghan media, which prompted misunderstandings about their war management strategies. However, the Russian envoy to Kabul, Alexander Mantytskiy, also expressed concern over the failure of American and NATO mission to ensure security and stability in Afghanistan. The exponentially growing security challenges, internal turmoil, kidnapping, attacks on religious places, universities, sexual abuse, rape and bomb attacks have become common and rampant.[17]

In September 2016, the Pajhwok News reported killing of more than 2,000 people by terrorists across the country. Now as the case further complicated, the US government received a stark warning that the culture of corruption within the Afghan armed forces might undermine their efforts to establish a professional army. However, as a result of dysfunctional security and defense sector, war criminals and military commanders plundered natural resources across the country. The Integrity Watch Afghanistan in its July 2016 report warned: "Afghanistan loses USD 100 million from illegal mining and USD 1 billion from uncollected customs revenues annually, in part due to a combination of corruption, an associated sense of impunity and lack of professionalism. In addition, corruption has made the armed forces inefficient and difficult to sustain… More importantly, corruption in the armed forces has undermined the legitimacy of the state."

The matrix of the Islamic State is expanding towards Central Asia. Terrorist groups are pledging allegiance to Daesh's struggle to establish their units in the Jalalabad province. In an exclusive interview with Pajhwok Afghan News Agency, NATO spokesman Brigadier General Charlie Cleveland

confirmed the existence of more than 1,000 Daesh fighters in the Jalalabad province. On 19 April 2016, Russian diplomat, Zamir Kabulov warned that more than 10,000 trained terrorists of the Islamic State were preparing to enter Central Asia. Abdul Rashid Dostum expressed the same concern and warned that some internal (government) and foreign circles want to transport more than 7,500 Daesh fighters (Chechen, Uzbeks, Tajiks, Iraqi, Syrians, Lebanese, and Libyans) to parts of Northern provinces.

Chapter 2

Kabul at War (1992-1996): State, Ethnicity and Social Classes

Gilles Dorronsoro

Abstract

Kabul witnessed especially violent fights during the 1992-95 periods. This article explains how, after the destruction of the state in 1992 following the fall of the communist regime, the city became a theatre of conflict between various armed groups. Contrary to popular opinion, the conflict in Kabul was not the product of irrational ethnic cleavages but the unanticipated consequence of rational strategies. More specifically, the city became a metaphor for the state, a central economic stake, and a place where opposing social groups fought each other.

Keywords: Afghanistan, Kabul, Mujahideen, state, war

This article focuses on the 1992-1996 period of the Afghan civil war. During these four crucial years, Kabul evolved as a small-scale distorted model of Afghanistan itself. Indeed, it was the place where the armed actors tried to define the country's future political system and where social and communal conflicts crystallized. The following pages attempt to grasp this process by analyzing the city as a spatial metaphor of the state, as a place wherein communal identities were redefined, as an economical gamble, and, finally, as the centre for the urban/rural confrontation[1]. First, though, I will examine how Kabul became the focus of fighting after the fall of the communist regime in 1992 and how the interplay of rational strategies produced the quasi-destruction of the city.

I. Kabul as a contested city

Although the war was mainly conducted in the countryside during the period between the communist coup of 1978 and the collapse of the Kabul regime in 1992, the Afghan

government was also confronted with opposition from the urban population. As soon as March 1979, even before the Soviet invasion, the city of Herat revolted and was out of government control for an entire week. The repression that followed caused 10,000 to 20,000 deaths[2]. After the Soviet invasion in December 1979, many cities experienced mutiny, merchant strikes and student protests. In Kabul, social groups mobilized against the regime, even if the omnipresence of the secret services and the prohibition of public gatherings rapidly limited the traditional sociability of the bazaar.

During a student protest held by a girls' school in Zarghuna on the occasion of the second anniversary of the Communist coup, police shootings resulted in several student deaths. At night, the inhabitants of the bazaar screamed 'Allah-o-Akbar' (God is great) and, by morning, walls were covered with shabname (tracts) against the government and graffiti. Clothing was also used as a mean to signify opposition to the government: the opponents used to wear the pakol, a Nuristani beret adopted by the resistance, notably by the famous Panjshir-based commander Masud.

In the early years, the guerrilla – who, at the time, enjoyed popular support – easily penetrated most cities? From the very beginning, however, fighter groups were absent from Kabul, which had benefited from a strong police and military presence. Besides undertaking specific military operations and attacks in the bazaar, the essential activity of the resistance in the capital was to gather information. Bombardments were relatively limited since the Soviets progressively added security belts around the city after the mujahideen had acquired more effective rocket launchers. Apart from these limited changes, it is a largely intact city that the mujahideen entered and – for many – discovered in April 1992[3]. From 1992 to the arrival of the Taliban in September 1996, controlling the capital became the principal military and political objective of the military actors. Clashes happened therefore mostly in Kabul.

Most provinces, on the other hand, experienced a significant decrease in military activity as hundreds of thousands of people had already gone into exile in Pakistan and Iran. In the

peaceful regions, reconstruction began, particularly in Herat and Ghazni[4]. The bombings destroyed a large part of the western and southern districts of Kabul and most of the infrastructure, such as water and electrical installations, was seriously damaged. According to the International Committee of the Red Cross, the fighting caused 25,000 deaths in the capital. Moreover, the state of permanent insecurity linked to rocket fire prompted many people to leave the city. Out of a population estimated at 1.6 million in 1992, 500,000 people left the capital in the months following the fall of the city in April 1992.

Why was there such an increase in violence? First of all, the war in Kabul was the result of a failed transition process. Contrary to popular belief, the Soviet withdrawal did not bring about the collapse of the Kabul regime, which resisted the pressure of the mujahideen by concentrating its forces in the cities. Yet, the coup against Gorbachev in August 1991, which led some months later to the collapse of the USSR, meant the end of the aid to the Afghan regime. Consequently, the Afghan regime no longer possessed the means to maintain its military apparatus. Expectations of negative outcomes led diverse actors within the regime to change their strategy and ally with the mujahideen. However, the UN's attempts to organize a peaceful transition were not successful as it did not take into account the complex relations between the different armed movements.

Moreover, the UN and the Soviets tried to integrate the former king Zaher Shah, who was popular but did not have any military support, into the peace process. The fall of the regime was caused by the mutiny of Rashid Dostam's Northern militia, Jumbesh-i melli (National Front). Militias, initially formed by the government as part of its counter-insurrection policy, became an important component of the armed forces. Therefore, their defection was a mortal blow for the regime. As the mutiny spread out, the main mujahideen parties were able to come easily to the capital. They formed alliances with the remains of the state machinery (for example, the police and the secret service) and occupied ministries and districts, while building strategic and communitarian interests[5].

Circumstances united these parties, the Hezb-i Wahdat (Abdul Ali Mazari), the Jamiat-i-islami (Ahmad Shah Masud) and the Jumbesh (Rashid Dostam). Jumbesh won the race and seized the capital[6]. Dostam's forces–previously in charge of defending Kabul – were particularly efficient and managed to prevent the penetration of other movements in the city. Masud approached the city from his bases in the Northeast and took advantage of the fact that some governmental institutions joined forces with him[7]. He was also able to rely on relatively professional troops and, initially at least, on the support of the population. The third member of the alliance, the Hezb-i Wahdat, came into existence, in 1990, as a fusion of different Shiite Hazara parties and benefited from the support of Iran[8]. It penetrated the districts located west of the city where many Shiite Hazaras lived.

Three other parties were initially excluded from the city and positioned themselves with the opposition. First, the Ettehad, a fundamentalist party led by Sayyaf, established itself in the native region of its leader, in Paghman (West of Kabul), on the hills dominating the capital. Second, the Hezb-i islami had to retreat to the Southern suburbs, to Char Asyab, from where it threatened Kabul with its rockets. It did so after a failed attempt to settle in the city using its support within the armed forces and the police[9].

Finally, the Harakat-i enqelab, which was present in the East of the capital, had control of the road to Jalalabad. However, it did not attack the city directly and did not have a determinant role in the continuation of the conflict, possibly because of its internal divisions.

While this was taking place, an agreement was signed in Peshawar, Pakistan, between the resistance parties on 24 April 1992. This agreement suggested the possibility of an interim government with a revolving President. Mojaddidi (the leader of Harakat-i enqelab) was appointed President for two months. Rabbani (the leader of Jamiat-i islami) took his place, in theory for four months, but his mandate was prolonged under conditions that other movements opposed. In addition, the post of prime minister was given to the Hezb-i islami, which had continuously bombed a city defended by Masud, now

Rabbani's defense minister. This paradoxical situation reflects well the incoherence of a government unable to establish any recognized institution at a national level.

For four years, these groups constantly changed alliances. Summer 1992 was marked by rocket fire from Hekmatyar and Sayyaf that brought the city into war. In November 1992, Masud broke his initial alliance with Hezb-i wahdat and joined the Ettehad before forming another alliance with Hezb-i wahdat a few months later. The second determinant rupture was in January 1994 when the Jumbesh rejoined the Hezb-i islami in the opposition. This provoked a period of extremely violent fighting.

In the autumn of 1994, the emergence of the Taliban movement and its rapid progression radically changed the balance of power. First considered with sympathy by Masud, who correctly saw the movement as a mortal adversary to the Hezb-i islami, the Taliban soon posed a threat as its success brought it closer to Kabul. Because the Hezb-i islami was swept from the south of the capital in February 1995, the Hezb-i wahdat, its ally, found itself isolated and weakened and was soon eliminated[10]. Taking advantage of the situation, Masud took complete control of the city, but too late to resist the pressure of the Taliban. In September 1996, the Taliban launched an offensive against Jalalabad. The betrayal of several commanders had allowed them to take control over the city without even fighting. The Taliban also seized Kabul without any fighting and Masud had to evacuate the city. The taking of Kabul by the Taliban was a major point of rupture in the war; the Taliban was able to progressively reconstruct a government. This lasted until 2001, until the US intervention, which would, in turn, provoke a new phase of fragmentation and civil war.

II. Kabul as a metaphor of the state

In the view of many observers, the situation we have described was totally confused, even anarchical. Journalists, academics, and other analysts started to label and stigmatize the conflict as an 'ethnic war' thereby reducing it to an infra-political dynamic; the stereotypical thesis of a 'return to the state of

nature' was, from now on, regularly applied to Afghanistan (Tarzi 1993). Actually, the way hostilities were evolving was, on the contrary, quite logical. Because the rationality of the political actors was essentially tactical, observers could not decipher it easily. In order to understand the violence, three aspects need to be recalled: a) the existing links between Kabul and the state, b) the kind of resources available in the city and, c) the strategic constraints the actors dealt with. I now turn to these three points.

When the Afghan empire was founded in 1747, the tribal chief Ahmad Shah was elected as the Amir of the Pasthun tribal confederation. In 1775, his successor, Timur, decided to transfer the capital from Qandahar to Kabul in order to reinforce the political centre's autonomy, which was contested by the southern tribes. Historically, therefore, the Afghan state was 'traditional', as Anthony Giddens would say: it was based on a 'city versus countryside' divide. The state apparatus did not penetrate the rural world but extracted its resources through negotiation or coercion. Consequently, class divisions in Afghanistan have, more so than in other social systems, a geographical dimension. This makes the city-countryside cleavage all the more significant (Giddens 1987)[11]. From the late 19th century onwards, the construction of the modern state was engineered from the capital, potentially rival powers were eliminated and modern institutions were set up following the western model[12]. During the second half of the 20th century, the state made its presence felt more strongly in the countryside and embarked on an authoritarian process of modernization.

The war stopped this centralization/modernization process and, as early as 1978, the countryside was out of control. This was aggravated by the fact that after the Soviet withdrawal, the Najibullah regime (1986-1992) granted more and more autonomy to local authorities. The centre's withdrawal was principally a consequence of its politics of counter-insurgency, which encouraged the formation of local militias. The state apparatus, progressively weakened, had no national coherency anymore; even less so because regional powers such as the northern militias started to appear. These powers were the

origin of the 1992 Coup. The fall of the regime accelerated the formation of several political territories, and relatively stable ones generally formed around urban centers (Herat, Jalalabad, and Mazar-i Sharif). But, because these regions were in harsh competition with one another, frontlines became political frontiers. Consequently, heading a ministry in Kabul did not mean more, in April 1992, than controlling its building.

As a matter of fact, Kabul was even more atypical in this context that it was a politically 'empty' space. Contrary to what was happening in most of the other provinces wherein a regional power — a commander or a coalition of commanders — besieged a city, no power was able to dominate Kabul. As a result, the city, rather than being an actor, is a space, a stake in the confrontational game. At no point, during the four years of long hostilities, did a military or political power emerge that originated from the city itself[13]. This is an important point: it demonstrates that the violence is primarily imported. Then why was it so vital to control the capital?

One of the most significant issues at stake in dominating the administrative centre was the financial and symbolic reward that grabbing the vestiges of the state provided, i.e. diplomatic representation abroad and the power to issue currency. This explains why the Masud-led opposition was so insistent on gaining international recognition. Controlling monetary production was not only a symbolic issue. Being able to pay the state's functionaries, and especially those who were posted in provinces, though on an irregular basis, helped maintain a semblance of relations between the centre and the periphery. How important the issue was can be gauged by the intense fights it provoked between the opposition parties. Cases in point are the Hizb-i Islami, which refused to use the new 5,000 Afghani note that the Rabbani government had just issued in October 1994, and Dostam, who was getting his own notes printed in Uzbekistan[14]. This led to a classical situation of dual power.

Ruling over Kabul was important as well because the city was perceived as the site from which a new political balance would soon emerge; this is, at least, what all the actors believed. Truly, the city still worked as the spatial metaphor of a unitary

state in the mental perceptions of the political actors. In this regard, the proposal to partition Afghanistan regularly put forward by foreign analysts throughout the 1980s was quite irrelevant, even more so because preserving the boundaries of a state, notwithstanding the state's obvious failure, remains a strong principle of the international system. Similarly, to transform Kabul into the symbolic centre of a federation — a dream nurtured by some parties at that time — raised intractable problems: how could ethnic boundaries be delineated, and how could this occur without the capital being neutralized, i.e. occupied and possibly on a communal basis? These questions will be developed later.

Actually, the strategic situation of Kabul remained open and unsettled throughout the conflict. First, there was no agreement on how the city should be divided, even de facto; this was an important difference with Beirut, for instance. Second, and from the perspective of reforming the political system, occupying the urban space permitted new a political and institutional balance of power. Lastly, it has to be recalled that some actors, Masud, Hekmatyar and Sayyaf in particular, did not control any important urban centres[15]. Therefore, their political survival rested on the stranglehold they could manage to establish in the capital.

What were the actors' objectives? This depended on the kind of constraints they faced. First, no single party was strong enough to assert its power on its own in Kabul; forming coalitions was unavoidable. Yet, it was also a highly volatile process as these alliances were based neither on trust nor on any long-term agreement. Any chance of compromise was ruled out by regional powers, which were constantly promoting confrontation rather than conciliation[16], and, more importantly, by fundamental conflicts between the main players. Hezb-i islami and Jamiat could not collaborate, given the intensity of the tensions between them[17]. Similarly, the staunchly anti-Shia positions of the Saudi-sponsored Ettehad prevented any possibility of reconciliation with the Iran-supported Hezb-i wahdat. In fact, the destruction that most of the western part of Kabul suffered was precisely due to their infighting.

Secondly, the parties had contradictory political projects. Hezb-i islami and Jamiat, though ideologically close – they both emanated from the same Islamic organization in the 1970s – fought with one another over the control of the capital and the following construction of a centralized Islamic (Sunni) state. Ettehad shared these objectives, but had a much more fundamentalist agenda. Hezb-i wahdat, which reunited the Hazara Shias, and Jumbesh, which promoted an ethno-nationalist Uzbek discourse (Dorronsoro 1996b), both tried to influence the future political balance in order to get the regional autonomy that the other parties refused. Dostam, for instance, wanted to be present in Kabul to compensate for the fact that his regional base was in the Uzbek-dominated north-west. This remoteness was geographical as well as political: Uzbeks had a very marginal representation in the Afghan political system. As for the Hezb-i wahdat, it attempted to make itself accepted as a full political partner but this was bound to fail due to the anti-Shia and anti-Hazara prejudice of the other parties.

As a matter of fact, both Jumbesh and Hezb-i wahdat were ideologically aloof from the dominant norm. They contemplated the reconstruction of a new central power with suspicion, as Sunni Islamists or fundamentalists would necessarily dominate it, and they were proved right. This is why these two parties relentlessly tried to prevent any coalition from becoming strong enough to eliminate political rivals and recreate a central power. Their presence in the capital was, therefore, first motivated by the desire to fragment and neutralize the political centre through the occupation of parts of the city and prevention of the reconstruction of the state.

These objectives–controlling the space and/or destabilizing the dominant coalition – shaped the patterns of violence between 1992 and 1996. When the balance of power was rapidly changing, direct involvement was favored so as to obtain tangible territorial gains. But when the objective was to prevent the installation and reinforcement of a government — in other words, to foil any political normalization—actors used rocket bombings. These were not supported by infantry

offensives, something that clearly demonstrates that no military results were sought.

For various reasons, each party failed to reach its objectives. The Hezb-i wahdat and Jumbesh, first, were unacceptable to the other movements and proved unable to neutralize the centre. They were defeated by the Masud-led coalition and then by the Taliban. The Hezb-i islami, secondly, was expelled from Kabul by Masud's troops and then brought to a halt at the southern gates of the city and soon marginalized. Indeed, it was easy for the other parties to instrumentalize it in order to pressure the Masud-led governmental coalition; precisely because of its opposition to the Jamiat, the Hizb could not represent a viable political alternative. The emergence of the Taliban and the end of Pakistan's support, after years of unfailing help, dealt the party its final blow and led to its elimination from the political game until 2001.

As for Masud, his strategy of enlarging his audience and rebuilding the state could have actually succeeded. He ended his early alliance with the Jumbesh and the Hizb-i wahdat because it had been built on incompatible long-term objectives. Masud, unlike his allies, never sought to divide Afghanistan into ethno-political regions led by one party or the other, and he was looking for allies in a Pashtun region that had always been reluctant to support him. If it were not for the unexpected emergence of the Taliban, this reconfiguration might have been possible: Masud's progressive ascendancy over the capital had already put him in a good position to negotiate with the parties that were well-rooted in the southern Pashtun regions.

III. The politicization of ethnic identities and its limits

In order to understand the extent and limits of the politicization of ethnic identities, it is first necessary to unravel two important factors: Kabul's dramatic demographic evolution and the nature of ethnic solidarities within the urban context.

Kabul began to develop from the 18th century onwards when it became the country's capital. Yet, the real demographic transformation occurred during the second half of the 20th

century. In 1965, 30 percent of the capital's inhabitants (127,000 out of 435,000) were born outside of the city, with half of these migrants having arrived within the last five years. Two thirds came either from Kabul province or from one of the adjoining provinces, i.e. almost all migrants came from the south and the west – at that time, the Hindu Kush mountain range presented a real barrier (Balland 1976). The flow of migrants increased dramatically in the 1970s, and then during the 1980s war. The population rose from approximately 600,000 people in 1979 to 1.6 million in 1992. At that time, a large majority of the inhabitants of Kabul were new migrants, and a considerable proportion of the long-established Kabuli middle classes fled following the post-1992 fighting.

How did this massive influx of migrants and the resulting changes in the living conditions impacted Kabuli identity and the nature of social solidarities in the urban landscape? In Afghanistan, individuals recognize or locate themselves within a series of identities, ranging from very general (e.g. belonging to the umma, the Muslim community) to the highly specific (the immediate family). Identity can be based on a similar geographical origin or membership in the same profession, religion, family, ethnic group, etc. Collective mobilization is rarely based on macro-ethnic identities but responds to more limited affiliations[18]. The Uzbeks of Kabul are a case in point. This very small population gradually divided on the basis of origin between the Uzbeks originally from Central Asia (mohajir) and those from Afghanistan (watani). Social mobility also influences identities: the Uzbeks for instance, already urban dwellers prior to their arrival in Kabul, were rapidly assimilated as Tajiks, whereas this was not true for the people from the countryside. These shared identities enabled individuals to cooperate and forge bonds of solidarity. The concept of qawm[19] precisely designates the types of identities that develop within a solidarity network.

Kabul is simultaneously an ethnic melting pot and an area of cohabitation between different social groups. There is, surely, a Kabuli identity, which manifests itself linguistically through variations in spelling and pronunciation of Persian (Farsi)[20] and more generally through a particular habitus. This

exemplifies a wider phenomenon: the strength of local identities in Afghanistan. To be a ‘Kabuli’ often has a greater meaning than being a Pashtun or, even more so, a Tajik. Furthermore, this urban dwellers’ identity fuses with others identities which may manifest themselves either through ethnic hierarchy, the unity in certain city districts or, occasionally, specific professional occupations. Thus the Hazaras, ranked at the bottom of the ethnic hierarchy, are very visible in the city districts of Morad Khani and Wazir Abad and, since the 1950s, have spread close to Ali Abad and Afshar[21]. Lastly, most of the illegal settler population in the mountainous regions is Hazaras. They are often bakers, water carriers and labourers, even though a Hazara middle class had emerged progressively in the 1970s.

The acceleration of the emigration to Kabul in the 1960s led to the development of surrounding villages and above all, of illegal settlements, especially in the Sher Darwaza and Koh-i Asmayi mountains. They are not shantytowns, but solid constructions, quite similar to those known in Turkey as gecekondu. The government has chosen to ignore this situation for decades and the successive town councils have neither provided basic amenities to these zones nor prohibited their construction. The main daily challenge in these areas is to transport drinkable water, which consumes about 10 percent of the family income (Bechhoefer 1977). Yet, despite these inconveniences, these houses remain more compatible with the rural Afghan lifestyle than modern apartments, enabling the founding of semi-rural localities within the city.

This influx of rural people therefore profoundly changed the configuration of the city’s population. The migrant, initially anticipating a temporary stay, often settled close to city dwellers with which he/she shared some kind of social link, based on kinship or other ties. The integration and socialization within the urban context was not, initially at least, an individualistic process but, rather, occurred through the bias of an existing social network. Hence, these strong rural-urban bonds may, for the recent settlers, prevent or impede the development of a Kabuli identity. During the war, these links between Kabul and the countryside were further

maintained through the mobilization of extended family ties (enlarged family, clan). These links facilitated the exchange of services, especially when a member of the network was affiliated with the government and another with the resistance. These intersecting protection mechanisms enabled the mujahideen's families to remain within the cities, while practices such as spying or exchanging prisoners would be carried out within these networks (Roy 1986).

While these solidarity networks construe a particularly complex reality, the Kabul regime attempted to simplify them by politicizing macro-ethnic affiliations in the 1980s in order to assess its power and, above all, to prevent the Jihadist discourse from destroying the government's legitimacy. This policy was a failure, at least in the short term. Indeed, the resistance parties had not made these macro-ethnic groups the basis for their own mobilization and, besides, their religious discourse superseded ethno-nationalist claims. The only case for which this policy produced results was with the Hazaras. Their nationalist discourse, employed mostly by ulema educated in Iran, had been the best mobilizing force amongst the Hazara population during the war. But even there, Kabul's policy did not directly incur spectacular changes for two reasons. First, creating a specific Hazara region might have obliged the government to reorganize the entire administration.

Second, too many concessions to the Hazaras' demands could have further weakened the Afghan Communist Party, which was already divided between two factions, the Khalq–mostly recruiting amongst Pashto speakers – and Parcham, composed of a majority of urban/Persian speakers. The most notable outcome of Kabul's policy was, indeed, to increase the visibility of Hazaras in political life – in the early 1980s, the Prime Minister Sultan Ali Keshmand was a Hazara – and especially within the administration, particularly in Kabul. This further antagonized the Khalqis, who were not only ethnically distinct from the Parchamis but also at the bottom of the social hierarchy. While Parchami were primarily upper-middle class Kabulis, often at the margins of the ruling class (Najibullah, for example, married a member of the royal clan),

Khalqis were primarily educated country folk without social connections.

The government's policy had indeed prepared the ground for the effective ethnicization of the war, in other words the politicization of ethnic/community identities that would appear in the 1990s[22]. The divisions within the Afghan Communist Party resurfaced when Kabul fell, and served as a basis for the strengthening of groups. Most of the Parchamis joined the Jumbesh, which was secretly supported by followers of the former president Karmal, and warmly welcomed Masud. The Khalqis mostly integrated into the Hezb-i islami, with which they shared two common features: the same social trajectory and Pashto as a first language.

Regarding the mujahideen, the legitimization of the war as a Jihad had lost its meaning, probably as soon as the Soviet army had pulled out. The clashes between parties were nurtured primarily by a non-religious logic. In order to mobilize support, some movements openly employed an ethnic discourse (Hezb-i wahdat, Jumbesh), while others did so implicitly (Hezb-i islami and Ettehad in particular). In some cases, ethnic identities became a strong political marker: any Panjshiri was suspected of being pro-Masud and faced a real risk of being arrested, especially under the Taliban regime. Moreover, the parties were often rooted in the districts where they could hope to mobilize communitarian support.

This phenomenon must, however, be put in its proper context, as the map of Kabul does not show a clear geographical division into ethno-political zones. First, social characteristics, much more often than ethnic identities, determined partisan affiliations. Second, some groups had only a military presence, such as the Jumbesh, which could not count on any significant Uzbek community in Kabul[23]. Third, political practices were generally functioning within the framework of a clientelism based on qawm solidarities. This was the standard way power operated in Afghanistan under the communists as well as under the Taliban. For instance, President Rabbani routinely promoted the Badakhshis (from the Badakhshan province where he was born) to positions of responsibility, while Masud knew he could count on the Panjshiris etc. Similarly, the

support that Sayyaf enjoyed in Paghman was the product of clannish solidarities more than a call to Pashtun solidarity in general.

The task of 'ethnicizing' the war undertaken by political parties had therefore only a limited impact, even more so if one recalls that national identity, probably strengthened during exile, remained the central reference point for individuals (Glatzer 1999). In one case, however, that of the Hazaras, ethnicization operated as a political project. In certain Western districts of the capital, the Hezb-i wahdat carried out, if not a real ethnic cleansing, at least brutal pressure to force the non-Hazaras to leave. Likewise, life became impossible for the Hazaras in the zones held by the Ettehad. Yet, the true degree of support for the Hezb-i wahdat among Kabul's Hazara population is difficult to appreciate. For instance, as the merchants were largely forbidden to trade with the Hazarajat, the war in Kabul often meant a significant loss of income. Their membership of the Hezb-i wahdat was probably as much the result of party pressure and of the discriminatory practices of other movements as it was a sincere expression of support for Hazara nationalism[24].

The Hezb-i wahdat's strategy led to a strong Sunni reaction and to the Afshar massacre. On 11 February 1993, Sayyaf's and Masud's troops launched an attack against the Hezb-i wahdat, which lost control of Afshar, a district West of Kabul. For the next three days the victorious troops massacred numerous civilians (probably between 200 and 300). Witness statements confirmed that the mujahaddin entered homes and committed various atrocities (rapes, murders, body mutilation, etc.) (Gille.1993:2). The massacre was the reaffirmation of ethnic hierarchies that the Hazaras had challenged by positioning themselves as political forces on the same footing as other groups. In Afghanistan, the coexistence between different communities had been possible because of the implicit recognition that a hierarchy, by definition unequal, existed. This is why ethnic cleansing, which is a specific type of violence that presupposes a will to eliminate another in order to seize a space, was quite rare.

IV. Economic stakes

The largest city in the country was bound to become an economic stake at a time when different groups were gathering resources to prepare their troops. The different battles in Kabul demonstrate that the nature of the war had changed because to take over a town required the costly build up of troops. The region of Kabul was in effect the first industrial centre of the country. It had a sufficient supply of electricity for industrial applications along the road leading to Jalalabad (Balland 1973), principally as a result of the three hydro-electric dams built on the river Kabul. The Jabal usseraj textile factory immediately, north of Kabul, for instance, formed part of this relatively industrialised area[25]. Along the road to Jalalabad, a burgeoning industrial zone had appeared with the concentration of an increased number of warehouses and small industries. Small industries were equally concentrated in the Kabul region, and as a result, so were the vast majority of workers.

In addition, the southern regions, Logar province in particular, had important agricultural production that was easily sold due to its proximity to the capital. Karakul (sheep skins) for exportation and dried fruits were also processed in Kabul. Lastly, the city was an important communications centre since it is at the junction between the north and the south, on the one hand, and the eastern roads to Jalalabad and Pakistan, on the other. It thus provided a major platform for the exportation of Afghan products (rugs, karakul, etc.).

By separating government-controlled urban zones from mujahideen-controlled rural zones, the Afghan war profoundly distorted the existing economic flows (Dorronsoro 1996a). The decreasing level of exchanges between the countryside and the cities was less the result of governmental or mujahideen forces' actions (they both allowed convoys in both directions to pass in exchange for bribes in some cases) than of the impossibility for men of military service age to go to the city (without risking conscription) and of people fleeing away from the countryside due to military operations. This decline in exchanges provoked a dramatic increase in prices. Moreover, the countryside was largely supplied by

neighbouring countries (notably Pakistan), and this contributed to the creation of partially separate economic flows.

In Kabul, the economic actors had to adapt themselves to the new conditions. Thus, blacksmiths no longer worked for the suburban peasant farmers, who could not come to the city. The Char Chata jewellers had to close their shops because they sold Turkmen jewellery that no longer arrived in the city from northern Afghanistan, and the demand for which had fallen due to the disappearance of tourists. This bazaar went over into selling hurricane lamps, very much in demand because of frequents power cuts (Delloye et al. 1986). Similarly, the goldsmiths vanished because of the difficulty in finding charcoal, while wood was more and more frequently replaced with fuel-oil, mainly in the bakeries. Elsewhere, the Soviet presence gave rise to a huge black market in arms, clothes and tools.

In 1992, the fall of the regime narrowed the economic gap between towns and the countryside. Yet, it also generated a new economic regionalisation with urban hubs connected to neighbouring countries (Herat to Iran, Kandahar and Jalalabad to Pakistan, Mazar-i Sharif to Uzbekistan). With this new organization of the economy and with provincial towns being less dependent on the centre, Kabul lost its central position. For instance, the capital's airport–once the source of important profits drawn from the transport of products sold as contraband in Pakistan–was so regularly disrupted by the bombardments that Jalalabad airport became used more often[26]. Furthermore, contrary to the rest of the country, the city was subject to blockades, which prevented the free movement of goods between 1992 and 1996.

In the absence of regular wage, the semi-professional troops of both sides lived on predation, mainly at checkpoints at the city limits where travellers were automatically taxed and sometimes mugged. The disorder led to the development of organised crime such as the looting of homes by armed gangs at night. When Kabul was captured, the sudden liberation of 4,000 prisoners, many imprisoned under common law, certainly did not contribute to improving security. In this troubled context, mercenaries drawn from Dostam's troops

further ‘distinguished’ themselves by their ferocity, their frequent pillages, murders and rapes[27]. This daily and arbitrary violence explains why the inhabitants of Kabul overwhelmingly rejected the mujahideen, who were largely perceived as thieves.

Additionally, frequent blockades aimed at emptying the city of its inhabitants. This tactic was particularly used by Hekmatyar (notably during winter 1994) because it helped controlling the access points to the south (towards Logar) and to the east (towards Pakistan), which were essential for the town’s supply. A market, subsidized by the Hezb-i islami, existed in the south of the town (Char Asyab) in order to compete with the town’s markets and to exploit the population’s discontent. The Hezb-i islami regularly blockaded convoys (including those from the UN) destined for the capital and demanded that they be unloaded so they could be checked. How economically determinant this military tactic was can be gauged by the fact that when, in the beginning of 1995, the Hezb-i islami was expelled from the south of Kabul, the price of corn fell by half.

A few exceptions aside, the armed groups did not seek to manage the economy but plundered or racketeered so as to satisfy their immediate requirements. Let us also clarify that, if sizeable individual profits were made, there were no economic intermediaries capable of exploiting the political parties or even of being intermediaries at an equal level. The bazaar, too disorganised, was not a social actor. As a matter of fact, the weakening of the individual merchants as a group and the disappearance of most industrial or semi-industrial production were the two major characteristics of the economic field during the four years of war. Only the NGOs organized, and in difficult conditions, some sort of economic assistance for the inhabitants, mainly during winter.

V. The confrontation between the educated and the Mujahideen

Contrary to what happened in Iran, where urban culture became dominant after the revolution (Hourcade 1988), and the mujahideen entry into Kabul initiated revenge against the previous years of modernization decided from the centre. In

order to understand this social confrontation, which only hardened with the arrival of the Taliban, I will analyze the educated classes of Kabul, then the new legal system of the Taliban and their practices. Then some attention will be given to gender relationships as a mean of analyzing ideological and social opposition.

Kabul is the heart of modernity/westernization in Afghanistan. Before the war, almost half of the urban population was concentrated in Kabul, which was the only real modern city. Herat has a very old urban culture, but remained traditional, as opposed to the capital, where modernity was apparent not only in urban organisation but also in the inhabitants' behaviour. The capital is the place where the Afghan elite was concentrated, living in the bourgeois areas of the capital. At least half of the upper echelons of the administration were Kabuli[28]. The Pashtun aristocracy, especially the royal clan of the Mohammadzai, which had played a central role in the constitution of the state, lived in Kabul and spoke Persian (Farsi) more than Pashto. In the 1960s, the proportion of Kabulis in the administrative elite once again increased (56 percent of the total).

This occurred irrespective of ethnic group (77 percent of Tajiks working in the administrative elite were Kabuli; 71 percent of the Mohammadzai, 67 percent of Durranis and 40 percent of other Pashtuns). This reflected the growing importance of schooling in the capital. Indeed, the capital had an important concentration of educational structures: 20 percent of the pupils at the primary and secondary levels at the end of the 1960s, and 25 percent of the teaching body. Daud's policy (1973-1978) engendered a decrease in the number of Kabulis in the administrative elite because Daud wanted to open up the political and administrative system to those living in the provinces and, in particular, to the Pashtuns. Nevertheless, this transformation only affected the highest positions in the state hierarchy and did not undermine the domination of the capital by the elites.

From the 1960s onwards, the majority of the educated in Kabul developed collective strategies within the first political parties. New practices appeared in the city, and this mainly

affected the status of women. Urbanization per se was not a guarantee of greater autonomy for women. In fact, urban life often tends to economically marginalize the women and imposes the wearing of the chadri (or burqa)[29] more often in unknown environments. Yet, amongst the Kabuli bourgeoisie, the schooling of girls went hand in hand with modern practices such as wearing western clothes, a very fashionable trend in the 1970s, but not looked on warmly by the traditionalists[30].

However, the city's modernity often ceased to exist a few hundred meters away from these areas. Women in chadri were still very much in the majority in the bazaar and the population maintained its traditional religious practices. Besides, the post-1960s exodus led to a rural influx into the capital. The population doubled in few years and its ethnic and social makeup profoundly changed. This phenomenon peaked in the 1980s with the arrival of refugees because of security problems and the economic situation. Several hundred thousand people moved to the city's hillsides (deprived of water, and sometimes of electricity), and the suburbs expanded considerably. These newcomers, when confronted with the city's life, often had a tendency to adopt even stricter behaviour[31].

The war led to a more visible differentiation between the different areas of the city and between social groups. In essence, with the war, the provincial towns became more conservative, either under the mujahideen's pressure or out of a spontaneous support to the Jihad, while Kabul persisted in its path towards westernization.

In Kabul, the modern Mikrorayon area, populated by civil servants and members of the Communist party, was probably more westernized than the bourgeois areas of Shahr-i naw (New City). Yet, Shahr-i naw was where social practices changed the most. Some women went out without a veil; others wore knee-length Russian-style skirts. Many of them had a professional activity outside of home (administration, healthcare, etc.), partly due to the fact that men were often in the army and that many were widows, without any other incomes. Because the war drafted many young men (or forced them to desert), women accounted for 50 percent of the lower

positions in the administration, and 55 percent of all students in Kabul were young girls (Centlivres-Demont 1988). Marriages – although still arranged by families – were celebrated with rock bands and easily available alcohol. Political mobilization remained limited; though 15 percent of the PDPA members were women, we can infer from individual cases that they joined principally because of family solidarity. Some women's organisations, mainly inspired by Anahita Ratebzad, were active under the Najibullah regime but they did not have any important activities outside Kabul.

With the fall of Kabul in 1992, a radically different period started. Some city-dwellers were nostalgic about the Najibullah regime and openly say so. Indeed, the arrival of the mujahideen was perceived by the majority of the Kabulis as the end of the specific urban culture of the city, though some political actors, such as Masud and Hekmatyar, had been students at the Kabul University. They thus had a sense of urban culture and belonged to this portion of the educated class that had become politicized through the Islamic movement. Masud, moreover, remained popular amongst some of the educated, because he represented a form of Islamic modernity. Other movements, particularly Sayyaf's one, had a much more fundamentalist vision of political Islam.

Be that as it may, all of the parties imposed a series of legal fundamentalist measures, most notably the shariatization of the law. In May 1992 the new authorities decided, for instance, that civil servant had to pray together every day. Wearing a moustache (perceived as a sign of pro-communist feelings) or being clean-shaven could lead to arrest. In September 1992, the first in a long series of public execution of delinquents was carried out.[32] Sayyaf succeeded in getting female television newscasters removed (on 28th July 1992) and managed to have the Afghan government declare that awarding official positions to women would be prohibited. Similarly, Afghan women were also forbidden from attending the International Women's Conference in Beijing.

In addition to these new legal rules, everyday incidents between the population and the mujahideen readily showed the distance that separated them. Many mujahideen had not been

able to enter the towns since the beginning of the war and were out of touch with the urban world. Furthermore, amongst the rural Pashtuns there was a feeling of mistrust, of contempt for the city and its special bylaws, and for the disappearance of the tribal identity as a result of urbanization (Anderson 1982). Often very young, they belonged to the poorest rural classes. What is seldom emphasized, but is equally indicative of the divergence between the social groups, is the distress of those Kabulis who sought refuge in the countryside, principally in the Logar (Abou Zahab 1993), where the women complained of the difficulty in adapting to a rural environment and, for example, to the requirement to wear the chadri[33].

These changes did not equally impinge on all social groups. The educated were the most affected, not only economically but also socially by the undermining of their values. First, the state's collapse placed them in a difficult situation, as most of them were civil servants. The absence of salary for months at a time made them virtually unemployed and NGOs could only employ a limited number of them. Second, the educated classes' ways of life, notably regarding the status of women, were severely weakened by the imposition of a rigorous social and legal order[34]. In effect, the arrival of the mujahideen implied a redefinition of public space, a space from which women were now excluded, just as they had been from practically all public activities during the war on the mujahideen side. For the majority of the mujahideen, women had nothing to do in the public space. In rural societies, women rarely venture outside the village space except if accompanied by a male relative. Yet, freedom of movement and a feminine society (with the sharing of chores, etc), from which men are de facto excluded (Poulton 1979, Lindholm 1996), do exist. For many young country-dwellers, women who venture outside without even a simple Iranian chador are a priori prostitutes, though it seems that violence against women was surprisingly rare, given the wartime context (Duprée 1993).

In practice, women working in the administration was subjected to different pressures that forced them to leave[35]. However, these measures were barely enforced in the Ministry

of Education, where 70 percent of the workforce was comprised of women, and the veil was not even imposed during the first few months. Elsewhere, the mujahideen infiltrated the buildings of humanitarian organizations and other workplaces to impose an Islamic dress code on Afghan female employees, who were increasingly obliged to wear the chadri in public rather than the lighter chador[36]. Kabul therefore followed the practice of the majority of other towns, notably Herat and Kandahar[37]. In addition, female education – rare for young girls older than eight years old – started to become a problem in some places. Eventually, the destruction of the majority of the infrastructure, the insecurity and the ideological orientation of the mujahideen led a growing proportion of the educated to flee, as they often had the means to move abroad. Ultimately, those who remained were only those who, for economic or other reasons, could not leave.

Conclusion

To conclude, I will underline the elements of continuity and rupture between the 1992-1996 situations and the one prevailing under the Taliban. During the 1992-1996 periods, the fighting had a strong political yet instrumental rationality: how to survive the competition and accumulate resources. Non-combatants were completely excluded from the political game, ethnic mobilization became more relevant, and legitimizing the war in the name of Jihad was de facto abandoned. The main result was that the mujahideen, and perhaps politics itself, were radically discredited. There was a general demand for restoring order and ending the violence. This, of course, cleared the way for the Taliban, who at first responded to common aspirations[38]. Yet it would be simply fallacious to infer from this that either the emergence of the Taliban was inevitable or that the strategy of the actors in Kabul was irrational. Once their regional area had been cleared, the Taliban aimed, like all other parties, at taking the capital. Their success, brought by a complex interplay of different factors (Pakistani assistance, the attrition of other movements, etc.), marked a decisive and turning point in the civil war.

In effect, the stabilization of the military situation in the capital after the arrival of the Taliban launched the reconstruction a political centre. This centralization and reconstruction process is often called into question for the simple reason that it did not lead to a return to the pre-war Afghan state structures. Here, the difference with the 1992-1996 periods is very clear. The Taliban brought two important innovations. First, the state no longer enjoyed a privileged relationship with the educated class, which therefore, especially in Kabul, was largely excluded from political as well as administrative decisions. Within the new state, the ulema monopolized power to the detriment of the educated. Second, Kabul partially lost its role as a political centre. Mullah Omar, the amir al-mominin (Commander of Believers), did not live in Kabul but in Kandahar. Kabul was thus more an administrative than a political capital.

Is the ethnic dimension the key to explain the Taliban's policy in the capital? The 1992-1996 phase shows, in fact, that frictions arose from the arrival of the mujahideen in the cities. The main conflict was between rural and urban dwellers, much more than between Pashtuns and other ethnic groups, even if the Pashtun's Puritanism made them particularly aware of the gap between their values and those of the Kabuli urban women. The tide of fundamentalism, powerful from the beginning of the Jihad, was not only present in Pashtun regions, and the educated were not always unsympathetic to it. It is therefore necessary to contextualize the common idea that the Taliban marked a total rupture. What they introduced was, as a matter of fact, partly started in 1992 but went almost unnoticed because attention was focused on politico-military questions.

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Chapter 3

The Afghan National Army: Sustainability Challenges beyond Financial Aspects

Dr. Antonio Giustozzi with Peter Quentin

Executive Summary

The ANA is commonly viewed as one of post-2001 Afghanistan's strongest institutions, if not the strongest. However, with the imminent withdrawal of international forces, the ANA's ability to stand on its own and successfully confront its enemies faces its first major test. This study shows that crucial weaknesses and flaws continue to undermine the ANA's readiness; these could derail its efforts to contain or defeat the ongoing insurgency. The ANA continued to experience high attrition rates in 2013, as has been the case throughout its history, largely due to a high rate of desertions. The desertion rate is attributable to a variety of factors, including the low quality of recruits, but the disinclination to serve in the ANA is inevitably linked to a larger state legitimacy problem. The ANA has been unable to attract recruits from sectors of the population which benefited most from international intervention after 2001 (the urban and peri-urban population), relying instead largely on recruits from the poorest rural areas, who benefited the least from economic and social development post-2001. It is not surprising that motivation among the ANA rank-and-file remains somewhat dubious.

Although the ANA has received considerable levels of investment from donors, particularly in terms of training and mentoring, the effort has made slow progress, in part because of the relatively low quality of human resources attracted to the ANA. The main problem with Western assistance to the ANA has been its tendency to import external models into a country which lacks the structural and educational capacity to implement them. Capacity substitution afflicted the ANA until

2013, when the gradual withdrawal of international mentors forced ANA officers and combat support to develop their own capacity. While there have been encouraging signs that this effort is finally making headway, by the end of 2013, it was far from clear that the ANA had enough time to catch up before being having to confront major challenges.

The extent to which the ANA might require additional components, such as strong artillery or an air force, is still under debate. Afghans generally support the idea that more heavy equipment is a necessity, as is a strong air force. ISAF and NTM-A have argued that heavy equipment is counter-productive in fighting counter-insurgency. Furthermore, the fact remains that the ANA has been trained to fight with strong air support, which it will no longer have after 2014. The Afghan Air Force is still in an early stage of development and there is no plan to equip it with anything more than a transport fleet and a handful of counter-insurgency aircraft.

Logistics is probably the ANA'a most crucial weakness. Despite a 2013 rush to develop it, the ANA lacks experienced logisticians to handle complex tasks essential for supporting tens of thousands of troops deployed away from their bases. As such skills cannot be improvised; the lack of logistical capability may force the Afghan government to depend increasingly on unreliable irregular forces to fight in areas far from the main cities and the highways.

Although by 2013 the ANA was a much more professional force than it was in 2005, nepotism and political factionalism have continued to undermine it, and external interference in its chain of command has been common. While the extent of ethnic friction might be exaggerated in some press reporting, frequent contact between ANA officers and politicians has exacerbated inefficient allocation of human resources within the organization. Despite some progress in improving discipline (for example, the crackdown on narcotics use), the overall level of discipline in the ANA remains poor.

In conclusion, the ANA faces major challenges in the near future. Some of these are the result of long-term neglect and cannot be quickly rectified. Others, however, are the result of

political interference and patronage network building, which could be addressed if there was the political will to do so. As of 2013, the Afghan political elite seemed more concerned with their own petty struggles in Kabul than with whether the ANA was prepared to meet threats on the battlefield. Although the ANA and the Afghan political leadership have some reason to complain about the under-equipping of the ANA, by 2013 it was clear that there was little that could be done about that in the short term.

Assuming that any country was willing to provide additional equipment, as Afghanistan cannot afford to buy any, it would still take a long time before such equipment would enter service because of the training required. Instead, the ANA would do better to make the best use of what it has and manage it as efficiently as it can in 2015, in order to gain sufficient credibility to persuade external donors to keep investing in it. For the same reason the ANA needs a realistic deployment plan, in order to avoid exposing its greatest weaknesses, including logistics. To speed up the development of components such as logistics and administration, the ANA should devise incentives to attract more high school graduates. The high number of applications to the Military Academy suggests that high school graduates are not averse to serving in the ANA in principle, but need to see what advantages would derive from it. It should also be clear that a serious political crisis at the top (for example, following the 2014 presidential elections) would weaken state legitimacy further and seriously damage morale in the ANA.

1. Introduction

The Afghan National Army (ANA) and Afghan National Air Force (AAF) stand today as products of the 2001 war and Western intervention in Afghanistan. This is not only because they were established in 2002 by the government brought to power by that intervention, but even more importantly because they were funded, designed and trained by the intervening forces. It was perhaps inevitable therefore that the question of their sustainability should arise.

The debate on the sustainability of the Afghan armed forces has focused mainly on financial concerns. Even in the early years of the post-2001 era, institutions like the World Bank rang alarm bells about the cost of the maintaining the armed forces, structured as they were according to decisions largely taken by donors, with little regard for the likely capacity of the Afghan state to raise revenue in the future. At that time, the ANA was still planned to number no more than 70,000. In later years, as the conflict intensified and NATO countries looked to their own eventual disengagement, the army was expanded to about 185,000, with a target of 195,000. This growth compounded the financial sustainability issue, particularly as the Afghan National Police (ANP) was also greatly expanded at the same time.

With the onset of the 2008 financial crisis, which affected almost all donor countries funding Afghanistan's Ministry of Defence (MoD), the Obama administration initiated discussions in 2011 to determine a sustainable level of future funding for the Afghan armed forces. Based on optimistic reports about the security situation in Afghanistan, at the Bonn International Conference in December 2011 an initial assessment projected that a fund of US$4.1 billion, with the US contributing the lion's share, and other donors and the Afghan government contributing the rest, would be sufficient to meet the country's needs. This assessment was made on the assumption that the 350,000 combined army and police forces could be trimmed to 228,000.

However, within months of that agreement, doubts over the wisdom of reducing Afghan security forces just as foreign forces withdrew called the entire plan into question. Maintaining the force at current levels through 2013 and 2014 entailed an additional US$2.4 billion, while meeting the proposed US$4.1 billion has already turned out to be more difficult than expected.[1] As of 2013, the Afghan army's fuel bill alone was US$500 million, about a quarter of the government's total revenue.[2] Thus, as of mid-2013, the financial sustainability issue remained unresolved, but its eventual resolution (likely in the shape of a greater US financial commitment) looked easy compared to other, non-

financial sustainability concerns. The project leading to the publication of this paper stemmed from this consideration.

This paper aims to assess the ANA in terms of its organisational resilience in the face of adversity or, in other words, will the ANA continue to be viable as an army? The ANA is often trumpeted as the foremost example of institution building in Afghanistan, and the institution most trusted to serve the national interest. But how genuinely mature is it as an institution, and how sustainable is its development? Particularly given that Afghanistan is still at war, the ANA's resilience will be a key issue when the time comes for it to rely on its own capacity. By April 2013, as Afghan forces increasingly took over major combat responsibilities during 2012-13, three-quarters of insurgent attacks targeted the ANA and other Afghan forces, with just one quarter aimed at foreign troops; only six months earlier the ratio was precisely the reverse.[3] This pressure will only intensify, as the transition at the end of 2014 does not appear negotiable, with Western governments openly and decisively committed to it.

Even if the ANA secures necessary financial resources, the problem remains that the MoD is unable to deploy its resources effectively.[4] A major hindrance was identified as corruption. As one NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan (NTM-A) source put it:

Therefore the primary threat to the Afghan state is not the Taliban or Pakistan, but its own internal corruption, and unless they can demonstrate a commitment to resolving this, the international community's funding will dry up.[5] The following set of benchmarks provides a basis on which to analyse the long-term nonfinancial sustainability of the ANA. Some of these benchmarks relate to the mobilisation and management of human resources, others to the ability/willingness of the MoD and the political elite to develop and maintain an efficient ANA.

- The mobilisation and management of human resources:
    a. Quality of rank-and-file recruitment, relative to the composition of Afghan society;

b. Degree of dependence on external advice and services provided by foreign military forces;

c. Production and management of skilled manpower for the task of providing combat support: indirect fire, close air support, IED countermeasures, etc;

d. Production and management of skilled manpower for the task of providing logistical support and maintaining units on the ground (the so-called "combat service support").

- The extent of political interference and its disruptive effects on command and control:

  a. The extent of meritocracy within the ANA;

  b. Solidity of the chain of command;

  c. Factionalism and ethnicism.

The methodology adopted for this study consisted mainly of a mix of free-flowing and structured interviews with ANA officers and troops (42), foreign mentors and trainers (29) and Afghan and foreign observers of the ANA - analysts, commentators, politicians, former army leaders and notables (7). The authors also collated and utilised material available in the public domain (articles, broadcast transcripts, released and leaked documents, etc.). Inevitably a range of methodological issues come up when studying an army in the middle of an on-going conflict. Little official documentation was available; to the extent that it was, it was shared by officials who might have a vested interest in showing only portions of the overall picture. This concern applies even more too oral sources. In order to mitigate the risk of bias, the authors attempted to strike a balance among different interest groups (serving ANA officers/mentors and advisers, and trainers/observers external to the Afghan security establishment). Still, navigating between the optimists and the pessimists presented significant problems for data interpretation, for which the author takes full responsibility.

In addition, relying on these kinds of sources, as opposed to a unit-by-unit survey of the ANA and AAF, may have two unintended consequences. The first is that aggregated data may hide huge variations between units. One aspect of this is the presence within the ANA of both capable officers and utterly incompetent ones, as foreign mentors often report. The second is that anecdotal evidence, drawn from published sources or obtained through interviews, may not represent dominant trends, but rather the negative or positive prejudices of those providing the information. Therefore, unless personal prejudices offset each other, this type of evidence can be misleading if not cross-checked with other sources. While this report uses these sources as carefully as possible, the readers should be aware of the risks.

2. The Evolution and Impact of attrition rates

Mobilising and managing human resources in an army at war presents a range of problems, particularly in a context of internal conflict, where by definition, territorial control by the state is weak. The information available on this question is uneven and not always reliable, so a rather lengthy discussion of the data is necessary to assess actual trends (2.1). The real issue, of course, is what drives high attrition rates (2.2).

The Facts

While recruitment ceased to be a problem for the ANA in purely numerical terms after the establishment of provincial recruitment offices in 2003,[6] throughout its existence the ANA has experienced very high attrition rates[7]. NATO advisers and Afghan MoD have made efforts to address at least some of the factors at the root of the attrition problem. For example, in 2012a leave policy was formalized, with a 20-day annual allowance written into employment contracts.[8] The management of the operations leave-training cycle however remained difficult due to the pace of operations and limited resources available.[9]

Although there have been claims that attrition rates declined during 2013,[10] the data available for the period cast doubt on this assertion: in the summer of 2013 the overall attrition rates were higher than in the summer of 2012 A comparison with

the pro-Soviet Afghan army of the 1980s is instructive. That was an army of conscripts, often press-ganged into service. As Table 1 shows, in 1988 (in the middle of a general offensive by the armed opposition) the Afghan army suffered an attrition rate just higher than the ANA in 2011, when ISAF was still fully committed to the military effort. The 1988 figure might also be somewhat overestimated as it includes all reported injuries, whereas this is not the case for ANA attrition data. Desertions from the ANA have rarely affected the officer corps, except in special cases such as sudden redeployment from permissive to heavily contested regions.[11]

They also have only marginally affected the non-commissioned officer (NCO) corps and even that only in 201213. Because of this, the high attrition rate is not such a threat to the professional growth of the ANA as some observers have hinted. However, there have always been shortages of professionally prepared officers due to a slow start in officer training.[12] Officer and NCO positions were filled at only 82 percent of their planned strength in March 2013.[13] The ANA only started taking part in combat operations on any significant scale in 2005. Considering that even from 2005-2010 the ANA as a whole was only partially committed to operations (at least compared to the ANP), the attrition rates shown in Graph 1 appear very high, particularly given the voluntary character of ANA recruitment.

Paradoxically, the attrition rates were at their highest in the early, pre-deployment history of the ANA (2002-3). Clearly, what was driving attrition at that time was not the difficult condition of deployment or the heavy casualties. Remarkably, while attrition rates remained roughly stable in 2005-12, the killed-in-action rate has been growing steadily. This shows not only that casualties represented a relatively small component of the attrition rate at that time (desertions represented the largest part of it), but that the casualty rate has not precipitated desertions. From 2004 onwards the monthly attrition rates have generally fluctuated between 2-3 percent, occasionally breaking the 4 percent barrier; in practice this has meant that every year at least one quarter to one third of the army has been lost due to attrition. Since 98 percent of desertions and

AWOL affect field units, in practice turnover in combat units has been much higher than the average rates suggest.[14]

A comparison among field units seems to confirm that although those more exposed to the fighting have been somewhat worse affected, the units more sheltered from the fighting have had only moderately lower attrition rates. This fact seems to further confirm that exposure to fighting might not have been a major factor driving desertions. To tentatively address the problem, in November 2010 then Defence Minister Wardak decided to hold unit commanders accountable for high attrition rates and also asked police and local authorities to collaborate in the identification of deserters.[15] However, little seemed to have changed in practice by the time this paper went to print.

The Causes

The debate over what is driving high attrition rates highlights a number of problems. A major point of contention has always been the failure to punish deserters, who have been able to live normal lives and even get other jobs such as security guards. This was originally due to the desire to "allow some flexibility during harvest time and to encourage recruiting", but led instead to desertions and AWOL rates getting out of control.[16]

Another factor that has contributed to the high level of desertions has been the weak vetting of recruits, itself a result of a preoccupation with growing the ANA numbers as quickly as possible. There has been little effort to vet recruits even in terms of physical fitness. Physically weak, drug-addicted and under-motivated recruits have often proved unable to withstand even the rather mild 10-week basic training course (at one point reduced to 8 weeks, then expanded to 12 weeks in 2013), let alone military discipline after being commissioned.[17]

Coalition and Afghan forces introduced tougher screening for recruits in 2011 and then tightened these again in 2012 following an upsurge in insider attacks.[18] ANA officers interviewed in the south were generally adamant that tighter recruitment rules had made a big difference in terms of discipline in the ranks.[19] Even as of 2012, however, rejecting

applications was a relatively rare event. The 18 vetting officers rejected only 962 applicants out of 31,000 in March-September 2012.[20] Some in the ANA believed that vetting would only work if the old practice of asking volunteers to be referenced by elders was reintroduced.[21]

In any case, even a more effective and thorough vetting process would not have entirely resolved all the problems leading to high attrition rates. By their own assertion, recruits have been motivated principally by economic interests.[22] Among other reasons for high desertion rates mentioned by interviewees, some have been discussed in the press:

- Allegations of serious corruption among ANA officers;[23]
- Poor medical care and the tendency to neglect the injured and the families of those killed in the ANA;[24]
- Intimidation by insurgents;[25]
- Poor living conditions and refusal by officers to grant leave;[26]
- Posting to remote locations from where it is very difficult if not impossible to go on leave;[27]
- The tendency to dispatch troops on patrol without adequate training;[28]
- Weak motivation among young men whose families compelled them to join or who joined to escape family disputes,[29] or who were unemployed,[30] or who saw the ANA as a way to earn some "easy" money;[31]
- The impending ISAF withdrawal, which from at least 2012 onwards appears to have had a demoralising impact and may have contributed to drive some soldiers out of the ANA.[32] In this regard our interviewee's confirmed what was already known. The interviewees also clarified that for many soldiers, the pay rate, while competitive in terms of unskilled employment, is less attractive once they consider the risks and the inconvenience of serving away from

home.[33] In addition, some interviewees also mentioned ill-treatment by officers as a factor.[34]

3. Dependence on mentors

The development of military skills requires a major long-term investment, particularly as far as officers and NCO corps and specialisations are concerned. One way to accelerate such development is to rely on foreign advisers and trainers, which is exactly what the ANA has done since its inception.

A consensus exists among observers that building up the ANA worked out much better than the corresponding effort to develop the ANP, if for no other reason than that the military organisation dedicated to the task was more comfortable dealing with another military organisation (the Afghan MoD) than with the Afghan Ministry of the Interior (MoI).[35] In terms of fundamental skills like patrolling, weapon husbandry and basic manoeuvre skills, the ANA appears to have improved over the years, and its mentors certainly contributed to this progress.[36] The ANA's evident progress in these areas contrasts with the situation a few years back when ANA units refused to take even garrison duties in the districts without a US presence accompanying them.[37]

However, this type of "acceleration" does not come without important side effects. One such effect is the tendency towards "capacity substitution" and another is the tendency of advisers to impose models which are not suitable to the local context.

Capacity substitution

The big question concerning the impact of mentoring carried out primarily by NATO countries has always been its long-term sustainability. The mentors' own reporting suggests that the capacity of ANA units to operate independently grew very slowly up until 2011[38]. By August 2011, just one ANA battalion was rated able to operate independently, that is, without being accompanied by ISAF troops, but still supported by ISAF mentors, ISAF logistics; ISAF maintenance, ISAF medical evacuation, etc. The fact that by the end of 2012 the number of ANA battalions rated able to operate independently had suddenly jumped to 30 cannot but raise suspicion with

regard to the integrity of the assessment.[39] It should be noted that a similar surge in the number of "independent (with advisers)" units occurred between mid-2008 and mid-2009, but reverted to previous levels in late 2009 when NTM-A was established to take over the mentoring and training effort from CSTC-A (Combined Security Transition Command – Afghanistan).

By mid-2013, ISAF claimed that 5 of 26 brigades were able to operate completely independently and another 15 brigades to operate independently with advisers, an even more startling progress. It remains an open question whether this progress is genuine or has been dictated by the NTM-A's need to "graduate" brigades more quickly in light of the decision to pull outfield advisers/mentors from the brigades, leaving them only at the corps and MoD levels.[40] Four of the six corps still required advisers to be able to function effectively.[41]

From 2002 on, the ANA became dependent on external support, in part due to their mentors' readiness to step in and take a supervising and even command role.[42] As a result even when the ANA had the capacity to provide support to its units, that capacity went unused because it seemed easier for everybody to rely on ISAF capabilities.[43] There are indications that it was not until 2011-12 that efforts to reduce ANA's dependency on foreign advisers ("even when they are at risk of failing") started in earnest. In fact, according to ISAF, the first real autonomous ANA brigade-size operation was launched in the summer of 2013.[44] Even the best ANA officers; however, were far from convinced that they could resist the Taliban without American support.[45]

The predominant view among ANA officers is that the ANA depends on foreign support because of its own lack of heavy equipment and close air support.[46] One officer contended that the ANA could not do without the intelligence (particularly non-human intelligence) that reaches them through ISAF.[47] Even the idea of partnering, introduced in 2010, has not been conducive to the development of an Afghanised model. Afghan opposition to partnering also derived from the fear that it would not be effective in terms of getting Afghan units to "stand on their feet", as Minister of Defence Wardak himself

observed, a fear confirmed by some CSTC-A officials as well.[48] Sometimes, the role played by the advisers has represented a form of interference in the Afghan chain of command:

The U.S. took complete ownership of the entire situation. They brought the weapons back here and didn't let the ANA talk to these guys, or make decisions. Then we had the Battalion Commander, I, the Afghan brigade commander, the American staff sergeant who was in charge of the mission, and the security guy who was the owner of the weapons were all in the same office. And basically, we took all the decision-making away from the Afghan brigade commander and the ANA during this meeting by making directives.[49] Those who travelled with the mentoring units often gathered the impression that it was the mentors, more than the Afghan officers, who were effectively leading Afghan units.[50] Doherty reports cases of mentors taking over an ANA unit after their commander had fled, of mentors leading Afghan units in battle, organising ANA firing positions, resolving tactical situations in the absence of ANA commanding officers, saving an ANA company from being overrun, reorganising ANA units, and steadying panicking ANA units.[51] Beattie provides an example of mentors removing an ineffective NCO they judged to be a liability.[52] Some Afghan officers even complained that mentors have ordered their units into battle without informing them.[53] Revealingly, a strike against a mentoring team tends to have a paralysing effect on an Afghan unit.[54]

The wrong model

The worst form of dependency fostering, at least from a tactical perspective, consisted in the training of Afghan forces in "ground cleaning", a tactic that depends heavily on close air support and has become a NATO standard.[55] Many Afghan officers have become addicted to close air support:

I repeatedly told the ANA commander to have his forces return fire on the enemy, and manoeuvre towards their position to outflank them, and he was quick to respond, "No you get planes and helicopters! They can kill the enemy."[56] Others too

pointed out that many Afghan officers have displayed a tendency to rely excessively on close air support:[57] As one officer stated:

We're absolutely ready to take over when the U.S. forces leave … but because we don't have air support of our own, we will need help from them.[58] Western observers concurred:

Some analysts worry the removal of air power will take a key advantage away from Afghan forces. "It's incredibly important that Afghan security forces have access to this capability and that the Taliban know they have access to this capability," [One analyst] said.[59] The delayed development of the Afghan Air Force has had a particularly strong impact on Afghan army combat units trained and mentored to rely on close air support when fighting. Although ISAF had guaranteed continued close air support through the completion of withdrawal in 2014, by the summer of 2012 it had already reduced such support to Afghan army units as mentoring declined.[60]

The provision of close air support was indeed severely limited in 2013; an ISAF general needed to authorise it, and ordnance could rarely be dropped because targets could not be confirmed by ANA officers unable to supply coordinates.[61] ANA troopers who suffered casualties in these battles have not been favourably impressed.[62]

In fact, through 2013 ISAF deployed air power in support of the ANA when it became clear that Afghan forces could not cope on their own, even outside the so-called "key terrain" areas, for example in Warduj (Badakhshan) and in parts of Helmand. As of summer 2013, about 20 percent of ISAF's engagements were in support of "independent" operations by the Afghan security forces, who had requested assistance.[63]

Similarly in planning, the tendency of mentors has been to push for a NATO-style decentralised approach combining arms operational planning and conduct, which the Afghans have not been able to implement successfully due to the lack of well-trained and highly educated officers and NCOs.[64] The result has been, in the words of Amarkhel, that "[W]e do not have a single military expert to draw up a plan".[65]

Prospects

Initially, dependency was not seen as a problem because the original military plan was to continue providing Afghan forces with "everything from intelligence support to air support" even after 2014.[66] It was not only the Americans who were betting on a longterm relationship. Minister of Defence Wardak (2004-2012) was on board too.[67] In 201213 the approach changed radically, as political decision-making in Washington dictated a greatly reduced level of foreign support. By the end of 2012 it had become clear that decisions taken in Washington would leave the US unable to provide an even remotely comparable level of support after 2014, and possibly even sooner than that.[68] At this point, there was sufficient political and bureaucratic will to see the ANA become self-sufficient, but little time to achieve the target.

With the official completion of the security transition in June 2013, Afghan security forces began formally leading all military operations throughout Afghanistan.[69] One optimistic ANA officer asserted then that the ANA performed much more effectively in the provinces where it was on its own than where it still operated together with ISAF.[70] Whether that was true or not, the Afghan political leadership's determination to reclaim its sovereignty, with full military control, certainly had positive effects: I do hear Afghan officials saying things like "this is our opportunity to take the lead and do this ourselves", there is a sense that "this is our time".[71]

To some extent, having to face the insurgents without ISAF's support forced ANA units to find ways to cope, for example by starting to put in practice the training they had received.[72] As one senior IJC source put it: "We have seen even more evidence that they get better the more we get out of their way and that's only natural human behaviour, when a very capable partner comes in to sit back and let them do everything".[73] During the first half of 2013, the insurgents still avoided direct confrontation with the ANA in most cases, but even the continuous, low intensity skirmishes took a heavy toll on the ANA, with 2,767 killed in 2013 according to official sources.[74] The question was whether the ANA could be weaned off ISAF support quickly enough to be ready to fight completely alone

in 2015. Although ISAF sources claimed that the ANA showed aggressiveness during its first fighting season as an almost independent force, the evidence is still inconclusive.[75]

Reliance on NATO forces, with whom the Afghan troops have fought for years, is not likely to evaporate overnight. What could be in store was highlighted in February 2013, when President Karzai announced his intention to ban Afghan forces from requesting airstrikes on residential areas.[76] That political decision created a major backlash, with senators and military analysts criticising the President and highlighting the fact that the insurgents appeared having been emboldened by the decision.[77]

4. The ability to provide sufficient levels of combat support

As indicated above, many Afghan interviewees identified the main source of dependency in the failure of ISAF to equip the ANA adequately. Foreign advisers by contrast believe that Afghan demands for heavy equipment are driven by pride and competitive reflexes toward neighbouring countries.[78] It has also been suggested that the predominant attitude in the Afghan MoD, but also in ISAF, underscores the risk of focusing on equipment at the expense of "moral and conceptual components of fighting power that will determine the success or failure of the ANSF".[79] Afghan interviewees however remained almost unanimous in calling for the ANA to be properly equipped if it is to stand a chance. There are many aspects to this and cannot all be discussed in detail in this paper. Two case studies have been selected to illustrate the debate: the ANA's artillery and the AAF.

Case study*: ANA's Artillery*

Artillery since its rehabilitation in 2002, the Afghan MoD has been forced to place little priority on its artillery because of the disinclination of its western supporters to provide the means to develop it. As a result, the artillery component of the ANA was still numerically weak as of 2012: 6-8 howitzers per brigade, for a total (as of end 2012) of 85 D-30s and 24 American-made, World War II vintage M114s, donated by Turkey and mostly used for parades.[80]

The procurement of a further 124 D-30s was ongoing.[81] Afghan forces began deploying the artillery in significant numbers only in the summer of 2013;[82] that delay compounded the feeling of powerlessness among infantry units.

In 2012, the MoD asked donors for more modern, longer-range artillery, but was refused, as the D-30 is easy to maintain and operate compared to the more modern guns produced in the West. In fact, the ANA had problems in fully integrating anything bigger than the 60mm mortars into its way of fighting.[83] The centralised command and control system of the ANA, where artillery fire has had to be authorised at the battalion commander level, has further inhibited the use of artillery in many tactical situations.[84] In general, ISAF/NTM-A have maintained that the artillery supplied has been sufficient for the counter-insurgency tasks of the ANA, provided it is adequately deployed, manned and coordinated. In particular, ISAF has stressed the importance of well-trained spotters, able to direct fire from remote locations. For this reason, a growing stress has been placed on personnel management, in order to make sure trained artillerymen serve in their specialisation.[85] Developing ANA artillery's leadership to the point of genuine competence appeared a tall order as of 2013, however.

Another argument put forward by ISAF was that advanced technology and heavy weaponry would be counter-productive in a counter-insurgency effort, as it would bind combat units to the road network and complicate maintenance issues.[86] The Afghans have responded that ISAF has used air strikes, artillery and even tanks in counter-insurgency throughout the war. They have also argued that the ANA must instil confidence that it would be able to repel a conventional attack from Pakistan if it wants to sustain the morale of troops deployed in remote outposts near the border.[87] Compounding the artillery deficit, the contract to equip all ANA units with light M224 60mm mortars was not signed until February 2013. Intense training throughout the summer followed; by September ISAF rated the 60mm mortars a major asset for the ANA, a dependable and cheap way to rapidly deliver tactical fire to units engaged by the enemy. IJC sources reported that the mortars delivered a major morale boost for the ANA.[88]

The ANA will also need heavy artillery after 2014, however. To be effective against highly mobile insurgents, accustomed to operating in small units, artillery has to be fired accurately; in order to cover a network of outposts in rugged terrain, the ability to fire beyond visual range is also essential. As of 2012, it was still common to have mortar and artillery crews who could not aim their weapons effectively, relying instead on gradual adjustment of fire based on direct observation.[89]

The lack of properly trained crews has been due to a number of factors. Among them was the fact that NTM-A's dedicated mentoring of Afghan artillery units only started in June 2011, when the first two mentoring teams were assigned to the western and northern Army Corps (207 and 209),[90] although a number of ANA Corps received training before then.[91] By 2012-13 some ANA units had developed the ability to call in indirect fire, using GPS technology.[92] Even when artillery units managed to bring the skills of their crews to relative proficiency in indirect fire, the substantial shortage of educated personnel in the ANA has worked against them. In the words of one Afghan officer:

> "It's a problem with our Defense Ministry. It's bad management. We need the right man, at the right time, for the right job. Sometimes they'll send a guy who has logistics training to the artillery and the guy with artillery training to logistics".[93]

An IJC source confirmed:

> We have recently done a check on where the people trained in their artillery schools have gone and only 50percent are filling artillery billets and the others have been siphoned off by company commanders who need a clerk or brigade commander who needs a driver.[94]

Case study: the Afghan Air Force (AAF)

Developing an air force from scratch is a long and complex process, particularly in post conflict countries whose educational system has been badly disrupted for many years, as in Afghanistan's case in 2002. The US had reportedly promised that by 2009 Afghanistan would have a professional

air force with 8,000 men; however, things moved much more slowly than that.[95] Until spring 2007 (when CSTC-A got involved), what was then called the Afghan National Air Corps (part of the army) received little if any support.[96] Afghans almost universally complain about the insufficient assistance extended by western powers to the AAF. Says an ANA officer: "Our seniors requested a capable AAF but the US did not listen".[97]

While Afghans may underestimate the challenges implicit in creating a new air force, the fact that the assistance programme to the AAF got off to a late start certainly delayed progress by several years. Moreover, aircrews that had been trained in the 1980s were available and could have been trained to fill the gap while a new generation of aircrew and mechanics was developed. Indeed a number of aircrews were retrained and deployed quickly after 2007; this and the training of new personnel could have begun years earlier. Instead, donors' lack of commitment meant that by early 2007 the Air Corps had made very limited progress compared to 2002. If in 2002 Afghanistan had no airworthy planes (at least by NATO standards), by early 2007 it had only 2-3 airworthy cargo planes and a handful of helicopters.[98]

CSTC-A became involved in the air corps training programme in spring 2007, but progress in the rehabilitation of the Afghan Air Force remained slow. Only the creation of a separate AAF (as opposed to a simple air corps of the ANA as it was until June 2010) accelerated the development thanks to the self-concern of its leadership.[99] The lack of urgency in the development of the AAF would be surprising, except for the fact that there were until July 2011 no plans for ISAF to wind down. As late as November 2010, Gen. Allvin, commander of the NATO Air Training Command, stated that there was no plan to accelerate the process of getting the AAF to the stage where it would be "fully stood up", scheduled then for 2016.[100] Despite Afghan impatience, the foreign mentors defended their careful, stepped approach by pointing to past mishaps that occurred due to poor training, including one that almost killed President Karzai.[101] The fact that a large percentage of

Afghan airmen sent to the US for training absconded also contributed to slow progress.[102]

What motivated neglect of the Air Force? Seth Jones reported in 2007 that US officers were not convinced that Afghanistan needs an advanced air force in the short term, given the extraordinary costs of jet fighters. "As long as the U.S. and other NATO countries are willing to provide air power, I think the focus is and should be on building ground capabilities," Jones said [emphasis added, AG].[103]

The expectation of a long engagement in Afghanistan could explain the lack of urgency until 2011; after that, bureaucratic inertia and legal wrangles, as well objective difficulties in finding suitable trainees, might explain why procurement for the AAF was still in a chaos by March 2013. Considering the greater complexity of developing an air force, compared to the army, and given the secondary and tertiary support requirements and demands for greater educational and technical qualifications, it is clear that the Afghan armed forces face a major post-2014 hurdle.

Equipment

The initial decision to incorporate the Air Force into the ANA as the Afghan National Army Air Corps (ANAAC) reflected the American inclination to keep the air force in its limited role of assistance to the Afghan Army, hence no real air defence capabilities were planned. Even tactical combat support was largely neglected. The Afghan Air Force's few Mi-35 combat helicopters were for a long time non-operational due to a lack of machine gun ammunition and a crew trained to use the guns.[104] The helicopters were deployed on a combat operation in the summer of 2013 for the first time.[105] Even as late as 2013, as the Mi-35s were approaching the end of their service life; just two of them were operational at any given time.[106]

The focus was largely on transport capabilities, but due to a wrong choice of aircraft and the mishandling of maintenance contracts, the AAF was without a significant fixed-wing transport capability until autumn 2013.[107] Even the acquisition of large numbers of newly built Mi-17s proved difficult. The

Mi-17s had to be procured in Russia, a complicated matter because of US laws restricting the use of US funds to purchase military equipment abroad.[108] With the delivery of the first C-130Hs in autumn 2013 (out of four planned), some transport capability was re-established, but not enough to impress Afghan authorities, who began discussing purchasing five An-74s from Russia.[109] By spring 2013 ISAF was working on the possibility of a Strategic Airlift Programme (contractors flying aircraft for the AAF) to ease ANSF troop movement from Kabul to the Corps locations, especially in support of leave rotations.[110] In fact, as of 2013, contractors were already operating flights to assist the ANA as part of the SALT (P) programme which facilitated soldiers travelling to their homes and back during leave.[111] The viability of such programs after ISAF's withdrawal is questionable.

In addition, to Kabul's chagrin, ISAF decided to limit AAF's combat capability to 20 small attack planes. Even the procurement of the A-29 turboprop attack aircraft was delayed for a year because of bureaucratic glitches.[112] There were also plans, as of summer 2013, to arm some of the Mi-17s to limited ground attack tasks, particularly in mountain areas.[113] By 2016 the Afghan Army is meant to receive small A-29 Super Tucano counter-insurgency turboprops, replacing the ageing Mi-35s. Neither the armed opposition nor Afghan Army troops on the ground are likely to be very impressed with these assets, having become accustomed to the mighty power of the USAF. However, as donors doubted the AAF's capacity to maintain jet fighters for several years to come, the Super Tucanos were judged to be adequate for counter-insurgency purposes as they can deliver guided weapons.[114] Some sources hinted that the AAF might receive some small tactical drones of limited capability, like the Raven.[115] It appeared that Afghan forces would also receive some simpler balloons and towers, equipped with digital cameras. There is also a plan to deliver 18 electronic intelligence capable PC12 planes, and to equip some of the C-208swith cameras.[116]

Human resources

Before US involvement in 2007, the AAF's airframes were barely maintained.[117] After 2007 there was some improvement;

the number of flights increased, but the human resources allocated by MoD to the Air Force were often so poor that effective training proved difficult; trainers recounted having to train illiterate mechanics using colour codes.[118] In addition, in 2007, as the US was taking over Air Force training, the average age of the pilots was 43 and most of them had not been flying for several years.[119] In 2007-8, these factors contributed to a high accident ratio of six crashes in 18 months (a large portion of the helicopter fleet).[120] Although the frequency of crashes was then reduced, a new maintenance crisis occurred in 2012, when most of the air fleet had to be grounded for several months to undergo extensive inspections.[121] Problems with careless crews and with lack of maintenance supplies have been regularly reported.[122]

As of 2013, all the serving pilots were "legacy Soviet-trained", who had to go through refreshment training as standards had deteriorated in the 1990s; there were just 20 combat ready crews.[123] New pilot training started in 2007 and saw Afghan trainees attend flight schools in Germany, Turkey, India, the UAE, Czech Republic and the US.[124] As of spring 2013, 150 pilots were undergoing training, mostly in the US and Czech Republic.[125] There were also discussions to train Afghan pilots on simulators in India.[126] In reality, at least as far as the Czech-trained Mi-17 crews were concerned, the flow of trainee pilots to the Czech Republic was too slow and not all trainees were suitable for the training.[127]

Helicopter and transport pilot training took place in Shindand as well; as of June 2013, 124 pilots had been retrained, with 62 more undergoing training.[128] However it was not until 2013 that ground training equipment for pilots was delivered to the AAF by the US.[129] As the older generation of pilots was approaching retirement age, though some still had some years to serve, they would need refresher courses and familiarisation with new planes before flying.[130] Thus, the NTM-A aim—to bring the crew-to-aircraft ratio from 1-1 to 1.5-1, in line with NATO standards—still appeared a distant one.[131]

Much of the delay in training was due to the poor selection of trainees; only in the summer of 2012 did the selection criteria for the air force change: all recruits were to be literate and had

to volunteer specifically for the AAF.[132] As of 2013 there were some signs that the AAF was attracting recruits with a university background.[133] Recruitment remained slow and retention problematic, because of the non-competitive salaries,[134] even as the quality of the mechanics improved, due to the literacy requirement.[135] However, as of summer 2013 there were still shortages in maintenance supervisors, who, because they needed to be educated to a higher standard and be literate in English, could easily be attracted by civilian employers. As one source put it:

If you have the technical skills to maintain aircraft you are probably working for Emirates Airlines.[136] Despite the presence on the ground of contractors tasked to maintain the newly delivered aircraft, the service rates were modest at best. As of June 2013, only 25-28 of the rugged and easy to maintain 41 Mi-17s in service were in working condition.[137] Moreover, the ability of the AAF to provide close air support to the ANA is also dependent on the ability of the latter to coordinate with them. The view of the House of Commons was that: It will still fall short of a full close air support capability, and with no trained Forward Air Controllers, interaction between the pilots and troops in contact is likely to be rudimentary. A fixed wing platform will also be ill-suited to operations in mountainous terrain.[138]

By the summer of 2013, the programme to deploy forward fire controllers was forecast by IJC to be able to involve the first Afghan personnel, although "not with laser targeters and sitcom but the ability to coordinate targeting with ground units, ensuring friendly forces and civilians are avoided and the right weapons are being used".[139]

Prospects

ISAF sources argue that given the unlikelihood that the Afghan MoD would ever develop anything resembling the close infantry-air force coordination of 21th century NATO armies, it made more sense to keep the AAF small and focused on pre-planned operations, leaving most fire support tasks to the artillery.[140] Undoubtedly, given the problems that most ANA officers have with maps, real time close air support

seemed a chimera in 2013, even if NTM-A and ISAF trained forward fire controllers.[141] By 2013 ISAF air assets were rarely dropping any ordnance because, in the absence of ISAF mentors, the ANA was unable to confirm positions.[142]

In 2013, contractors involved in training the AAF suggested that another 10 years would be needed before the AAF would be fully operational, and that the planned size of the force would definitely be insufficient given the size and geography of the country.[143] The most optimistic assessment provided by ISAF was that the AAF would not achieve even its initial autonomous operational capability before 2016.[144] As of mid-2013, ISAF estimated that it would realistically take the AAF another 6-8 years to be fully equipped and operational.[145] By spring 2013, the AAF was able to carry out resupply missions, although not in the number required, and medevac missions, as well as a few air assault operations.[146]

In sum, it is easy to understand why the Afghans are puzzled: ISAF displayed a high degree of reliance on close air support, "hooking" the ANA on it, but then has discouraged the ANA from pursuing the same path. In fact it could be argued that ISAF has created capability gaps, introducing tactical models that Afghans could not implement on their own and distorting expectations. The level of aid planned for the AAF now is comparable to older efforts for much smaller militaries, engaged in less extensive counter-insurgency efforts, such as the Salvadoran Air Force in the 1980s.

5. The autonomous logistical capability

Causes of insufficient development

"Demand-supported inventory in Western doctrine evolved through careful analysis of historic consumption and aims to reduce inventory, which reduces overall cost."[147] The Soviet system built in the 1990s was the exact opposite: it relied on oversupply to keep the system going. While more expensive to establish, it was also more resilient, especially in times of crisis. In the 1980s the Soviets developed a massive logistical redundancy in Afghanistan, creating three layers of supply systems to face any crisis situation. In normal conditions supplies would flow from Kabul and a few other supply

centres, but if that supply line was interrupted, each Corps had two local depots to rely on. One would have six months of supplies, and the other 10 years of stocks; the latter was to be activated only with presidential authorisation.[148] Nothing like that existed in 2013 for the ANA. Of four main ANA supply depots extant in 2009, three were in Kabul and one in Kandahar.[149] One American observer commented that:

Although Soviet doctrine represents "alien thought," it presents less of a challenge to conservative Afghan values. In spite of the challenges, MoD's stated goal still leans to NATO standards in the implementation of Western logistics. The MoD acknowledges that adoption of a U.S. / NATO-based system places significant challenges on the Afghan senior leaders to adjust from their long history of supply point operations and the requirement for additional effort at the policy levels to implement. U.S. doctrine represents an immense challenge since it demands that the Afghan logistician wrestle with strong currents of high power distance and the tendency to establish a group consensus.[150]

One logistics mentor explained that the Afghan army had always used the traditional "push" logistics, a "top-down, centrally controlled system based on relatively fixed rations being distributed through a time-based, predictable resupply system." In 2007, however, American contractors rewrote the logistic of the ANA in line with the practices of the contemporary American army that is "pull" logistics:

Based on bottom-up requests and the variable needs of the units, it requires a logistics system that communicates well and responds quickly. Pull logistics is more complicated and requires more coordination and integration but, when done correctly, is more efficient and effective, delivering the right supplies to the right place at the right time.[151]

The result has been a largely ineffective hybrid.[152] An ANA officer serving in remote Kunar told a journalist that he was getting only 10 percent of what he needed from the Afghan MoD.[153] Valeski estimated it at less than 20 percent overall, and believed that in the end the ANA would return to a predominantly push system once left to its own devices,

because it could not afford a predominantly pull system.[154] ANA logisticians and commanding officers have coped with the uncertainties of a logistical system they have not fully understood by hoarding supplies as much as possible, despite resistance from ISAF mentors.[155] In addition, the centralised character of logistics has also slowed the flow of supplies, as superior officers have tended to be reluctant to release material.[156]

Competition from the private sector has compounded the problem; logistical units have felt this most keenly.

The current compensation incentives for ANA personnel with logistical and information technology skills and experience necessary to support logistical functions and operations was [sic] not competitive with comparable private sector opportunities. For example, an ANA sergeant with over three years of experience earned $215 monthly, while a master sergeant with over 24 years of experience was paid $415 per month. However, if an ANA soldier at the end of his first two or three year ANA contract is a skilled logistician or mechanic, he can reportedly earn $600-$700 per month in a civilian occupation. At Depot 0, U.S. trainers had 50 ANA soldiers complete training as computer operators. When their ANA contracts were completed, 47 of them left for higher paying civilian jobs.[157]

As of 2006, ANA units could not rely on their own logistics even for short-term missions, including those of 24 hours.[158] By 2010-11 things had not improved much: requests for supplies seldom succeeded, the rule was that mentors would request them through their own supply system. Some Afghan voices stressed the need to create a logistical system more to Afghanistan's measure and not so dependent on quick air deliveries.[159] Moreover, the early training/mentoring effort in logistics was ineffective, not least because it lacked an overall plan.[160] After a slow start in 2010, the Combat Service Support School was still unknown to many commanding officers, while others who knew were reluctant to send their officers there.[161]

Some interviewees alleged that the failure to provide adequate logistical support is partly due to embezzlement and corruption.[162] Not all interviewees agreed that corruption is a problem in the ANA, particularly at the field level (some admitted problems at the higher logistical and procurement level); considering that 80-90 percent of logistics was still being delivered by ISAF at the time of the interviews, it might be that field officers were not even aware of the problem.[163]

The Prospects

One mentor supporting ANA logistics offered the somewhat paradoxical hope that the system might revert to old practices after the Western withdrawal.[164] Even that, however, would take time and require some adjustments, at a time which is likely to be very critical for the ANA.

Strategic decisions being discussed in 2012-13 could have a further impact on the viability of ANA logistics. Minister Wardak reportedly took the original decision to deploy the ANA into remote areas, apparently because he wanted to argue for a larger army against those who argued in favour of a larger police force.[165] By 2012, the debate had shifted to deploying the ANA away from the more remote districts, toward a more sustainable line of defence around cities and highways ("key terrains"). ISAF supported this redeployment.[166]

An ISAF source pointed out that the onus was on the ANA to plan their deployment according to the resources they effectively control – there is always going to be a limit to the number of outposts that can be supported.[167] The remote corners of the country pose the greatest challenge, one that the ANA would not be able to resolve on its own.[168] Supplying these outposts requires greater air transport capabilities than the ANA is scheduled to have.[169] The inclination of the Afghan MoD, however, has been to hold on to the whole defensive perimeter as established at the peak of ISAF's reach in the country.[170]

To the consternation of ISAF, in 2012, Minister Mohammadi considered pushing into mountainous Nuristan province, where until 2013 there was no permanent ANA presence but a

few, isolated police garrisons; he did deploy small detachments there in 2013.[171] Chief of Staff Karimi accepted ISAF's advice, acknowledging that he could not "cover every inch of the country. The Afghan army isn't big enough". He implied that the ANA may have to abandon some outlying areas to the insurgents, although he was later reported to have lobbied in favour of keeping the army in some remote districts of Kandahar.[172] The 2013 experience of deploying ANA units to Berg Matal and Kamdesh in Nuristan may have sobered the MoD leadership to the difficulties involved in supporting such deployments with their own logistics.[173]

In 2013, ISAF and NTM-A began focusing in earnest on logistics, and attempted to get senior ANA generals interested. While 19 of 28 logistics nodes were scheduled to transition to Afghan control in2013,[174] as the time approached, there was near consensus that ANA remained too heavily dependent on ISAF for logistics.[175] As of summer 2013, NTM-A and ISAF were still writing most contracts and transferring resources for the Afghan MoD; thus, even in the most optimistic scenario, ANA logistics would not be ready bef ore 2015.[176] As a source at the top of NTM-A put it as late as spring 2013, "logistics are the Achilles heel".[177] One source described personnel administration and logistics as "simply not being there" in terms of the structures required to make things work. "It is a constant battle to identify who is responsible for paying for food to feed their troops."[178] Apart from the limited availability of means of transport, the real problem with ANA logistics has been the inefficient, unresponsive administration in Kabul.[179]

In ISAF, the assumption has been that the ANA might not need much in terms of logistics to face the existing threat: it was meant to fight an insurgency which itself had limited supplies, particularly away from the Pakistani border. As long as the ANA could out supply the insurgents, it was bound to maintain superiority on the battlefield. The insurgents rarely have ammunition supplies for more than 24 hours of fighting, which is rarely enough to win a decisive engagement against a resilient adversary.[180] This might be true in the absence of a coordinated, persistent offensive by the armed opposition, but

there is no guarantee that the opposition would not become more aggressive and deploy new capabilities once ISAF is out of the country.

In June 2013, ISAF adopted a new approach to developing ANA logistics, forming a team of advisers tasked to help the ANA leadership develop its own processes for improving logistics. This prompted new attention to the reciprocal interaction and integration of the various processes involved, whereas they had previously been the object of training as separate component.[181] This effort had an impact, as the Afghan authorities are now fully aware that ISAF's drawdown and eventual disengagement is no bluff.

As a result there has been an effort to clear bottlenecks and reduce the number of signatures required for authorizing supplies.[182] On the whole; however, as of 2013 ANA logistics was still moving its first steps, the more so given the rugged geography of Afghanistan and the vulnerability of supply lines. Weak logistics was clearly one of the ANA's key vulnerabilities.

6. The extent of political interference and its disruptive effects

Meritocracy (or lack thereof) Promotions

Complaints about the failure of the MoD to promote the most qualified and deserving are frequent.[183] Officers who served in the 1980s often complain about not being promoted after they re-joined the ANA in the post-2001 era; many of them serve with ranks inferior to what they held in the 1980s, despite being better qualified than most of those who overtook them in terms of promotions.[184] The lack of clear rules concerning appointments and promotions has facilitated the spread of nepotism. In 2008 the Afghan parliament tried to address the issue by drafting a new law on regulations for army personnel (Inherent Law of Officers and NCOs, the Law on ANA Personnel, Sergeants and Officers), featuring among other provisions:

- Recruitment and hiring criteria and procedures
- Discipline and reward mechanisms

- The assignment of rank
- Rules governing transfers The draft law fixed criteria for giving ranks, in particular granting the rank of lieutenant only to those with bachelor's degrees or with a high school education and officer training course. The law has not yet been approved, and arbitrary appointments continue to be made, however, often under pressure from members of the parliament. One general gave the example of a 26-year-old from a wealthy family, linked to one of the top Afghan political figures, who received the rank of colonel after spending just two weeks in the Military Academy.[185]

Even when individuals with a professional background have been appointed, they have not necessarily been the most qualified; cases of very fast promotions have often been reported.[186] While criticism from within the ANA could be dismissed as complaints by people passed over for promotion, foreign advisers and trainers have expressed similar views.[187] There has been progress on this front, but it has been slow. US- and NATO-led training missions have finally started providing courses specifically targeting officers. As of spring 2013, the OCS (Officer Candidate School) completed its final course before starting the ANAOA (ANA Officer Academy), with an increased capacity (up to 600) and course length.[188] In 2013 Minister Mohammadi formed an Evaluation Commission to assess over 500 ANA commanders, from battalion commanders upwards. It identified 30 poor performers, but only 10 of these were re-assigned.[189]

Overall, these signals of intent to establish a more meritocratic system remain weak. This is all the more apparent with the approaching presidential elections and political horse-trading around them, in the midst of which President Karzai yielded to political pressure and signed a number of new promotions to the rank of general in the MoD. Of the 46 generals then appointed, only 10 were professional military, while several had not even completed high school. Twenty-six of the promotions were reportedly linked to Jamiat-i Islami and to the MoD, while 16 were linked to Hizb-i Islami and only four

had no know factional alignment. Among the newly promoted generals, Feda Panjshiri was appointed to head logistics, replacing a predecessor educated in a military academy, Zia Alizai.[190]

Nepotism

Former Minister of Defence Wardak himself reportedly complained that he received daily requests to appoint or promote individuals on the basis of their connections to powerful people.[191] In 2013, the head of personnel, Gen. Rahimi, was also reported to be under heavy pressure from various sources to twist meritocratic criteria when making appointments.[192] Another general indicated that Chief of Staff Karimi too was also under pressure from powerful individuals to appoint their protégés.[193] Nepotistic pressure and the inclination of the MoD leadership itself to bring in friends have impelled such appointments. One MoD general even alleged that the practice of selling positions, while not as common in the MoD as in the MoI, was not unheard of in the MoD.[194]

> I myself saw lots of people in the ministry who do not deserve that position and that rank but due to having connections with high-ranking officials of the ministry, they get promoted. I can tell you that around 40 percent of the officers in the ministry are appointed because of their connections and friends.[195]

Patronage, nepotism and the fact that not all positions in the MoD and ANA are desirable (particularly the more dangerous postings) have led to considerable rank inflation over the years, albeit not to the same extent as in 2002-4 when the MoD was populated by armies of generals and colonels. As of 2012, there were reportedly 1,400 excess colonels in the MoD/ANA who did not have a position in the tashkil (personnel charts).[196] There are reportedly also excess generals in good numbers.[197] By October 2013 a high level source in the MoD alleged that such "shadow" officers already numbered over 2,000.[198]

In 2012, former NDS chief Amrullah Saleh estimated that over 90 percent of ANSF leaders have been appointed for political and nepotistic reasons: The upper and middle echelons of

Afghan forces are filled by people who have not risen to their promotions in a democratic system. They are not "secu-crats": Most of them have been placed in their posts through political consultations and personal connections. This directly affects the loyalty and inspiration of the officers at different levels. […] Interference in the management of the security forces be it in the upper or lower levels, slows their growth rate, increases their expenses, and strikes a major blow to their morale. The nepotistic appointment of officers in upper and middle echelons of the security force will at best protect narrow interests instead of national ones.[199]

Mentors confirm nepotistic practices, with officers coming to Corps HQ carrying letters of appointment by MoD heavyweights.[200]

Impact on the capabilities of the ANA

Nepotism is not exclusive to the ANA. In the words of one British adviser:

The only difference between us and the Afghans is that they have unenlightened nepotism, whereas ours is enlightened nepotism– desperation to follow the boss's intent for our own career ends, rather than what we know to be right.[201] Although nepotism and favouritism might to some extent be universal behaviours, it is also true that nepotism takes different forms. In practical terms, the issue is whether the extent to which nepotism is practiced within the institution leads to dysfunctional forms of behaviour. Nepotism and corruption in appointments mean (in the words of an Afghan MoD general) that many officers are not able to fulfil the most complicated tasks.[202] Another effect is waste, as redundant officers receive salaries and small retinues of ANA personnel for no good purpose: Most of them don't have the capability to fight, they are very weak and only happy to have a good job, have three or four vehicles and bodyguards, but never think of Afghanistan and of the fighting. I know lots of people in the leadership of the ministry who have got cars from the ministry for their wives, sons and daughters, while there are generals who walk from the their job to home and back to work. I told

you that the reason that we don't have a good army is the lack of justice in the ministry and corruption.[203]

The low educational level of the average recruit has compounded the problem: weak of acers cannot count on rank-and- to be alert and capable enough to deal with even the basics.[204] Corruption is a by-product of nepotism; one of the most notorious cases has been one that concerned Kabul military hospital, whose surgeon general Ahmad Zia Yaftali was alleged in 2010 to have sold US$42 million of medicines on the black market, and to have allowed widespread neglect of injured soldiers. Yaftali was protected by the Minister of Defence until ISAF stepped in and removed him from his job in December 2010.[205] Nepotism and corruption affect the morale of the ANA, as political protégés are believed to be favoured in their task assignments, skirting dangerous duty. For example, training instructor positions (a comfort post) are often distributed to inexperienced staff according to patronage criteria, rather than to experienced injured soldiers no longer able to serve at the front.[206]

Ethnic friction

In recent years, there has been a greater tendency among of socials to acknowledge the problem of ethnically-based patronage in the ANA, as when Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Mullen remarked that the Tajik-Pashtun rivalry had the potential to tear this country apart.[207] Similarly the head of NTM-A Caldwell recognised that the overrepresentation of Tajiks in the ANA was a problem.[208] Early on, the ANA had introduced ethnic quotas in recruitment and appointment.[209] Arguments over the strong overrepresentation of Tajiks in the MoD in 2002 lead CSTC-A to determine that the ethnic shares of the main population groups should be reelcted in the ANA at all levels.[210] A dedicated appointment board was created, presided over by the Minister and Chief of Staff; other members of the board reportedly had little power and the two leading figures distributed all appointments.[211] The ethnic quota system applied to all levels, from the top to the bottom. Even private soldiers of the tactical units of the army were to be assigned on the basis of ethnic quotas. Assignments were chosen from shortlists of three names, each of different

ethnicity: the principle was supposed to be that both merit and ethnicity mattered.[212]

The quotas were meant to defuse political concerns over the issue of ethnic dominance within the ANA, but it also legitimised patronage-based appointments. The policy of ethnic balancing in the MoD/ANA could only be implemented to some detriment of a full meritocracy (which in truth might not have been implemented even without this example of "afirmative action"). The leadership of each unit was to be mixed as well: "if the unit commander is a Tajik then his deputy will be a Pashtun, or if he is a Hazara then his deputy will be an Uzbek".[213]

The quotas did improve the distribution of posts at the top levels of the MoD/ANA structure. At the senior level, managing the ethnic make-up was easier. In 2005, the nine top positions in the four army corps then active were thus divided: 3 Pashtuns (33 percent), 3 Tajiks (33 percent), 2 Uzbeks (22 percent) and one Hazara (11 percent).[214] At the MoD level, in 2011 the 26 top positions were occupied by 11 Pashtuns (42 percent), 9 Tajiks (35 percent), 4 Hazaras (15 percent), 1 Nuristani and 1 Uzbek (4 percent each).[215]

However, concerns about ethnic balance within the ANA have not disappeared. In 2011 one of the MoD deputies openly expressed his concerns about ethnic balancing.[216] Opinions about the extent and sources of ethnic friction within the ANA varied considerably among interviewees. Some argued that ethnic friction was pervasive[217] and others that it was rare and declining.[218] Middle rank army officers interviewed for this study were mostly dismissive of the existence of any serious ethnic issue within the army.[219]

On the other hand, there is quite a bit of anecdotal evidence to the contrary. One source within the MoD asserted that personal clashes over ethnic or religious issues were often reported to the MoD.[220] A few interviewees even argued that the ANA works better when Pashtuns and other ethnicities are separated.[221] Some officers admitted that they have to force their troops to mix ethnically; otherwise they would tend to form ethnic clusters.[222] An example of a platoon splitting along

ethnic lines was mentioned by Bishop in 2007.[223] One ANA captain stated his belief that ethnic conflict within the ANA was being contained by ISAF, implying that it could break loose after ISAF's disbandment.[224] Mentors witnessed the tendency of officers of different ethnic backgrounds to spar with each other.[225]

Different ministers and chiefs of staff have regularly been accused of favouring their own ethnic groups.[226] Language issues have often compounded ethnic friction. Pashtuns have sometimes been reprimanded for using Pashto (particularly in written communication) by Dari-speaking superior officers; among the bottom ranks, soldiers who could not speak Dari were humiliated, among them some Uzbeks.[227] The inability or refusal of Dari-speaking ANA soldiers to speak Pashto when meeting Pashtun communities also led to complaints.[228]

In reality, as one ANA general pointed out, over-representation at the top levels of the MoD/ANA usually concerned small sub-tribal or sub-ethnic communities: rather than Tajiks, therefore, Panjshiris, Parwanis and Nejrabis; rather than Pashtuns, Wardakis.[229] Among Pashtuns recruitment has been very uneven, with the east (Nangarhar, Laghman, but not Kunar) contributing most recruits and the south, Ghazni and Farah, almost nothing. Modest numbers of Pashtun recruits have come from Baghlan, Kunduz, and Herat, while Loya Paktia contributed significant numbers in 2002-5, but few after that.[230] Thus, the best represented groups have not been those recruited in the largest numbers. In general it has been the better organised groups that have been able to exploit the opportunities offered by the quota system; with most Pashtuns tribes being politically fragmented, they have reaped fewer benefits.[231]

Throughout the ANA's recent history, there has been a tendency to ethnicise problems. The common practice of commanding officers demanding cash payments from soldiers before granting leave is sometimes attributed to ethnic prejudice.[232] When recruits faced unexpectedly tough training courses, they would sometimes accuse the trainers of ethnic bias and of trying to weed out particular ethnicities.[233] When Pashtun senior officers argue for restraint in the pursuit of

Taliban into Pashtun communities, they are often accused of ethnic bias; southern Pashtuns have been accused of protecting specific Taliban targets. Ethnic tensions also flared over the 2011 Dand-e Ghori incident, during which an ANA operation caused significant collateral damage to Pashtun communities. Afterwards, the Hazara Corps Commander was replaced by the more cautious Pashtun, Gen. Wesa.[234]

Political factionalism

A common refrain among ANA officers, particularly Pashtuns, has been that it is political factionalism, not ethnicity that drives ethnic favouritism in the MoD.[235] Those named are usually Tajik, Hazara and Uzbek politicians and strongmen.[236] However, some Pashtuns also mention political favouritism among Pashtuns: If this problem was not present in national army, why are people who were with me at graduation employed in the Ministry of Defence, while the people like me who do not have relationship with any Jamiat and Mahaz[a largely Pashtun organisation, to which Minister Wardak used to belong] are sent to the provinces and districts? We saw once that our commander was receiving calls from the parliament and other places and he was told whom to employ…[237]

Some interviewees have alleged that officers with a jihadi background have monitored the activities of colleagues with a professional background.[238] Rivalry among factions has apparently disrupted decision-making at MoD's highest level. The tension peaked when Rahim Wardak was minister and Bismillah Mohammadi (Khan) was chief of staff; the two frequently argued over policies and personnel and rarely agreed.[239] In 2010, the International Crisis Group (ICG) estimated that 50 percent of the MoD's 118 top positions were held by officers loyal to Mohammadi.[240] Some MoD insiders believe that the rivalry between Wardak and Mohammadi ran much deeper than the old Khalq-Parchami rivalry in the 1970-80s, because there was no ideological element to hold the two together.[241]

Mohammadi was transferred to the MoI in 2010 but came back to the MoD in 2012 as the Minister of Defence. Throughout this time, Karimi remained in his job of Chief of

Staff. Although Karimi has reportedly had a difficult relationship in the past with Jamiatis in the MoD, he and Bismillah seemed to work together reasonably well from 2012 onwards—at least when compared to the shouting matches that took place between Mohammadi and Wardak.[242]

Political factionalism within the ANA has meant that the ANA has been in no position to confront militias and illegal armed groups when the need has arisen. This was the case in Kunduz in April 2012, when the ANA pulled back from a confrontation with a militia linked to Jamiat.[243]

The solidity of the chain of command

As no system of command and control is perfect, the ANA should not be judged according to abstract standards, but in line with what could be expected in terms of appropriate comparisons in time and space. As an ISAF officer involved in training the ANA commented: We bang on at the ANA about unity of command etc., but our own C2 [Command and Control] is hideously complicated and competitive.[244]

The real issue therefore is whether the ANA will be able to perform effectively in an increasingly challenging environment, and behave with discipline and with united command and control, while at the same remaining loyal to political authorities. The system established after 2001 is more centralised than at any time in the past. Corps commander no longer have the right to replace a simple NCO after 2001; in the past they even had the power to replace colonels. The battalion HQ does not have the built-in capacity to plan and carry out independent operations, but only to take orders from above.[245] In the absence of a commanding officer, deputies typically avoid taking initiatives or making decisions.[246]

Centralization has had some positive effects, when implemented properly. The Azra operation of summer 2013, carried out under MoD leadership with little ISAF support, and featuring the first combat deployment of the AAF, was generally hailed a coordination success by various security agencies.[247] This represented progress on 2011, when the command structure of the ANA was barely functional above battalion level. Foreign advisers, rather than Afghan officers,

remained responsible for most planning, although the exact role of advisers varied depending on the assertiveness of the corps commander.[248] However, progress made after 2011 has come late, leaving little time to institutionalise professionalism within the ANA before the crucial 2015 test.

Loyalty

In early 2011, President Karzai for the first time openly discussed his worries about political interference in the MoD, referring not to his own attempts to interfere in appointments, but to the existence of a strong network within the MoD, linked to a political party of questionable loyalty to the president (Jamiat-i Islami).[249] In June 2012, he reiterated his demand that, as specified in article 153 of the Afghan constitution, ANA officers should not have any party or factional affiliation.[250] The signs of political affiliation were sometimes quite obvious, as when pictures of late commander Ahmad Shah Massud (one of the leaders of Jamiat) were displayed in the barracks and even on vehicles.[251]

A landmark speech by President Karzai in 2013 signalled the extent to which he was concerned about the unity and loyalty of the ANA.[252] Western officials took note because President Karzai, upset about an airstrike in Kunar which had killed 14 civilians, announced that he would ban the Afghan security forces from requesting ISAF close air support. Karzai also aimed criticism at Pakistani intelligence services, whom he accused of deeply penetrating Afghan security forces, the ANA in particular.[253]

The wave of green-on-blue attacks of 2012 had already shaken Western faith in the ANA.[254] One interviewee pointed out that the proliferation of militias in northern Afghanistan was itself an admission of distrust in the capacity of the ANA.[255] The NTM-A and ISAF officially dismissed such concerns as unfounded, but a US Marine Corps advisor predicted that the core state was likely to "rot" through corruption, and that the ANSF would erode around it, to be manifest initially by early retirements for "ill health", after which the Corps would fracture and junior ranks break, taking their weapons and equipment with them.[256]

Disruptions to the chain of command

The role foreign mentors have played in influencing the distribution of supplies has also disrupted the chain of command, "as many commanders became more loyal to US than to their superiors".[257] There have been cases of ISAF or Enduring Freedom units bypassing the MoD chain of command and getting ANA units to deploy on operations which had not been authorised through the Afghan chain of command.[258] Afghan politicians and government officials have also interfered in the process; when an Afghan army corps commander in Kandahar tried to move some units from Zabul to Kandahar and Helmand, the Kandahar governor lobbied against him.[259]

Centralization maximises the negative impact of nepotism. When senior officers want to replace incompetent subordinates, suggestions for replacements are sent to the MoD for decision, often without follow-up. Political appointments have also disrupted the chain of command; in the words of one general, "political appointments make it difficult to make subordinates take us seriously".[260] At a time when the ability of the ANA to face battlefield crises was still very much in doubt in 2013, the Warduj incident, in which an ANA battalion was ambushed and almost disintegrated, saw Minister Mohammadi trying to handle the crisis directly from his mobile phone, bypassing the entire chain of command. The obvious question is what will happen when the ANA confronts a large scale insurgent offensive and has to cope with several crises at the same time.[261]

Indiscipline

The problem of indiscipline and insubordination was greatest in the early years of the ANA, when soldiers would often refuse to deploy to remote or risky areas. According to some of the interviewees, the problem abated in 2012-13 as the Taliban had been pushed back, particularly in the south, and deployment there was no longer seen as very dangerous.[262] In some areas however, the problem persisted.[263] As one eyewitness noted during a 2012 battle in Nuristan: The Afghan commander did not appear to have the support and loyalty of

his own brigade. At times, his second in command openly criticized him, shouting at him for not sending enough fighters up to a plateau that was the scene of some of the heaviest fighting.[264]

Insubordination did occur in earlier years, and battalions who refused to deploy were reported by ISAF and other authorities.[265] One ANA officer indicated that insubordination was common in the south until 2010, when pressure from the Taliban was greatest.[266] MoD orders to take over and man every outpost and base evacuated by ISAF have been particularly controversial among field officers, who often judge these positions untenable. Some officers complained; others failed to deploy as ordered.[267] Overall as of May 2013, of 675 bases abandoned by ISAF, two thirds had been handed over to the ANA and one third had been closed.[268]

Drug addiction among recruits has also complicated enforcing discipline within ANA.[269] Measures have been taken to weed out some, chiefly heroin addicts.[270] A 2013 survey suggested that heroin usage had been reduced but not completely eliminated, with 3.4 percent of those tested within ANA found positive for the drug. The same test found that 16.3 percent of the tested soldiers used hashish or marijuana, and 5.3 percent drank alcohol (which is strictly banned in Afghanistan).[271] Even senior officers reportedly use drugs.[272] Particularly in remote outposts, drug usage remains common.[273]

Delayed pay has also led to indiscipline;[274] one ISAF source acknowledged that as late as 2013, soldiers had complained about late salary payments, but ANA sources stated that was not the only issue.[275] In one case, “100 ANA soldiers” in Nuristan reportedly sold their weapons because they had not received their salaries.[276] This is not the only instance in which soldiers have sold weapons; the sale of ammunition on the black market has been quite common. For this reason, ANA’s original Kalashnikovs were replaced with M-16s as the ammunition of the latter was not in high demand in the black market.[277]

7. Conclusion

It is clear that the ANA has made important strides from the days of its launch in 2002. It is also clear that the effort to establish the ANA has been very inefficient—despite 11 years of considerable financial expenditure, as of 2013 it was still far from certain that the ANA would be ready to fight its enemies on its own in 2015. Arguably, there was little serious effort to fully develop the ANA before the establishment of NTM-A in 2009, and even NTM-A has had its own challenges coming to "maturity": ensuring billets were called and with appropriate personnel, as well as maintaining continuity between locations, contributing nations and rotations over time. The main law of the ANA development programme was the presumption that the new army would be able to count on the presence of American combat forces in the country for the long-term, and that it would never have to face a strong opposition. Thus the development of tactical units was privileged over the setting up of a command structure, of logistics, administration, as well as of are support. Despite the fact that by 2006 a serious insurgency had emerged, it took US President Obama's July 2011 decision to gradually disengage from Afghanistan to kick-start a process that within a year would lead to major training and mentoring efforts in the logistics and administrative fields. Since these are among the fields most difficult to develop, such a late start turned out to be the largest liability the ANA confronts in 2015.

A number of other factors have undermined the medium- and long-term sustainability of the ANA. The ANA continues to be unattractive option for Afghans educated even at high school level, a fact that compounds the diffculties the ANA faces in improving its logistics and administration. The desertion rate continues to be very high for a volunteer army, even when conditions of service are not bad, except in the most remote outposts, at least for recruits from the poorest villages of the country. This lack of enthusiasm for serving in the ANA might be linked to the weak legitimacy of the Afghan state, but this is not a topic that can be fully developed here.

Another indicator of this weak legitimacy is the persistent tendency of politicians, officials and other influential figures

to interfere in ANA appointments, despite the negative impact this has on ANA's performance in the middle of a major war. Afghanistan's political elite appears more concerned with the expansion of its patronage network than with the state's ability to win the war. Although old ethnic and political divisions persist within the ANA, the main factor disrupting the consolidation of ANA's chain of command and professionalization is interference from the political elite. Yet another factor subverting ANA's sustainability is the fact that the model on which it has been based does not properly at its needs at this stage of the army's development. Although efforts have been made to bring the ANA model closer to what Afghanistan can afford in terms of human resources, the accumulated delay could leave the ANA decidedly weak in 2015.

The limited (non-financial) sustainability of the ANA derives therefore from two sets of problems, one linked to the flawed approach adopted by donors, and the other linked to laws in the post-2001 political set-up in Afghanistan. The weak post-2001 political settlement in Kabul undermined the ability of political elite to converge in supporting an organisation ultimately responsible for defending the country from its enemies. The failure of the ANA to recruit sufficient numbers of educated people might also be linked to the de facto exclusion of the middle classes from the political settlement. Various political actors remain rivals for control of the state apparatus and particularly of the security institutions, and thus do not trust their own allies in the coalition government to use their influence for the common good. In this sense, the laws of the donors' approach are less damaging for the future of the ANA and of Afghanistan than the consequence of the as yet unachieved consolidation of the political settlement in Kabul. Even if the ANA were to receive all the equipment it needs, the political elite might fail to make good use of those resources in the current situation.

On the basis of this report, two possible post-2014 scenarios for the ANA emerge. In the first scenario, the armed opposition might fail to launch a coordinated challenge to the Afghan security forces, due to internal divisions, lack of

coordination and logistical laws. In such a scenario, the ANA might well be able to hold the line and successfully defend "key terrain", which includes cities, densely populated rural areas and highways, particularly if the MoD adopts a realistic deployment plan, not trying to hold exposed ground in the mountains or too close to the border.

The second scenario features an armed opposition sufficiently cohesive to mount a coordinated offensive throughout Afghanistan. The ANA does not appear to have the capacity to repel such an offensive and might have to surrender key terrain, with the risk that some highways could be cut, isolating important parts of Afghanistan. That could easily create a political crisis in Kabul, as well as a morale crisis within the army, with potential snowballing effects. While risk and uncertainty can never be eliminated in war, arguably the massive investment in the ANA/AAF post-2001 should have led to Afghan security forces less dependent on the (hoped for) internal difficulties of their enemies for their own success and survival.

Policy recommendations

Some of the challenges the ANA is going to face in the near future are the result of longterm neglect and cannot be addressed quickly. For example, although the ANA and the Afghan political leadership have some reason to complain about the under-equipping of the ANA, by 2013 it was clear that there was little that could be done about that in the short term. Assuming that any country was willing to provide additional equipment, as Afghanistan cannot afford to buy any, it would still take a long time before such equipment would enter service because of the training required. Instead, the ANA would do better to make the best use of what it has and manage it as efficiently as it can in 2015, in order to gain sufficient credibility to persuade external donors to keep investing in it. All that can be done is identify measures that can limit vulnerability, for example recycling into the system as many Soviet-time specialists as possible, which in part has already been done.

Other challenges, however, are the result of political interference and patronage network building, which could potentially be addressed quickly if there was the political will to do so. As of 2013, the Afghan political elite seemed still more concerned with its own petty struggles in Kabul, than with the ability of the ANA to meet threats on the battlefield. The ANA needs competent officers in key positions, and will not in the future be able to rely on Minister Bismillah Mohammadi's micro-management efforts.

The ANA could also limit its vulnerabilities by adopting a realistic deployment plan which avoids exposing the greatest weaknesses of the ANA, such as logistics. The ANA would be taking a great risk if it holds on to the deployment adopted under the joint ISAF/ANA force in 2009-13.

At the same time, the ANA should not neglect the importance of medium and long-term planning. To speed up the development of components such as logistics and administration, the ANA should devise incentives to attract more high school graduates. The high number of applications to the Military Academy suggests that high school graduates are not averse to serving in the ANA in principle, but need to see what advantages would derive from it. It should also be clear that a serious political crisis at the top (for example following the 2014 presidential elections) would weaken state legitimacy further and seriously damage morale in the ANA.

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interviews in the UK and in Afghanistan with ISAF and NTM-A staff, and has also contributed to analyzing the information and to writing some passages of the paper. Antonio Giustozzi Febuary 2014.

Courtesy: The Afghan National Army: Sustainability Challenges beyond Financial Aspects. Dr. Antonio Giustozzi with Peter Quentin (RUSI), February 2014. Editing: Patricia Gossman, Layout: Ahmad Sear Alamyar. 2014. Dr Antonio Giustozzi is senior research fellow at King's College London (KCL). He has authored a variety of articles, papers and books, including 2013's Policing Afghanistan and 2011 are the art of coercion. Dr Giustozzi is currently researching issues of security in Afghanistan, including the insurgency, the military and the police. Peter Quentin Research Fellow for Land Warfare at the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) in London. His research interests include the armed forces and society, reserves reform, Security Force Assistance and overseas capacity building, Influence and Information Activities, and Insider Attacks.

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Chapter 4

Afghanistan: Background and U.S. Policy in Brief

Clayton Thomas

Afghanistan has been a significant U.S. foreign policy concern since 2001, when the United States, in response to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, led a military campaign against Al Qaeda and the Taliban government that harbored and supported it. In the intervening 17 years, the United States has suffered around 2,400 military fatalities in Afghanistan (including twelve in 2019 to date) and Congress has appropriated approximately $133 billion for reconstruction there. In that time, an elected Afghan government has replaced the Taliban, and most measures of human development have improved, although future prospects of those measures remain mixed. The fundamental objective of U.S. efforts in Afghanistan is "preventing any further attacks on the United States by terrorists enjoying safe haven or support in Afghanistan."

In mid-2019, U.S. military engagement in Afghanistan appears closer to ending than perhaps ever before as U.S. officials negotiate directly with Taliban interlocutors on the issues of counterterrorism and the presence of U.S. troops. U.S. negotiators report progress, but Afghan government representatives have not been directly involved. Lead U.S. envoy Zalmay Khalilzad insists that the United States seeks a comprehensive peace agreement but some worry that the United States will prioritize a military withdrawal over a complex political settlement that preserves some of the social, political, and humanitarian gains made since 2001. It remains unclear what kind of political arrangement could satisfy both Kabul and the Taliban to the extent that the latter fully abandons armed struggle.

President Trump has expressed his intention to withdraw U.S. forces from Afghanistan, though U.S. officials maintain that

no policy decision has been made to reduce U.S. force levels. Many observers assess that a full-scale U.S. withdrawal would lead to the collapse of the Afghan government and perhaps even the reestablishment of Taliban control. By many measures, the Taliban are in a stronger military position now than at any point since 2001, though at least some once-public metrics related to the conduct of the war have been classified or are no longer produced (including district-level territorial and population control assessments, as of the April 30, 2019, quarterly report from the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction). Underlying the negotiations is the unsettled state of Afghan politics, which is a major complicating factor: the all-important presidential election, originally slated for April 2019, has been postponed twice and is now scheduled for September 2019.

For additional information on Afghanistan and U.S. policy there, see CRS Report R45818, Afghanistan: Background and U.S. Policy, by Clayton Thomas. For background information and analysis on the history of congressional engagement with Afghanistan and U.S. policy there, as well as a summary of recent Afghanistan-related legislative proposals, see CRS Report R45329, Afghanistan: Legislation in the 115th Congress, by Clayton Thomas.

Overview

The U.S. and Afghan governments, along with partner countries, remain engaged in combat with a robust Taliban-led insurgency. While U.S. military officials maintain that Afghan forces are "resilient" against the Taliban,[1] by some measures insurgents are in control of or contesting more territory today than at any point since 2001.[2] The conflict also involves an array of other armed groups, including active affiliates of both Al Qaeda (AQ) and the Islamic State (IS, also known as ISIS, ISIL, or by the Arabic acronym Da'esh). Since early 2015, the NATO-led mission in Afghanistan, known as "Resolute Support Mission" (RSM), has focused on training, advising, and assisting Afghan government forces; combat operations by U.S. counterterrorism forces, along with some partner forces, also continue.

These two "complementary missions" make up Operation Freedom's Sentinel (OFS).[3] simultaneously; the United States is engaged in a diplomatic effort to end the war, most notably through direct talks with Taliban representatives (a reversal of previous U.S. policy). A draft framework, in which the Taliban would prohibit terrorist groups from operating on Afghan soil in return for the eventual withdrawal of U.S. forces, was reached between U.S. and Taliban negotiators in January 2019, though lead U.S. negotiator Zalmay Khalilzad insists that "nothing is agreed until everything is agreed."[4] Negotiations do not, as of August 2019, directly involve representatives of the Afghan government, leading some Afghans to worry that the United States will prioritize a military withdrawal over a complex political settlement that preserves some of the social, political, and humanitarian gains made since 2001.

Underlying the negotiations is the unsettled state of Afghan politics, which is a major complicating factor: Afghanistan held inconclusive parliamentary elections in October 2018 and the all-important presidential election, originally scheduled for April 2019, has now been postponed until September 2019. The Afghan government has made some progress in reducing corruption and implementing its budgetary commitments, but faces domestic criticism for its failure to guarantee security and prevent insurgent gains. The United States has spent approximately $133 billion in various forms of aid to Afghanistan over the past decade and a half, from building up and sustaining the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF) to economic development. This assistance has increased Afghan government capacity, but prospects for stability in Afghanistan appear distant. Some U.S. policymakers still hope that the country's largely underdeveloped natural resources and/or geographic position at the crossroads of future global trade routes might improve the economic life of the country, and, by extension, its social and political dynamics as well. Nevertheless, Afghanistan's economic and political outlook remains uncertain, if not negative, in light of ongoing hostilities.

U.S.-Taliban Negotiations

In August 2017, President Trump announced what he termed a new South Asia strategy in a nationally-televised address. Many Afghan and U.S. observers interpreted the speech and the policies it promised (expanded targeting authorities for U.S. forces, greater pressure on Pakistan, a modest increase in the number of U.S. and international troops) as a sign of renewed U.S. commitment.[5] However, after less than a year of continued military stalemate, the Trump Administration in July 2018 reportedly ordered the start of direct talks with the Taliban that did not include the Afghan government. This represented a dramatic reversal of U.S. policy, which had previously been to support an "Afghan-led, Afghan-owned" peace process.[6]

In September 2018, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo appointed former U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan Zalmay Khalilzad to the newly-created post of Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation; Khalilzad has since met several times with Taliban representatives in Doha, Qatar (where the group maintains a political office). He has also had consultations with the Afghan, Pakistani, and other regional governments. After a six-day series of negotiations in Doha in late January 2019, Khalilzad stated that, "The Taliban have committed, to our satisfaction, to do what is necessary that would prevent Afghanistan from ever becoming a platform for international terrorist groups or individuals," in return for which U.S. forces would eventually fully withdraw from the country.[7] After a longer series of talks that ended on March 12, 2019, Khalilzad announced that an agreement "in draft" had been reached on counterterrorism assurances and U.S. troop withdrawal. He noted that after the agreement is finalized, "the Taliban and other Afghans, including the government, will begin intra-Afghan negotiations on a political settlement and comprehensive ceasefire."[8] During a trip to Kabul in June 2019, Secretary of State Pompeo stated, "I hope we have a peace deal before first September.

That's certainly our mission set."[9] Kabul is not directly involved in the ongoing U.S.-Taliban negotiations: the Taliban have long refused to negotiate with representatives of the Afghan government, which they characterize as a corrupt and

illegitimate puppet of foreign powers.[10] That refusal, along with continued Taliban attacks, have led some to call for the U.S. to suspend talks until the Taliban make concessions on one or both issues.[11] Afghan President Ashraf Ghani has promised that his government will not accept any settlement that limits Afghans' rights. In a January 2019 televised address, he further warned that any agreement to withdraw U.S. forces that did not include Kabul's participation could lead to "catastrophe," pointing to the 1990s-era civil strife following the fall of the Soviet-backed government that led to the rise of the Taliban.[12]

A meeting between several dozen Afghans and 17 Taliban representatives took place in July 2019; the Afghan delegation included some government officials, who participated in a personal capacity. The two-day "Intra-Afghan Conference for Peace" concluded with a joint statement that stressed the importance of an intra-Afghan settlement, and was hailed by Khalilzad as a "big success."[13] It remains unclear what kind of political arrangement could satisfy both Kabul and the Taliban to the extent that the latter fully abandons armed struggle in pursuit of its goals. The Taliban have given some more conciliatory signs, with one spokesman saying in January 2019 that the group is "not seeking a monopoly on power."[14] Still, many Afghans, especially women, who remember Taliban rule and oppose the group's tactics and beliefs, remain wary.[15]

Afghan Political Situation

The unsettled state of Afghan politics is a major complicating factor for current negotiations. The leadership partnership (referred to as the national unity government) between President Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Abdullah Abdullah, which was brokered by the United States in the wake of the disputed 2014 election, has encountered challenges but remains intact. However, a trend in Afghan society and governance that worries some observers is increasing political fragmentation along ethnic lines.[16] Such fractures have long existed in Afghanistan but were relatively muted during Hamid Karzai's presidency.[17]

These divisions are sometimes seen as a driving force behind some of the political upheavals that have challenged Ghani's government.[18] Afghanistan held parliamentary elections in October 2018 that were marred by logistical, administrative, and security problems; the new parliament was inaugurated in April 2019 but the lower house quickly fell into a months-long dispute, including physical confrontation between parliamentarians, over the election of a speaker.[19] The all-important presidential election, originally scheduled for April 2019, has now been postponed twice, until September 2019. It is unclear to what extent, if any, those delays are related to ongoing U.S.-Taliban talks.[20] U.S. officials have denied that the establishment of an interim government is part of their negotiations with the Taliban, but some observers speculate that such an arrangement (which Ghani has rejected) might be necessary to accommodate the reentry of Taliban figures into public life and facilitate the establishment of a new political system, which a putative settlement might require.[21]

Military and Security Situation

Since early 2015, the NATO-led mission in Afghanistan of 17,000 troops, known as "Resolute Support Mission" (RSM), has focused on training, advising, and assisting Afghan government forces. Combat operations by U.S. forces also continue and have increased in number since 2017. These two "complementary missions" comprise Operation Freedom's Sentinel (OFS).[22] There are around 14,000 U.S. troops in Afghanistan, of which approximately 8,500 are part of RSM. The remaining 8,700 troops of RSM come from 38 partner countries. Since at least early 2017, U.S. military officials have publicly stated that the conflict is "largely stalemated."[23] Arguably complicating that assessment, the extent of territory controlled or contested by the Taliban has steadily grown in recent years by most measures. In its January 30, 2019, report, the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) reported that the share of districts under government control or influence fell to 53.8%, as of October 2018.

This figure, which marks a slight decline from previous reports, is the lowest recorded by SIGAR since tracking began in November 2015; 12% of districts are under insurgent

control or influence, with the remaining 34% contested.[24] According to SIGAR's April 30, 2019, quarterly report, the U.S. military is "no longer producing its district-level stability assessments of Afghan government and insurgent control and influence." This information, which was in every previous SIGAR quarterly report going back to January 2016, estimated the extent of Taliban control and influence in terms of both territory and population, and was accompanied by charts portraying those trends over time along with a colorcoded map of control/influence by district. SIGAR reports that it was told by the U.S. military that the assessment is no longer being produced because it "was of limited decision-making value to the [U.S.] Commander."[25]

While the Taliban retain the ability to conduct high-profile urban attacks, they also demonstrate considerable tactical capabilities.[26] Reports indicate that ANDSF fatalities have averaged 30-40 a day in recent months, and President Ghani stated in January 2019 that over 45,000 security personnel had paid "the ultimate sacrifice" since he took office in September 2014.[27] Insider attacks on U.S. and coalition forces by Afghan nationals are a sporadic, but persistent, problem—several U.S. servicemen died in such attacks in 2018, as did 85 Afghan soldiers.[28] In October 2018, General Miller was present at an attack inside the Kandahar governor's compound by a Taliban infiltrator who killed a number of provincial officials, including the powerful police chief Abdul Raziq; Miller was unhurt but another U.S. general was wounded.[29]

Beyond the Taliban, a significant share of U.S. operations is aimed at the local Islamic State affiliate, known as Islamic State-Khorasan Province (ISKP, also known as ISIS-K). ISKP and Taliban forces have sometimes fought over control of territory or because of political or other differences.[30] U.S. officials are reportedly tracking attempts by IS fighters fleeing Iraq and Syria to enter Afghanistan, which may represent a more permissive operating environment.[31] ISKP also has claimed responsibility for a number of large-scale attacks, many targeting Afghanistan's Shia minority. Some raise the prospect of Taliban hardliners defecting to ISKP in the event that Taliban leaders agree to a political settlement or to

continued U.S. counterterrorism presence.[32] The UN reports that Al Qaeda, while degraded in Afghanistan and facing competition from ISKP, "remains a longer-term threat."[33]

ANDSF Development and Deployment

The effectiveness of the ANDSF is a key to the security of Afghanistan. As of June 2019, SIGAR reports that Congress has appropriated at least $82.7 billion for Afghan security since 2002.[34] Since 2014, the United States generally has provided around 75% of the estimated $5-6 billion a year to fund the ANDSF, with the balance coming from U.S. partners ($1 billion annually) and the Afghan government ($500 million). Concerns about the ANDSF raised by SIGAR, the Department of Defense, and others include

a. absenteeism, the fact that about 35% of the force does not reenlist each year, and the potential for rapid recruitment to dilute the force's quality;

b. widespread illiteracy within the force;[35]

c. credible allegations of child sexual abuse and other potential human rights abuses;[36] and

d. casualty rates often described as unsustainable.

Total ANDSF strength was reported at 272,000 in May 2019, a decrease of about 11% since the previous quarter; the U.S. military stated that the reason for the decrease "is not known."[37] Other metrics related to ANDSF performance, including casualty and attrition rates, were classified by U.S. Forces-Afghanistan (USFOR-A) starting with the October 2017 SIGAR quarterly report, citing a request from the Afghan government. Although SIGAR had previously published those metrics as part of its quarterly reports, they remain withheld.[38] In both legislation and public statements, some Members have expressed concern over the decline in the types and amount of information made public by the executive branch.

U.S. Troop Levels and Authorities

At a February 2017 Senate Armed Services Committee hearing, then-mission commander of Resolute Support

Mission General Nicholson indicated that the United States had a "shortfall of a few thousand" troops that, if filled, could help break the "stalemate."[39] In June 2017, President Trump delegated to then-Secretary Mattis the authority to set force levels, reportedly limited to around 3,500 additional troops, in June 2017; Secretary Mattis signed orders to deploy them in September 2017.[40] Those additional forces put the total number of U.S. troops in the country at around 14,000.[41]

Some reports in late 2018 and early 2019 indicate that President Trump may be contemplating ordering the withdrawal of some U.S. forces from Afghanistan.[42] Still, U.S. officials maintain that no policy decision has been made to reduce U.S. force levels. In February 2019, the Senate passed S. 1, which includes language (Section 408) warning against a "precipitous withdrawal" of U.S. forces from Afghanistan and Syria.[43] In July 2019, Secretary Pompeo said in an interview that his "directive" from President Trump was to bring about the reduction of U.S. forces before the 2020 U.S. presidential election, before later stating that "there is no deadline" for the U.S. military mission.[44]

NATO Contribution

"The current train, advice, and assist mission in Afghanistan, Resolute Support Mission (RSM), is led by NATO, and NATO partners have been heavily engaged in Afghanistan since 2001. At its height in 2012, the number of NATO and non-NATO partner forces reached 130,000, around 100,000 of whom were American. As of June 2019, RSM is made up of around 17,100 troops from 39 countries, of which 8,475 are American. This represents an increase of nearly 4,000 troops from NATO and other partner countries since January 2017. At the NATO summit in July 2018, NATO leaders extended their financial commitment to Afghan forces to 2024 (previously 2020)".[45]

Additionally, U.S. forces now have broader authority to operate independently of Afghan forces and "attack the enemy across the breadth and depth of the battle space," expanding the list of targets to include those related to "revenue streams, support infrastructure, training bases, infiltration lanes."[46] This

was demonstrated in a series of operations, beginning in the fall of 2017, against Taliban drug labs. These operations, often highlighted by U.S. officials, sought to degrade what is widely viewed as one of the Taliban's most important sources of revenue, namely the cultivation, production, and trafficking of narcotics.[47] Some have questioned the impact of that campaign, which came to an end in late 2018.[48] In November 2018, the United Nations reported that the total area used for poppy cultivation in 2018 was 263,000 hectares, the second highest level recorded since monitoring began in 1994.[49]

Regional Dynamics: Pakistan and Other Neighbours

Regional dynamics, and the involvement of outside powers, are central to the conflict in Afghanistan. The neighboring state widely considered most important in this regard is Pakistan, which has played an active, and by many accounts negative, role in Afghan affairs for decades. Pakistan's security services maintain ties to Afghan insurgent groups, most notably the Haqqani Network, a U.S.-designated Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) that has become an official, semiautonomous component of the Taliban.[50] Afghan leaders, along with U.S. military commanders, attribute much of the insurgency's power and longevity either directly or indirectly to Pakistani support; President Trump has accused Pakistan of "housing the very terrorists that we are fighting."[51] U.S. officials have long identified militant safe havens in Pakistan as a threat to security in Afghanistan, though some Pakistani officials dispute that charge and note the Taliban's increased territorial control within Afghanistan itself.[52] Pakistan may view a weak and destabilized Afghanistan as preferable to a strong, unified Afghan state (particularly one led by an ethnic Pashtun-dominated government in Kabul; Pakistan has a large and restive Pashtun minority).[53] However, instability in Afghanistan could rebound to Pakistan's detriment; Pakistan has struggled with indigenous Islamist militants of its own.

Afghanistan-Pakistan relations are further complicated by the presence of over a million Afghan refugees in Pakistan; as well a long-running and ethnically-tinged dispute over their shared 1,600 mile border.[54] Pakistan's security establishment, fearful of strategic encirclement by India, apparently continues

to view the Afghan Taliban as a relatively friendly and reliably anti-India element in Afghanistan. India's diplomatic and commercial presence in Afghanistan—and U.S. rhetorical support for it—exacerbates Pakistani fears of encirclement. Indian interest in Afghanistan stems largely from India's broader regional rivalry with Pakistan, which impedes Indian efforts to establish stronger and more direct commercial and political relations with Central Asia. In his August 2017 speech, President Trump announced what he characterized as a new approach to Pakistan, saying, "We can no longer be silent about Pakistan's safe havens for terrorist organizations, the Taliban, and other groups that pose a threat to the region and beyond."[55]

He also, however, praised Pakistan as a "valued partner," citing the close U.S.-Pakistani military relationship. In January 2018, the Trump Administration announced plans to suspend security assistance to Pakistan, a decision that has affected billions of dollars in aid.[56] Since late 2018, the Trump Administration has been seeking Islamabad's assistance in facilitating U.S. talks with the Taliban. One important action taken by Pakistan was the October 2018 release of Taliban co-founder Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, who was captured in Karachi in a joint U.S. Pakistani operation in 2010. Khalilzad, who has since met with Baradar several times in Doha, said in February 2019 that Baradar's release "was my request," and later thanked Pakistan for facilitating the travel of Taliban figures to talks in Doha.[57] The Administration has since given differing accounts of Pakistan's stance. In April 2019, the State Department reported to Congress that, "While Pakistan has taken some limited, reversible actions in support of the [U.S.] South Asia strategy…we have not seen it take the sustained, irreversible actions that would warrant lifting the [security aid] suspension."[58] A biannual Department of Defense report on Afghanistan released in July 2019 asserted that "Pakistan is actively supporting Afghan reconciliation."[59]

Afghanistan largely maintains cordial ties with its other neighbors, including the post-Soviet states of Central Asia, though some warn that rising instability in Afghanistan may complicate those relations.[60] In the past two years, multiple

U.S. commanders have warned of increased levels of assistance, and perhaps even material support, for the Taliban from Russia and Iran, both of which cite IS presence in Afghanistan to justify their activities.[61] Both nations were opposed to the Taliban government of the late 1990s, but reportedly see the Taliban as a useful point of leverage vis-a-vis the United States. Afghanistan may also represent a growing priority for China in the context of broader Chinese aspirations in Asia and globally.[62] President Trump mentioned neither Iran nor Russia in his August 2017 speech, and it is unclear how, if at all, the U.S. approach to them might have changed as part of the new strategy. Afghanistan may also represent a growing priority for China in the context of broader Chinese aspirations in Asia and globally.[63] In his speech, President Trump did encourage India to play a greater role in Afghan economic development; this, along with other Administration messaging, has compounded Pakistani concerns over Indian activity in Afghanistan.[64] India has been the largest regional contributor to Afghan reconstruction, but New Delhi has not shown an inclination to pursue a deeper defense relationship with Kabul.

Economy and U.S. Aid Economic development is pivotal to Afghanistan's long-term stability, though indicators of future growth are mixed. Decades of war have stunted the development of most domestic industries, including mining.[65] The economy has also been hurt by a steep decrease in the amount of aid provided by international donors. Afghanistan's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has grown an average of 7% per year since 2003, but growth slowed to 2% in 2013 due to aid cutbacks and political uncertainty about the post-2014 security situation. Since 2015, Afghanistan has experienced a "slight recovery" with growth of between 2% and 3% in 2016 and 2017, though the increase in the poverty rate (55% living below the national poverty line in 2017 compared to 38% in 2012-2013) complicates that picture.[66] Social conditions in Afghanistan remain equally mixed. On issues ranging from human trafficking[67] to religious freedom to women's rights, Afghanistan has, by all accounts, made significant progress since 2001, but future prospects in these areas remain uncertain.

Congress has appropriated more than $132 billion in aid for Afghanistan since FY2002, with about 63% for security and 28% for development (and the remainder for civilian operations and humanitarian aid).[68] The Administration's FY2020 budget requests $4.8 billion for the ANDSF, $400 million in Economic Support Funds, and smaller amounts to help the Afghan government with tasks like combating narcotics trafficking.[69] This is down slightly from both the FY2019 request as well as the FY2018 enacted level of about $5.5 billion in total funding for Afghanistan (down from nearly $17 billion in FY2010). These figures do not include the cost of U.S. combat operations (including related regional support activities), which was estimated at a total of $756 billion since FY2001 as of March 2019, according to the DOD's Cost of War report, with approximately $45 billion requested for each of FY2018 and FY2019.[70] In its FY2020 budget request, the Pentagon identified $18.6 billion in direct war costs in Afghanistan, as well as $35.3 billion in "enduring theatre requirements and related missions," though it is unclear how much of this latter figure is for Afghanistan versus other theatres.

Outlook

Insurgent and terrorist groups have demonstrated considerable capabilities in 2019, throwing into sharp relief the daunting security challenges that the Afghan government and its U.S. and international partners face. At the same time, hopes for a negotiated settlement have risen, driven by direct U.S.-Taliban talks, though the prospects for such negotiations to deliver a settlement are uncertain. U.S. policy has sought to force the Taliban to negotiate with the Afghan government by compelling the group to conclude that continued military struggle is futile in light of combined U.S., NATO, and ANDSF capabilities. It is still unclear, however, how the Taliban perceives its fortunes; given the group's recent battlefield gains, one observer has said that "the group has little reason to commit to a peace process: it is on a winning streak."[71]

Observers differ on whether the Taliban pose an existential threat to the Afghan government, given the current military

balance. That dynamic could change if the United States alters the level or nature of its troop deployments in Afghanistan or funding for the ANDSF. President Ghani has said, "[W]e will not be able to support our army for six months without U.S. [financial] support."[72] Notwithstanding direct U.S. support, Afghan political dynamics, particularly the willingness of political actors to directly challenge the legitimacy and authority of the central government, even by extralegal means, may pose a serious threat to Afghan stability in 2019 and beyond, regardless of Taliban military capabilities. Increased political instability, fueled by questions about the central government's authority and competence and rising ethnic tensions, may pose as serious a threat to Afghanistan's future as the Taliban does.[73]

A potential collapse of the Afghan military and/or the government that commands it could have significant implications for the United States, particularly given the nature of negotiated security arrangements. Regardless of how likely the Taliban would be to gain full control over all, or even most, of the country, the breakdown of social order and the fracturing of the country into fiefdoms controlled by paramilitary commanders and their respective militias may be plausible, even probable. Afghanistan experienced a similar situation nearly thirty years ago. Though Soviet troops withdrew from Afghanistan by February 1989, Soviet aid continued, sustaining the communist government in Kabul for nearly three years. However, the dissolution of the Soviet Union in December 1991 ended that aid, and a coalition of mujahedin forces overturned the government in April 1992.

Almost immediately, mujahedin commanders turned against each other, leading to a complex civil war during which the Taliban was founded, grew, and took control of most of the country, eventually offering sanctuary to Al Qaeda. While the Taliban and Al Qaeda are still "closely allied" according to the UN,[74] Taliban forces have clashed repeatedly with the Afghan Islamic State affiliate. Under a more unstable future scenario, alliances and relationships among extremist groups could evolve or security conditions could change, offering new opportunities to transnational terrorist groups whether directly

or by default. In light of these uncertainties, Members of Congress and other U.S. policymakers may reassess notions of what success in Afghanistan looks like, examining how potential outcomes might harm or benefit U.S. interests, and the relative levels of U.S. engagement and investment required to attain them.[75]

The present condition, which is essentially a stalemate that has existed for several years, could persist; some argue that the United States "has the capacity to sustain its commitment to Afghanistan for some time to come" at current levels.[76] In May 2019, former National Security Advisor H.R. McMaster compared the U.S. effort in Afghanistan to an "insurance policy" against the negative consequences of the government's collapse.[77] Others counter that "the threat in Afghanistan doesn't warrant a continued U.S. military presence and the associated costs—which are not inconsequential."[78] The Trump Administration has described U.S. policy in Afghanistan as "grounded in the fundamental objective of preventing any further attacks on the United States by terrorists enjoying safe haven or support in Afghanistan."[79]

For years, some analysts have challenged that line of reasoning, describing it as a strategic "myth" and arguing that "the safe haven fallacy is an argument for endless war based on unwarranted worst-case scenario assumptions."[80] Some of these analysts and others dismiss what they see as a disproportionate focus on the military effort, citing evidence that "the terror threat to Americans remains low" to argue that "a strategy that emphasizes military power will continue to fail."[81] Core issues for Congress in Afghanistan include Congress's role in authorizing, appropriating funds for, and overseeing U.S. military activities, aid, and regional policy implementation. Additionally, Members of Congress may examine how the United States can leverage its assets, influence, and experience in Afghanistan, as well as those of Afghanistan's neighbours and international organizations, to encourage more equal, inclusive, and effective governance. Congress also could seek to help shape the U.S. approach to talks with the Taliban, or to potential negotiations aimed at

altering the Afghan political system, through oversight, legislation, and public statements.[82]

How Afghanistan fits into broader U.S. strategy is another issue on which Members might engage, especially given the Administration's focus on strategic competition with other great powers.[83] Some recognize fatigue over "endless wars" like that in Afghanistan but argue against a potential U.S. retrenchment that could create a vacuum Russia or China might fill.[84] Others describe the U.S. military effort in Afghanistan as a "peripheral war," and suggest that "the billions being spent on overseas contingency operation funding would be better spent on force modernization and training for future contingencies."[85]

Clayton Thomas is analyst in Middle Eastern Affairs. This document was prepared by the Congressional Research Service (CRS). CRS serves as nonpartisan shared staff to congressional committees and Members of Congress. It operates solely at the behest of and under the direction of Congress. Information in a CRS Report should not be relied upon for purposes other than public understanding of information that has been provided by CRS to Members of Congress in connection with CRS's institutional role. CRS Reports, as a work of the United States Government, is not subject to copyright protection in the United States. Any CRS Report may be reproduced and distributed in its entirety without permission from CRS. However, as a CRS Report may include copyrighted images or material from a third party, you may need to obtain the permission of the copyright holder if you wish to copy or otherwise use copyrighted material.
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Chapter 5

A Tale of Two Afghan Armies

Lemar Alexander Farhad

Author's Note

The United States began retraining the Afghan National Army (ANA) in 2003; it inherited a skeleton army, if you could even call it an army. The ANA, or what had remained of it, was completely destroyed by the civil war of 1992-1994, and the subsequent years of Taliban rule 1996-2001. There was no equipment, uniforms, functioning bases, doctrine, officers and NCOs, or vestiges of any system that remained. Thus, the U.S. military built the Afghan national army from the ground up. The ANA is a thirteen-year old institution with the kind of lingering problems that should be expected for one that young. The communist Afghan Army was established with traditions and a structure that dated back to the 1800s. It also inherited a healthy society, and a government with functioning institutions. Nevertheless, there is value in comparatively analyzing the performance of the former Afghan Communist Army with today's Afghan National Army, using two decisive incidents. The Battles of Jalalabad 1989, and Kunduz 2015, though very different, still illustrate the comparative capabilities of the two Afghan armies. I intend this article to be purely technical and descriptive, not a praise of or accolade for the Afghan communists.

Introduction

The fall and the subsequent sack of Kunduz on 27 September 2015 exposed to the world a trio of poorly trained, unsoldierly, and inept Afghan National Army (ANA), Afghan National Police (ANP), and Afghan Local Police (ALP). Moreover, it highlighted an army that, despite billions of dollars of investment by Washington, is haplessly underperforming. In contrast, the Army of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (DRA) under the leadership of President Najibullah proved itself to be a fighting force worthy of its name. That army,

which enjoyed the patronage and technical support of the Soviet Union –though inferior and antiquated at the time– defeated a mujahideen battle group (what has now mostly become the Taliban) supported by Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), and other foreign entities in the Battle of Jalalabad in the waning days of the communist regime. How was the Afghan Army, under the tutelage of the Soviet Union, able to defeat a massive mujahideen battle group? Why was the DRA's communist Afghan army successful in the battle of Jalalabad (1989) and the Afghan National Army of today unsuccessful in defending Kunduz (2015)?

The purpose of this article is to start a discussion on how the ANA is performing; what their shortcomings are, and the reasons behind them. Moreover, by using history to evaluate the Afghan Army as an institution to better understand what had worked prior to the creation of the ANA, one can better analyze and make recommendations regarding how to improve the performance of the ANA.

A unifying ideology with nationalistic overtones, a strong charismatic leader, a professional officer corps, a conscription-based military service, overwhelming fire-power, and the idea of a common enemy led to the DRA government's decisive victory in Jalalabad (1989). By contrast, a majority of today's ANA units consist of soldiers who have enrolled for economic reasons. It is plagued with an officer corps that is mostly comprised of illiterate former militia members, and suffers from ethnic imbalance. Based on this writer's extensive in-country observations, the majority of the ANA, ANP, ALP units are not fighting for a core set of common beliefs and goals; they lack in patriotism and commitment to the very notion of a unitary, democratic, and multi-ethnic Afghanistan. Excluded from this observation are the Afghan Commando's (Afghan Special Forces) who have proven their worth as a national fighting force.

The Battle of Jalalabad (March-June 1989)

> "You want to know why it's dumb to attack Jalalabad. Because it's dumb to lose ten thousand lives … And if we

do take it, what's going to happen? The Russians will bomb the s**t out of us, that's what."

-Abdul Haq, Mujahideen Commander.[1]

The battle of Jalalabad was the first attempt by the mujahideen to fight in a conventional battle, in unit formation with the goal of seizing and holding territory. The operation was formulated in Pakistan by the Pakistani ISI.[2] The Pakistani plan called for the "Peshawar Seven," which included groups loyal to commanders Gulbudin Hektmatyar, Burhanudin Rabbanni, Ahmad Shah Massoud, Mohammed Nabi Mohammedi, Younis Khalis, Abdul Rasoul Sayyaf, and Pir Gailani to capture Jalalabad (161km east of Kabul,) and use it as a staging ground to launch military operations into Kabul.[3] The Peshawar Seven assembled approximately 5,000-7,000 fighters in preparation for the siege of Jalalabad. The DRA's 11th Division had been tasked with securing Jalalabad's defenses. With 11th Division and reinforcements, it is estimated that the DRA Army had a total of 15,000 personnel.[4] The mujahideen and the Pakistani ISI suffered a humiliating defeat in the battle of Jalalabad with an estimated 3,000 dead and many more wounded.[5] The mujahideen were decisively defeated due to a lack of unified command, inexperience in large scale offensive operations, and an overreliance on the ISI.

President Najibullah

President Najibullah ascended through the ranks of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) in the 1980s. He was a trained medical doctor, recruited by the KGB to run the Afghan Intelligence Agency (KHAD).[6] Robert Kaplan cites former Afghan Prime Minister, Sultan Ali Keshtmand, as saying that Najibullah was "a strong and penetrating weapon of the Revolution."[7] Moreover, Kaplan describes Najibullah as a "talented political survivor."[8]

To date, Najibullah and the idea of what he represented—an Afghan nationalist who fought Pakistani interference in Afghan affairs—remains in certain fantasies as that of a venerable leader, a respectable strongman. Najibullah developed a cult of personality and a substantial loyal

following. Najibullah's cult of personality has long outlived his death, as explained in the Al- Jazeera article, "Executed Afghan president stages 'comeback'."

Najibullah has made a comeback of sorts as an Internet sensation and common man's fantasy. The harsh reality of his murderous reign seems to be largely forgotten. In the Battle of Jalalabad (1989), Najibullah, a dictator who during his reign was fiercely disliked and feared due to his brutality and Soviet connection, fielded a dedicated and determined fighting force that repelled a combined mujahideen battle group and their Pakistani patrons. Therefore, facets of his leadership and state policies should be examined.

In his waning days, President Najibullah proved to be more of nationalist than a communist.

Developing the Concept of a Common Enemy

Fundamental to Najibullah's success was the concept of the common enemy which was adopted by his regime and military commanders. Najibullah was an accomplished orator whose anti-Pakistan speeches rallied the various Afghan ethnic groups around him, and helped bolsters a sense of national unity. Dr. Najibullah, through state media, warned the Afghan nation about the Pakistani-backed mujahideen. He employed anti-Afghan statements made by Pakistan's leaders as fodder for his central theme. Videos of Najibullah's anti-Pakistani and anti-Islamist speeches are widely available on YouTube. The following quotes are small examples of Pakistan's central anti-Afghan state theme:

> "The water in Afghanistan must boil at the right temperature," Former President of Pakistan, President Zia-ul-Haq, 1979 "Kabul must burn." Lieutenant General Akhtar Abdul Rahman Khan, Former Director of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence, 1987. "You cannot deny us the drive into Kabul in victory to pray at the Kabul mosque." General Hamid Gul, Former Director of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence, 1989.

Najibullah used acerbic comments made by Pakistani officials in his information operations campaign, which rallied the

Afghans under the umbrella of Afghan nationalism. Najibullah's message resonated with his army, and they came to believe that the mujahideen were nothing more than Pakistani proxies bent on destroying the Afghan state. Thus, members who were not fully indoctrinated in communism, or Afghan nationalism, at a minimum were convinced by the Afghan state that the real enemy was foreign. Though the DRA was plagued with desertions, those who decided to remain in place became committed, state-trained, indoctrinated soldiers. The thought of losing to a Pakistani proxy force delivered the much necessary motivation and espirit de corps that the Afghan soldiers needed to stick to the mission when the bullets were flying.

The Afghan communist army prevailed over the Mujahideen in the battle of Jalalabad, 1989.

Enemies, Brothers, and Political Opposition

In direct contrast to Najibullah's theme regarding the mujahideen, former Afghan President Hamid Karzai referred to the Taliban as "brothers" and stated, "We call on our Taliban brothers to come home and embrace their land." The current Afghan President, Ashraf Ghani, called the Taliban his "political opponents." Unlike Najibullah, both Karzai and Ghani have not demonized the Taliban. Thus there is no "common enemy," only "brothers" and "political opposition." Despite the Taliban's violence, and murderous attacks that has resulted in the deaths of thousands of Afghan, American, and coalition lives, both of these Afghan leaders have used soft, accommodating language to describe the Taliban. As leaders of the nation, they should have known that language matters. Proper articulation of the conditions is vital to improving the morale of the citizenry and of the soldiers who face armed insurgents day after day. When the message coming from the country's top leadership is vague and confusing, soldiers in the field are prone to developing a serious case of self-doubt when faced with the prospect of fighting their kin and political opponents, all for meager pay. Conceivably, the 6,000 – 7,000 soldiers who failed to hold their ground in Kunduz experienced this type of tribulation.

DRA Army vs. ANA

When the two armies' are compared in terms of performance, one will realize that the difference can be explained in terms of the "motivational belief system" of the troops, professionalism of the officer corps and the military leadership, as well as the national political leadership. The communist Afghan army possessed a body of core beliefs which included sanctity of national borders, independence and inviolability of the national sovereignty. Of note is the little studied fact that affected the psyche of the soldiers of the old Afghan army. The official term for the military service was the Arabic word mukallafiyat, meaning obligation. Military service was a national obligation, not a choice; not done for pay. By being obligated to a two-year service, the soldiers became a part of the governance apparatus. Former Afghan army officers, whom I talked to while deployed to Afghanistan, recalled their former national service as, "a duty filled with honor and dignity." Moreover, as professor and author Stephanie Cronin contends for past nationalistic regimes, in Afghanistan and throughout the region, conscription had been a key strategy for incubation of national cohesion, identity, and loyalty. For countries where primary loyalties were still to the tribe or kin and where government was remote, the experience of service in a national institution, especially one where "modern" attitudes were paramount, was crucial in promoting new ways of comprehending the relationship between the state and the individual.[9]

Prior to 2001, Afghanistan had a long tradition of a professional officer corps. According to Cronin, "From as early as the 1920s, a majority of Afghan officers had identified themselves with a program of modernization articulated first by King Amanullah, then Muhammad Daud and finally by the DRA. Until 1992 the Afghan officer corps largely retained its loyalty to the army as a symbol of the Afghan state."[10] The traditions and professionalism of the former Afghan officer corps is largely responsible for this. However, the new ANA is largely made up of former Northern Alliance militias and new recruits with no ties to the former professional army, except for a small minority of senior officers who rejoined the ANA

over the past 13 years. Moreover, as Cronin argues, there is a marked hostility between uneducated former militia/mujahideen and the more professional, but not politically-connected, Soviet trained officers.[11] Today, it is asserted that many of the competent Afghan government officials are products of Afghan Communism and DRA institutions. Minister of Interior Nur ul-Haq Ulumi and National Security Advisor Hanif Atmar serve as examples of such officials.

To date, except for specialized Afghan commando units, the United States and the Afghan government have been fighting an uphill battle to build a professional, loyal, and patriotic Afghan army that believes in the purported democratic goals of the new Afghan state, and their own national-level leadership. When the situation turns dire, most ANA and ANP soldiers reason that the couple of hundred dollars pay is not worth their lives, and hence they walk away. The officer corps of the old Afghan army underwent a 3-year full-time training and indoctrination program at a military college and further advanced training in the USSR, Turkey, and India. As Cronin contends, the former Afghan military slowly became professionalized from 1920s-1980s through the Afghan military academy, which produced an "educated and trained officer corps."[12]

Today's ANA was created from new template without much regard to past Afghan Army traditions. Creating a professional institution takes time and patience. The Soviets invested in the Afghan officer corps from 1955 until 1992.[13] The U.S. models of immediate results and short courses has proved bereft. It took the US, and coalition twelve years to stand up the Afghan Military Academy, "The Sandhurst in the sand," which trains 270 officers per 42-week training cycle. The focus has clearly not been on institutions and human capital. Moreover, as Cronin argues, "potential officers lacked the skills and literacy levels common among their predecessors…in 2009 an estimated 50 percent of officers were still illiterate…and divided by ethnic, political, and personal rivalries."[14] Training for today's ANA is concentrated on tactics and basic

soldiering. Indoctrination in concepts of statehood and nationalism are lacking.

The current ANA motto is "God, Country, and Duty." However, in common parlance the word for country, watan, refers to one's village or area, not the greater nation state. The word "Afghanistan" is missing. I am not arguing that one word would magically turn the ANA into a formidable fighting force. However, as proven by the sack of Kunduz by the Taliban on 27 September 2015, the 6,000-7,000 strong ANSF charged to defend the city proved neither loyal to "God, Country, or Duty"; the specialized Afghan commandos who came to Kunduz's rescue accepted. It's not all doom and gloom for the ANA. The specialized Afghan Commandos have proven to be an effective fighting force.

Conclusion

In the battle of Jalalabad, the Afghan communist army proved its mettle as a national fighting force. The DRA Army was molded by a common belief and motivated by patriotic and ideological pull. On the contrary, today's ANA, though fielded with much better equipment than the DRA army, lacks a unifying ideology and common purpose. Feasibly, instead of spending more money on equipment, the Afghan government should look at attracting, training and retaining an ethnically diverse, college educated officer corps. Moreover, they should indoctrinate them in a common, nationalistic Afghan narrative that is cross-ethnic. Najibullah's regime labeled the enemy as foreign proxies and as anti-state. The Afghan administrations since 2001 have been unsuccessful in developing the concept of a common enemy of the state. Furthermore, the merits of conscription for ethnically challenged societies have been well documented, and should be considered as a means to bring college-level talent to the ANA. Perhaps the ANA should be reevaluated from a structural perspective, rather than training and equipping one. To use an old Southern proverb, "it's not the size of the dog in the fight, but the size of the fight in the dog that matters." *Lemar Alexander Farhad is an active duty Army Foreign Area Officer. Lemar is a graduate student at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey-California. Small Wars Journal facilitates the exchange of information among*

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Chapter 6

The Unintended Consequences of US Support on Militia Governance in Kunduz Province of Afghanistan

Toon Dirkx

Abstract

How do militias use the external support provided to them by powerful foreign actors? In Kunduz province, Afghanistan, a wide range of militias has received money, weapons, training and political support through several US-funded militia programmes. While labelled as 'local self-defence forces', the observable behaviour of these militias ranges from providing local governance services in the areas they control to preying upon the people they are supposed to guard. Through the analytical lens of multi-layered governance this article investigates how the external support of the United States has been adopted, manipulated, and/or diverted by local militias in Kunduz to serve their own agendas. While the militia support yielded short-term counterinsurgency gains, in the mid to long term, it has unintentionally undermined both the security needs of local populations in Kunduz and US strategic interests.

Introduction

How do militias use the external support provided to them by powerful foreign actors? The provision of money, weapons, training and political support can significantly affect the behaviour of militias, and the governance of groups fighting a civil war. Militias can operate both on behalf of, and independently from the state, and sometimes are supported by powerful foreign actors. This article focuses on instances in which militias are supported by such foreign actors, in particular the United States. While the term 'militia' is applied to a wide range of non-state armed groups, the most fundamental characteristic of militias is their fight against

rebels (Kalyvas 2006, p. 107, Jentzsch et al. 2015, pp. 755–756). Paradoxically, these groups of 'anti-rebels' are sometimes portrayed as a root cause of insecurity, while others see them as a vital part of local rule and state-building (Kalyvas 2006, p. 107). In some cases militias prey upon local populations, while other examples illustrate that militias provide governance services, or do (Jentzsch et al. 2015, Staniland 2015, Dirkx and Terpstra 2016). It is unclear however, how militia behaviour changes under the influence of external actors.

The US army has long recognised that militias can protect local communities and furthermore isolate rebels from the population they claim to represent. Conventional doctrine suggests that for counterinsurgency to be effective, US forces should work closely with local forces to build an 'indigenous security capability' that can win the precious 'hearts and minds' of the local population.[1] However, US-backed militias have sometimes undermined this doctrine and consequently US strategic interests. Afghanistan is a particularly relevant case, because of extensive US support to militias since the 2001 US-led invasion (Giustozzi 2009, Peceny and Bosin 2011). This article analyses the behaviour of US-backed militias in the northern Kunduz province where the arming and funding of militias accelerated in 2009 amid growing concerns about the rise of Taliban activity.

This support led to the establishment of several US-funded militia programmes in Kunduz, including, the 'Afghan Local Police' (ALP) and the 'Critical Infrastructure Police' (CIP). Some of these US-backed militias in Kunduz have protected local populations, others have preyed upon the people they were supposed to guard, and some have done (Human Rights Watch 2011, Münch 2013, Goodhand and Hakimi 2014). In the wake of the post-2014 drawdown of US troops, some militias even defected to the Taliban. It remains unclear however, how the external support of the United States to these militias–ranging from political support to the provision of money, weapons and training – has been appropriated, or misappropriated. This article investigates how local militias in Kunduz, in particular militia commander Nabi Gechi and local

power broker Mir Alam have adopted, manipulated, and/or diverted the external support of the United States. The unintended consequences of US support on militia governance in Kunduz included militias assaulting, harassing, taxing and extorting local populations. Contrary to US strategic interests, the militias the US supported became a prime source of insecurity that indirectly contributed to a resurgence of the Taliban in 2015.

When the goals of militias and their external supporter are incongruent, external support can be appropriated in ways that contradict intended outcomes and strategic interests of the supporter. These goals are forged in the context of an ongoing civil war in which short-term gains on the battlefield generally overshadow longer term strategic interests of external supporters. At the same time, militias may opportunistically use external resources to serve their own agendas. Especially where the central government's ability to influence and control militia behaviour is limited, the insertion and (abrupt) withdrawal of external resources by powerful foreign actors can significantly affect how militias govern.

While the insertion of external support helps to empower militias, the withdrawal of external support often results in militias taxing local populations through the use or threat of force. In some cases, militias have some degree of popular support of the people they claim to govern, while in other cases, militias prey upon local populations along and across tribal, ethnic and political fault lines. To explain this variation it is vital to understand the social and political networks in which external support 'lands'. In Kunduz, Pashtuns have been disproportionately affected by predatory behaviour of US-backed Tajik, Uzbek, and Turkmen dominated militias.

Indirectly, the US militia support led to incentives among Pashtuns that fuelled rather than countered the insurgency. This was foreseen in 2010 by the US political leadership in Kabul and numerous analysts, but a short-sighted counterinsurgency strategy persisted. While in the short term the US support for militias helped to marginalise the Taliban in Kunduz, in the mid to long term these militia policies have unintentionally undermined both the security needs of local

populations and US strategic interests. The case of Kunduz demonstrates that while the US army has the power and the resources to subject militias to projects of security governance, militias can redirect the influence of US political interventions by manipulating external support at the local level.

The different layers of security governance in Kunduz thus constitute a complex interplay between US attempts to modify the actions of militias to achieve certain goals, and Afghan militias that may not align with these goals. This argument is based upon the analysis of policy documents and speeches, diplomatic cables, extensive fieldwork in 2013, and 2016. In 2013, in cooperation with Afghan research assistants, more than 100 structured interviews were held with civilians, militiamen, local elders, shura members, civil society representatives, ALP members and ANP officers in Kunduz. In addition to this, I conducted in-depth interviews with police trainers, military staff, diplomats and NGO workers at the German-led Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Kunduz. During additional fieldwork in 2016, various analysts, NGO workers, diplomats, military staff and informants from Kunduz were also interviewed.

Multi-layered Governance and Militias

External intervention can significantly influence the behaviour of militias and the ways they govern. In recent years, a growing body of literature has emerged on the fluid nature of militias, and non-state armed groups more broadly. Militias can for example transform into rebels, criminals, or even be incorporated in the state's security apparatus (Schneckener 2006, Staniland 2015, Dirkx and Terpstra 2016, Jentzsch, this issue). Within the literature on non-state armed groups, studies on 'rebel governance', and more recently 'militia governance', analyse the interactions and relations of rebels and militias in civil wars with civilians and the state (Mampilly 2011, Arjona et al. 2015, Gutiérrez-Sanín 2015, Terpstra and Frerks forthcoming).

How powerful foreign actors influence the ways these groups govern remains understudied however. Beyond the incumbent government, rebels and militias, powerful foreign actors need

to be taken into account in the analysis of civil wars. Together, these different actors have intersecting influences on the governance of civilians. To capture the complex relations between them, analysts need to disentangle multiple layers of governance (Kasfir et al. this issue). While for some research questions a single-layered analysis may suffice, understanding how militias govern in the case of the Afghan civil war requires a broader analytical framework to examine the complex relations between a multiplicity of actors and strategic interests.

In Afghanistan, from the start of the US-led invasion, the CIA and the US army have tried to influence militia governance in order to align it with US political-military goals through the provision of money, weapons, training and other resources. Inserting as well as (abruptly) withdrawing external support constitutes an additional 'layer' of multi-layered governance together with interactions of the militias with civilians, rebels and the Afghan state (Kasfir et al. this issue). My argument is that combinations of these layers influence militia governance during civil war. Sometimes the influence of external intervenors is positive (at least from their own perspectives) in the sense that the militia conform to objectives and expectations of the funders.

In other instances their influence is negative in that militia governance pursues goals that undercut the intentions of its sponsor. As will be demonstrated, the result from these interactions can undermine the larger strategic objectives of both external intervenors and the central government. Instead of viewing Afghan militias as passive 'proxies', I approach them as actors who have historically played dynamic roles under different geopolitical configurations (the cold war, the 1990s, and the War on Terror).

In doing so, I counter the dominant narrative, spearheaded by a plethora of Western policy makers and analysts that present militias as static, a historical and apolitical entities. Paradoxically, this prevailing discourse lacks an accurate understanding of the key role that external support has had in enabling the establishment of an elite of warlords, militia commanders and other power brokers who govern through

patron–client networks and their control of opium, arms and foreign resources (Rubin 2000, Hussain 2012). The attempts of the US government to modify the actions of Afghan militias to fight the Taliban and provide security in rural areas essentially consist of discursive and material forms of support.

The discursive level encompasses moral and political support to anti-Taliban militias through the adoption of a language that sounds both state-like and locally owned, with words such as 'police', 'village defence guards' and 'community watch'.[2] In doing so, US officials use particular 'frames', which function to interpret and organise individual and collective experience, thereby guiding, inspiring and legitimating their own activities, as well as those of other socio-political actors (Benford and Snow 2000, p. 614). Above all, these frames project legitimacy on certain Afghan militias at the expense of other armed groups (e.g., the Taliban, the Haqqani network and the Islamic State). US officials have for example consistently refrained from calling the local forces the US supports 'militias'. Instead, they insist that their 'self-defense programmes' are based on 'Afghan traditions' (Felbab-Brown 2016, p. 262).

These frames provide the rationalities for specific forms of material support. This material support consists of the provision of money, weapons, ammunition and training to militias, but also of logistical support, communication technologies, shelter and food (O'Neill 2005, pp. 111–124, see also Office of the Secretary of Defense 2016, p. 40). Since 2001, the US government has spent billions of dollars on material support for militia programmes, as well as wider efforts to build up the Afghan army and police. More than half of all US reconstruction dollars have been used to build, equip, train and sustain the Afghan National Security Forces, thereby far outweighing the Afghan government's investments in the security sector (SIGAR 2017, p. 2). These material forms of support are intimately connected to, and enabled by, the frames that legitimise and justify support. The multi-layered approach to militia governance in this article serves to understand how these various forms of external support have facilitated specific types of militia behaviour when they 'hit

the ground' in Kunduz. However, this third layer of external intervention has both intended and unintended consequences.

The Militia Dilemma

A central dilemma for the international community in Afghanistan has been what to do with or about the militias (Giustozzi 2009, Perito 2009, Edwards 2010, Barfield 2010, Jones and Muñoz 2010, Suhrke 2011, Braithwaite and Wardak 2013, Mukhopadhyay 2014, Malejacq 2016). Demobilise them in order to centralise the means of coercion, or support them in the fight against the Taliban insurgency? The move to give US money, arms and training to militias in Afghanistan was controversial from the onset for various reasons (Boone 2009; Partlow and De Young 2010).

It largely contradicts the dominant view of international organisations and most Western governments that claim a state monopoly of force to be a prerequisite for security and stability (Dirkx and Terpstra 2016). This Weberian notion of the state as the only actor who can control the legitimate use of force has resonated particularly well with Western states, whose own history is generally characterised by a transition from fragmented political power towards more economically, politically and militarily consolidated and centralised states (Tilly 1990). However, since the start of the 2001 US-led intervention in Afghanistan there has been a tension between the international community's ambition to stabilise Afghanistan by helping the government to centralise the means of coercion, and powerful foreign actors that support local militias, strongmen and warlords that operate autonomously in spaces outside the reach of the Kabul government.

Foreign forces tried simultaneously to centralise and fragment the means of coercion through different logics, justifications and approaches, turning militia programming, and the US-led intervention at large, into a contradictory endeavour (Suhrke 2011, 2013, Goodhand and Hakimi 2014, p. 6). On the one hand, interventions focused on centralising the means of coercion through security sector reform (SSR), judicial reform, counter narcotics and disarmament, demobilisation and

reintegration (DDR) programmes. On the other, foreign forces continued to support and fund warlords, local power brokers, militias and private security companies, who as Goodhand and Hakimi (2014, p. 6) put it 'operated either above or below the law'. Various local policing and community defence experiments followed one after the other, including for example the Afghan National Auxiliary Police, the Afghan Public Protection Program (APPP or AP3), the Community Defense Initiative (CDI) and eventually the Critical Infrastructure Police (CIP), and the Afghan Local Police (ALP) (Friesendorf and Krempel 2011, p. 27, Goodhand and Hakimi 2014, p. 9).

From the early days of the intervention onwards, US policymakers made critical choices that 'contradicted and undermined the liberal focus' of the state-building project, which 'inadvertently weakened the capacity of the Afghan state' (Peceny and Bosin 2011, p. 607). This resulted in a complex security marketplace consisting of formal actors and informal actors that shaped, and at times trumped, the security concerns of local populations (see also Luckham and Kirk 2012, p. 47). US support to Afghan militias has furthermore affected the Afghan government's ability to influence and control militia behaviour. The case of Kunduz province is emblematic of these ominous dynamics.

The Strategic Importance of Kunduz Kunduz is a strategically important ethnically heterogeneous province in the north of Afghanistan. Since the 1850s, several waves of migration altered the ethnic makeup of the province, which induced conflicts about land, resources, as well as political representation. The province's strategic location has also been an important source of conflict. With the completion of the Salang tunnel in 1964, Kunduz came to lie at the intersection of the roads connecting Mazar-e Sharif with the northeast of the country, and Kabul through the Hindu Kush Mountains to Tajikistan. It contributed to the establishment of the province as a significant drug trafficking hub, and control of the province became a precious military asset. Especially during the civil war of the 1990s, Kunduz became a major battleground.

The ethnic diversity and strategic location of the province provided all major mujahideen factions with support bases and stakes in Kunduz.[3] The provincial capital switched hands five times, after which it was controlled by the Taliban from June 1997 until November 2001 (Wörmer 2012, Münch 2013, pp. 10–11). The movement successfully bribed some commanders of opposing Northern Alliance factions, but most defections to the Taliban followed ethnic lines. Wormer points out that the Taliban's rule over Kunduz was characterized by a'Pashtun domination of the provincial administration' (2012, p. 43). When by October 2001 the US Air Force started to bomb Taliban positions, and US Special Forces supported Northern Alliance factions on the ground, the power structure was about to change once again.

Taliban fighters in the north retreated to defend their stronghold in Kunduz, but after a bloody battle and series of negotiations, the province fell in the hands of the Northern Alliance by late November 2001. Kunduz retained a strong potential support base for the Taliban however, because of its large Pashtun population. The following section outlines how, when the Taliban came back as an insurgency, a combination of local efforts, actions of the Afghan government, and US interventions shaped the mobilisation of anti-Taliban militias in Kunduz.

The Mobilisation of Anti-Taliban Militias in Kunduz Militia formation in Kunduz initially started as a predominantly local initiative with little direct American involvement. Later, as shown below, when US Special Forces started to fund, train and equip local militias, already existing militias were able largely to co-opt the US-funded programmes (Münch 2013, p. 40, Goodhand and Hakimi 2014, pp. 36–37). The mobilisation of anti-Taliban militias started in the summer of 2009. In the lead-up to the presidential elections of August 2009, the provincial authorities were highly concerned about the rise of Taliban activity in Kunduz. When the Kabul government did not grant the request of the provincial governor Engineer Mohammad Omar for additional police and military forces and the German-led ISAF forces were unwilling to fight the Taliban, the governor started to equip local jihadi

commanders, many of whom, including himself, had fought against the Taliban in 2001 alongside US forces (Wörmer 2012, p. 40, Münch 2013, p. 36, Goodhand and Hakimi 2014, p. 33).

At the provincial level, local Northern Alliance commanders, who also opposed the Taliban, took advantage of the insecure situation, and started to activate their old networks along and across tribal, ethnic and political lines.[5] At the time, General Mohammad Daud, the Kunduz chief for the National Directorate of Security (NDS),[6] was put in charge of recruiting local commanders and militias to fight the Taliban. This was a significant development because in addition to being the local NDS chief, Daud was the brother-inlaw of Mir Alam, a powerful Tajik commander of the Jamiat party who also fought against the Taliban in 2001.[7] Daud, nearly without exception, relied on Mir Alam to recruit local commanders loyal to him (Koelbl 2010, Hewad 2012). At the national level Mir Alam was backed by the Tajik and Jamiat affiliated Vice-President Mohammad Qasim Fahim until his death in 2014 (Human Rights Watch 2011, p. 30, Human Rights Watch 2015, p. 49).

Another commander that set up a militia at the time was Nabi Gechi, an ethnic Turkmen from the Qala-e-Zal district in Kunduz who earned a reputation during the 1980s when he fought with the mujahideen against the Soviets. It was during this time that he earned his moniker ‘Gechi’ (Turkmen for ‘goat’), because of his quickness in fighting and moving around in the mountains (Nazar and Recknagel 2009, Raghavan 2015). After 2001 he reportedly laid down his weapons, opened a fish and kebab restaurant in the neighbouring Balkh province, but returned to Qala-e-Zal in 2009 when local elders and the provincial authorities asked him to come back to prevent the Taliban from overrunning the district (Münch 2013, p. 15, Sites 2013, Raghavan 2015). The local council of Qalae-Zal raised money from its citizens to equip Gechi’s militia with Kalashnikovs, rocket-propelled grenades and a portable mortar. It also paid the militiamen 6,200 afghanis ($124) per month, and 2,000 afghanis ($40) more for food (Nazar and Recknagel 2009).

Soon thereafter the militia also received additional weapons and funding from the NDS.[8] The anti-Taliban militias in Kunduz were almost exclusively comprised of Tajiks, Uzbeks and Turkmen, even though in the ethnically heterogeneous province as a whole Pashtuns are the largest ethnic group. One of the few Pashtun commanders that also set up a militia was Mir Alam's rival, Mohammad Omar, a Sayyaf loyalist and Ittihad[9] commander also known as 'Pakhsaparan', the 'Wall Breaker' (Bleuer and Ali 2014, Goodhand and Hakimi 2014, p. 33, Baczko and Dorronsoro 2016, p. 6). Other local power holders involved in setting up militias were the Uzbek Ibrahimi clan in the Imam Sahib district, and, as mentioned, Nabi Gechi in Qala-e-Zal. None of them were as influential as Mir Alam however (Hewad 2012, Münch 2013, p. 36, Goodhand and Hakimi 2014, p. 33).[10]

Through this mobilisation of anti-Taliban militias, the Taliban were ousted from most parts of Kunduz, but an even stronger blow for the Taliban came when after the assassination of Engineer Mohammad Omar in October 2010,[11] Abdul Rahman Sayedkhaili became the new provincial chief of police. With money provided by the interior minister Besmillah Khan, Sayedkhaili started to fund militias to fight the Taliban while he simultaneously bribed Taliban commanders to switch sides. The MoI sponsored efforts of the provincial chief of police were further advanced by the deployment of US Special Forces to Kunduz who were tasked with killing and capturing insurgents. By January 2011, Sayedkhaili declared Kunduz to be cleared of the Taliban (Goodhand and Hakimi 2014, p. 34). Up until then, the anti-Taliban militias had thus been funded through a complex mix of formal and informal channels of the Afghan government, including local councils, the provincial authorities, the NDS and the MoI.

Arbaki

The militias that were set up, or in some cases reactivated, are often referred to as 'arbaki' (Bruno 2008, Tariq 2008, Schmeidl and Karokhail 2009, Human Rights Watch 2011, Hakimi 2013, Goodhand and Hakimi 2014, International Crisis Group 2015,

p. 4). In theory, arbaki are a tribal community police force that protects their community from outside threats, and implements the decision of the local Jirga (village council) (Jones and Muñoz 2010, p. 27). In practice however, the behaviour of arbaki and the way they are perceived by local populations differ greatly among localities. An elder in the Ali Abad district of Kunduz explained that arbaki: 'have no clear and defined activities. They are different in each area, since arbaki are the residents of that place'.[12]

Paradoxically, in some areas, arbaki are seen as predatory militias rather than a customary police force. While initially, US officials were rather hesitant of supporting groups with such ambiguous track records, as the security situation deteriorated the idea of supporting 'local', 'indigenous' and 'tribal' security actors increasingly inspired those involved in the development of local policing programmes (Hakimi 2013, p. 393, see also Gant 2009, Jones and Muñoz 2010, Rector 2012, Moyar 2014).

The ALP programme

Probably the most well-known US-sponsored militia programme in recent years has been the 'Afghan Local Police' (ALP). The programme originated in Kabul, where the Combined Forces Special Operations Component Command – Afghanistan (CFSOCC-A), led by Brigadier General Edward Reeder, was developing plans to deploy US and Afghan Special Forces to villages where they would train and support 'village defense forces' to resist the Taliban (Moyar 2014, pp. 9–15). General Stanley McChrystal,[13] who took command of ISAF in June 2009, was eager to back the initiative, while the US political leadership in Kabul feared that setting up militias could undermine efforts to build the Afghan National Security Forces, and thwart the limited achievements of the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) programmes[14] (Goodhand and Hakimi 2014, pp. 11–12).

In August 2010 the programme was established nevertheless after President Karzai was persuaded by General David Petraeus to sign a presidential decree, authorising its establishment. Once, the US-funded ALP programme got

underway, its long-term strategy was formulated as providing 'sustained security, permanent stability, expands governance and increase development in the areas where the ALP will be established' (NATO/ISAF 2011, p. 7). A US official of NSOCC-A[15] later pointed out to me that the ALP programme seeks 'to broaden the security reach of the Afghan government in a cost-effective manner by supporting local communities to defend themselves against insurgents. (…) [It] helps to prevent insurgents from controlling a broader swath of rural areas that lack ANP [Afghan National Police].'[16] Between 2010 and 2015 the US Department of Defense (DoD) spent 469.7 million dollars to fund the ALP through the Afghan MoI.

The US DoD estimated that it would cost approximately 121 million dollars annually to sustain the programme based on the authorised strength of 30,000 ALP personnel (SIGAR 2015a). After it was first piloted in other parts of the country, ALP units were formed in Kunduz province in the first half of 2011, leading to a force of 1,125 ALP officers by June 2012 (Münch 2013, p. 40, Goodhand and Hakimi 2014, p. 35). The training for ALP officers consists only of three weeks in which the recruits are educated in the basic handling of small firearms, the delivery of first aid and communication with US Special Forces. The programme envisioned that the US trainers would embed themselves in a village, develop knowledge of the power structure and political actors, vet recruits and then supervise the ALP units in action. While this worked out in some areas, in Kunduz the supervision of US Special Forces amounted to a visit once a week even though close monitoring was crucial, especially in the complex power structure of Kunduz (Felbab-Brown 2016, pp. 266–267).

The CIP programme

A lesser-known US-funded militia programme, the 'Critical Infrastructure Police' (CIP) established in 2011, ran parallel to the ALP for some time.[17] Apart from Kunduz, it operated in other northern provinces such as Balkh, Jowzjan and Faryab, and possibly also in Sar-i-Pul (Felbab-Brown 2016, p. 269). While the word 'police' may suggest otherwise, the CIP programme essentially consisted of militias that quickly developed a reputation for predatory behaviour towards local

populations (Ibid).[18] These police numbered in the low thousands, were officially unpaid, although the commanders and militiamen did receive monthly payments of $200 and $150, respectively from an American discretionary fund called the 'Commander's Emergency Response Program' (CERP) (Rosenberg and Rubin 2011, Sites 2013, Goodhand and Hakimi 2014, p. 34, Felbab-Brown 2016, p. 269).[19]

The purpose of the CERP fund was to enable US military commanders in Afghanistan and Iraq to support a broad range of small humanitarian relief and reconstruction projects. The eligible categories included 'protective measures to enhance the durability and survivability of a critical infrastructure site (oil pipelines, electric lines, etc.)', which is probably how the CIP programme was justified (SIGAR 2015b). It was run by US Special Forces under ISAF's Regional Command-North with the aim of using local forces as a 'temporary solution' to protect strategically important locations such as bridges and roads (Stahnke 2012). It remains vague however how much money was spent on the CIP programme. In an audit of CERP spending in Afghanistan from 2004 until 2014 only 890 million dollars of the total of 2.2 billion dollars could be accounted for.

It is unclear what the other 1.3 billion dollars of CERP funding has been spent on, but the US DoD did indicate that CERP funds have also been used as a tool for counterinsurgency efforts (SIGAR 2015b, p. 18). After a short training course and an oath sworn to the Afghan constitution the CIP members were recorded biometrically, and given a yellow armband with a CIP logo (Stahnke 2012). Part of the CIP militiamen used to be members of the Taliban, which according to some gave them an advantage in identifying Taliban infiltrators in their communities while others questioned their commitment to the CIP programme precisely because of their past membership in the Taliban (Lawrence 2012). The US started to arm CIP forces in northern Afghanistan in the spring of 2011, 'probably as a counterweight to the arbaki programme of the NDS (…)', which in Kunduz, was managed by Daud and his brother-in-law Mir Alam (Münch 2013, p. 43). In Kunduz the CIP forces numbered a little over 500 spread across three districts.

The Afghan State Influence on Militia Governance

The Afghan national government was in a much weaker position than the US armed forces, but still managed to influence the ALP and CIP programmes that intended to create militia governance. President Karzai himself initially opposed the idea of setting up the ALP, 'warning that such groups could become militias in a country already plagued by warlordism' (Lawrence 2010; Partlow and De Young, 2010). Only after extensive discussions with General David Petraeus, who took command of ISAF in July 2010, did Karzai authorise the programme[20] (Belcher 2013, p. 73).

The result of the discussions was a compromise solution, allowing the US to legitimise and legalise its existing militia programmes, while the Afghan government, at least in theory, managed to extend its control over those programmes by bringing the ALP under the Afghan Ministry of Interior (Goodhand and Hakimi 2014, p. 13). However, at the same time, those efforts to establish ALP units were well underway with approval of the Afghan government, the CIP programme was implemented by ISAF without Karzai's consent. When Karzai found out about the CIP programme – at least three months after it had started – he issued a decree in December 2011 to disband it, fearing that it would impede his aim of centralising the means of patronage (Münch 2013, p. 43, Goodhand and Hakimi 2014, pp. 34–35, Felbab-Brown 2016, p. 269). The US DoD reported that by November 2012 all CIP forces throughout Afghanistan had been demobilised or incorporated in the ALP (DoD 2013, p. 101).

Militia Governance in Kunduz

Although the CIP programme was eventually disbanded by Karzai, for some time in 2011 and 2012 the two distinct US-funded militia programmes ran in Kunduz at the same time. The situation regarding militia programmes was further complicated when the earlier mentioned Afghan MoI funding stopped after the provincial police chief Sayedkhaili was killed by the Taliban in March 2011 (Münch 2013, p. 41). His successor was unable to continue payment of the arbaki militias that Sayedkhaili had been funding. As a result, these

militias that previously received MoI-funding started to extort local populations.

While the Afghan government tried to disarm some of them, the Germans at the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) incorporated a part of these militias in Kunduz in the by then still running US-funded CIP programme (Goodhand and Hakimi 2014, p. 34). Some militias thus initially received funds from the Afghan MoI through police chief Sayedkhaili, but when he was killed and the money stopped flowing from Kabul, they were 'transferred' to the American CIP programme. Altogether, inserting and abruptly withdrawing various external resources affected militia governance in Kunduz in complex ways, as the cases of militia commander Nabi Gechi and local power broker Mir Alam demonstrate.

Nabi Gechi

One of the militias that received US support through the CIP programme contained the approximately 225 militiamen of Commander Nabi Gechi in the Qala-e-Zal district of Kunduz province (Raghavan 2015). Prior to receiving US money, weapons and training, Nabi Gechi's militia was commended in a leaked US Embassy cable for being 'the most organised and disciplined of the various militia groups operating in Kunduz province.'[21] It assessed that Gechi's forces 'proved themselves in fighting insurgents', and that 'the local population expressed strong appreciation for the improvement in security Nabi's forces have brought.'[22]

> *The cable concluded that: (...) the inclusion of the community into the process, their benign behavior toward the population (not collecting taxes), and the (comparatively) clear chain of command have all helped to make the force in Qala-e-Zal a success*.[23]

US officials saw Nabi Gechi's way of governing in Qala-e-Zal as aligned with US strategic interests of fighting the Taliban and protecting the local population. His good reputation helped him to secure US support when the CIP programme was implemented in Kunduz. In October 2012, when the programme had ended, the US military stated it had the 'greatest respect and appreciation' for Gechi's 'leadership'

(quoted in Raghavan 2015). In May 2013, almost a year after the CIP programme had ended, Nabi Gechi managed to retain his influence in the district. During that time, several respondents expressed themselves content with Nabi Gechi's militia, which they regarded as a force protecting them against the Taliban.

A shop keeper, for example, expressed his happiness with the security situation, because the help came from one of his own people and not from foreigners or the government. He said: 'The security situation is very good. When I lock my shop I sleep well without any problem (…) The reason of the good security is commander Nabi (…) When he came to our village the security got better.'[24] He explained that Nabi Gechi: 'has power because he has a good relationship with the people and the community supports him.'[25] Another person claimed that Gechi is involved in resolving disputes, and that unlike many government officials 'Nabi is not a corrupted person' (quoted in Terpstra 2013, p. 34). Respondents mainly referred to the Taliban as the most important security threat in their daily lives. One community member said: 'the people in our village had a very hard life when there were Taliban (…) in our area.

Thus, our people, and our leader Nabi, decided to fight against them.'[26] A resident of Kunduz City reiterated Nabi Gechi's remarkable capabilities during an interview in 2016. He stated: 'Nabi Gechi is an exceptional commander. He is honestly fighting against the Taliban. The people are very happy. The area under his control are all Turkmen, and all his arbaki are Turkmen, so there is support of the people.'[27] Gechi himself said: '(…) this power has been given to me by my people (…). Whatever they say I will do. I will even commit suicide for my people if they ask.'[28] A militia member explained that the responsibilities of his militia are: 'to provide security in the village, and when the Taliban come to the village we secure the area until the Afghan Local Police or Afghan National Police get to the location.'[29]

Some Taliban members even switched sides to Gechi's militia; after it took control of Qala-e-Zal (Sites 2013).[30] All of Gechi's militiamen interviewed in 2013 claimed they had previously received support from US forces in the form of

money and weapons to assist them in the fight against the Taliban. In fighting the insurgency, Gechi cooperated with the Afghan National Police (ANP). An ANP officer working in the district confirmed that: '(…) some operations happened through cooperation of ANP and arbakis against Talibs in this district. The area was cleared from them.'[31] After US support ended; Gechi's militiamen were able to sustain their control of the district mainly through illegal taxation. From then on, Gechi started to take matters into his own hands by taxing local communities for food, fuel and money to support his own fight against the Taliban (Münch 2013, p. 43, Baczko and Dorronsoro 2016, p. 5).[32]

He even taxed weddings to support his militia (Felbab-Brown 2016, p. 269). Stopping the CIP programme thus made Gechi use his acquired power to let the people instead of the Americans pay for his governance. As a journalist states Gechi 'is not just the general. He is the judge, the police chief and the tax collector' (Raghavan 2015). This behaviour directly contradicted the prior US assessment that claimed Gechi was 'not collecting taxes'. People unwilling to pay the taxes allegedly were tortured by Gechi's men to force them to pay (Raghavan 2015). One respondent that lived in Kunduz City at the time mentioned that Gechi also set up 'his own prison'.[33]

However, 'the ethnic homogeneity and economic marginality of the district' spared Gechi from clashing with other commanders, as happened in other parts of the province (Baczko and Dorronsoro 2016, p. 5). Conjointly, these factors seem to have contributed to the consolidation of Gechi's militia governance of Qala-e-Zal. The consequences of external support through the CIP programme for Gechi's militia are ambiguous. For some respondents, Gechi was a hero-like figure who protected them against the Taliban, in line with the envisioned goals of US support. At the same time however, Gechi has taxed local communities in return for security and justice services, outside the formal control of the Kabul government, but with informal connections to provincial police and government officials.

Using his power to collect taxes and resolve disputes when the CIP programme ended, he simultaneously weakened the reach

of the Afghan government, and redirected the implementation of US political intervention, from the objectives that the US forces had envisioned. The external support to his militia facilitated securing territorial control of the district, which in turn made a rudimentary form of governance possible (tax collection, security provision, dispute resolution) (see Kasfir 2015, p. 28). Abusing those who refused to pay taxes was unlikely to have won their hearts and minds. Gechi's case also shows that while the US army undeniably has the power and resources to subject militias to projects of security governance, at the local level, militias can redirect the influence of powerful foreign actors, and find possibilities to manipulate external support to serve their own agendas.

Mir Alam

The implications of the US-funded ALP programme on militia governance in Kunduz are even more complex. As mentioned, from September 2011 onwards, the ALP programme ran in several districts in the province with the aim of setting up 'local self-defence forces' to protect communities against the Taliban. Mir Alam's militias had gained strength through the support of the NDS in the two years prior to the establishment of the ALP programme in Kunduz, but were not officially integrated into the ALP forces. However, most, if not all, ALP commanders were either linked to Mir Alam or rival militia commander Pakhsaparan (Hewad 2012, Goodhand and Hakimi 2014, p. 35, Human Rights Watch 2015, p. 50).[34] Mir Alam's influence was especially far-reaching through his network of Jamiat-affiliated Tajik and Uzbek commanders. One respondent explained: 'Every local police commander in Kunduz belongs to Mir Alam. They are all under his control. When Mir Alam says something they accept it. (…) He is the secret governor of the province.'[35] Thus, while Mir Alam himself was not directly supported by the ALP programme, through his position as most important local power broker he did manage to acquire influence over the ALP units and the resources the programme brought to the province.

The influence of the ALP programme on Mir Alam has been significant for various reasons, not least because of his history of assaulting, harassing and exploiting local populations. A cable of the US Embassy in Kabul from 2006 for example stated that when Mir Alam was the chief of police in the neighbouring Baghlan province (2005–2007), he acted as a mujahideen commander, rather than a professional police officer, abusing his position of authority 'to engage in a broad range of criminal activity, including extortion, bribery, and drug trafficking'.[36]

Mir Alam's control over ALP commanders and the money and weapons that were brought to Kunduz as part of the programme enabled him to continue his predatory behaviour, and strengthened his position as power broker. ALP units, on which Mir Alam exerted influence, engaged in especially predatory behaviour in zones of contested territorial control. Many respondents found it difficult to distinguish between the arbaki militias that were paid by the NDS and the US-funded ALP forces. Often the two names were used interchangeably. A civil society member in an area with a relatively strong Taliban presence in the Ali Abad district stated that 'arbaki are responsible for every violence and illegal activity. They are not useful for us.

They are bullying, harassing and they commit armed robberies (…)'[37] In another contested area of the Ali Abad district a respondent said: 'people are afraid of them (…) Arbaki will do harm, so people are looking to the government.'[38] A civil society member from this area stated: 'arbaki are rebellious people and cause more problems in this area. They are supported by powerful people and the government cannot do anything in this part.'[39] Apart from physical violence towards civilians, many respondents said ALP units were also involved in bachabazi, which literally means 'boy play'. It involves wealthy or powerful commanders keeping boys to be dressed up as girls, and ordered to dance, which may often entail sexual abuse (Human Rights Watch 2011, p. 41).

This practice was regularly mentioned by respondents, and explicitly condemned as bad behaviour of militias. Furthermore, militias loyal to Mir Alam have been implicated

in a long list of violent incidents towards local populations, including killings, cases of rape and extortion. As noted by Kunduz expert Lola Cecchinel (2014, n.p.) 'It is hard to say who the local people fear more (…): their 'defenders'–ALP and other militias–or the Taleban themselves.' For example, ALP commander Qadirak, an ethnic Aymaq loyal to Mir Alam, was infamous for his predatory behaviour towards Pashtuns across Kunduz province. In September 2012 he was involved in the 'Konam killings', where in the predominantly Pashtun village Konam-e-Kalan 12 villagers were killed by his militiamen and others loyal to Mir Alam (Human Rights Watch 2015, pp. 51–58).

Another infamous case is the former Taliban commander Ishaq Nazami who switched sides to the ALP, and was then–after the intervention of Karzai–put on trial with his militia and convicted for the rape of Lal Bibi, an ethnic Kuchi (Pashtun nomad) (Goodhand and Hakimi 2014, p. 36). Similar to the short-lived CIP programme, the US support to ALP forces initially helped to marginalise the Taliban, and expand the territorial control of militias in Kunduz, as the programme intended. Yet, instead of providing security to all civilians, the ALP units and other militias loyal to Mir Alam became a prime source of insecurity. While Nabi Gechi managed to maintain some form of popular support from his Turkmen community after the external support had ended, the ALP units loyal to Mir Alam increasingly lacked popular support because of their predatory behaviour.

Pashtun Marginalisation from Militia Governance An important feature of militia governance in Kunduz that violated ALP objectives has been the marginalisation of Pashtuns. Ethnic Pashtuns have been targeted disproportionately by predatory behaviour of the Tajik, Uzbek and Turkmen dominated militias. A Pashtun respondent told me that 'with the selection of men for the arbakis, they only called the non-Pashtuns tribes' and that 'Pashtun people have no leaders like Mir Alam and Nabi Gechi'.[40] Another Pashtun respondent said that Mir Alam's ALP commanders 'were all thieves' that were solely focused on 'personal benefit for themselves.'[41]

He furthermore explained that because most government positions were going to Tajiks, Uzbeks and Turkmen, the Pashtuns–who make up the largest part of the population – 'do not feel represented. Their voices are not heard.'[42] Protocols were in place to safeguard against ethnic imbalances in the ALP recruitment process, but in the Dashti Archi district for example, they were circumvented by US Special Forces because they were unable to find any Pashtun volunteers to join the programme. Pashtun elders were allegedly unwilling to send their sons to fight for a local government they considered to be dominated by Uzbeks (International Crisis Group 2015, p. 16).

To illustrate the abusive behaviour of ALP forces towards Pashtuns, a Pashtun respondent from Kunduz City reported his outrage at ALP forces in the Chardara district:

> *People who join the local police are not good people. The common people are fed up with them. (...) One of my relatives is a tailor in the city. He has a shop in Kunduz City, but he lives in a rural area. Two years ago in a rural part of Chardara he went out of his home and passed a local police post. The local police had a dog. When my relative crossed the road, there was an accident with their dog, [and] because of that the local police fired mortars at my relative. Another relative of mine that was there lost his leg because of this. The people will never accept the local police.*[43]

The risk of marginalising Pashtuns through militias loyal to Mir Alam was no surprise to the Americans. Already in January 2010, US officials reported in a leaked US Embassy cable that:

> *Unlike in Qala-e-Zal, where the population is overwhelmingly Turkmen, Khanabad district, like the province as a whole, comprises a plurality of Pashtuns as well as smaller numbers of Tajiks, Hazaras, and Uzbeks. As the militias loyal to Mir Alam are mostly Tajiks, there exists a real risk that conflict between the population and militias or among the militias themselves will take on an*

> *ethnic dimension, in which the militias are perceived by Pashtuns as not anti-Taliban but anti-Pashtun.*[44]

Moreover, another leaked Embassy cable from two months earlier warned that the 'ethnically divisive' militia of Mir Alam 'exemplifies a quick fix with dangerous implications: tactical gains at strategic costs'.[45] In the years following the implementation of the CIP and the ALP programmes, the strategic costs of the 'ethnically divisive' militias were becoming increasingly visible. In late 2013, German and American forces were gradually drawing down from Kunduz. Meanwhile, a resurging Taliban increasingly challenged the Afghan National Security Forces and the militias the US was supporting. During 2014 and 2015, the Taliban launched several offensives, and by late September 2015, it managed to take control of Kunduz City.

For the first time since the removal of the Taliban regime in 2001, the Taliban managed to temporarily takeover one of the major cities of Afghanistan (Cooke and Urwin 2015). The multiple reasons for the Taliban's resurgence are explained in detail elsewhere (Cooke and Urwin 2015, Fisher and Mercado 2016, Terpstra 2017). For the purpose of this article it is important to point out that the Pashtun marginalisation from militia governance is likely to have impeded broad-based support against the Taliban surge in 2015. A Kabul-based analyst explained that the bad behaviour of ALP forces has driven Pashtuns 'into the hands of the Taliban' and contributed to its resurgence.[46] A Pashtun respondent from Kunduz City said:

> *For fifteen years, all the provincial government directorates belonged to non-Pashtuns. Now, [after the fall of Kunduz City] many Pashtuns are happy with the Taliban, because they pressure the government. The Taliban pressure the government to work for the Pashtuns now.*[47]

Arguably, many Pashtuns in Kunduz are better off with the Taliban than the militias (Cooke and Urwin 2015, International Crisis Group 2015). In short, Northern Alliance factions that mainly consisted of Tajiks, Uzbeks and Turkmen had managed

to maintain their power when US-funded militia programmes came to Kunduz (Goodhand and Hakimi 2014, p. 37). The US programmes were co-opted, manipulated and redirected by commanders such as Nabi Gechi (who had received direct US support), and Mir Alam (who as a local power broker managed to exert control over ALP units that had obtained US resources). Because the mostly non-Pashtun arbaki militias and ALP forces were preying upon Pashtuns, many Pashtuns did not feel represented by the militias. This contributed to the Taliban's resurgence in 2015. Paradoxically, the militias indirectly fuelled rather than countered the insurgency, directly undermining US strategic interests.

Conclusion

From the start of the 2001 US-led intervention in Afghanistan, the US military repeatedly tried to use Afghan militias to advance US political-military interests. The US military applied a counterinsurgency doctrine that relied on local forces to gain popular support and fight the Taliban. They chose existing militias as their instrument. The Americans had their own ideas about how militias should govern. While they exercised influence on militia governance by supplying resources, it often had opposite effect from what they expected. In addition, US intervention complicated, but did not eliminate Afghan governmental influence on the militias. My argument is that both external intervention and state interests influence militia governance during civil war.

Sometimes this influence is positive in the sense that the militia conform to objectives and expectations of their funders. But in other instances the influence is negative in that militia leaders pursue goals that undercut their funders' intentions and undermine the larger strategic objectives of both external intervenors and the government. The case of Kunduz demonstrates that while the US army has the power and the resources to subject militias to its choice of projects of security governance, militias can redirect the influence of US political interventions by manipulating external support at the local level. In turn, this affects the relations and interactions between militias, rebels, civilians and the state.

The different layers of security governance in Kunduz thus constitute a complex interplay between US attempts to modify the actions of militias to achieve certain goals, and Afghan militias that may or may not go along with these goals. Within the complicated power structure of formal and informal security actors in Kunduz, I have particularly analysed how the militia of Nabi Gechi, and militia's loyal to local power broker Mir Alam, have appropriated external US support. The mobilisation of anti-Taliban militias in 2009 started as a mostly local initiative in response to the rise in Taliban activity in the province. During the recruitment process Pashtuns were largely excluded from the Tajik, Uzbek and Turkmen dominated anti-Taliban militias. When later, US-funded militia programmes came to Kunduz, the already existing militia commanders managed to maintain their power, and largely co-opted external support. As such, US-funded programmes have mainly amplified and reinforced the existing power structure in the province.

In the case of Nabi Gechi, the CIP programme has helped to marginalise the Taliban and to increase territorial control, but when external funds were withdrawn, it also indirectly facilitated illegal taxation. Based on the evidence available, the most convincing explanation why supporting Gechi's militia has worked out relatively well compared to other commanders in the province is that his militia enjoys some degree of popular support from the Turkmen community he claims to protect. Militias loyal to Mir Alam, including US-trained ALP units, often lacked this popular support and have instead assaulted local populations, especially Pashtuns.

The marginalisation of Pashtuns in turn fuelled the insurgency and eventually contributed to a resurgence of the Taliban in 2015. Following this analysis of the implementation and aftermath of the CIP and ALP programmes, I have demonstrated how the external support to militias in Kunduz has undermined US strategic interests. The intended goals of the programmes – fighting the Taliban and protecting civilians – were only partly attained, and came with the price of many unintended consequences. In essence, the cases show that when the ultimate goals of militias and their external supporter

are incongruent, external support can be appropriated in ways that directly or indirectly contradicts the intended outcomes and strategic interests of the actor providing the support.

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Chapter 7

The Afghan Territorial Force: Learning from the Lessons of the Past?

Kate Clark

A new local defense force is being mobilized in Afghanistan. The establishment of the Afghan National Army Territorial Force was announced by President Ashraf Ghani in April 2018. Careful consideration has gone into its design, with safeguards built in to try to avoid the pitfalls associated with previous locally-recruited forces, such as the Afghan Local Police. AAN Co-Director Kate Clark (with input from Erica Gaston and Ali Yawar Adili) has been speaking to some of those involved in setting up the new force. In this dispatch, she looks at what the Territorial Force is and whether it will be better than its predecessors in protecting local people and holding territory, and not being co-opted by strongmen or factional interests. She reports that haste to get 'boots on the ground' over the summer has already led to an expansion of the Territorial Force before pilots were evaluated. She also looks in detail at the Territorial Force companies now being set up Jaghori in Ghazni province.

This dispatch is published as part of a joint three-year project (funded by the Netherlands Research Organization) by AAN, the Global Public Policy institute (GPPi) and the American University of Iraq, Sulaimani exploring the role and impact of militias, local or regional defence forces and other quasi-state forces in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria.

A translation of the as yet unpublished decree authorizing the new force appears in an annex to this dispatch.

1. What is the Afghan Territorial Force (ANA TF)?

The Afghan National Army Territorial Force (ANA TF) (quwatha-ye manteqawi urdu-e milli-ye afghanistan) (also referred to in Persian as the 'territorial army' or urdu-e manteqawi) is a new local defence force currently being

mobilised under the Ministry of Defence as part of the Afghan National Army (ANA). Each company (tolai) draws soldiers from a particular district but is led by officers from outside that district who are already serving in the regular ANA or who are in the ANA reserves. The aim is for the Territorial Force to eventually be 36,000 strong.

The ANA TF was authorised by presidential decree (a copy of which is in an annex) in February 2018. The initial aim was for a pilot phase in eight to ten locations and, after evaluation, for it to roll out to a phase 1 with as many as 48 districts (discussed below) and then a phase 2. President Ghani announced the establishment of the Territorial Force on 5 March 2018, recruitment was reported to have begun on 15 April and the training of the first 370 "cadets" at the Kabul Military Training Centre reported on 11 June.

2. Why was a local defence force felt to be necessary?

Despite the many pitfalls associated with local defence forces – see the next Q&A for detail on this – international forces and the Afghan government have kept returning to them because when they work, they work extremely well, producing determined fighters with local knowledge who protect the civilians in their areas and often stand their ground more than regular troops because they have nowhere else to retreat to. (See AAN case studies in Yahyakhel, Paktika and Shajoy. As AAN detailed in "Enemy Number 1: How the Taleban deal with the ALP and uprising groups", this has made them more feared and hated by the Taleban than regular Afghan forces or even foreign troops. Equally significant is that local forces are cheaper to mobilise and support.

As to the ANA TF specifically, Ministry of Defence (MoD) sources told AAN the idea for it came out of brainstorming between President Ghani and the then commander of NATO and United States forces in Afghanistan, General John Nicholson and was an attempt to address four key issues:

1) Supporting ANA forces at current levels is not financially sustainable in the long-run or by the government of Afghanistan. (1)

2) The need to free up regular ANA for offensive, not defensive/hold operations, something which, in turn, should mean Afghan Special Forces are less stretched. (2)

3) The need to address ANA recruitment gaps and retention issues, including the hope that Pashtuns from the south and east might be more willing to serve if they could stay in their home areas.

4) The need to leverage local knowledge and expertise. As one Ministry of Defence official put it, regular ANA "keep walking into traps that a normal villager wouldn't."

Also at issue was continuing United States dissatisfaction with the Afghan Local Police (ALP), which is currently about 28,000 strong (see page 102 of the latest SIGAR report). The US is the sole funder of the ALP and, as AAN has written, has put significant pressure on it to reform and address allegations of abuse, misconduct and graft. Even so, in the face of continued US Congressional scrutiny and criticism from many sides, the US had been poised to cut funding to it by the end of 2017. Dislike of the ALP is not directly related to the ANA TF mobilisation, but a significant impetus seems to have been to channel US ALP funds into a more accountable and fit-for-purpose local force programme.

3. Why was setting up a new local defence force controversial?

When word came out, in September 2017, that a new force was being planned, it was met with concern (see reporting by AAN here and here), Human Rights Watch and various media, for example, here. This was not the first effort to mobilise local forces and, whether paid for by the international military or government, they have had a sorry history, of association with war crimes, impunity and graft, capture by factional, ethnic, tribal and/or criminal interests, and some with collusion. There have been many iterations of the local forces model since 2001, including the CIA or US military-backed 'campaign forces' (in the news recently again with allegations of summary executions, private security companies, the

Afghan Local Police (ALP) and popular uprising forces (for the full, long list, see this AAN/GPPi review). National security forces have not been immune to problems of corruption and factional capture either, as AAN has detailed in its look at the Ministry of Interior and Afghan National Police (ANP). However, local forces have been particularly prone to committing abuses with impunity and of capture by local interests and are often referred to by Afghans simply as 'militias'.

The largest of the recent local force mobilisations, the ALP, was envisioned in 2009 as a sort of 'community watch' with local forces protecting their communities and standing up to the Taleban. However, as the programme expanded, it became a way for Kabul politicians and regional strongmen to put their militias on the payroll and many ALP were found to abuse local people more than they protected them (see examples of abuse allegations in part III of the AAN/GPPi review).

The other current iteration of the local defence force model are the popular uprising forces (wulusi patsunin Pashto and khezesh-e mardomi in Persian). Emerging since 2012, but especially from 2015, these groups supposedly coalesce from spontaneous rebellions by local civilians against the Taleban. The resistance usually turns out to have been prompted by or was soon supported/co-opted by the National Directorate of Security (NDS), with, it has been assumed, the support of its main sponsor and funder, the CIA. As the UNAMA human rights unit has pointed out in their reports on the protection of civilians in the conflict, uprising groups have no legal status. Nor is it clear what, if any, chain of command they answer to. (3) Consequently, there are also no formal mechanisms for accountability.

Afghans also remember the war crimes, impunity and general state dissolution associated with the PDPA-era kandakha-ye qawmi ('tribal' or 'ethnic battalions') usually referred to in English as 'tribal militias'. These were mobilised especially by President Najibullah in the late 1980s and early 1990s. (4) He came to rely on them to defend his government and as the Afghanistan Justice Project's "Casting Shadows: War Crimes

and Crimes against Humanity: 1978-2001", has documented, this helped them enjoy effective impunity.

Yet the idea of setting up a new local defence force was not only controversial for human rights activists. The leadership of the Ministry of Defence was initially allergic to the idea of hosting a local defence force, adamant that a 'militia force' would not be planted in its ranks, given the record of the ALP and uprising groups and the tribal militias. They also bore in mind the 1990s civil war when the national army split on ethnic grounds and joined the various warring tribal militias and mujahedin factions. "Militias are like a poison for building a force with integrity," one MoD official told AAN. The tribal militias, he said, were "small snakes turned dragons with funding and weapons," while the ALP "had destroyed the name of the [Afghan National] Police."

4. How is the ANA TF different from the ALP?

At first blush, the ANA TF and ALP models seem quite similar. Both are designed to mobilise men from a local community (neither recruit women, unlike the regular ANA and ANP) and develop them into a defensive, hold force. They are supposed to be auxiliary or adjunct forces only, with limited weaponry (5) and a limited geographical remit permitting them to operate within their own communities. However, the ALP operates at village level, the ANA TF at district level; Territorial Force soldiers can be deployed anywhere within their district, making the force, it is hoped, less prone to very local capture. Restrictions are also more explicitly spelled out for the ANA TF (including that they may not independently undertake duties in enemy-controlled areas, carry out independent offensive manoeuvres, or undertake civilian policing or "dangerous operations, such as strikes, arrests and rescue operations" (for more detail, see the Annex), but were also implicitly part of the model for the ALP.

One major change is that the ANA TF falls under Afghan National Army command rather than, as the ALP does, the Afghan National Police. The ANA has generally had far better command and control than the ANP with a more advanced (and functional) disciplinary and military justice system, to

which the ANA TF would be fully subject. The Ministry of Defense also has a better accountability record with donors than the Ministry of Interior and has been much better able to escape factional and criminal interests.

Other differences in command, oversight and training are designed to reinforce MoD command and control, and institutional accountability. Each Territorial Force company will be under the command of officers from the regular ANA, ideally from the reserves, and these officers may not come from the company's district (although Non-Commissioned Officers, NCOs, can be). By contrast, ALP units follow a local commander, something which increased the tendency towards pre-existing militia units simply being're-hatted' as ALP, with their commanders and other agendas intact (see Derksen's comprehensive paper detailing this enduring pattern). ANA corps commanders select the officers and NCOs of the ANA TF. Having an experienced, professional leadership, said one international advisor "should be a counterbalance to it becoming too local a force."

Other efforts are going into institutionalising Territorial Force soldiers into the rest of the ANA (here, there have been some minor modifications between the plan and what has eventually transpired – see question 9 below). ANA TF recruits are subject to the same ten-week training as regular soldiers, including on human rights, rule of law, and humanitarian law. The initial aim was for recruits first to come to Kabul for an initial round of training and then to have another round regionally at the ANA headquarters they were to deploy under; this was to ensure good cooperation between regular and territorial soldiers. The original plan was for ANA TF soldiers to live in ANA barracks, co-located with regular soldiers, again to 'socialise' them into the ANA. ANA TF soldiers will only be allowed home when not on duty (this has not been changed), unlike the ALP who live at home.

These institutional changes could make a difference. Perhaps more importantly, every Afghan and international involved in setting up the new force has shown a greater interest in getting recruitment and ANA TF locations right from the start. The spectres of the past – Dr Najib's militias and the civil war, the

ALP and uprising forces – spurred those planning the new force into incorporating as many safeguards as possible.

Two other major differences between the ANA TF and ALP relate to funding and image. The creation of the ANA TF does not mean the overall force strength (tashkil) of the ANA will grow; every Territorial Force soldier stood up means giving up a regular ANA soldier, with the overall size of the ANA held steady. The formation of the ANA TF within the ANA, then, should not inflate costs and, in the long run, because a local force is cheaper to maintain, should reduce them.

Also significant is that, while European countries have never funded the ALP on the grounds that it is a 'militia', NATO is involved in the ANA TF, although it remains a largely US-military supported force.

5. Who gets to join the force and what are the benefits?

The general requirement is for men aged 18 to 40 who are from the district, with a preference for former members of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). Hopeful recruits have to pass a background check by NDS and, according to an MoD official, be vouched for by local elders (the presidential decree specifies elders vouching only for former members of the ANSF, not other recruits. Sources have also said recruits need to be signed off by the provincial governor or his/her deputy, although this is also not mentioned in the presidential decree.

In an attempt to avoid ANA TF companies effectively being captured by pre-existing local militias, planners told AAN that members of the ALP and uprisers were banned from joining the new force.

ANA TF wages are set at 75 per cent of a regular ANA soldier's wage. The 25 per cent reduction sets off the benefit of serving in one's home area. The hope is that the wage will be high enough to encourage enlisting, but not so high as to make the ANA TF more attractive than the regular ANA. ANA TF soldiers and officers or their families get the same benefits as those in the regular ANA if they are disabled or killed in action. Officers get the same wages as regular

officers. There is also a career structure: ANA TF can be promoted, but only if they leave their districts; officers can move back to the ANA and will be treated the same as other offices.

6. Is the ANA TF a community force or just a local recruitment arm of the ANA?

AAN's research into what works and what does not with the ALP suggests that behind the success stories lies strong community engagement and control and a determination to have all groups within a local population involved (see the Yahyakhel and Shajoy case studies and a contrary example of what can go wrong when there is not widespread community support in AAN's Andar case study). A locally-backed force not only benefits from intelligence and tip-offs, but its members tend to fight harder when defending their own people. The opposite is also true; imposing a local force on a population which does not view it as legitimate can benefit the Taleban. It will then be they who benefit from tip-offs, intelligence and recruits. Where local communities have had some authority over the establishment of an ALP unit, recruitment to and some control over it, those units appear to behave and fight better (although a local force with the backing of only some elements of the community may also fight well, as was seen in the Andar case study).

Those behind the ANA TF–both international and Afghan – have all stressed community involvement in the new force. However, most of the innovations designed to make it different from the ALP involve elevating institutional controls, without the same attention to community control and support. The presidential decree setting up the ANA TF deals almost entirely with the state's role in recruitment and command and control. The one specific role given to 'the community' is in guaranteeing former ANSF members who want to serve in the new force. On paper, this is less involvement than communities were given in the setting up of ALP units (although in practice, ALP models of full community engagement in selection and accountability rarely bore out in reality, see section II of the AAN/GPPi literature review).

AAN was told there is more detail in the guidance given to those setting up the force, but we are not privy to that.

Those involved in mobilising the ANA TF pilot forces also described the need for 'community sensitisation' and public education, before asking for volunteers, and recommendations from elders and community leaders. It appears that there are aspirations for community involvement and a desire for the ANA TF to be 'local' in a sense greater than just to be made up of men living in a particular district. However, the means of achieving this does not appear, as yet, thought-out. In April 2018, we were told the pilots would be watched carefully to see how this aspect of the force panned out. This, however, did not turn out as planned – more on which below. Also, some innovations have been made to the model – again, more on which below.

7. Why was the location of ANA TF Companies such a difficult issue?

The question of where to locate the pilot projects was critical and highly contentious. "Everyone had a view on where they should be located," one international planner told AAN. "It was very painful. There was a lot of internal politicking, disagreements." Strict criteria had been agreed in order to avoid the many problems associated with ALP mobilisation. ALP units were stood up in places where the model was never designed to work: in areas where it could never be a 'hold' force because active fighting was not over, where the community did not want it and would not support it, or where the presence of factional interests, illicit economic sources, or local strongmen was likely to result in a compromised or self-interested force. The cautions against mobilising ALP in these environments were often ignored due to expediency, pressing security demands and political pressure (for a behind-the-scenes accounts of these pressures, see our analysis of the setting up of the Andar ALP). Political pressure on the ALP remains to this day. Ministry of Interior officials have described to AAN how politicians and MPs still constantly ask for 'their own' ALP units to be set up in their home areas.

Those establishing the ANA TF told AAN they sought to avoid these issues by only choosing districts where the model could work. They had to be in what the military calls ‘green areas’ ie in territory held by the government or only ‘lightly contested’ and locations need to be near regular ANA back-up. One international officer said: “Because they are a static force.” The precursor [for the ANA TF] has to be a clearing operation, with the potential to last. These are not even yellow areas. They have to be green.” They also had to be in locations where they would not in danger of being caught up in politics and factional interests, but where there was support form the governor and corps commander, and where they were needed.

Given this background and these guidelines, discussions were fierce. A long-list of 120 locations was whittled down, but even then, the ‘final list’ went through numerous iterations: 38 different sites were decided upon only for most to be ruled out. Eventually, an actual final list of nine locations was determined. Sites were ruled out because they were too vulnerable to the Taleban or to narrow political self-interest and interference or to factional or ethnic takeover or because they were safe and did not need an ANA TF company.

One Ministry of Defence official described the selection process as “agonising.” He also recounted the political pressure put on Afghan planners from some of the highest officials in government to locate ANA TF companies in their areas. Nevertheless, the determination that ANA TF companies would not be co-opted by strongmen, MPs or factional, ethnic or tribal interests was strong. Whenever these requests were made, the MoD official said, “We kept pushing back.” Luckily, he said, they could use the US military as cover. “We told them, ‘Sure. We can create a unit, but General Nicholson won’t pay for it.’ Then they backed down.” The Tribes and Borders Minister, Agha Sherzai, also made a bid for half of the planned funding, so that he could make ‘tribal forces’ to guard the borders, or as interlocutors with AAN put it “arm ‘his’ Barakzais [ie men from his tribe].”

ANA TF recruits being trained at the Kabul Military Training Centre in Kabul, (US Air Force Sgt Sharida Jackson June 2018)

8. How has the pilot phase of the Territorial Force gone?

In the summer of 2018, there was a major change of plan: the ANA TF pilot was rolled into phase 1 – with 52 more locations added – before the pilot had finished or been evaluated. This was explained variously as either General Nicholson operating under intense pressure from Washington for quick results and evidence of progress in the war, or him wanting to capitalise on the dynamics of the Eid ceasefire. It came as a great surprise then, especially given the painstaking care which had gone into designing the ANA TF and pinpointing the most suitable locations and the insistence that the pilot would be evaluated before moving on that expansion was expedited. Haste to get boots on the ground in the hope of changing fortunes on the battlefield has been a factor behind earlier forces failing or expanding with design flaws and weaknesses intact. That haste has undermined both national and local forces in the past, including the ANA, ANP and ALP.

After General Scott Miller took over as commander of NATO and US forces on 2 September 2018, he called a halt to the expansion and a slowing down of the project so that the current ANA TF companies could be reviewed. One of the concerns emerging, AAN was told, was recruitment. A senior international officer said there were doubts as to whether the new companies "reflected community mobilisation," whether the "current recruitment model worked" and whether there was "accountability." (6)

Planners asked AAN not to disclose information as to how many companies are now operational, in training or being recruited. However, they did discuss some of the issues thrown up by the mobilisation up till now. Recruitment has been slow, one MoD planner told us, the result, partly he thought, of the lack of public education as to what the ANA TF is: "The continual militarisation has been confusing, the ALP, the uprising groups, now the Territorial Force, and the local militias of various strong men." He also said, some specific recruitment issues had emerged: the reluctance of people in the north to 'give' more sons to "the Territorial Force or anything else" because of the "many coffins [of ANSF that] have been

coming home"; in some places in Loya Paktia, a scarcity or men because they are "already divided between the Taleban, the Haqqani network, the army and working in the Gulf" and; some communities "unwilling to give volunteers because of the repercussions they know will come from the Taleban."

The MoD planner also said they had discovered a recruitment problem on the officer side: the ANA reserves, from which the MoD had hoped to draw the ANA TF's officer corps, were far smaller than the payroll had suggested: "We were supposed to have 18,000 in the reserves. We did an exercise and barely 1,800 turned up. They were dead, had left the country and so on. We didn't have reserves in the south and east to command these units. So NATO told us we had to [recruit officers] from our active force."This has been more difficult to achieve than was envisaged, sources told AAN, with officers fearing that serving with the ANA TF, an as-yet untested force, could harm their future chances of advancement in the future.

9) What changes have been made to the model to address some of these problems?

Perhaps most significantly, a unit within the Independent Directorate of Local Government (IDLG) which works with communities has been tasked with helping with community mobilisation. The IDLG and its director, Matin Beg, are also advising on locations of ANA TF companies. This came out of the awareness of the "profound need," as one advisor put it "for the force to be accountable and broadly representative of the community." In early November 2018, General Miller also stood up a cell within Resolute Support to focus on the ANA TF and ensure coordination, accountability and synchronisation (a military term to do with timings, in this case that training, equipment, support etc are available at the appropriate times). Many of the officers in the cell are veterans of the Village Stabilisation Operations (VSO) programme, which set up the precursors to the ALP and the ALP (for detail on this, see the AAN/GPPi review cited earlier), which means they are very aware of the many problems setting up a local force can run into.

International advisors told AAN there are now specific mechanisms for consulting local communities and that various people need to agree to a company being established in a particular district for it to go ahead: elders in the district need to meet in a 'security shura' to formally agree to the ANA TF company and there also has to be agreement and support by the IDLG, ANA corps commander and provincial and district governors. AAN was also told there had been a 'circling back' to reassess the Territorial Force companies authorised over the summer. Corps commanders and advisors have now re-assessed each one and were happy that the 'accountability pillars' – agreement by elders, provincial and district governors – were in place and there was ANA support. One advisor, who worked on the ALP in 2010 and recalls how the US military accelerated its expansion – "punched the gas" – and all the problems that then ensued, said they were in a "lucky position" this time and the ANA TF companies so far were "right." She added, "What we have is smart growth, not growth at all costs."

Some flexibility in terms of training and deployment have also been introduced into the model, including:

> **Training**: The two-layer approach, ie first in Kabul and then at the regional level, has not suited everyone. Southerners did not want to come to Kabul, so have been trained in the region. Easterners were happy to come, so have done so. The MoD is using a mix of approaches.
>
> **Co-location of ANA TF and regular ANA soldiers**: Most ANA TF companies will be co-located with regular ANA soldiers, AAN was told, but for those who were not, regular soldiers had to be "very near" and in locations where they could support the Territorial Force, militarily and with medevac. International advisors stressed that even trained and ready-to-deploy Territorial Force companies would not be deployed until they could be properly supported (see next question).

10. Can you give an example of how one of Territorial Force companies is doing?

AAN was given a list of the ANA TF pilot locations, but asked not to publish them because of the particular threats the force is facing from the Taleban. However, one location which has been publicly reported on, both in the media and by the government is Jaghori in Ghazni province. It is notable because planners initially rejected it for a pilot because it did not meet Territorial Force criteria. It is too far–70 to 80 kilometres – from the nearest ANA bases (in Qarabagh and Muqur districts) for there to be support, let alone co-location of ANA TF and regular ANA soldiers. Also, as one planner put it, the district is "on the edge of contested areas," with neither of the two routes into Jaghori from the provincial capital, Ghazni City, under the full control of the Taleban or government, again making support difficult. (7) Although Jaghori itself is almost completely Hazara, it is on the Hazara-Pashtun 'border' (8) and planners also did not want to risk any hint that, as one person put it, "the [Territorial] Force could be used in an ethnic-centric way."

However, a Territorial Army company for Jaghori was later agreed to, partly, it seems, through successful lobbying by Second Vice President Sarwar Danesh who said Hazaras there felt vulnerable and, as elsewhere in the country, employment opportunities were needed. Both he and Second Chief Executive Muhammad Muhaqeq had been lobbying anyway for the deployment of regular army forces to Hazarajat, including to Jaghori. (9) Agreement for two ANA TF companies for Jaghori, we were told, was given before the Taleban's assault on it and neighbouring Malestan district in early November and on Khas Uruzgan in Uruzgan province in late October (for AAN reporting on the assault, see here and here). However, that assault does appear to have accelerated the establishment of the Territorial Force, as well, significantly, as an uprising force. As well as lobbying by both political figures and the population for the government to 'do something' to defend this district, there was probably also the realisation by the government that if it failed to act, local people would mobilise forces against the Taleban anyway. These might be less easy to control and, especially with elections coming up, could be problematic. Also, government support for the defence of Jaghori (even though the

administration's initial response to the Taleban's autumn attacks was tardy) would be popular with voters. The fact that both the Territorial Force and uprising forces were given the go-ahead at the same time and mentioned by local interviewees asked only about the Territorial Force is significant: local people appear to view the ANA TF in terms of a local defence force, with better pay and conditions for recruits than the uprising forces not as an arm of the ANA.

The establishment of the two ANA TF companies in Jaghori has strayed from the model. It is being formed in the absence of any assured long-term regular ANA presence, according to MPs and local security officials. ANA soldiers were deployed to the district to push the Taleban back in November. Ghazni MP Muhammad Ali Alizada told AAN that he and other MPs had been lobbying the government to deploy one of the six Ghazni ANA battalions to the district permanently. As of now, they have not received any assurances and fear that, once the ATA is formed, the regular ANA will leave and this will encourage the Taleban to attack again. District chief of police Yunus Ramazani also told AAN he thought the regular ANA could leave once other forces were up and running. Moreover, far from territorial soldiers being 'institutionalised' into the body of the ANA, according to Ramazani, the ANA TF will be co-located with the ANP, ALP and the new uprising force in two or three joint bases (qarargah). (10) When new ANA TF and uprising forces are all mobilised, he said there should be around 1,000 combined forces in Jaghori, none of them regular ANA:

- ANP: 150-200 under Ministry of Interior
- ALP: about 200 under Ministry of Interior
- NDS paramilitaries: about 60 to 70
- Uprising forces 300 under NDS, newly recruited
- ANA TF: around 220 with ten [this should be about 20 or, ideally 26 for two companies, so may be a mistake] regular ANA officers, under Ministry of Defence (11)

It has to be stressed that local sources, including security sources, are saying different things from international officers advising on the ANA TF. Asked specifically about Jaghori and the absence of long-term assurances of a regular ANA presence there, one international officer said: “The ANA TF cannot be deployed until they can be properly supported.” In other words, even if a company has gone through recruitment and training, he said, regular ANA support still has to be in place before it can be deployed.

Local sources in Jaghori have told AAN that Territorial Force recruitment, now completed, was carried out under the supervision of an ANA commissary. Two tolai (companies) have been stood up, each with 108 to 110 soldiers, who are now almost all in Kabul for their ten-week training. Recruits, sources said, had to be volunteers, 19-40 years old and not be disabled or addicted to drugs. Priority was given to former ANA members. The recruits had to fill out the forms and bring a zamen (a local guarantor). That is, recruitment complied with the ANA TF guidelines. Local sources noted that there was no sense of any wider community involvement.

One recruit, who asked not to be named, said he joined the ANA TF because of doubts that the district would regain the level of security it enjoyed before the Taleban assault; defence forces, therefore, were necessary. During the Taleban attack, he had felt duty-bound to take part in patrolling and keeping watch (paira) in his area. This is a standard response in this area to a Taleban threat; after a community decision, self-defence is arranged and villagers take their personal weapons (whatever they might have) and take turns to go to the hills to patrol and keep watch, especially at night. This is done mainly in the areas bordering Pashtun districts from which the Taleban could attack. Since the Taleban were pushed back, the threat has reduced and some patrols have ceased.

The ANA TF recruit said that in his area people were continuing to patrol, each taking their turn, but he had felt it better to join the ANA TF which is paid, equipped and armed by the government. He said there had been no consultation on the new force or public meetings. Instead, notices had been posted in village bazaars and mosques and, seeing these, he

had decided to join. He also said Hassan Mujahed, (12) the general commander of uprising forces in his village (Baba) had encouraged young men to join the ANA TF, paying the fare for them to travel to Sang-e Masha for enrolment. Sources have also described to AAN the recruitment to the new 300-strong uprising force, being set up at the same time as the ANA TF: uprising fighters bring their own weapons and the NDS provides vehicles and motorbikes and pays salaries.

As AAN reporting has detailed (here and here), the Taleban's attack on Khas Uruzgan district in late October came, partly, out of extremely tricky ethnic politics and a history of inter-communal violence; international and Afghan-sponsored, anti-Taleban local forces there leveraged and inflamed ethnic tensions. After the Taleban captured Khas Uruzgan, they capitalised on this to make an outrageous bid to take over Malestan and Jaghori, districts in which the movement has no local support.

All this means that setting up local forces in Jaghori is not a straightforward issue. The decision to establish ANA TF companies in Jaghori could be early evidence of the force falling the same way as ALP – with strict criteria and safeguards abandoned because of the need for boots on the ground or political stakeholder pressure. However, the urgency felt by local people for forces to defend them from an insurgent group which has just brutally overrun their areas is significant. Moreover, despite the absence of formal community involvement in setting up this force, it looks to be both popular and have strong local backing. As such, though, it may not be typical of other districts where popular opinion and experience of both Taleban and government is more mixed.

This issue of whether the ANA TF will be deployed if regular ANA are not in Jaghori needs to be watched. Finally, it is worth noting that both MPs and local people said what they really wanted was regular ANA, not the ANA TF.

AAN has been doing some preliminary investigations into the ANA TF pilots/phase 1 locations, to see how communities receive them and whether the careful safeguards in the model

are actually being put into practice. We hope to publish on this in the future.

11. Is there evidence the new strategy and model is working?

It is still far too early to say anything about whether the newly-established ANA TF companies are working well or not. Even the oldest were established only weeks ago. Looking ahead, one would want to scrutinise various aspects of this force: whether ANA TF companies are being mobilised according to the model, that is only where there is a genuine local desire and backing for them, only in green areas and without their capture by politicians, factional forces or strongmen; whether the community involvement is something other than just the ANA TF recruiting locally; whether ANA command and control is effective and the ANA TF is institutionalised into the regular army and; whether the ANA TF succeed in protecting local people and territory, are supported by the regular ANA, and free up regular ANA soldiers to take more offensive action.

It is worth stressing that today's Afghanistan is not an easy environment in which to make an innovation like the ANA TF. The MoD is trying to set up a new force while fighting an often vicious insurgency. On the US side, as well, there is general pressure to show 'progress' in Afghanistan especially on the battlefield to a White House that appears to be hovering on the brink of pulling out American troops. At the same time, one of the international advisors was somewhat reassuring on this last point, insisting they were not under pressure and that "battlefield benefits tomorrow" was not their aim. These would be welcome, she said, but the focus was on the long-term, "We are doing this [setting up the Territorial Force] deliberately and making sure accountability is in place."

Finally, there is one tiny victory to report. One of the main fears, certainly within the MoD, was that Afghans would consider the ANA TF to be a militia and the integrity and reputation of the ANA as a whole would be damaged. Up till now, what media reports there have been, (for example here and here) have described members of the force as "soldiers"

and trainees as “cadets.” Even if, in the same news report, the ALP is referred to as a militia, reporters have not used the ‘m word’ to describe Afghanistan’s newest local defence force.

Annex: Edited by Erica Gaston and Sari Kouvo

The President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Decree on the Creation of the Afghan National Army Territorial Force

The following actions will be undertaken in order to improve the security situation, provide better security services to the people of Afghanistan, and establish the Afghan National Army Territorial Force with the aim of changing the defensive posture of the National Army to an offensive oneand extending security to all districts:

1. After evaluating outcomes from the pilot [programme], the Afghan National Army Territorial Force shall be created, as a contingent force to the National Army, with an estimated thirty-six thousand (36,652) personnel.

2. Afghan National Army Territorial Force personnel will be an integrated and essential constituent of the National Army. They will be recruited in accordance with relevant laws, rules and regulations from districts where they live. They will be trained within the framework of the National Army and deployed under the command and control of experienced National Army cadre.

3. The Ministry of Defense of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan will establish several pilot companies (tolai) of the Afghan National Army Territorial Force in the fourth quarter of 1396 (the month of Delw) [21 January to 20 February 2018]. Long-term planning for the creation of the Afghan National Army Territorial Force will proceed based on [lessons learned from] their experience. Details are specified in the six (6) articles attached to this decree.

4. The Deputy Chief of the National Security Council Office on Armed Forces Affairs shall monitor the implementationof this decree and provide regular reports on its progress to the meetings of the National Security Council.

Attachment to the Decree of the President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan on the Creation of the Afghan National Army Territorial Force.

Article One: Tashkil and Regulations

1. Establishment and Tashkil of the Afghan National Army Territorial Force: The Ministry of Defense shall undertake the following actions to establish the Afghan National Army Territorial Force:

2. Structure and organise the Afghan National Army Territorial Force on the model of the National Army, in companies (tolai) and battalions (kandak);

3. Create a pilot [programme] of Afghan National Army Territorial Force companies (tolai) alongside National Army battalions (kandak), or under the respective battalion's protection;

4. If an aforementioned company is upgraded to a battalion, these forces will be included, as an Afghan National Army Territorial Force battalion, in the tashkil of the National Army brigade (lewa) posted to that province;

5. The leadership cadre for Territorial Force companies shall be selected from the National Army. While serving with the Afghan National Army Territorial Force, the aforementioned cadre will be considered part of National Army staff and will receive full salary and benefits provided to National Army personnel;

6. As the Afghan National Army Territorial Force expands, its cadre and leadership can be deployed to parts of the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces within the framework of the Ministry of Defence [unclear what this means];

7. The cadre and leadership of the Afghan National Army Territorial Force at the level of platoon and higher will be selected from the National Army and those at levels lower than platoon, such as squads, should be selected from the National Army Territorial Force;

8. During the pilot phase of the Afghan National Army Territorial Force, the National Army Brigades support forces

shall meet their needs;

9. All equipment for the Afghan National Army Territorial Force shall be provided in accordance with their tashkiland staffing.

10. Local Recruitment: All Afghan National Army Territorial Force personnel will be recruited, and serve, in the districts in which they live. The leadership cadre and commanders of the Afghan National Army Territorial Force are excluded from this order.

National Training: The Afghan National Territorial Force will receive basic and on going training to a professional level by qualified National Army cadre in National Army training centres.

1 Leadership and Command: The current cadre and commanders of the Afghan National Army will have command and control responsibility in order to ensure the effectiveness and stability of the National Army Territorial Force.

2 Cost-effective and Sustainable: The Afghan National Defense and Security Forces are designed to be cost-effective and sustainable so that the government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan will have the long-term ability to meet their expenses. The Afghan National Army Territorial Force is one such cost-effective and sustainable force. Their cost, as compared to the National Army, will be lower without impacting their effectiveness and duties.

Article Two: The Creation of a Pilot Territorial Army, Location and Timeline for Their Creation

1. The Ministry of Defense shall establish the Afghan National Army Territorial Force pilot [programme] in several locations in the fourth quarter of 1396 (the month of Delw) [21 January to 20 February 2018]; and develop a long-term plan for creating the Afghan National Army Territorial Force based on [lessons learned] from this experience.

2. The Ministry of Defense shall select locations for the establishment of the Afghan National Army Territorial Force

[pilot programme].

Article Three: Responsibilities and Duties of the Afghan National Army Territorial Force

1. **Duties and Responsibilities:** As local security forces, The Afghan National Army Territorial Force, will have the following responsibilities in areas under the full control or partial control of the government:

2. Provide security for areas that have been cleared of enemies by the National Army and Special Forces Units and prevent the enemy from re-entering these areas;

3. Be a source of information for the National Army and Special Forces on activities of the enemy in the area;

4. Perform duties in areas under the control of the government;

5. Perform duties in areas under the control of the enemy only with close support from the National Army;

6. Establish stable relations between government and people through the district authorities;

7. Provide security services at the district level and below;

8. Prevent the movement and activities of the enemy in the region;

9. Secure and protect key government infrastructure in the region, including highways;

10. Protect and defend the area until reinforcements or supporting forces arrive;

11. Help victims of natural disasters and emergencies;

12. If necessary, ensure the safety of events or ceremonies in the area.

13. Duties the Afghan National Army Territorial Force Will Not Undertake: The Afghan National Army Territorial Force will not undertake the following duties:

- Independently undertake duties in areas under the control of the enemy;
- Undertake independent offensive manoeuvres;

- Dispatch and execute duties in provinces, districts and other villages (outside their area of responsibility);
- Perform duties in offensive operations against large enemy groups;
- Perform the duties of rapid reaction forces, in the place of forces from other districts;
- Carry out dangerous operations such as strikes, arrests and rescue operations;
- Perform the duties of the city police.

Article Four: Leadership Cadre

1. **Selection Requirements**: The leadership cadre of the Afghan National Army Territorial Force are members of the National Army personnel during their posting and until the end of their assignment. The Ministry of Defense shall recruit them in line with the following considerations. [They must]:

2. Be an officer or sergeant of the National Army;

3. Be approved by the commanders of the relevant corps;

4. Have sufficient relevant experience and skills;

5. Be fluent in the languages of the [local] Afghan National Army Territorial Force;

6. Must not be from the same district as the pilot [programme] Afghan National Army Territorial Force to which they are assigned.

7. Education and Training: The Ministry of Defense shall direct the cadre members to the necessary training for their assigned duties after they are selected and before taking up their assignments as leaders of Afghan National Army Territorial Force.

8. Salary and Privileges: Officers and sergeants who are selected as cadre and commanders of the Afghan National Army Territorial Force will receive the same salary and benefits as they did in their previous assignment. The Ministry of Defence shall make all necessary arrangements to pay salaries and benefits.

Article Five: Recruitment Requirements and Privileges for Afghan National Army Territorial Force

- Recruitment Conditions: The Afghan National Army Territorial Force personnel will be recruited according to the following conditions. [He must]:
- Be a resident of the same district where the Afghan National Army Territorial Force is established;
- Be between 20 to 40 years of age;
- Pass all National Army health standards successfully;
- Meet all Ministry of Defense assessment criteria based on his records and credentials successfully;
- Individuals who have previously served with the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces as enlisted personnel may retain their [previous] rank and can join the Afghan National Territorial Army Force after a revaluation by investigative bodies, in line with National Army recruitment policies, and after obtaining guarantees from local representatives, elders and district and provincial councils. Likewise, persons who have served in the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces as non-commissioned officers for one year—up to the level of squad commander – can retain their [previous] rank contingent on successfully completing professional training and receiving approval fromthe cadre or commanders of the Afghan National Army Territorial Force.
- Training and Higher Education: Individuals recruited to the Afghan National Army Territorial Force will receive training at National Army regional training centres under the supervision of the Ministry of Defense.
- Afghan National Territorial Army Force personnel who have served one-year successfully and completed professional training can join the National Army after their nomination and endorsement by the Afghan

National Army Territorial Force commanders. After being recruited into the National Army, they can maintain their rank, but cannot be promoted to commanders and leadership cadre of the Afghan National Army Territorial Force in the same district;

- Afghan National Army Territorial Force personnel will receive on-going professional training up to squad commander level;
- The Ministry of Defense shall assign experienced personnel to regional training centres to train Afghan National Army Territorial Force pilot [programme] Personnel.
- Salary, Benefits and Other Expenditure:
- National Army Territorial Force personnel will receive salaries and benefits equivalent to 75 per cent of an ordinary National Army soldier;
- National Army Territorial Force personnel will receive all medical benefits which are afforded to those serving in the National Army;
- Budgetary expenditures (salaries, benefits, engineering reinforcements, uniforms and other equipment) for National Army Territorial Forces soldiers will be paid from the Ministry of Defence National Defense budget by the CSTC-A ([United States] Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan) Command;
- Benefits for martyrs, captives, the missing, and the disabled are the same as those of the National Army;
- Technical personnel of ANDSF who have successfully completed at least one period of servicewill receive the same salary as National Army Territorial Forces upon joining the National Army Territorial Force (except at cadre and leadership positions).

Article Six: Command and Control, and Promotions:

1. Command and Control:

2. Brigade commanders are responsible for command and control of the National Army Territorial Force as per the chain of command. In accordance with the chain of command, brigade commanders will assign National army battalion commanders to command and control pilot Afghan National Army companies established in the area;

3. Cadre and leadership of the National Army will be assigned to the battalions and brigades where pilot companies of the National Army Territorial Force are established.

4. Protection and Survival:

5. The commanders of the corps are responsible for assigning one brigade to protection and survival duties and providing essential logistical services to the National Army Territorial Force as a Rapid Reaction Force. This process will be activated quickly upon request.

(1) In 2018, the Ministry of Defence was budgeted to receive 62 million Afghanis (about 825,000 USD) and the Ministry of Interior 61 million Afghanis (around 811,000 USD) (read the budget here). Estimated domestic revenue for that year was 153 billion Afghanis (about two billion USD). As was written in the budget, that year as in all previous years, "a significant proportion of the resources available to the Government for security is still provided by Afghanistan's partners outside the national budget." If the government had had to pay for the ministries of defence and interior out of its own pocket, it would have eaten up more than three-quarters of domestic revenue. As the budget document said, "…for the foreseeable future, the cost of maintaining security will be beyond the capacity of the tax system to meet."

The main donor for Afghan security (and other sectors) is the US. In 2018, it was projected to spend $4.67 billion USD on the Afghanistan Security Forces Fund (ASFF) which funds the sustainment, operations, training and infrastructure of up to 352,000 members of the ANSF, including army, police and local police. (See the latest SIGAR quarterly report from October 2018, pages 52-55).

For some scholarly assessments of the financial sustainability of the Afghan National Security Forces, see research carried out in 2014 for the US congress, “Independent Assessment of the Afghan National Security Forces”, William Byrd’s 2014 article for Foreign Affairs, “Who Will Pay for Afghan Security Forces?” and, a broader study, Anthony H Cordesman’s 2017 study for the Center for Strategic and International Studies, “The Afghan War: Key Developments and Metrics”.

(2) The ANSF has faced continual difficulties holding territory that is under its control or that is lightly contested. This holding role, a NATO question and answer sheet from October 2017 on the ANA TF proposal said, was “currently conducted by a patchwork of forces including the Afghan National Police, Afghan Local Police and local militias with varying degrees of success.” One consequence, it said, was that the ANA is often drawn into the holding role and one aim of a “well-run local force” would be to free up the regular ANA, enabling it to change from having a defensive to an offensive ‘posture’. This, it is hoped, would also free up Afghan special forces, described by one of the international planners as “overused, constantly fire-fighting.”

(3) Examples of uprising forces, relevant to the ANA TF debate, are those in Nangrahar province where the idea for the ANA TF initially included the possibility that uprising forces in Achin and Kot districtswould bewould be re-hatted as a ‘territorial army’. These groups were the government and US military were fighting the local Daesh franchise the Islamic State in Khorasan Province (ISKP). As we wrote at the time, these uprising forces “… received arms from the Ministry of Defence, not just light, but also heavy weaponry, including pika (PK machine guns), dashaka (DShK heavy machine guns) and rocket-propelled grenades.” That might sound like the state had established the militias, we said, but actually, “local powerbrokers have been crucial or even primary in their formation.” For them, mobilising forces against the Taleban and Daesh were as much to do with trying to recover smuggling routes and illegal checkpoints in areas which the insurgents had captured. At the same time, we wrote, the uprisers, along with the ALP and Afghan National Border

Police were “effective, aggressive against the enemy and, unlike other places, not particularly abusive of the population.” For other examples of uprising forces, see our in-depth look at Andar.

(4) As the Afghanistan Justice Project put it, “Before an Afghan national army had existed, the state relied on similar irregular forces to suppress revolts.” The most famous of the PDPA era militias were those which went on to become the largely Uzbek Jombesh-Milli, commanded by (now) First Vice-President General Abdul Rashid Dostum and Sayyed Jaffar Naderi’s much smaller Ismaeli militia. However, there were many others, including local mujahedin groups whom the state turned, re-badged and on whom they relied to keep control of local areas, as the Afghanistan Justice Project described:

A plethora of armed structures parallel to the regular army and the paramilitary police were established by the communist government throughout the country in the years following the Saur Revolution in 1978. Some of these were affiliated to the communist party, while others were defensive and linked to industrial installations or specific localities, particular tribes or feudal personalities. As the years passed, the number increased, as did their level of organization and the complex nature of their identity and interrelationship. From being in the main local defense forces many had metamorphosed to being combat units deployed outside their areas or origin, displaying —by virtue of their recruitment pattern—considerable group solidarity and military coherence.”

(5) AAN was told that planned equipment for the ANA TF was: AK47 rifles, rocket propelled grenades, DShK heavy machine guns (dashaka), VHF radios, motorbikes, vehicles and D30 artillery for every company (more than the ALP has).

(6) One Afghan involved in advising on the ANA TF described how they recruited: “First education, putting up posters telling people what the new force is, then gather together community elders and explain the idea and ask them to introduce people. Ask them to guarantee that someone is a good guy.”

(7) There are two main routes into Jaghori from Ghazni city, one via Qarabagh and Jaghato and one via Nawar. Both have had variable security in the past years and been vulnerable to Taleban checkposts (in the Dasht-e Qarabagh area of Qarabagh and Qiyagh area of Nawar).

(8) Jaghori borders both completely Hazara districts, Malestan(to the north) and Nawur (east), mixed Hazara-Pashtun districts, Qarabagh (east) and Muqur (south), and Pashtun districts, Gilan (south) and Khak-e Afghan, also known as Kakarof Zabul province (west).

(9) Danesh and Mohaqeq submitted a plan in December 2016 titled "Comprehensive Security and Administrative Plan for the Central Hazarajat Region" in which they had called for a brigade (lewa) to be deployed to Bamyan for Bamyan and Daikundi provinces and separate battalions for Jaghori and Balkhab districts (details in footnote 9 of the second dispatch on Taleban attacks on Hazarajat).

(10) At the official level, there appears to be some confusion about the new forces in Jaghori. The Ministry of Interior, for example, said on 18 November that it (sic) had established two tolai (companies) of a 'territorial army' and mobilised 600 locals within the framework of public uprising forces in the two districts of Malestan and Jaghori, saying they would be equipped and assigned to maintain security in their areas after receiving training.

(11) Etilaat Roz, quoting security sources on 18 December 2018, gave somewhat different figures: combined security forces for Jaghori have been increased from 300 to 1090: 450 ALP, 350 public uprising forces, 240 ANA TF and 50 NDS paramilitaries. It reported that one big security base was planned along with 39 posts (16 for ANA TF and the rest for uprisers and ALP) in the villages of Hutqul, Angori, Daud, Zirak, Kotal-e Loman, Dahmarda, Pato, Tailum, Qarqunda, Drazqul, Parkhasha of Baba, Ghogha and Pushta-e Hicha.

(12) After the Taleban attacks, Hassan Mujahed became the general commander of public uprising forces in Baba village. He fought with the mujahedin faction, Nasr, during the Soviet invasion of the 1980s. It was one of the biggest of the ten Shia

Muslim mujahedin factions forming Hezb-e Wahdat in 1992. Recently, he has been aligned with former Second Vice President and now Chair of the High Peace Council, Abdul-Karim Khalili (also from the Nasrist strand of Wahdat). Mujahed also served in the army in the early years of the Karzai administration.

The Afghan Territorial Force: Learning from the lessons of the past? By: Kate Clark. 15 January 2019. The Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN) is an independent non-profit policy research organisation. It aims to bring together the knowledge, experience and drive of a large number of experts to better inform policy and to increase the understanding of Afghan realities. It is driven by engagement and curiosity and is committed to producing analysis on Afghanistan and its region, which is independent, of high quality and research-based. Our aim is to be bi-taraf but not bi-tafawut – impartial, but not indifferent. Since its establishment in 2009 AAN's publications have informed and influenced the work of policymakers, journalists, academics and development workers working on Afghanistan. AAN's analysts are regularly asked to speak at conferences and briefings around the world, and frequently appear as commentators in the media. https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/about-us/

Chapter 8

CIA-Proxy Militias and CIA-Drones in Afghanistan: "Hunt and Kill" déjà vu.

Kate Clark

Reporting from the United States has said that the CIA is expanding its operations in Afghanistan, running Afghan militias to "hunt and kill" Taleban and "poised" to start flying armed drones. The CIA has run Afghan militias in the past; they were notorious for human rights abuses and for not being subject to the state justice system or Afghan government. Up till now, only the US military has flown drones offensively in Afghanistan. For Washington, the only 'advantage' the CIA might bring over the military would be secrecy and lack of accountability, says AAN's Kate Clark, as she looks at what an expansion of CIA operations might mean for Afghanistan.

The New York Times has given a detailed, well-sourced – and rather gushing – account of the CIA's planned expansion of its operations in Afghanistan. Deploying dehumanising language with apparent relish, the paper describes the CIA using Afghan militias to 'hunt' (the word is used five times in the piece) and kill Taleban. The newspaper reports CIA director Mike Pompeo as saying, "We can't perform our mission if we're not aggressive… This is unforgiving, relentless. You pick the word. Every minute, we have to be focused on crushing our enemies." The paper details two tactics the CIA is keen to pursue:

- Counterterrorism pursuit teams or CTPTs. The CIA is reported to be currently running these teams to "hunt and kill Taliban militants across the country" and "hunt[ing] Taleban bomb makers including using night raids." The teams, the paper says, "are managed by CIA paramilitary officers from the agency's Special Activities Division and operatives from the National Directorate of Security [NDS] and include elite American troops from the Joint Special

Operations Command and contractors. The majority of the forces, however, are Afghan militiamen."

- Flying drones in offensive operations inside Afghanistan. Up till now, the CIA has only flown drones from Afghanistan across the border to strike targets in the Pakistani tribal areas. However, according to The New York Times, the CIA has been pushing for authorisation to fly drones inside Afghanistan and is now "poised" to do this.

The CIA's use of militias

Afghan militias, operating outside an Afghan government chain of command, have been used by international forces, especially US Special Operations Forces (SOF) and the CIA since 2001. It has often been debatable who was running whom. Militias set up by or fighting alongside international forces (often called 'campaign forces') have frequently used their alliance to pursue personal or factional goals – including targeting rivals and carrying out crime – as well as often gaining a fierce reputation for fighting Taleban. (For more detail on militias, see here). Counterterrorism Pursuit Teams (CTPTs) were examples of this type of militia. The name was first used publicly by Bob Woodward in his 2010 book "Obama's Wars". He described them as:

> *... the CIA's 3000-man covert army in Afghanistan. Called CTPT for Counterterrorism Pursuit Teams, the army consisted mostly of Afghans, the cream of the crop in the CIA's opinion. These pursuit teams were a paid, trained and functioning part of the CIA that was authorised by President Bush. The teams conducted operations designed to kill or capture Taleban insurgents, but also often went into [the Pakistani] tribal areas to pacify and win support*.

According to Kimberly Dozier, Associated Press' intelligence correspondent in 2010, "the 3,000-strong Afghan teams are used for surveillance and long-range reconnaissance missions and some have trained at CIA facilities in the United States." They have also been involved in night raids and detentions. In 2009, Dozier said, they had been the subject of a turf war

between US Special Operations Forces and CIA over who would control them; the CIA won. (Other US newspaper reports on the teams can be read here and here.)

The CTPTs tended to follow the pattern of being aggressive enemies of the Taleban and perpetrators of crimes and egregious human rights abuses against civilians and detainees. Their close working relationship with US forces meant they were able to operate with virtual impunity from the Afghan justice system, as can be seen by looking at some of the individual units.

Khost Protection Force

The Khost Protection Force, reportedly still active and still under CIA control, emerged out of a militia which was notionally the 25th Division in the Afghan Military Forces – the latter term was used to describe the various militia and factional forces from the Northern Alliance and those loyal to pro-US Pashtun commanders which came under Ministry of Defence control in 2001/02 and were funded by the US before the creation of the Afghan National Army (ANA). The 25th Division had a high proportion of former members of the PDPA army. It was spared Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) because of its good links to the US military.

Allegations against the Khost Protection Force are long-standing. These include extrajudicial killing, torture and beating of civilians, sometimes in the presence of US advisers (see here and here) and unlawful detentions. In 2014, UNAMA found that five detainees who had been arrested by the Khost Protection Force together with international military forces and detained at the US Camp Chapman base in Khost were subjected to ill-treatment by the force. In December 2015, US newspaper reporting alleged that six civilians had been killed during Khost Protection Force-led raids on homes in the province in the presence of American advisers and that the group was still unlawfully detaining and abusing detainees, UNAMA's 2016 mid-year report cited particular concerns about the number of civilian casualties caused by the Khost

Protection Force and called for its integration into regular ANSF chains of command and accountability.

Afghan Security Guards

This Counterterrorism Pursuit Team operated in Paktika province and was commanded by Commander Azizullah, an ethnic Tajik in an overwhelmingly Pashtun province. An investigation by reporter Jules Cavendish described the Afghan Security Guards as existing to "protect Firebase Lilley, a remote outpost in eastern Paktika province that doubles as a listening post for the CIA and a training hub for some of the agency's 3,000 private troops (known as Counterterrorism Pursuit Teams)." The Afghan Security Guards' main job though, he said, was "killing Taleban."

Cavendish and later Human Rights Watch, both with access to two internal United Nations reports, detailed at least nine well-documented and established incidents perpetrated by the Afghan Security Guards from 2008 to early 2010 including extrajudicial killing of civilians, possible examples of collective punishment or retaliatory killing, summary execution of detainees in custody, detaining young boys and reportedly sexually abusing them and frequent thefts and beatings during night raids. (1) No disciplinary or criminal measures were ever reported as having been taken against Azizullah or the forces under his command. Indeed, in 2011, the Afghan Security Guards was folded into the Afghan Local Police (ALP) and Azizullah was appointed chief of the provincial ALP. This means that his forces are probably largely intact and in situ.

Kandahar Strike Force (KSF)

The KSF operated out of the old house in Kandahar of former Taleban leader, Mullah Muhammad Omar, re-named Camp Gecko. Its chain of command appeared to be an informal arrangement, by-passing the ministries of interior and defence, and answering to the US SOF and/or CIA, as well as to Ahmad Wali Karzai, the late brother of former president Karzai. Jules Cavendish, again at the forefront of investigations (see here and here), described how KSF recruits

were cherry-picked from regular Afghan army units and trained by US SOF at Camp Gecko:

‘Foreign military advisers at the camp taught hand-to-hand combat and put new recruits through ambush training, as well as teaching them English, said [former leader Atal] Afghanzai. Everyone, he said, from the cook to the Special Forces advisers, was ‘working for OGA somehow’: an acronym standing for ‘other government agencies’ and generally used to refer to the CIA. ‘We had day raids, night raids. Any time we received Intel from the NDS [Afghanistan’s security service] that there were 10, 20, 50 insurgents gathering in a house or a garden, we’d launch an op.’ The 400-strong group fought well, but according also to The Wall Street Journal and reports on the torture of security detainees by the Open Societies Foundation and Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) and UNAMA, it was abusive. Allegations included extrajudicial killings, unlawful detentions and extreme beatings and brutality during night raids and severe beatings amounting to torture at Camp Gecko.

The group’s defacto impunity for alleged crime and abuses partly ended when forty KSF soldiers stormed Kandahar police station in 2009 and killed the provincial police chief, Matiullah Qahteh, apparently in revenge for a murdered KSF fighter. KSF leader, Atal Afghanzai and 38 others were convicted of this murder, a rare example, reported Cavendish, of “the Afghan judiciary coming down on a US bankrolled mercenary – and likely only happened because Afghanzai and his men killed a well-connected Afghan police commander in broad daylight.” There has been little reporting on the KSF since 2013 when public pressure, in particular the detention and abuse of a student, may have forced the group to disband.

The NDS 0-4 Team, Kunar

In 2013, there were two disastrous raids in the Shigal Valley in Kunar which brought to light the existence of the ‘0-4 unit’, a 1200-strong force that was nominally NDS. However, then Presidential spokesman Aimal Faizy told The Guardian the force was actually a CIA proxy: “Some of them are said to be working with the NDS, but they are not armed by the NDS,

not paid by the NDS, and not sent to operations by the NDS. Sometimes they only inform the NDS minutes before the operation." During two raids in Shigal on 7 February and 13 April 2013 when seven or eight CIA paramilitaries accompanied about 75 men from the unit, the CIA called in air strikes which killed nine and 17 civilians, respectively. There were indications that those on the ground knew when they requested the second strike that there were civilians in the house they were targeting, but called it in anyway (potentially in breach of the Laws of War); it followed the killing of a CIA agent by insurgents. (Read AAN analysis here).

In the wake of the strikes in Kunar, the National Security Council ordered the disbandment of all militias run by international forces. President Karzai had already banned such groups in February 2013. (2)

Militias currently operating

Earlier this year, AAN and GPPi wrote that, out of the various CTP teams, only the Khost Protection Force appeared still to be active – and to be still under CIA command and linked to Camp Chapman. The Afghan Security Guards in Paktika had been rolled into the ALP programme and the Kandahar Strike Force appeared to have been disbanded. Yet, the recent piece by The New York Times refers to the CTPTs in the present tense and says that, after the withdrawal of most international forces in 2014, they "continued to conduct missions in Afghan cities and in the surrounding countryside, and with greater autonomy." Some more detail from the newspaper as to who they are referring to would be useful here. The Times says the units are "managed" by CIA and NDS operatives, but the experience of NDS 0-4 highlights the possibility that Afghan oversight can be in name only. It also said contractors are part of the teams.

Some digging has produced a few other possible examples of CTPTs currently operating. NDS 0-4, we were told, now consisting of 250 men trained by US Special Forces appears still to be active, and working with (for?) the CIA still, with a zone of responsibility extending into southern Nuristan. NDS's 0-2 brigade in Nangrahar would be another possible unit worth

looking into. In a recent incident, a night raid reportedly with international air support in Mohmand Dara district on a house occupied by people displaced by the conflict in Achin, ended with what relatives said were seven dead civilians. Voice of America journalist, Zabihullah Ghazi, named the 0-4 unit as involved, although the 0-2 unit would seem more likely given the location. Relatives and neighbours brought the dead bodies to Mohmand Dara district headquarters in protest and blocked the Jalalabad to Torkham highway on 24 October 2017.

Finally, it seems possible that some of Kandahar Provincial Police Chief Abdul Razeq's forces in Kandahar are formally designated as CTPTs to allow for operations on the other side of the border. Razeq has been reported to run limited campaigns into Pakistan – mostly for assassinations.

The problems with militia forces

Militia forces have a long and troubled history in Afghanistan. Unless reined in by tight command and control, they tend to be abusive. Militias that answer to foreign powers and lie outside Afghan state control have had a particularly poor record since 2001. Those giving the orders on the US side have tended to have very short-term, narrow goals. The definition of 'security' for local Afghans and the Afghan state, for example, is likely to be much broader than just killing Taleban and would include a desire not to be exposed to abusive militias or see state sovereignty eroded by them. The Karzai administration was mistrustful of such militias because they undermined state power, with some limited exceptions, such as the Kandahar Strike Force, which answered not only to the US SOF and CIA, but to the president's brother, Ahmad Wali (himself named as a CIA proxy). For the US military or CIA, a militia's raison d'être would be killing Taleban, while the abuse of civilians might be an unpleasant, but unavoidable side effect. This view was put into words by a Green Beret captain, known as Matt, speaking to Jules Cavendish in 2011 as he tried to justify why they worked with militias whose behaviour "insults Western sensibilities [sic]."

"There are no good guys by our standards. There is no standard to begin with. There is no justice system or rule of

law to hold people accountable," Matt says. "The Taliban are not horribly bad and the Afghan farmer is not an innocent victim."

In this moral twilight, refusing to work with paramilitaries accused of rights abuses accomplishes nothing, he argues. Instead, as relationships develop, so do the possibilities for altering the "moral calculus" of the Afghan fighters.

"I don't like this reality," says Matt. "But I do not have the power to make Afghans conduct themselves like Americans in matters of politics and warfare. I can only influence it over time." The alternative is to "go home now."

Abuses can also, of course, drive rebellion. This was the conclusion of the leaked UNAMA report about Azizullah's offenses against the population in Paktika. (3)

CIA drones and secrecy in conflict

The other obvious problem with the CIA running militias or flying drones is the secrecy the agency operates under. Different US legislation governs the CIA and the military. The CIA, as opposed to the military, has extensive license to run secret programmes and the government is legally restricted from providing information about them. Up till now, only the US military has flown drones in Afghanistan. According to The New York Times, the CIA is now about to start doing so. As AAN reported in 2016, this issue is not straightforward:

There have been reports of 'turf fighting' between the Pentagon and CIA over who should control the programme, but mainly reports of a high degree of operational cooperation, for example in kill/capture operations in Yemen, Iraq and cross-border strikes from Afghanistan into Pakistan, and of air force pilots flying drones on behalf of the CIA. Last year [2015], a general shift from the CIA to JSOC [the US military Joint Special Operations Forces Command] carrying out drone strikes was reported.

Robert Chesney of the US law and national security website, Lawfare, has said that "in terms of practicalities…the operations themselves may still be hybrid, involving both

military and CIA surveillance and intelligence." Who issues the final order may not be so important, he thinks.

However, there are concerns about the CIA's lack of accountability and transparency in Afghanistan, at least (for discussion, see here and here and here). For Washington, the only benefit the CIA might have over the military in flying drones would be the extra secrecy. This was important, for example, in the drone strikes carried out in neighbouring Federally Administered Tribal Areas; the CIA was chosen to fly drones from Afghanistan into Pakistan, it seems, because the agency's secrecy allowed Islamabad to pretend that it was hostile to American attacks on its territory. However, the US is fighting a 'declared war' in Afghanistan (in US terms, it is an "area of active hostilities") which means, for example, that air sorties and munitions dropped are reported.

The US military has certainly become less transparent about its operations in Afghanistan since pre-2014, but it is still far more accountable to Afghan policy makers, MPs and official watchdogs than the CIA, and the media and NGOs can, at least, contact it. Moreover, it is the CIA's secrecy, whether it comes to authorising drone strikes or running proxy militias, that makes it dangerous.

We do not know whether agency operatives get training in the Laws of Armed Conflict – unlike the military which publishes its training and legal manuals – or whether agents are disciplined for breaching them. We do not know what the CIA tells its proxies they can or cannot do. Unlike the foreign military and Afghan intelligence, police, army and detention centres, as far as we know, the CIA does not open its doors to the official watchdogs, such as UNAMA's human rights team, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the AIHRC. Nor does it engage in dialogue on issues such as whether it adheres to the Geneva Conventions when it conducts hostilities. An official from the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) told AAN, it does not and cannot scrutinise US funding of the NDS because the funding comes from the CIA. The only monitoring of the agency is in the United States and is domestic, through the Senate and House Intelligence Committees.

Philip Alston, former United Nations Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, writing in 2011 about the CIA's use of lethal force when carrying out targeted killings by drone or in 'kill/capture' missions, has said the agency is effectively unaccountable:

Assertions by Obama administration officials, as well as by many scholars, that these operations comply with international standards are undermined by the total absence of any forms of credible transparency or verifiable accountability. The CIA's internal control mechanisms, including its Inspector-General, have had no discernible impact; executive control mechanisms have either not been activated at all or have ignored the issue; congressional oversight has given a 'free pass' to the CIA in this area; judicial review has been effectively precluded; and external oversight has been reduced to media coverage which is all too often dependent on information leaked by the CIA itself. As a result, there is no meaningful domestic accountability for a burgeoning program of international killing.

The CIA's secrecy and lack of accountability makes abuses and breaches of the Laws of War more likely to happen. At the same time, the lack of accountability means the United States, in Alston's words, "cannot possibly satisfy its obligations under international law to ensure accountability for its use of lethal force, either under [International Human Rights Law] or [International Humanitarian Law – the Laws of War]." Significant also is that, looking at the CIA's record over many decades of operating in Afghanistan, it has shown itself to be consistently short-termist and ready to accept or even embrace abuse for the 'greater good'. (4)

The CIA's role in the context of Washington's military strategy

The New York Times reported Pompeo saying that President Trump had "authorized the agency to 'take risks' in its efforts to combat insurgents 'as long as they made sense,' with an overall goal 'to make the C.I.A. faster and more aggressive.'" The belligerent posturing of the CIA director appears to be part of a wider US narrative, with the tone set by Trump when

he announced his Afghan military strategy on 21 August 2017 as “killing terrorists… not nation-building [sic].” General John Nicholson, commander of US and international forces in Afghanistan, has since promised that “a tidal wave of air power is on the horizon” and “this is the beginning of the end for the Taliban.” (5) For all the bold words of the US, though, even Trump does not claim that ‘victory’ involves defeating the Taleban:

“Our troops will fight to win. We will fight to win. From now on, victory will have a clear definition: attacking our enemies, obliterating ISIS, crushing al Qaeda, preventing the Taliban from taking over Afghanistan, and stopping mass terror attacks against America before they emerge.” (emphasis added)

Trump acknowledged that “Military power alone will not bring peace to Afghanistan or stop the terrorist threat arising in that country” and that, “strategically applied force aims to create the conditions for a political process to achieve a lasting peace.” The New York Times also reported in its piece on CIA militias that there is a “tacit acknowledgment that to bring the Taliban to the negotiating table — a key component of Mr. Trump’s strategy for the country — the United States will need to aggressively fight the insurgents.”

Afghanistan has been here before. During the surge (2009-12) 189 when President Obama raised US troop levels to more than 100,000, the US military believed it could solve the country’s insurgency by killing Taleban. A great deal of energy, creativity, thought, money and lives went into that fighting. Efforts to find a negotiated end to the conflict were, by contrast, meagre, despite then US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton casting US strategy as “fight, talk, build” (in 2009, she had accepted that some Taleban could be talked to. In 2011, security correspondent for The Wire, Spencer Ackerman reported, “Obama’s generals promised that it would whup the Taliban into suing for peace,” but all the surge did was “rescue Afghanistan from the brink of total failure.” Since then, the Taleban adapted and, in the lead up to the withdrawal of most international forces, themselves ‘surged’ and have steadily taken territory and threatened population centres since then, taking (and losing) Kunduz city in 2015 and 2016 and almost

taking Lashkargah in Helmand, Tirin Kot in Uruzgan and Farah city in 2016. The US in support of the ANSF may be able to push the Taleban back again (see analysis here), but virtually no-one expects a military victory by either side. Despite that, as of yet, there has still been no significant attempt to, as Trump put it, begin a "political process to achieve a lasting peace." Rather, as the American intervention in Afghanistan enters its seventeenth year, the CIA like the US military is, as reported by The New York Times, preparing to intensify its efforts:

One senior American official acknowledged that the scope of the new directive would require more manpower, and that it would take time to build up the number of officers and teams to carry out those missions in Afghanistan. But the official insisted that the agency was committed to using its new authority to ramp up its strikes in parallel with increased military air and ground operations.

This reader is left with a strong sense of déjà vu, not just with America's strategy and rhetoric, but with the prospect of the CIA once again trying out the failed tactics of the past.

(1) The leaked UNAMA southeast region report, as reported by Human Rights Watch, included to particularly horrific accounts of extrajudicial killings, one clearly against civilians and the other appearing to be a form of retaliatory or collective punishment. Nine civilians, including three children (six to ten years old) were reportedly killed in early 2009 in Barmal district. Then, later that year, in September/October 2009, UNAMA documented a retaliatory raid, led by Azizullah, against a village in Barmal where there was a clash between the Afghan Security Guards and insurgents. During the raid, forces shot and killed three men working in nearby farm areas (for no apparent reason) and "then strapped [the] bodies [of the three men] to the hood of vehicles and drove through Margha Mandi bazaar, announcing that they were terrorists. The bodies were kept for eight days until they started to decompose, at which point they were returned to their families."

(2) Later in 2013, there was a new scandal when it was revealed that 17 detainees had been killed, possibly after torture, between 2012 and 2013 in Nerkh in Wardak province (see reports (here and here). The perpetrators were either militiamen affiliated with or direct auxiliaries of US Special Operations Forces or members of the SOF themselves (see also AAN analysis). One translator was charged and sentenced. After repeated denials of wrong-doing, on 17 July 2013, the US military said it was launching a criminal investigation after the UN and ICRC had supplied it with fresh evidence. It has yet to release its findings.

(3) Human Rights Watch quoted the 2010 report as saying:

We see significant indications that the unintended consequences of employing someone like Commander Azizullah may be the growing hostility of large parts of the population due to his behavior towards the local people both on and off duty.

(4) As AAN wrote in 2013:

From its inception, the agency has never been solely, or even mainly, an intelligence gathering body. Rather it has focussed resources and personnel on running covert operations, often of a military nature. In Afghanistan, its record is long and dubious, going back to its funding of the 1980s jihad through the ‘deniable’ conduit of the Pakistani Islamist military dictator General Zia ul-Haq and the Pakistani intelligence agency, the ISI. By subcontracting its support for the Afghan anti-Soviet resistance, the CIA gave Pakistan a free hand to favour and build up Islamist forces and marginalise non-Islamist forces. Zia was also able to cream off funds: CIA dollars helped pay for the immeasurable strengthening of the ISI, the forced lurch of the army to the jihadist right and a huge Islamist madrassa building programme.

In the CIA’s second bite at the Afghan cherry, after the 9/11 attacks, it was given new orders by President George W Bush in a top secret directive issued on 17 September 2011, in the words of Tim Weiner, ‘to hunt, capture, imprison and interrogate suspects around the world… set[ting] no limits on what the agency could do.’ The CIA would go on to arm proxy

forces in Afghanistan. These, incidentally, were always either treated as if they did not exist by the various disarmament programmes of DDR and DIAG, or were units of the old army such as in Khost which were officially disarmed, but kept on as Campaign Forces. The CIA also set up a global detention and rendition programme in which torture and associated abuses were perpetrated, with Afghanistan acting as one of the hubs (for details see this report).

For more details about the impact of CIA detentions and torture on Afghans and Afghanistan, including how the abuse helped fuel the Taleban insurgency, see here.

(5) Trump has lifted some restrictions on the US military on the ground and in the air, with one result being a sharp rise in air strikes, following earlier steady increases, as targeting conditions were loosened. Civilian casualties have also risen. See details and AAN analysis here.

CIA-proxy militias, CIA-drones in Afghanistan: "Hunt and kill" déjà vu. Kate Clark. Date: 26 October 2017. The Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN) is an independent non-profit policy research organisation. It aims to bring together the knowledge, experience and drive of a large number of experts to better inform policy and to increase the understanding of Afghan realities. It is driven by engagement and curiosity and is committed to producing analysis on Afghanistan and its region, which is independent, of high quality and research-based. Our aim is to be bi-taraf but not bi-tafawut – impartial, but not indifferent. Since its establishment in 2009 AAN's publications have informed and influenced the work of policymakers, journalists, academics and development workers working on Afghanistan. AAN's analysts are regularly asked to speak at conferences and briefings around the world, and frequently appear as commentators in the media. https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/about-us/

Chapter 9

The Two Faces of the Fatemiyun: Revisiting the Male Fighters

Mohsen Hamidi

Over the last eight years, thousands of Afghan men and some boys have fought on the side of the Iran supported Assad government in Syria as members of the Fatemiyun group. Although they are sent to Syria from Iran and supported by the Iranian government, Tehran describes the group as "self-motivated." This dispatch, which is the first in a two-part series, explores why so many Afghan men decided to join the group and what the consequences of this might be for Afghan society at large. Given the recent drawdown of Syria's armed conflict, many of these men are now returning home, either to Iran or Afghanistan. This return is fraught with complexities. AAN guest author Mohsen Hamidi* also examines the reports that warn of a Fatemiyun threat in Afghanistan and notes how the Syrian war has become a way of life for some of these men, for better or for worse.

A second dispatch will look at the women behind the Fatemiyun fighters, exploring their roles and experiences as their men go to war in Syria – and return home.

Afghans in the Syrian war: the context

The Iranian government has been a major actor in the catastrophic war in Syria.[1] It has deployed or supported proxy forces there as part of its policy to maintain and strengthen what it calls the 'Axis of Resistance', which, in its eyes, stretches to Palestine through Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and, to a lesser extent, Yemen.[2] Iran denies any role in forming or supporting any proxy force. It calls those fighting in Syria, for example, 'self-motivated' and argues individuals went there of their own accord in order to 'defend their faith.' It sees its role in the region as legitimate and itself as acting in self-defence

against threats faced from the United States and Israeli governments and the risks of regional instability that threaten its allies such as the regime of Bashar al-Assad in Syria (details in this RUSI paper).

One of the proxy forces deployed to Syria by the Iranian regime has been the Fatemiyun, a group of thousands of Afghan men who have fought on the side of the Syrian government since 2012/2013. The group has played a small, but not insignificant, role in the conflict in Syria.

The name 'Fatemiyun', meaning 'followers of Fatema', was chosen on religious grounds. According to a 9 Khordad/Jawza 1394 (30 May 2015) report by Kayhan, considered a hard-line Iranian newspaper, the group was named after Fatema Zahra, daughter of the Prophet Muhammad, because it was formed during her traditional annual commemoration days (year not specified in the report).

Drawing on official Iranian historiography and individual founder biographies, Tobias Schneider, research fellow at the Berlin-based Global Public Policy Institute (GPPi), presented the group's 'origin story' in an October 2018 paper.[3] These sources trace the roots of the Fatemiyun to "a small and fluctuating number of [Afghan] volunteers organised as the Muhammad Corps [Sepah-e Muhammad]" that fought in a series of wars, including the Afghan resistance against the Soviet invasion and the Iraq-Iran war in the 1980s, as well as against the Taleban regime in the 1990s.[4] According to this history, the fighters moved to Iran from post-2001 Afghanistan because of what Schneider calls "fear of prosecution by the new Afghan government and its American-led coalition backers." The history continues that in about 2011 (the exact year is not specified in the paper):

> …when the Syrian conflict erupted, the group's commander Ali-Reza Tavassoli, known as Abu Hamed, and senior cleric Mohammad Baqir Alaoui [Alawi] petitioned the Iranian government for his then 22-25 fighters based around Mashhad to be sent to Syria to defend the shrine of Sayyeda Zeinab.[5] The request was

> swiftly approved in Tehran under the new umbrella of the "Fatemiyoun."

Checking for facts, Schneider writes, "Kayhan's historical account appears to correspond to the individual biographies of senior Fatemiyoun commanders who were killed in battle and whose exploits could be recounted." Of this founding generation of commanders that have all been killed in action in Syria, he names Ali Reza Tavassoli, Sayyed Hakim, Hossein Fedai Abdarchi, Reza Khavari and Sayyed Ibrahim. Their biographies indicate they fought for Iran in the Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s and against the Taleban in the 1990s, most probably as part of the Shia factions that made up Hezb-e Wahdat.

The picture on the ground seems far messier, in contrast to the coherent historical narrative presented above. According to this author's research, for instance, one senior Fatemiyun commander and several members of the group were working as part of the security forces of the US-backed Afghan government post-2001. The commander had even worked in a private security company for a while, offering protection to convoys transporting supplies for the US-led foreign troops. He then quit and left to join the Fatemiyun in Iran.

It was only after former fighters who had been captured by rebels in Syria or fled to seek asylum in Europe began to speak to journalists and researchers, from 2015 onwards, that information started to emerge about this "Afghan face to the Syrian conflict" (see AAN reporting in June 2015 and this April 2016 report from BBC Persian). This reporting indicated that because the Syrian government had been running out of soldiers, its allies such as Iran had started mobilising proxy groups like the Afghan Fatemiyun to bolster its forces.

Mobilising fighters: differing perspectives

Within a couple of years after 2011, the year in or around which discussions about forming the group probably started, the Fatemiyun group grew dramatically from a small core composed of a handful of individuals to thousands of fighters. The sudden growth of the Fatemiyun was due, in large part, to a pervasive recruitment campaign in Iran since 2012/2013,

described as “maddening” (in the sense of disabling one’s rational thinking) by an Afghan man who wished to join the group, but was prevented from doing so by his family (he then returned to Herat where he spoke to AAN). According to recent reporting, out of the roughly three million Afghan refugees and migrants living in Iran, an estimated 50,000, entirely Shia Hazaras and Sayyeds, joined the group. At its peak, there were an estimated 10,000-20,000 active Fatemiyun.[6]

In several reports, some of them based on original research, one question stood out: why had so many Afghans joined the Fatemiyun to fight a war in someone else’s country? All in all, two main explanations have been offered – both of which have been rejected by the group and its Iranian backers.

The dominant explanation has focused on the circumstances under which Afghans live in Iran. It says that Iran was able to successfully mobilise Afghans, especially those without papers, by offering various benefits, such as better pay (than they were getting elsewhere), more permanent residence permits and the promise of ‘social recognition’ gained by going to war in Syria. For most Afghans who joined the Fatemiyun, life in Iran was so miserable that it seemed a good option. Writing for the Middle East Institute, researcher Lars Hauch sums up this point of view:

[The] underlying violence is more structural than direct. The authorities in Iran have put them [Afghans] in such a horrible situation that many of them actively decide to join the Fatemiyoun because it’s the only thing they can do to address the devastating feeling of not being accepted as human beings, to feel power in their lives, and find some sense of meaning, however fleeting.

This perspective might clarify why Afghans were susceptible to joining the Fatemiyun when the Iranian government, in particular the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), launched its active recruitment campaign. In November 2015, The Guardian, for instance, reported regular recruitment by the Iranian regime particularly through mosques in cities such as Qom and Mashhad – which are holy places for Shia Muslims –

where “the [Afghan] refugees, usually young men, sign up on a daily basis to go and fight for Iran in Syria.” According to this report, Afghan men approached these mosques, queuing to get registered for joining the war in Syria, and conditions of recruitment were easy: “those interested have to prove they are Afghan, and singles or minors must have parental consent.” According to this author’s research, however, many youths joined the group without the consent of their families.

There were also cases of coerced enlisting of undocumented Afghans in Iran, as reported by Human Rights Watch in January 2016:

Iran has not just offered Afghan refugees and migrants incentives to fight in Syria, but several said they were threatened [by Iranian police] with deportation back to Afghanistan unless they did. Faced with this bleak choice, some of these Afghan men and boys fled Iran for Europe.

Afghan children have also been recruited into the Fatemiyun. In October 2017, Human Rights Watch presented cases of Afghans not yet 18, including a boy as young as 14, who had fought and died in Syria and had then been brought back to be buried in cemeteries across Iran.

While the vast majority of Fatemiyun members have been recruited in Iran, some men and boys in Afghanistan, again all Shia Hazaras and Sayyeds, were also attracted and joined the group, as has been reported from Bamyan, Herat, Mazar-e Sharif and through an “unofficial recruiting centre in west Kabul.” In most cases, they either decided to join the group themselves or were encouraged by pro-Iran Afghan clerics to do so. These men and boys first went from Afghanistan into Iran through smuggling and from there were enlisted to fight in Syria.

The second explanation for why so many Afghans decided to join the Fatemiyun focuses not so much on external pressures and conditions, but rather on the individual fighters and their choices. There is some research that views the Syrian war as an arena in which diverse actors – ranging from states to individuals – have sought to maintain, transform or gain social, political and economic capital to pursue their interests

in and through the conflict.[7] Seen from this perspective, different actors, including individuals, have been pursuing their different interests in and through the armed conflict in Syria.

Drawing on this second perspective, previous AAN research showed that some Afghan youths who had failed to integrate back into in their local communities in Afghanistan and then failed in their efforts to get to Europe opted instead to go to the Syrian battlefield. In their view – and of their peers and families – it was a means to show they had matured into 'responsible' men fighting a 'just' war, thereby achieving identity and status. By defending Shia shrines, as they viewed it, they won recognition for themselves, their families and Afghan communities in Iran. More importantly, their wages as Fatemiyun fighters meant they could support their parental families. Some even later married and established their own families in or moved them to Iran. They regarded Iran as a safer and better place to live than Afghanistan, given their improved, post-fighting in Syria status, at least for now.

Neither explanation tallies with the Iranian government's (and by extension Fatemiyun's) view of Afghan participation in the Syrian war, however. Both have justified the fighters' 'voluntary' participation as the need to defend Shia shrines and especially the shrine of Sayyeda Zeinab (one of the great grand-daughters of the Prophet) in southern Damascus, against assaults by the Islamic State (IS, also known as ISIS/ISIL/Daesh)–only an explanation after June 2014 when the group declared itself–and other 'takfiris' (who believe in killing Muslims of other sects and schools, especially Shias). The official explanations have thus focused on religious faith as the fighters' key and even sole motivating factor. As a staunch, long-time Fatemiyun member told AAN, "Nothing material can make someone sacrifice their life." Iranian officials have said they find the singling-out by reporters and observers of the Fatemiyun "bizarre," because, from their standpoint, "there is no reaction to the recruitment of Afghan citizens by the IS in West Asia [Middle East]."[8]

It is not clear how many or indeed whether Afghans have gone to Syria to fight against the Assad government. There seems to

be some, suggested a 2015 AAN dispatch without giving more detail: Syria had turned, it said, into an "odd meeting place" for Afghans, with both Shia and Sunni Afghans pitted against one another there. Yet, given the relative lack of reporting on Sunni Afghan fighters, it seems doubtful that their numbers have in any way matched those of the Fatemiyun.

Some Fatemiyun fighters were certainly religiously motivated from the outset. Also, in many cases, what they say about why they fought changed–from saying they wanting to fight for Iran to get benefits, to defending a 'just' religious cause in Syria. This change in perception or self-justification appears to have come following their initial or subsequent deployments to the war and socialisation with comrades. The religious justification is very apparent in official Iranian and Fatemiyun narratives which fighters came to adopt, which references broader aims, such as defending Shia shrines and the faith as a whole, guarding defenceless people and securing not just Syria, but also the broader region, including Iran and Afghanistan against Islamic State incursions.

It also has to be stressed that, far from defending Shia shrines, the Fatemiyun have been deployed by Iran and the Syrian government far more widely: the photograph accompanying this piece, for example, is from Palmyra (Tadmur) which is a long way from any Shia religious sites which cluster around Damascus, with a couple more in the northern city of Aleppo. As Fullbright scholar Ahmad Shuja Jamal wrote:

> *... the Fatemiyoun has been deployed in most of the Syrian theater and used to spearhead operations to recapture territory, which then would be handed to Syrian troops to hold. The Fatemiyoun fighters either operate alone or, in some of the toughest battles like the recapture of Palmyra and Deir Ezzor, fight in conjunction with other so-called resistance forces, including the Lebanese Hezbollah, the Pakistani Shia mercenary force of Zeinabiyoun, and Russian forces…*

Moreover, he writes that "[the] Fatemiyoun are sometimes referred to as "cannon fodder" for their deployment as an

expendable force. Stories of high casualties in several Fatemiyoun operations appear to bear this out."

Returning 'home': complexities

Given the very high casualty figures, large numbers of Fatemiyun fighters have returned to Iran injured or it is their remains that have been returned. One August 2015 study estimated there had been 121 deaths between January 2013 and August 2015 based on open-source data alone. A later paper in November 2018 put the dead and wounded in action rates respectively at 10 and 30-40 per cent in the period 2013-17, indicating 2,000 killed and 6,000-8,000 injured from among what the paper estimated was a peak strength of 20,000 active Fatemiyun members.

The Iranian authorities have glorified fallen fighters by naming streets after them, praising their sacrifices through state media and providing their families with livelihood support. They have also paraded their coffins and buried them in high-status cemeteries in Iran. This includes Behesht-e Zahra in Tehran where some fallen Fatemiyun fighters have been buried in a special section near the mausoleum of Ayatollah Khomeini, the architect of Iran's Islamic Revolution, and next to thousands of Iranian soldiers who died in the 1980s war with Iraq.

It seems the Iranian authorities might also fear that Fatemiyun returnees to Afghanistan could reveal details about the group's internal affairs. This author has heard from two families that Fatemiyun members who wanted to quit and return to Afghanistan were likely to run into troubles with their previous organisation and its Iranian patrons. A Herat-based sister of a Fatemiyun fighter said their family thought her brother's death in a traffic accident in Iran was a "conspiracy" because "the Iranians didn't want him to get back to Afghanistan and somehow disclose their secrets." She said her brother was a Fatemiyun commander and had been about to step down and come back home. In another instance, on a short visit back to Herat, a former Fatemiyun fighter said that Fatemiyun members were afraid of what the Iranians would do to them if they decided to abandon the group and return to

Afghanistan. That is why they tended to hide their travel plans from both their Afghan and Iranian supervisors or lie to them about where they were going, as he had done himself (eg saying they were going on a pilgrimage to Mashhad city in Iran while actually visiting family in neighbouring Herat across the border). Although it is impossible to verify these statements, they at least indicate that some Fatemiyun men may be so entangled in the Syrian engagement that they cannot easily get out of it even if they wanted to.

As for coming back to Afghanistan, several sources have reported that thousands of Fatemiyun members have returned home. In April 2019, for instance, the Associated Press quoted an unnamed "senior official in Afghanistan's Interior Ministry who is familiar with government intelligence" as saying that "[roughly] 10,000 veterans of the [Fatemiyun] brigade have returned to Afghanistan." In his March 2019 study of the Fatemiyun, Jamal says that "[individual] Fatemiyun fighters are returning to Afghanistan in the thousands."[9]

However, these numbers are disputed and likely wrong. First, they are based on government intelligence (in the first source quoted above) and we do not know how this information is gathered or checked. Second, the vast majority of men joined the Fatemiyun in a bid to turn Iran into a more permanent 'home' for themselves and their families including by taking their families there. This casts doubt over their returning to Afghanistan in such high numbers.

Regardless of the number of Fatemiyun returnees, all existing reporting, including research, concurs that they struggle to return to civilian life and to find adequate and meaningful employment in order to make a decent living for themselves and their families. As Jamal writes, "Many fighters returned to the same kind of economic difficulties that they sought to escape by going to Syria."[10]

The returnees to Afghanistan face other serious concerns, too. First, they fear a possible crackdown by Afghan government security agencies for participating in a foreign war. According to Jamal, besides the Law on Crimes against Internal and External Security, the Penal Code of 2018 (which has been

revised and went into effect in February 2019) provides a clue on how ex-fighters such as Fatemiyun returnees could be treated by the criminal justice system.[11] The code (article 245 (4)) stipulates "long-term imprisonment" for those taking part in "wars or internal armed conflicts of other countries."[12] As Jamal writes, however, Afghan government security agencies such as the Ministry of Interior and the National Directorate of Security are not actively looking for Fatemiyun returnees because "their hands are full with more pressing threats"[13] notably the ongoing full-scale insurgency across Afghanistan.

Second, Fatemiyun returnees are afraid of retaliation by the Islamic State-Khorasan Province (ISKP), the local IS franchise. Some potential links, for example, already exist between ISKP-claimed attacks against Shias in and around Herat city and the participation of some young men from Herat in the Syria war (see this previous AAN dispatch), to say the least.

Third, added to the above, is the recent designation in January 2019 by the US Treasury of the Fatemiyun Division (in Iranian military ranking) for 'terrorism' and 'human rights abuses' – charges that have been vehemently rejected by the Fatemiyun themselves. Some Afghan politicians, including Muhammad Mohaqqeq, former second deputy to the government's Chief Executive, also think they have done nothing wrong.

As Jamal says, there could be "better options" both for the returning fighters as well as to "keep similarly vulnerable young men out of foreign conflicts."[14] The Afghan government could clarify its stance on how it intends to deal with the returnees and, if prosecution is not its intended course of action, it could help assuage fears among ex-Fatemiyun fighters. This could be followed by reintegration, eg through the provision of employment opportunities, including within the security and defence forces. Jamal concludes: "Individual Fatemiyoun fighters who are returning to Afghanistan are struggling to build a life after giving up violence. Helping them reintegrate is thus primarily a humanitarian task."[15]

Moving on: contingencies

Speculation has arisen about future trajectories of the Fatemiyun group. Although some reporting has wondered if the group could be deployed by Iran to fight for its allies in Iraq and Yemen (see here, here, here and here), the focus in this section is entirely on Afghanistan.

Recent reporting has paid increasing attention to what Iran could or might want to do to with, as one report calls it, "tens of thousands of battle-hardened [Fatemiyun] fighters." This has sounded alarm bells among some Afghan officials who fear that the return of Fatemiyun fighters to the country could turn Afghanistan into "the next great sectarian battleground" (see here) between regional foes, in particular, Iran and Saudi Arabia. Some Afghan authorities and commentators have expressed concerns that Iran may be laying the groundwork for an organised presence of its Fatemiyun proxy in Bamyan, Kabul and the country at large (see here and here). Some reporting claims that the Fatemiyun as an organisation has already been implicated in recent violent disputes in Afghanistan, the central highlands of Hazarajat in particular (see here). For example, Antonio Giustozzi and Shoib Najafizada have claimed:

[The] organization [Fatemiyun] got involved already in the conflict between Pashtun nomads and Hazara settlers in central Afghanistan. Alipur, in the past a commander linked to a local Hazara party, has joined hands with Fatimiyun and started recruiting veterans of Syria into his militia that has been blocking access to the pastures of Hazarajat in Behsud (Wardak) against armed nomads for years. The two communities accuse each other of aggression.

These reports on alleged organised Fatemiyun engagement in Afghanistan appear flawed on at least two grounds. First, it plays up the 'Fatemiyun threat' by relying mostly on statements from unnamed Afghan government officials who tend to blame Afghanistan's troubles on anyone but the government. Second, they do present no evidence for the involvement of the Fatemiyun as a group in recent violent clashes in Wardak (Behsud), Ghazni (Jaghuri and Malestan) or Uruzgan (Khas Uruzgan) provinces. Indeed on-the-ground

monitoring has found no footprint of the Fatemiyun as a group in these clashes.

It is important to note that the Fatemiyun does have the potential to act, as a group, in places Iran sees as important to its interests. However, central Afghanistan is not such a place, at least not yet (see also this Hasht-e-Sobh report). In fact, as AAN reported in November 2018 (see here and here), the violence in Jaghuri and Malestan districts in Ghazni province and Khas Uruzgan district in Uruzgan province in late October 2018 involved fighting between the Taleban on the one hand and government forces and pro-government militias on the other (although there was also an ethnic dimension with the Taleban pushing deep into predominantly Hazara-inhabited areas). Fatemiyun returnees might have joined the local militia groups but if they did, they did so as individuals; we have no indication that any fighting occurred on an organisational basis.

Conditions may, however, arise under which the Fatemiyun could be mobilised in Afghanistan as a group. Summing up the views of Afghan clerics and politicians, Jamal lists two such conditions:[16]

First, if the Afghan government continues its perceived prejudice against Hazaras, and continues to neglect development in Hazara areas, it could alienate the Hazara and Shia communities. Second, if the government fails to protect Hazara mosques and communities against IS- and Taleban-perpetrated violence, militia forces could form. Possible options for future mobilisation could be the self-organisation of Fatemiyun returnees, their co-opting by Shia political forces that could provide them with logistics in Afghanistan, or Iran keeping or raising a similar military formation when and where it needs to, including in Afghanistan. It is doubtful that Iran would disband the group in its entirety. It is instead most likely that Iran will maintain the current core of Fatemiyun, who could then mobilise from among the vulnerable Afghan refugee and migrant population residing in that country, when and if needed. But that time has not yet come, at least as far as Afghanistan is concerned. For the time being, reports from Iran indicate that, given the downscaling of the war in Syria,

new recruitment into the Fatemiyun has stopped, the group is being downsized and its members are returning 'home,' mostly to Iran rather than Afghanistan.

Afghan government: a passive posture

So far, the Afghan government has responded to Iran's mobilisation of the Fatemiyun group in a reactive way. A few senior officials, most notably Mohaqqeq, praised "combatants" such as the Fatemiyun for their "victory against Daesh" in a November 2017 speech in Tehran. When his remarks created great controversy, he said his speech had been misinterpreted and that he had only mentioned them because they "had freely participated in the war against Daesh … But this is neither my policy nor our party's policy nor our government's policy [to uphold them]."

On other occasions, watchdog reports (such as the Human Rights Watch report on the recruitment of children into the Fatemiyun) prompted the Afghan government to respond, again in a reactive mode. In October 2017, for instance, the Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs asked Iran to stop "pressuring and enticing" Afghan migrants, and children in particular, to take part in "activities contravening international principles." In January 2018, the Afghan government asked Iran to dissolve the Fatemiyun group. In late March 2019, an Afghan presidential advisor responded to the Iranian leader's meeting with families of the Fatemiyun and his special praise for the group by saying that "Iran has abused Afghan migrants [living in that country]."

There are a variety of reasons why the Afghan government has failed to deal seriously with Iran on the Fatemiyun issue thus far. First of all, the Afghan government is in the weaker position, unable to hold it to account given the leverages Iran has over Afghanistan, notably on the issue of the refugee population and its trade advantage. Second, the Afghan government is partly responsible for the conditions that have led many to flee the country, including those who have ended up being enlisted in the Fatemiyun. Third, given the proxy nature of the group, Iranian officials have engaged in a politics of denial, stating repeatedly that those who have formed and

joined the Fatemiyun have done so on a ‘voluntary’ basis without Tehran taking any part in it. The Fatemiyun do not accept the proxy label either.

How much the issue of the Fatemiyun is tied to the broader issue of Afghan refugees and migrants in Iran came to light most recently in May 2019. Then, Abbas Araqchi, an Iranian deputy minister of foreign affairs, said that Iran would ask the Afghans living in that country to leave if “[US] sanctions are effective and our oil sales get to zero” and that “it was up to them where to go.” He was severely criticised, including by influential Iranians (see, for example, this media report) who reminded him of Iran’s leader’s praise for Afghans such as the Fatemiyun who “participated well and fought well in situations such as Syria.” The Iranian official later retracted his statement and said his remarks had been addressed to Europeans (warning them that Afghan refugees would leave Iran for Europe), not Afghans.

Apart from an Afghan government response that Iran should behave “responsibly” with the Afghans who live in that country, Araqchi’s statement caused harsh reactions even among some Fatemiyun members. One of them told AAN: If you [Iran] are in danger, you make us Fatemiyun and if you need labour for the construction of your country, you make us workers. If you have a budget deficit, you tax us more and now that you are under the pressure of sanctions, you use us like a tool.

Existing studies on the Fatemiyun have focused on the Afghan men fighting for the Iran-backed government in Syria. The women behind the fighters – wives, mothers and sisters – have remained invisible, despite the fact that many fighters decided to go to Syria with family concerns in mind. Based on interviews with ten women in the Afghan city of Herat and Iranian capital Tehran, AAN guest author Mohsen Hamidi* uncovers what the Syrian war has meant for these Afghan women. They reveal the crucial role women played encouraging or trying to discourage their men from going to fight in Syria, the struggle of surviving without their menfolk, and for some, the ordeal of getting a dead body back, and for others, coping with men who have returned injured or

traumatised. The interviews show how a faraway conflict has put many families in dispute with each other – not everyone viewed the Syrian war as a 'jihad' or believed the Fatemiyun had gone there out of piety.

Why focus on the women?

The first dispatch in this two-part series looked at the Fatemiyun from the perspective of the male fighters. It explored the reasons for many Afghan men deciding to fight in Syria–from wanting to improve life for themselves and their families through the benefits provided by Iran to Fatemiyun, to a desire to protect Shia shrines in Syria, to seeing war as a way to become men. It considered the role of Iran's heavy propaganda campaign in recruiting fighters to support its ally, the Assad government, in the increasingly sectarian Syrian civil war, and the very heavy casualties taken by the Fatemiyun as it was deployed across Syria in some of the toughest battles of the conflict.

This second dispatch differs in two significant ways: it takes families and their decision-making as its point of departure, rather than individuals, and views the conflict and its impact from the point of view of the women whose men opted, or were compelled, to fight away from home, rather than from the standpoint of the men.[17]

This is important because crucial decisions, such as whether to join or stay with the Fatemiyun, have typically been made within the family context – through lengthy talks with spouses, parents and siblings – taking into account family concerns, such as financial support or the option to move one's family from Afghanistan to Iran. The members of the all-male Fatemiyun fighter group were never just isolated individuals, free from family ties or considerations. This is reflected in the current study.

This dispatch reveals the daily struggles of the fighters' families. As such, it may inspire greater efforts to reduce the conflict, by (re) humanising the people involved. The dispatch also fills a research gap, breaking new ground, since, as far as the author is aware, this is the first research on the women behind Fatemiyun fighters. For detail about the methodology

behind this research, including how interviewees were chosen, five living in Herat and five in Tehran, and how this sensitive subject was tackled[18]. The rest of this dispatch is organised in three parts and a conclusion.

First, it examines the roles women played when men were deciding to go to war in Syria, whether trying to argue against or supporting or being bypassed.

Second, it explores women's struggles to survive while their men are away fighting, whether their troubles are financial or being left alone without a man's protection in a patriarchal society. It looks at the rituals and support groups which have helped ease absences.

Third, it hears some harrowing stories from women coping with bereavement (ten per cent of the Fatemiyun are estimated to have been killed at the peak of the group's involvement), or with men returning injured (30-40 per cent) or severely traumatised by the war. It also looks at how they have tried to counter jibes that their men were fighting for material benefits or in someone else's war, not a jihad.

A conclusion surveys the complicated feelings many women whose men have fought in Syria are left with.

Men going to war

Women's stances

The distant Syrian war became near and very real for many Afghan families when their men, or men they knew, started signing up to join the Fatemiyun group. A first trigger was often increasing exposure to the conflict. Friends and relatives living in Iran began leaving for Syria as a result of an active campaign, including by Afghan clerics and sympathisers among the Afghan diaspora there, from about 2013 on. In Afghanistan, social media was an important means through which many young men learned about the armed conflict in Syria and, more importantly, how to participate in it (see examples in this previous AAN dispatch). More traditional means such as sermons or conversations in mosques also made many men think about going. When they began weighing up

the pros and cons of joining the war in Syria, they often did so within a family context or with family concerns in mind.

The women in the family most affected by these men's decisions were their wives and mothers; children, including daughters, were also affected, but might not have realised the seriousness of the decisions. Also, most of the men going were young, so if they had children, they would also usually still be too young to be fully aware of what was going on. More generally, making such a decision affected the whole family, both male and female members, with ripple effects extending far more widely, to extended families, local communities and beyond.

In most of the families within the purview of this research, women's opinions counted, relatively speaking. This meant that major issues, such as a man's departure to join the war in Syria, involved consultation and negotiation in which women took an active part. Few were families in which women had to comply with whatever decisions their men made. In a few cases, the women, only found out about their men's plans through extended family members after the men had already left. In these cases, the men went to fight in Syria from Iran, while the women were in Afghanistan, with the men seemingly not wanting to cause family disputes that they would be unable to manage easily from afar.

Many families, and in particular mothers and wives, initially tried to discourage their men (sons and husbands) from fighting in Syria – although this discouragement was stronger in Afghanistan than in Iran, where the environment was far more supportive of and conducive to Afghans' participation in the Syrian war. In nearly all cases, mothers and wives felt torn: they felt a profound desire to keep sons and husbands with them safely at home, but also knew that the material benefits provided to the Fatemiyun would ease difficult living conditions.

Making the decision together

Some women described how they had delayed or tried to string out discussions and decision-making in the hope of dissuading their men from going. After months and, in some

cases, years of on-and-off negotiations within the family, these women finally agreed to the men's decisions. (There are also families where the women successfully managed to fully dissuade men from leaving, but this study focuses on families whose men went to Syria). For example, in one family, which is very devout, a then Herat-based mother described how she bargained with her then Tehran-based son through social media for a year and a half, until she ultimately acquiesced to his departure to Syria. It ended tragically for this family:

He said, "Mum let me go to Syria." He was just 16 then and had gone with his kaka [paternal uncle] to Iran through smuggling to find work there. I didn't let him go because of his young age. He was also my eldest son. I wanted to see him rather than to let him go to Syria. He insisted for one year and a half. Sometimes he'd tease me by writing: "Bye mum, I'm going to Syria." Some other times he wouldn't reply to my calls and messages, leaving me concerned and not able to sleep at night. I said "No" when we were in touch. I said, "You should be at least 18 or reach an age that you can tolerate seeing someone die and not tremble." He kept raising the issue and telling me he really meant to go to defend the [Shia] shrines [in Syria]. There was lots of preaching in Iran about it and we're also strong believers. So, I finally let him go and gave him my halaliyat [forgave him for whatever wrong he might have committed in the past]…We said goodbye [in our last chat]. I never saw him again. I didn't even hear his voice again … He just went once and he was martyred.

Couples also discussed the husbands' possible participation in the Syrian war for months, thrashing out how their families would function in their absence, socially, financially and in other ways. What featured in these discussions, as well, were the wives' concerns and deep desire to have their husbands stay at home.

A good example is a Herat-based couple where the husband finally opted to go to Syria after years of intermittent discussions within the family, including with his wife and a brother who was already a Fatemiyun member in Tehran and who was encouraging him to sign up. As a religious couple, both are religious students, with two children, they had tried to

earn a decent living in seminaries in both Kabul and Mazar-e Sharif and then back in Herat for several years, but in vain. As the recognition that they would not be able to support their family in Afghanistan in a dignified way sharpened, they saw the war in Syria as an opportunity. Since the wife's parental family lived in the same neighbourhood in Herat, he could go without her and the two children being left completely on their own. The couple agreed and the husband followed his brother's call to enlist as a Fatemiyun member and work as a cleric, preaching the 'Fatemiyun cause' and performing religious rituals for Fatemiyun fighters in Syria (for detail on how clerics such as this Afghan man motivated combatants including Fatemiyun to fight in Syria, see here).[19] The opportunity to pursue a non-combat role in Syria made it easier for the husband and wife to arrive at this decision in agreement. The wife and children stayed behind in Herat, supported by remittances sent by the husband – directly or through his brother and other relatives in Iran. They are currently planning to move to Tehran. The wife said:

It's of course difficult for us to be away from each other. It's hard for every wife and husband. It's more difficult for the wife. But as a family we should tolerate the distance patiently. Syria has helped him get to know himself better. It is also a religious duty to go and help the people there. He also found a job and an income and even got us a residence permit in Iran.

Making the decision alone

By contrast, the cases in which the men did not consult the women on their decision to fight in Syria, for whatever reason, were markedly different. Their decisions led to family disputes, but also reveal, strikingly, the agency some women have been able to exercise to prevent or discontinue some men's involvement in the war. A Herat-based woman said her brother's friend's wife had successfully prevented her husband from joining her brother in Syria by convincing him, often in squabbles, that he could not leave her and their children entirely on their own in Kabul (the husband joined the Afghan police instead, but was killed in the war in Afghanistan). Another example is a Herat-based wife who went to great

lengths to make her husband leave Syria where he was fighting. She put it bluntly:

He'd gone to Iran to find a better job and a better income. I didn't hear from him for three months or so. I then learned from my da'i [also known as mama, maternal uncle] that he'd gone to fight in Syria. When I received a call from him, I quarrelled with him, asking "Why have you gone there?" and telling him to come back immediately. He came back home after a while, when he could. He was always talking about Syria and he again wanted to go. I fought with him again and there was lots of jang o jedal [wrangling and bickering] between us. He didn't give in and neither did I. I said "You've got kids and you must think about them. What will happen to them if you were no more?" I eventually went to the house of my khosor [father-in-law] and demanded a divorce, just to put more pressure on him to change his mind. His parents and siblings were also against him going. Though he again went to Iran, he soon came back home without going to Iran or Syria again.

The same interviewee spoke about how another woman she knew had managed to stop her husband from departing for the Syrian battlefield by pleading with him not to leave her and the children on their own, persuading him that she was content with whatever work he did and whatever money he could make in Herat. Her husband is a plasterer engaged in informal construction work and looks for work anywhere in Afghanistan, including Herat city and recently in Lashkargah city in Helmand province.

In other cases, men who had wanted to join the war in Syria, especially younger ones, entirely bypassed their families and made their decisions in concert with their peers instead. This points to the important role of extra-familial ties, particularly friendship ties, in decision-making, but also does not exclude family connections altogether, since many of these men have been enabled by fighting in Syria to support their families back home. (For more background on the role of families and peers in the context of decision-making, see AAN's previous reporting on migration to Europe). A Herat-based woman

whose brother is a Fatemiyun fighter described how he was influenced by his peers to go to war in Syria:

One of his close friends came back to Herat from Syria and whispered thoughts into his ears to go to Syria. We [his sister and parents] said, "You'd better not go, there's war and it's difficult," but he didn't listen to us. So he went because his friends were going and he wanted to fight beside them. He first got smuggled from [Herat] to Iran, and then signed up for the Syrian war.

In some cases, women used all the influence they had to stop men from going but ultimately failed. "Zur-e zanha ba mardha namirasa [women's force is no match for men's]," said one woman living in Tehran whose sister's son joined the Fatemiyun, summing up how an entire family including a mother, a sister and herself failed to keep a young man, a drug addict heavily influenced by his gang of friends, away from the Syrian battlefield. A similar experience was reported by another Tehran-based woman who did all she could, but failed to prevent her husband, also a drug addict under enormous peer pressure, from going to fight in Syria. Their stories point to the fact that drug addicts and other 'problematic' youths (those who have troubled relationships with their parents and siblings) are not only in a far more precarious situation and at greater risk of being recruited into the Fatemiyun, but are also more difficult to dissuade.

Changing minds because of war-related benefits

For almost all the women interviewed, the positions they took on whether to agree to men going or continuing to fight in Syria were not static, but changed over time as circumstances varied. In most cases, their stances gradually shifted from adamant resistance to increasing acceptance after the men's participation in the war began bringing both material and immaterial benefits to their families. These benefits included better pay than from most jobs available to them in Afghanistan and Iran, more regular or permanent residence permits in Iran or the possibility of taking their families there and increased recognition in Iran such as preferential treatment with Iranian government institutions. There was also a

growing conviction that their men were fighting a ‘just’ cause. These benefits definitely came as a relief to families in living in difficult conditions in Iran, especially those lacking residence papers.

This change was especially observed in families that had moved from Afghanistan to Iran after they had been given residence permits because their men were fighting in Syria. For families that were already living in Iran, their men’s involvement in the Syrian war and the residence permits saved them from constantly worrying about being rounded up by the Iranian police for deportation. They also reported better access to public services such as education for their children and healthcare for the elderly and infirm members of their families. This change in attitude towards men’s involvement in the Syrian war was thus far greater among the families of the Fatemiyun living in Tehran than those in Herat.

Other factors that changed Iran-based Fatemiyun families’ perspectives included pervasive exposure to extensive propaganda, including from Afghan clerics and sympathisers. The propaganda justified going to fight in Syria as a highly religious act that was socially valued. Its aim was to motivate families to support and press for men to join up. Increased social respect for Fatemiyun fighters in Iran, the senior ones, in particular, was real, illustrated by the fact that they were easily able to get visiting relatives’ Iranian visas extended or could, more importantly, intervene and get the release of undocumented relatives from deportation camps.

There were also other practical benefits. The women related to the two drug addicts quoted above increasingly approved of the men fighting in Syria once they realised it had helped them overcome their addiction and made them more religious and responsible. This, in turn, improved the prospects for their families back in Iran. In another example of a man recruited from a precarious situation, a Tehran-based mother said her son’s participation in the Syrian war had helped him overcome a series of troubles such as separating from his fiancée, dropping out from university and joblessness. It had also enabled his parents and siblings to move to Iran:

The benefits have been very good, spiritually and otherwise. He was an immature and inexperienced youth. He's become mature and has travelled to see other people and a different place. He's seen a war and has taken part in it. He's really more experienced now. He's also become more religious. He pays more attention to saying his daily prayers and following religious rituals. I'm very happy about it. I'm even now happy with him going to Syria. There's no problem, even if he becomes a martyr in Syria. I now understand him much better. I wasn't happy then [when living in Herat], but I am now [after moving to Iran]. I understand that our children are no better and no more than the children of Hazrat Fatema Zahra[19] and the children of the martyrs of Islam.

There was an arc about how families, including the women, felt about their men going to fight in Syria. From initially discouraging the move, they increasingly accepted the situation. This was especially true for those who had left Afghanistan to live in Iran. The women were, in many cases, an active and integral part of the decision to be involved in the war, even those who had not been consulted beforehand or had been completely sidelined. In any case, deciding whether or not to take part in the Syrian war made this distant conflict more tangible for these families. However, in many cases, it also led to bitter disputes over what to do, not just in terms of their men going to war there but also the war's legitimacy, as will be discussed below.

When men are away

Women's struggles

The men's absence had more impact on families in Afghanistan than in Iran. None of the families had men at home, but those in Iran had more access to 'war-related' benefits than those in Afghanistan. However, Afghanistan-based families' lives also improved when they moved to Iran thanks to their men fighting in Syria. Of the ten families involved in this study, four were already in Iran when their men went to war in Syria, three left Afghanistan to live in Iran, one was preparing to move to Iran, one had their man back in

Herat and he decided not to return and one had stopped their man returning to war in Syria.

The most heavily-impacted families were those left with no adult man at home, especially wives on their own with small children. Interviewees said the mere presence of a man provided protection, given the patriarchal social context in which these families live, whether in Afghanistan and Iran. In this context, the fact that some of the interviewees were living on their own without a closely-related adult man (eg father, husband, brother) was generally considered ‘abnormal’ and ‘bad’ (especially if there were unmarried women in the household). According to a Tehran-based woman, her cousin’s departure to Syria was difficult because it deprived his mother and two sisters of male presence and support at home:

Though he usually used to hang out with his friends before he went [to Syria], it’s difficult for his family that he’s away now. They don’t have any other men at home. His dad had passed away. His mum is frail and unwell because she’s suffering from high blood pressure and asthma. He has two young [unmarried] sisters at home and an elder brother – he lives nearby, but has wife and children of his own. The elder brother visits them [mother and two sisters] sometimes. So they’ve at least got him around. Wives were most affected by men’s absence. A Herat-based wife who remained alone with her two small children after her husband went to Syria had to ask her father and male siblings who lived nearby to come and stay at her house, especially at night. This was seen to offer her protection in the male-dominated community she lived in and to guard against or prevent local community members from talking about her behind her back.

Some women who were living with their in-laws (khesh) felt their husbands’ absence in Syria and the lack of their company and support keenly. This was especially so where wives and their in-laws were not on good terms. A Tehran-based wife described her difficulties:

I don’t have my [parental] family here [in Iran] while my husband’s relatives are all here and around. My [parental] family is in Afghanistan. It was difficult for me and my little

kid to have him not with us while I was living in my in-laws' place. I wasn't happy and always talked to my husband about it. So I moved out four or five months ago. I now live on my own and receive money from my husband to keep life running.

Living a day-to-day life without a man was a struggle for the interviewees. Men's absence required these families, the wives, in particular, to carry out male family roles themselves, including buying necessities in the market, finding and moving home if rent agreements changed and arranging protection for themselves and their children when needed. As women became responsible for all the housework, some reported getting help from female and male relatives with whom they were on good terms (if available, and often more from their own side than their husband's). Seen from a different perspective, men's absence forced some women to develop new skills and deal with the world outside the home, as also implied in the quote above by the woman who decided to live independently in the wake of her husband going to Syria.

Managing family finances has been another struggle for women, especially wives after their men joined the Fatemiyun group. When the exchange rate was still favourable, there were not too many financial hassles for these families to worry about. The Iranian government provided a monthly income of three million tomans – roughly 50,000-60,000 afghanis (1,000-1,100 US dollars) – for the first few years of the Syrian war. Things changed, however, when the Iranian currency, began to fall sharply; since early 2018; its value has fallen by over 60 per cent. That meant the monthly income came to be worth about 18,000 afghanis (because of the depreciation of the afghani, as well, that currently amounts to only about 225 US dollars). This severe financial blow was felt both by Afghan families in Iran and the families in Afghanistan that depended on remittances sent from Iran, including families of the Fatemiyun. Family purses had to be tightened, but how to do this was tough. Interviewees described the negotiations, carried out through social media and when men returned for visits back home, over how much and where to spend the money.

In some extreme cases, the unprecedented depreciation of the Iranian currency was one of the reasons why some men decided to stop fighting in Syria. A Herat-based woman, the sister of a Fatemiyun fighter, said: His friends didn't go [back] and neither did he. One reason was that their pay got less and less because the toman-to-afghani rate became very low. There wasn't much war or much recruitment, either. So he and his friends decided it wasn't worth going any more.

Women's rituals and gatherings

For all the interviewees, in particular mothers and wives, being apart from their men was a constant struggle. They were constantly anxious about their safety, justifiably so given the high levels of Fatemiyun casualties in the Syrian war. To allay their fears, family members and in particular women resorted to a host of religious rituals including performing prayers (namaz and dua) and nazr (cooking and hosting/distributing food for free). Through these rituals, they sought to invoke divine protection for their men on the Syrian battlefield. This is illustrated by the following three quotes:

> *It was very hard for our parents to bear his absence. They were always praying for his protection. We, his sisters, were also praying for his safe-keeping. We all were worried about him. He was always in our thoughts and prayers*.
>
> –A Herat-based sister of a Fatemiyun fighter

> *After he left, we went to [a local shrine] and prayed to God to guard him in Syria. His mum cooked ash-e posht-e pa [literally "soup behind the footstep," a ritual dish served to pray for someone's safe return] in Mashhad [centre of Iran's Razavi Khorasan province neighbouring Herat]. His sister also cooked this food in Tehran to pray for his safety in his Syria [war] journey. His mum also did nazr for him to pray for his safety*.
>
> –A Tehran-based maternal aunt of a Fatemiyun fighter

> *Every morning I prayed for my husband. The day my son also went [to Syria], I began saying two prayers, one for him and one for his father. I didn't want to be lazy*.

– A Tehran-based wife and mother of two Fatemiyun fighters (husband and son).

While these rituals were important to individuals performing them, those enacted collectively also served a social function. For instance, the women behind the Fatemiyun fighters brought together many other women affiliated to the Fatemiyun or not, in a ritual called sofreh salawat (literally 'tablecloth of salutation'). This is a special kind of nazr (the cooking/hosting ritual) for women only (with any small children).4 It is held quite frequently. Besides being an opportunity for praying for the safety of the Fatemiyun fighters and the fulfilment of other wishes, the sofreh salawat serves as a venue for simply getting together and sharing a meal and as a means to relieve stress. Through such events, women socialise and are able to stay up-to-date about the goings-on in one another's families.

In these gatherings, women spoke about the men who were, in one way or another, related to them and had left or were leaving or thinking about whether to leave for the Syrian war (although they kept some information private, such as actual decisions and dates of departure, or shared them only with close confidantes). During these conversations, they discussed the advantages and disadvantages of joining the war for the families, including considering what had happened to those they knew who were already in Syria and to their families in Afghanistan and Iran. These events thus played a role in shaping family decision-making – to go to Syria, or to stay there. Discussions went far beyond just the perceived benefits of joining the war in Syria for the men and their families. There were many contrasting voices. Representing several other interviewees, a Herat-based woman, the sister of a Fatemiyun fighter, said:

From sofreh salawat ceremonies [and elsewhere], we were learning that those who had gone to fight in Syria had gotten rich, were getting [good] sums of money and were buying themselves things [land, house]. But he [my brother] was not getting rich and not bringing money home. Then what was the use of [him going to] the war in Syria? Nesf-e-nan rahat-e jan

[Better to eat half a piece of bread and be comfortable]. Working here or in Iran would be better.

This reveals that the Fatemiyun group and the group of women related to its members were never a monolithic collective with only one voice and one narrative. While some women defended their men's participation on religious grounds, others countered that these families had mainly been swayed by material benefits. Some women behind the Fatemiyun fighters were indeed very frank in acknowledging the pivotal role material benefits had played in their men's departure to Syria and in them consenting to these decisions. Several other interviewees, however, especially those living in Tehran, spoke about how difficult they found it when others did not accept their religious justification for their men's participation in the Syrian war. This is illustrated by the following two quotes:

> *Our relatives who are really near and dear to us aren't happy about him [my son] going to Syria. They say it's a pity he does this thing. His youth is wasted. They're also worried that something bad will happen to him there. My sisters and brothers tell me these things. Those who are more distant relatives say he's gone there for the money, the document [Iranian residence permit] and to live in Iran. We keep hearing these things and feel very bad and offended*.
>
> – A Tehran-based mother of a Fatemiyun fighter

> *Our own relatives were against him going to Syria. They asked why I sent my son. Some were even saying "You sent him to bring money for you from there." These words have really been hurting me. They didn't understand what I was telling them about defending the shrine of namus-e khoda [God's honour].*[20]
>
> – A Tehran-based wife and mother of two Fatemiyun fighters (husband and son)

Several women indicated that it was a constant struggle to explain to other people, including their close relatives, why their men had gone to fight in Syria. They found it difficult to

tolerate perspectives, including from within the Fatemiyun, which countered their explanations in bitter ways. But the high instances of casualties (deaths and injuries) and traumatic events once the men were in Syria exposed these families to far tougher questions in terms of justifying their men's involvement, both internally and in their encounters with their wider communities.

Men killed, injured or traumatised

Women coping with loss

Casualties among the Fatemiyun have been unsettlingly high: ten per cent killed and 30 to 40 per cent wounded at the estimated peak of 20,000 personnel from 2013 to 2018 (see the first dispatch of this series). Of the ten women interviewed, three had suffered bereavement, three had had their men return injured and rest their men traumatised, including after witnessing close friends and other comrades die horrible deaths. For instance, a Herat-based woman who maintains regular contact with several Fatemiyun families in Herat and Tehran said, "So many men got martyred in Syria. For example, there are so many men from [an area in Tehran] who have been fighting in Syria. There are very few families without a martyr there."

Given the high number of casualties, the women also suffered from the catastrophic war in Syria in an indirect way. The biggest shock came when they, mothers, sisters and wives in particular, learned of the deaths of their sons, brothers or husbands. Their descriptions of these painful moments were moving. Representing the three women who lost their men in the Syrian war, a Tehran-based mother, who had already lost a brother fighting for the government security forces in Afghanistan and who had moved to Iran to meet her son coming back from the Syrian war, said:

After arriving in Tehran, I noticed many of our relatives came to our place at once. I had told my husband not to inform anyone about my arrival, though. I wanted to be on my own for some time and was impatiently waiting to see my son back… I thought our relatives were coming to express their condolence to me on the death of my martyred brother in

Afghanistan. My paternal uncle talked about him, my martyred brother in Afghanistan, and said "You were khahar-e shahid [sister of a martyr] and now you have become madar-e shahid [mother of a martyr]. [Name of her son] has been martyred in Syria." I paused after hearing this. I didn't shake, but felt I was going down as ice melts. I felt I was being levelled to the ground and going down and the earth was opening.

They [Iran's authorities] provide a place to live, such as apartments, to the families of the martyred. They can live in that place for as long as they wish and are alive. But they're not owners and cannot pass that on as property after their death. There are apartment complexes for these families where they can live during their lifetimes. This is what my mum told me after coming home [to Herat] for a visit. She'll soon go back to Iran. If they didn't want to live [in the apartment complex], they would be given [money for] their rent and it would be up to them how to spend it and where to live. They also get the monthly pay of their martyred son [paid by the Iranian government's Foundation of Martyrs and Veterans Affairs]. They used to get support from him from Syria and Iran while he was alive and they were living here in Herat.

One Tehran-based interviewee who had lost a son in Syria about three years ago said Iranian financial support had been decreasing over time, from a peak of 2.2 million tomans per month in 2016 to 1.2 million tomans per month in early 2019, a fall of about 55 per cent (at the time of writing, one million tomans was about 5,500-6,000 afghanis or 70-77 US dollars). Before the interviewee's son went to Syria, her husband had been dying of cancer and she had to support a family of four children – one daughter and three sons – on her own. Her request for aid at the time had been rejected, nastily, by the relevant Iranian authorities:

Because we were having a tough life, I once approached the komiteye emdad [Imam Khomeini Relief Committee, a major Iranian charity organisation] for help. An officer there told me, "Woman, go! We cannot even help our own Iranians, and Afghans come here." I said "My husband has cancer and is dying. I have children." The officer said, "Don't argue with

me!" I said, "You are Muslims and following the religion of Islam. You should help me in this situation. Many had introduced you to us to go to and get some help." But the officer took our [temporary migration] registration cards and tore them up. So I even lost my cards. We had registered but didn't get the [refugee] documents [known in Iran as amayesh cards].

In addition to some money and a food stipend from the Iranian government because of the death of her son in Syria, she and her remaining children work to make a living in Iran. However, residence papers are no longer a concern for them, as this family received them after their son fought in Syria. They might now even get Iranian citizenship following the son's death.

There has also been support of a religious, psychological and social nature for bereaved families. Several interviewees spoke about collective pilgrimages to Shia shrines in Mashhad and Qom, considered Iran's two holiest cities, and Damascus in Syria, especially the shrine of Sayyeda Zeinab. These would obviously not have happened without Iranian support. The women said the pilgrimages helped them begin coping with their bereavement. There were also informal support groups for bereaved women, both on and offline either organised by the women themselves or the Iranian government (or a combination of the two). Online, women formed groups through social media platforms such as Telegram (before and even after its filtering in Iran) where they wrote and talked to one another about what they were going through and shared memories and pictures. In actual get-togethers, often once a week on Thursdays before the weekend, they gathered to pray, read the Quran and listen to religious sermons and other speeches, including by Iranian clerics who tend to portray their losses in highly favourable religious terms. For instance, they indicated that the dead men had attained, as a Tehran-based interviewee put it, "one of the highest degrees of martyrdom in the presence of Allah the Almighty." The women also visit the graves of their men and others in cemeteries in Iran, both individually and collectively.

These women's activities and the official support accorded by the Iranian government also served to make both the Fatemiyun-related women and other Afghan women in Iran aware of the recognition Iran has given to these families. This, in turn, has made other families think about or be more receptive to the idea of men going to fight in Syria.

Women coping with controversy

From the outset, there were bitter controversies about Afghan men fighting in Syria, the benefits they and their families receive, the status of men who lost their lives fighting in Syria and whether the sacrifices were worth it. With men getting killed or injured at very high rates, disputes became even more prominent. This has been very disconcerting for family members including women, in particular mothers and wives.

However, these controversies were not often spoken about in public. Moreover, members of Fatemiyun-related families tended to maintain limited interaction with others who challenged them over their men's involvement in the Syrian war.

In some instances, nevertheless, the contentious issues were discussed among Fatemiyun-related families themselves. In a Thursday get-together of women who had lost men in Syria referred to above, a Tehran-based woman who lost a son in the Syrian war addressed this question to the 'Haj Agha' (Iranian cleric) leading the discussion that day:

It's upsetting that some people don't consider our martyrs as martyrs. They say they've been killed in a foreign war. This is even said by our close relatives, who tell us, "Your sons or husbands haven't been martyred. You sent them to get killed in Syria intentionally." Even a cleric said those who went and lost their lives in Syria had not been martyred, but were killed. The Haj Agha's reply was that those who say these things are gomrah [misguided] who want to impose their beliefs on the people.

Although the Iranian cleric's answer was a conclusive one, whether she was convinced by his answer is a different matter.

In Herat and Afghanistan more broadly, Fatemiyun-related families faced an additional controversy: why should men chose to fight jihad in Syria and not, for instance, against insurgents in Afghanistan that have also attacked religious places like mosques? Fatemiyun families including women found this question disturbing, but they were themselves unable (or unwilling) to elaborate, apart from saying that Islam has no borders. Even if some families got involved in heated disputes over this and other questions, answers were never convincing for the other side.

The controversy not only affected the Fatemiyun families but also the wider communities in which they live, including in Iran. This was even reflected in a rare Iranian news report about a Fatemiyun woman who had lost her husband in Syria. It recounts her meeting on a train two Iranian women who were opposed to the Iranian government's intervention there. A degree of jealousy or unhappiness towards Fatemiyun's privileges appears to be mixed in their argument:[21]

Once the two Iranian women noticed my husband was a Fatemiyun martyr, they said "You got 8 million tomans because your husband went to fight [in Syria]." I said "Look at me and my child's conditions. With these conditions, did we get eight million tomans? We still live in a rented house." I… said "If they gave you eight million tomans, you would also go ahead and send your dear ones there to bring you money." They said "It's none of our business. That alien country has nothing to do with us." I said, "What you mean by 'alien country'. If there's war in a Muslim country, we must all help. It's related to all of us. There's no such thing as our country and their country." My daughter afterwards told her amma [paternal aunt] that [one of the two Iranian women] was an old woman who was very bi-hijab [unveiled].

Why Afghan men go to war in Syria, why their jihad should be waged in Syria and how those killed in Syria should be treated have been particularly unsettling questions for the Fatemiyun families, including women. There has been no convincing response for those who asked. Many women who have lost their men in the Syrian war and others continue to wonder at whether the entire involvement was ultimately worth it.

Women coping after men return

The Syrian war has also given the women behind the Fatemiyun other problems. Once wounded and no longer able to fight, men were sent back to Iran for hospital care provided by the Iranian government. Once discharged, however, they returned to their homes, where it was women, mothers and wives in particular, who provided essential care to help them return to normal life. This has been a tremendous ordeal for women. Three of the interviewees were responsible for dealing with men with various injuries, including hands and legs shattered by shrapnel and a jaw hit by a bullet. In many cases, it took months for these men to recover, if they recovered at all, during which the women provided constant care, as well as prayers and other supportive rituals they believed would hasten the healing. However, the physical and mental scars of war will long remain with the men and their families.

Besides their physical injuries, according to all ten women interviewed, the Fatemiyun men have been severely traumatised. Upon their return, some men confided in their mothers and wives in particular about their terrible experiences in the war, especially their witnessing friends and comrades whom they had come to know intimately dying terrifying deaths. In addition to signs resembling the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (those affected were called mawji shoda – shell-shocked – by the interviewees), such as nightmares, flashbacks, waking visions and unaccountable anger, the men suffer high levels of survivor guilt. Three quotes below describe the trauma of war, one indicating the psychological consequences of witnessing war crimes:

> *After he returned, he wasn't the previous man. He was aggressive. He had nightmares. Sometimes he cried loudly. He was depressed and often nervous. He was always saying he must return, he must go back to the war in Syria and he must be martyred… He wasn't talking about the benefits Iran was giving the combatants any longer, but was always saying he didn't deserve martyrdom and must go back to get martyred. This was very worrying for me. Some nights, he talked about his*

close friends who had been martyred there in frightening ways.

– A Herat-based wife of a Fatemiyun fighter

My son is now mentally unstable. If the TV volume is a bit high or the kids make some noise, he soon becomes angry. He becomes irritated. He cannot tolerate sound easily. These are the effects of the noise of war and explosions, I suppose. No one knows what he's going through. These things happen to him sometimes. He's no longer calm. He isn't happy. He says he never feels happy anymore.

– A Tehran-based mother of a Fatemiyun fighter

He said he'd certainly go back to Syria after I told him not to go for the sake of his wife and children. He had one child then. He talked about the severity of the war, about Daesh kidnapping young girls and slaughtering and decapitating men, even old men ... They [Daesh] slaughtered mothers and fathers and little children in front of the rest of their families. He said he wasn't at rest even for a second after seeing these scenes in Syria. I told him not to go this time, but he said it was just the beginning of his work in Syria. My parents fell at his feet, begging him not to go, but it was no use in keeping him away from Syria. His wife asked me to intervene, but we all failed in stopping him from going to Syria again.

– A Herat-based sister of a Fatemiyun fighter

War crimes were also perpetrated in Syria by pro-regime forces (details on the serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law committed by all parties to the conflict can be read in this February 2018 report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic). It is possible that the Fatemiyun were involved in these crimes. AAN received information about at least one such case, on 15 February 2015, reported by human rights activists in Syria. According to this information, the Fatemiyun were part of a fighting force comprised of "[Pakistani] Zainabyoun, [Lebanese] Hezbollah, [Syrian]

Assad army and Assad militants [possibly militias]" that blocked and attacked various small towns in the countryside north of Aleppo, namely in the Al-Mallah, Retyan, Herdatnin and Bashkoy areas. While the Syrian forces attacked houses in the towns driving some inhabitants to flee, the Fatemiyun were reportedly stationed at checkposts outside the towns and were involved in shooting fleeing civilians in their cars. In total, 43 civilians were killed and 150 more were injured (along with nine members of the opposition Free Syrian Army who were also killed). It is not clear whether the number of victims included only those harmed at the checkposts or also those in town. AAN has been unable to independently verify this report.

If true, however, this and other possible similar cases could be another factor contributing to former Fatemiyun fighters' trauma, as it would be extremely difficult to speak about and cope with them, with potential judicial consequences, at least in Afghanistan.

Conclusion

While it was often the men themselves who ultimately decided whether to go to fight in Syria and to continue fighting there, the women, wives and mothers in particular, played important roles in the decisions made. In some cases, women were consulted and some women, certainly, were able to prevent or put an end to their men's involvement, often, however, through bitter rows. Yet in other cases, they lacked any influence in their men's decision-making.

These women were torn between wanting their men to stay at home and the knowledge that living without them would be economically tough. Often it was difficult living conditions which drove their men to go to Syria in the first place, given the promise of material benefits if they went; some fighters also had a strong religious motivation. Over time, for many of the women, their positions gradually shifted from total resistance – which had often delayed, but in the case of our ten interviewees, not stopped their men from going – to increased acceptance, once the men's involvement brought benefits to their families. This was especially the case for family's already

in Iran or for whom their men's decision to fight in Syria meant they could move there.

Whatever role women had in men's decision-making, these decisions have seriously affected their lives. After their men left, it fell to the women, and to wives, in particular, to carry on all the family work. This was a daily struggle, particularly when financial support received in Iran shrank due to the plummeting value of Iran's currency. In particular, men's absence created huge difficulties for families left with no man at home and for those wives who had to live with in-laws they did not get on with. Gravely concerned about the safety of their men, women resorted to a host of religious rituals. Those enacted collectively served a social function as well, allowing women to keep abreast of the goings-on of Fatemiyun in Syria.

Women have had to struggle to cope with their men returning injured or traumatised, or as corpses. Women related in the interviews how they have provided care to those injured and traumatised to help them get back to normal life. They have been helped by online and actual support groups, but the hurt and damage of the war will remain to haunt these families for a long time. Supported by the Iranian government, these same support groups have made Fatemiyun-related and other Afghan families aware of the recognition Iran has awarded the Fatemiyun fighters and their families. That recognition has also, in turn, helped ongoing recruitment.

The women have also faced criticism from relatives and others as to why their men went to fight in Syria in the first place. Sometimes, they have become embroiled in bitter disputes within their communities. This has been especially the case in Afghanistan, where perceptions of Afghans going to fight in Syria have been far more negative than in Iran. There, regime propaganda in favour of the Syrian war has had a strong impact. Some women had second thoughts about whether the sacrifices had been worth it, especially when their men were killed or severely injured in action. Many continue to wonder at what has happened and why.

These ordinary, down-to-earth families were struggling to cope with dire socio-economic circumstances when they felt

the pull of the Syrian war. Their men opted or were compelled, to pursue war as a way of life, for better or for worse. They could have instead lived lives in and through peace.

(1) This dispatch is based on interviews with ten women with close relatives among the Fatemiyun: three wives, two mothers, three sisters, one maternal aunt and one woman who was both wife and mother to Fatemiyun fighters (ie her husband and her son). Given their indirect involvement in and deep knowledge of the Fatemiyun group, these women are key informants. To capture the potential geographic and other variations in experiences of Fatemiyun women, the author decided to conduct interviews in Afghanistan, in Herat city, and Tehran – five in each. They were carried out in late 2018 and early 2019. Of the ten families studied through these women, four were already in Iran when their men went to war in Syria, three left Afghanistan to live in Iran, one was preparing to move, one's male relative was back in Herat and had stopped fighting in the war, and the interviewee from the last family had prevented her male relative from returning to Syria.

The women were approached by two female research assistants (one in Herat and one in Tehran) who had previous acquaintanceship and therefore already some rapport with them. This prior familiarity provided easier and safer access, both for the key informants and the research assistants, and contributed to a 'do-no-harm' research approach. The anonymity of both the key informants and the research assistants is maintained here to protect their privacy and the confidentiality of the conversations.

Having secured the consent of the interviewees to take part in this research (in a few cases, potential interviewees refused to do so, something which was fully respected), the research assistants used a rough list of general, open-ended questions to stimulate conversation. The questions were about family decision-making prior to the men joining the war in Syria, family life while the men were fighting away from home, family life if the men were killed, injured or affected otherwise and family life after Syria, at least at the time of the interviews. The interviews were largely unstructured and the

interviewees were not interrupted to allow as natural flow as possible in the conversations. The conversations were either recorded (if permission was granted) or written down. The transcribed and handwritten conversations were analysed and form the basis of this dispatch.

AAN takes research security seriously. Without stressing that the topic was 'sensitive' and thus making it so beforehand, the author held several rounds of consultations with the research assistants over the course of a couple of months, talking through the need to make sure their research would pose no risk to them or their key informants and that both had the right to quit the research whenever they wanted to. Since the research assistants approached women they knew and relationships of trust already existed, they determined that the research was reasonably safe and therefore doable.

The ten key informant interviews are complemented by the author's intermittent observations, since 2014, of an extended family that has members in the Fatemiyun. Through on-and-off observations and informal conversations over the course of five years, it became possible to study several members of the Fatemiyun from within and over time, contrasting with research approaches that have so far looked at the group from without or only at one point in time.

Finally, this dispatch does not claim to be representative. The sample size is small (n = 10) and the interviewees were chosen through convenience sampling. However, given what was feasible, it is an exploratory study that is relevant to the topic under discussion (experiences of the Syrian war by women whose men have participated in it). Such subjects are often best captured through qualitative approaches.

(2) One of the things clerics including this Afghan one have done in Syria has been to recite religious songs such as nohas (lamentations) and maddahis (panegyrics) to reinforce fighters' morale. For example, to challenge the idea that individuals have gone to war in Syria just to get better pay than what they could find back in Iran, one noha quotes a child whose father was killed in the Syrian war as saying: "Love is priceless. To fight and to die has no price but for love [of

defending Shia faith].” The clerics are mostly stationed in military bases or mosques that the Fatemiyun fighters visit in Syria.

(3) Hazrat Fatema is the daughter of the Prophet Muhammad and wife to Ali ibn Abi Taleb, the first imam for Shia Muslims and the fourth caliph for Sunni Muslims.

(4) In sofreh salawat ceremonies that were held or attended by the interviewees, a woman usually hosted other women in her home to recite thousands of salawat (salutations to the Prophet Muhammad and his progeny) with tasbih (prayer beads). The women also prayed to God to answer their praying, including entreaties for their men to be well and return from Syria safe and sound. They then ate food that was mostly ash (soup). These events were also opportunities for both hosting and participating women to meet and socialise.

(5) It refers to the shrine/mosque in southern Damascus, the Syrian capital, in which lies the Prophet Muhammad’s granddaughter, Sayyeda Zeinab. Her tomb is an important Shia shrine. She is highly revered by Shia Muslims for her role in preserving and continuing the prophet’s lineage through her grandparents, Fatema and Ali.

(6) The Office of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei (aka Beit-e Rahbari or the House of Leadership) is reportedly one of Iran’s wealthiest institutions with “holdings of about $95bn,” according to this BBC report about recent United States sanctions targeting his assets. However, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani responded to these US sanctions by saying: “They [the Americans] say they want to confiscate the property of our leader. His property is just a hosseiniya [a place of worship] and a simple house. Our leaders are not like the leaders of other countries who have billions in their foreign accounts that they want to sanction and confiscate.”

(7) There have been protests in Iran against the Iranian government spending billions of US dollars financing and supporting its regional allies including Syria, given deteriorating economic conditions for Iranians inside the country. There was also heated discussion in Iran when militia groups such as the Fatemiyun got involved in assisting people

affected by recent destructive floods there. Regarded as an 'alien' involvement, some Iranians said they had been sent to suppress domestic protests.

The Two Faces of the Fatemiyun (I): Revisiting the male fighters. The Two Faces of the Fatemiyun (II): The women behind the fighters. Mohsen Hamidi. 08 July and 16 July 2019. The Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN) is an independent nonprofit policy research organisation. It aims to bring together the knowledge, experience and drive of a large number of experts to better inform policy and to increase the understanding of Afghan realities. It is driven by engagement and curiosity and is committed to producing analysis on Afghanistan and its region, which is independent, of high quality and research-based. Our aim is to be bi-taraf but not bi-tafawut – impartial, but not indifferent. Since its establishment in 2009 AAN's publications have informed and influenced the work of policymakers, journalists, academics and development workers working on Afghanistan. AAN's analysts are regularly asked to speak at conferences and briefings around the world, and frequently appear as commentators in the media. https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/about-us/

Conclusion

So what do we make of the Fatemiyun based on the above? Although it is clear that one's understanding of the group is mostly shaped by where one stands ideologically and with whom one interacts, some assertions are more plausible than others. When it comes to mobilising fighters, the Iranian government with its incentives and pressures has been a key motivator, aided in large part by the miserable conditions in which many Afghans there live. At the same time, the agency of fighters themselves – mostly young men seeking an identity in dire circumstances – cannot be ignored; however, this would not have led them to fight in Syria without the mobilisation and propaganda by the Iranian government.

Historical accounts of Fatemiyun fighters indicate that several have been involved in a series of successive wars in the region, mobilised by various state and non-state actors. In these accounts, fighting wars on behalf of others has turned

into a lifestyle for many men. This is yet another version of the damaging cultural message that to be a man means to fight a war. In the recent Fatemiyun reincarnation, many Afghan youths have gone to war in Syria to establish their identity as men. As such, they have been able to support their parents and form their own families and have taken them to live in Iran. They have also won recognition for Afghan communities in that country. So, they feel they have become men through joining the Fatemiyun and fighting Iran's war in Syria.

As for returning 'home,' Fatemiyun ex-fighters, regardless of their disputed numbers, generally prefer to return to Iran and to turn it into a 'new home' for themselves and their families. This is possible thanks to residence permits and other benefits achieved through fighting in Syria. As for those who return to Afghanistan, they struggle to get back to civilian life. Many again end up in the bleak conditions they tried to escape by going to fight in Syria in the first instance. So far, there seems to be no community support for their future reintegration into society. The generally negative attitude towards them by the government threatens to alienate them instead. On the other hand, some will argue that providing them with reintegration support might set a negative precedent, encouraging others to go and fight outside the country and then return and be welcomed back.

Reports of the involvement of the Fatemiyun as an organisation in recent fighting and other violent disputes in Afghanistan should be taken with a large grain of salt. If Fatemiyun members were involved, it was on an individual, not organisational, basis, at least thus far – although conditions might arise in the future causing higher levels of mobilisation (for instance the Afghan government's failure to protect Shia communities and in particular mosques). As for the members who are still in Syria or who have returned to Iran, they are clearly under much greater Iranian influence than those now in Afghanistan, since Iran could cut Syria-related benefits to 'encourage' them to, for example, return to Syria or to fight elsewhere. As Hauch writes, although the Fatemiyun have found a place in Iran's narrative on Syria, "their place in [Iranian] society remains precarious."

Edited by Sari Kouvo, Martine van Bijlert, Thomas Ruttig and Kate Clark. Mohsen Hamidi (pseudonym) is a local researcher with focus on western Afghanistan including Afghan-Iranian relations. The Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN) is an independent non-profit policy research organisation. It aims to bring together the knowledge, experience and drive of a large number of experts to better inform policy and to increase the understanding of Afghan realities. It is driven by engagement and curiosity and is committed to producing analysis on Afghanistan and its region, which is independent, of high quality and research-based. Our aim is to be bi-taraf but not bi-tafawut–impartial, but not indifferent. Since its establishment in 2009 AAN's publications have informed and influenced the work of policymakers, journalists, academics and development workers working on Afghanistan. AAN's analysts are regularly asked to speak at conferences and briefings around the world, and frequently appear as commentators in the media. https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/about-us/

Chapter 10

The Rise and fall of Taliban Regime (1994-2001) in Afghanistan: The Internal Dynamics

Dr. Qamar Fatima

Abstract:

This study intends to analyze the Rise and Fall of Taliban Regime in Afghanistan. To understand the internal dynamics of the rise and fall of Taliban regime, this study elaborates the Ideological and Religious bases, Ethnic Composition, Geographical location, the causes of rise, Governance by Taliban, and The fall of Taliban seen through the lenses of domestic factors. Key Word: the Civil War, Kabul, Khandhar, Taliban, Ethnic, Religious bases, Madrassa, Fall of Kabul, Bamiyan statutes, Post-Soviet political Chaos: The Civil War in Afghanistan 1989 The Civil war and Afghan styled „Buzkashi" between ex Afghan Mujahideen Commanders and war lords confirmed the Soviet point of view that these Afghan Mujahideen instead of bringing peace, stability and development, would drag Afghanistan into medieval ages, "from which by the late Twentieth century, it had barley emerged" (Tanner, Stephen, 2000, p. 277).

Besides, destruction and devastation, this civil war ushered the loss of faith and reverence for their leadership. After the withdrawal of Soviet Forces in 1989, a few of the mujahideen leaders, once the symbol of most sacred tenet of Islam "the Jihad" were found involved into some heinous and unsocial activities, which later became the major cause of unprecedented change in traditional political anatomy of Afghan society. The loss of faith in mujahideen leaders also stemmed from the other two factors: first, they were seeing no end to their internecine infighting and second the incapacity and inefficiency of political leadership to eliminate prevalent famine conditions and economic deterioration, which really had been futile to their normal life.

This had been yet part of their memory that even Soviet occupation could not affect so badly the lives of common Afghans as it was ruining now by the triumphant mujahideen rule. The major cities, during the Soviet occupation, generally remained secured where the normalcy of life was very much possible. Contrary to it, during the internal strife the major cities of Afghans became the epicenter of power struggle. As Michael Griffin (2001) stated that almost 300,000 Kabulis left Kabul for Jalalabad. In the end of 1994, approximately, 1000 people fled from the capital city every day. Majority of them took refuge in the SharShai camp. The migrants were highly qualified that “It was referred to as University of Kabul in Exile” (p. 26)

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As Michael Griffin (2001) stated that almost 300,000 Kabulis left Kabul for Jalalabad. In the end of 1994, approximately, 1000 people fled from the capital city every day. Majority of them took refuge in the SharShai camp. The migrants were highly qualified that “It was referred to as University of Kabul in Exile” (p. 26) More than 500 experienced secondary school teachers, lot of Doctors, technicians, health workers, senior civil servants, and former Army officers left Kabul just to save their lives. Similarly, the situation in other cities like Kandahar, Baghaln, and Kunduz was not different form Kabul. The wide spread ferocity and violence, the unsocial leanings of Afghan Mujahideen strongly created the hatred among Afghan people for their symbols of jihad who successfully expelled Soviet forces but failed to reconcile with each other.

The Afghan ex commanders now were frequently involved into looting, raping and specifically drug trafficking with an excuse that the end users of these drugs are infidels. The armed gangs were commonly observable phenomenon. They, besides involving in criminal activities, were levying taxes on passer by trucks. The 400 US dollars by truck drivers and 2 US dollars were to be paid by passengers to these armed gangs at check posts which were seventy one between Chamman and Heart only.(Matinun-din-Kamal, 2002, p. 23) Mullah Zaeef (2010) confirmed these checkpoints in his book. By stating that…many of the people who went to the city would comeback with tales of anarchy and chaos (pp. 59-60) Situation in Kandahar Before the rise of the Taliban movement, besides Kabul, Kandahar was also an important battlefield for warring factions. This city during the Afghan resistance against Soviets presented somewhat different pattern, as found by Ahmed Rashid (2000) “In Kandahar the struggle against the Soviets was “jihad” led by clan, chiefs and Ulema (senior scholars) rather than by ideological jihad led by Islamists” (p. 29). As this city was under the influence of Harkat-e-Inqalabi Islami and Hizb-eIslami respectively led by Nabi Muahamdi and MulaviYounas Khalis who also enjoyed support from other parts of south western Afghanistan.

Kandahar, historically, had been a trade route being located at the intersection of ancient route of eastwards across the Bolan Pass to Sind, the Arabian Sea and westward to Herat and Iran.

This location made it a transiting point for goods, Arts and crafts between Iran and India having famous Bazars for centuries. Its historical significance lies in another fact that The Durranis who instrumented the creation of Afghan State in 1747 were from Kandahar. Religiously it also commanded prominence because of the shrine of the Cloak of Holy Prophet(Peace be upon Him) which was rarely shown on certain occasions like once King Amanullah needed to muster the support of the Pushtoon Tribes in 1929 or when cholera epidemic hit the country in 1935. In 20th century, it was once again shown to common masses when Mullah Omer was declared Amir-ul-Momineen. (Rashid Ahmed, 2000, p. 21) Kandahar by the year 1994 was true reflector of anarchic and chaotic Afghanistan. As there were illegal check posts established by the commander Nadir Jan and Slaeh Daro Khan on Kandahar-Heart road who had been immensely involved in all types of unsocial and criminal activities. (Misra, Amenlandau, 2004, p. 62).

They were also damaging public assets like telephone wires, poles, trees, factory machinery and road rollers by selling to Pakistani trade and scrape merchants. (Matinuddin Kamal, 1999, p. 25) They did not even spare the private property of common people, which resulted into widespread fear and uncertainty in the daily life of common Kandahari Afghans. The most quoted event, which became the immediate cause of Taliban eruption, was the harassment of a Herati family on 20 September 1994, which was stopped at a check point, their boys were molested, and girls were repeatedly raped, and finally were burnt down after brutally killing them. Mullah Omer was the first who reached at crime spot. Reportedly, he gathered some Madrassa students who helped him to bury the dead bodies of that family.

Thereafter they turned up with all commitment to purge Afghan Society form these social evils. (Matinuddin, Kamal, 1999, p. 26& Griffin, Micheal, 2001, p. 23 & Rashid, Ahmed, 2000, p. 20). At the same time, some veteran Mujahideen were

also in the same thought process as stated by Mullah Zaeef (2010) the stories made me feel uneasy. I remembered the Jihad and the sacrifices we had made, it had been for nothing (p. 61) Therefore, Taliban who had already existed in the Afghan society made their mind to launch a movement for eradication of all the curses from Kandahar and surrounding areas. Mullah Zaeef claimed that a host of meeting took place and finally a founding meeting convened in the late autumn of 1994. Initially forty to fifty Taliban attended the meeting at white Mosque in SangeSar.

The prominent founding members were Mulvi Shaib Abduls Samad, Mullah Muahammad Omer Akhund and Abdul Sattar Akhund. The next night BBC announced the birth of a new movement in Afghanistan with a purpose to purify society from illegal armed groups. At the start, the movement did not issue any formal statement regarding their objectives or agenda. However, media started coining names for the movement (Zaeef, Mullah, 2010, p. 65) Mullah Omer later in an interview told that “We were fighting against Muslims who gone wrong. How could we remain quite when we could see crimes being committed against women and the poor” (Rashid, Ahmed, 2000, p. 25) The Taliban leaders initially sent verbal messages at different check posts. However, people at these check posts ignored them.

Finally, as a last resort, they made an assault on the nearest check posts of Daro Khan. It was so much successful that it sent a strong message to other armed gangs who left their respective check posts without a fight leaving behind stockpiles of weapons and ammunition. Soon Taliban seized Kandahar when Mullah Naqib, the most prominent commander with 2500 men gave in without any resistance. On capturing Kandahar, Taliban did not lose much time in imposing their self-interpreted version of Islam. All girl schools were banned and working women were barred from going outside. TV sets were smashed and all other recreational sports activities were banned.

Ideological and Ethnic Composition of Taliban Movement Afghanistan is a heterogeneous society, with multiple sources of identities for its population. To understand the ethnic and

ideological bases of Taliban movement, we need to unearth the ethnic and religious intricacies of Afghan society. It has always been predominantly a Muslim state but sharply divided along ethnic and sectarian lines. The eighty percent of Afghans profess Sunni Islam, which is further sub-divided into four schools of thought with slight differences over the interpretations of Sunnah and Quran. These four sects include the Hanfite, Maliki, Shafi, and Humbali of which a little detail is given here. Majority of the Afghans follow the Hanfi school of Thought. The Shiites also take a considerable share in the faith of Afghan Muslims with subdivision of Ithnaashari, Ismailia, and Zaidyias.

These Shiites live close to Iranian border, Hazarajat and also in urban centres.(Dupree, Loius,1980, p. 103) It has been observed that “few Muslim Peoples in the world observe the rituals and the piety of Islam with such regularity and emotions as the Afghans” (Rashid, Ahmed, 2000, p. 82) So the Islamic education since its arrival has remained the part and parcel of Afghan Society, being imparted through many ways and resources. The Mosques schools specifically in the villages provide the elementary level of education, without having any regular and specific institutional or administrative rules. They provide basic learning for all the children in their neighbourhood. After Mosques schools children usually start primary school or Madrassas. The Seekers or Talibul-ilms have remained a common phenomenon of Afghan society.

Curriculum and History of Madrassa Institution The history of Madrassa institution starts form the eleventh century of Iraq when Islamic educational system was defined to acquire knowledge of religion and prepare Islamic clergy under the rule of Nizamul-Mulk. Madrassas provide a higher level of education. These madrassas are residential institutions, which sometimes also provide stipends to give financial support to student’s families. The curriculums of these institutions are usually based on Dars-e-Nizami with little variation in both India and Pakistan. The traditional teaching in Islamic educational system is always based upon Islamic Law: Fiqh, Hadith, Sunnah, Tafseer and logic, however some institutions also include in their syllabi secular subjects as well. But, In

KPK (NWFP) the Madrassas usually follow only these subjects. (International Crisis Group Asia Report, 2005, p. 5 &Rehman Tariq, July 1998, p. 5)

Taliban is the plural of Talib, which means seekers, generally associated with the knowledge of Religion. The students and Teachers of Islamic learning are always highly motivated and a main source of providing specialists in religious matters. Traditional Madrassas always existed at both village and city levels in Afghan Society. Usually the repute of the institution, they had attended determined the veneration and respect of Islamic scholars. Traditionally, in Afghanistan, the more motivated seekers used to go for higher learning either to Bokhara, Egypt, Syria, or to India where Dar-ul –Uloom Deo-Band existed as a seat of learning with a repute of the best institution in traditional theological religious knowledge based on Sunni Islam with new educational methods. It was in 16th century when Madrassas started to flourish under Muslim Rulers.

As there are three primary sub sects of Sunni Islam which became the source of establishment of madrassas. These sects" include Deobanis, Bravelis, and the Ahl-Hadith. To understand the ideological background of Taliban Movement, there is also a need to focus on the role of Madrassas, their educational patterns and influences on society specifically in Pakistan. The growth of Madrassas in Pakistan shows the diversity in terms of sects. These sects include: The Bravelis, Deobanids, Ahal –e-Hadith. They all have their own specific interpretation of sharia and traditions. As Bravelis believe in tradition of the folk Islam, accommodate the veneration for Sufis, Pirs and Shrines; Deobandis and Ahl-Hadith criticize their respect for local influences. The Madrassas run by Bravelis also follow the Dars-e-Nizami course.

The Ahal Hadith school of thought is usually known as nonconformists as they do not follow any particular Fiqh or interpretation of Islamic jurisprudence. The nomenclature associated to them is Whabi after Muhammad Bin Abdul Wahab (1703-1792) of Saudi Arabia. The Deobandi and this sect are ideologically very close to each other. The Deobandi school of thought manifested a conservative orthodox Salafist

egalitarian model exemplifying the life and times of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) for the Muslims. Some well-known Muslim scholars established a Madrassa in 1866 in Deoband UP India with a well-defined organizational structure; the curriculum designed was to impart the knowledge of Sharia law and Fiqh.

The Pioneers were Maulana Qasim Nauntwi (1833-1877) and Maulana Rasid Ahmed Gangohi (1829-1905) derived their inspiration from Whabisim, which emerged in 18th century and promoted the Puritanism of religious practices. Talibulilms from all over the world used to come to this institution.(Rlaph Magnus, Eden Naby,2002, pp. 75-76). Dars-e-Nizami was the main source of its curriculum. The most significant part of their teaching was anti Shiite views. The Deobandis forcefully rejected the folk Islam, which heavily relied upon saints and mysticism. In Pakistan Jamiat-Islami and JamiatUlma–e-Islam (JUI) believe in the Deobandi philosophy. Both these political parties run the largest numbers of madrassas in Pakistan.

The Soviet invasion in Afghanistan had a great ramification in terms of growth and the role of Madrassas and their students in Pakistani Political system. This invasion made millions of Afghans to flee from their mother land and get settled into Refugee Camps in KPKP(NWFP) and Baluchistan, where Deobanism was already very much influential, not only in faith but also in Madrassas education. Similarly the Afghanistan Mujahideen leadership and later on Taliban leadership were the followers of Deobandi traditions, received their education in Deobandi influenced Madrassa located in Pakistan. As M. J. Ghouri (2001) mentioned in his book that The Mullah Omer and ninety percent of Taliban leadership like Talibanas former envoys to UN and their representatives in Islamabad were the graduates from Dar uloom Haqqania Binori Town Karachi.

The massive funding from the US, Saudi Arabia and parallel support from government institutions of Pakistan to knock down Soviet Union in Afghanistan instrumented in spreading radical Madrassas in Pakistan.(Chandran, Suba, 2003, para.2). This proliferation began in the 1980"s and continued; still no

concrete figures are available about the madrassas. The curriculum was drastically altered by USAID and new version of textbooks based on violent Islam were issued to the elementary school children in both the camps and Pashto border region of Afghanistan and Pakistan. As found by Leigh Nolan (2006) The University of Nebraska, Omaha (UNO) made 50 $ million contract with Education Center for Afghanistan (ECA) which was run by the seven Mujahideen organizations.(p. 39)

These madrassas incubated the Taliban movement rather appeared as a massive source of fresh recruits whenever they needed in Afghanistan. The student of these madrassas fully participated in resistance against Soviets. Mullah Zaeef confirmed the role of Taliban in Jihad against Soviets by stating that There is a common misconception that the The Taliban only came into being in 1994. In fact, the word Taliban is the plural form of Talib meaning student. As such as long as there have been madrassas, there have been religious students or Taliban (p. 10) The Taliban role in political, economic and military spheres, traditionally pervasive and evident as Mullah Mushki and Mullah Shor Bazar were some well-known Talibs who inflicted heavy causalities on the British forces during the third Afghan War,(Jacob, Happymon, 2006, p. 2). so this attire of resisting character of Taliban in Afghan Society during the foreign invasion continued and Taliban also fought against Soviet forces (Ghufran, Nasreen, 2001, pp. 462-487 & Mullah Zaeef, 2010, pp. 22) After the Soviet withdrawal, the Taliban leaders eased their role in political life and went back to Madrassas to complete their education. However, they were not satisfied with what was going on in the country. (Ghufran Nasreen, 2001, p. 467). In an interview with Rahim ullahYousafZai, Mullah Omer said, “we began fighting with Muslims who had astray. How could we remain quite when we heard and saw crimes being committed against the innocent, the poor, and the women” (Magnus & Naby, 1998, p. 194)

The Ethnic Background Afghan’s ethnic identity is based upon multiple sources, as its population majorly comes from four main ethnic groups, it is estimated that Pashtun constitute

38%, Tajiks, 25%, Hazaras 19% and Uzbeks 16%. The largest majority Pashtuns have further division into 30 tribes who maintained their political power until 1992 since 1747. These tribes belong to two of major confederations: the Durannis and Ghilzais. Durannis are settled on the flat lands from Farah to Kandahar, while Ghilzis mostly reside in the Southeast, between Kandhar and and Kabul, however their presence in the center and north of the country is also found due to coercive migration during the Durannis rule.(Riphenburg, Carol. K, 2005, p. 37)

Ethnic Composition of Afghanistan

The Duranni rule strengthened Pashtuns so much that their traditions, cultural patterns, and chores have become the major source of Afghan national identity. Pashtuns remained the major recipients in the distribution of land and property; they were also preferred for military recruitments. They enjoyed institutionalized dominance. The first blow to their power came into 1929 when Kabul was in the hand of a Tajik Habib-Ullah; however, Pashtun Nader Shah father of Zahir Shah recaptured it very soon. Pashtuns either Ghilzais or Durannis had been at the core of power in one way or the other in all the regimes. Burnet R. Rubin (1992) analyzing Afghanistan from rentier state perspective found that social structures in Afghanistan reflect kinship or religious identities. Afghanistan national society, he pointed out, however had been based upon ethnic stratification.

He stated that the head of state (king untill 1973, president from 1973 to 1978) was from Muhammadzai clan of the Barakzai tribe of the Durrani back ground. (p. 79). Anwar -Ul-Haq Ahdy (1995) pointed out towards the changing trends of interethnic relations that according to him began with the constitutional decade (1964-1973). In constitution no ethnic group" was granted any privileges that others do not enjoy" (p. 622) Likewise, the communist rule specifically Khalaq faction (1978-79) was also marked by the changing trends of interethnic relations when Uzbeki, Turkmani, Baluchi, and Nuristani were recognized as official languages. The same continuity in interethnic relations can also been seen during Parcham period when a large number of ethnic minorities were

recruited into armed forces and the bureaucracy. Ahdy (1995) viewed these changes in these words that “this policy not only drastically reduced the dominance of the Pashtuns in state institutions but eventually caused the breakdown of the state after Soviet forces withdrew” (p. 623)

Since April 1992, the decline of Pashtuns was quite visible when Pashtuns were under control of only two-fifths of the country despite being the largest majority of the country. The rise of the Taliban generated a sort of optimism among the Pashtuns about a reversal of their decline process. The ethnic cleansing in North of Taliban and in Kabul of non-Pashtuns during 1996-2001 virtually divided Afghanistan along the north-south and Pashtuns and non-Pashtuns lines.(Dawn, December, 5, 1996, UN Report: Afghanistan now divided on ethnic lines). The main stream leadership of Taliban Movement and its rule were self-evident of Pashtuns dominance at the core of Power. Out of 29 Taliban leaders, 14 were Ghilzais, 8 Durranis, and 7 non Pashtuns. (Ahmed, Rashid, 2000, p. 64) Nasreen Ghufran (2001) pointed out towards the Taliban’s efforts to integrate non –Pashtuns and Pashtuns into political realm. As given the names and ethnic identity of Central Shura in Kandahar. This has been opined that Taliban regime was accused to have been structured along ethnic lines, however, they made some efforts to bring non-Pashtuns into their Shura, “have not been considered as impartial regarding other ethnicities” (p. 437)

The fall of Kabul to Taliban

After capturing Kandahar, they moved towards the north of Kabul where local warlords surrendered to them. Urzgan and Zabul provinces came under their sway without even a shot fired by November and December 1994 respectively. In January 1995 a brief fighting took place at Helmand valley, finally it was conquered. Similarly, after one day fighting, the Taliban ceased Ghazani province when Mullah Abdul Salam Rocketti, despite having all skills to use Scud and Stinger missiles surrendered with weapon and territory. In continuation, the Feb 1995 marked another victory for Taliban and the important positions of Hikmatyar at Chaharsayab and Maidanshahr outside Kabul captured. Because of this victory

over HizbeIslami Kabulis heaved a sigh of relief who had been victim of severe causalities and deaths (Griffin Michael, 2001, p. 44-45) Taliban also opened all the roads for foods convoys to reach at Kabul so transport people felt relieved because of Taliban.

The year 1995 also saw new balances of power and remaking of alliances. In March 1995, Rabani forces pushed out Hizbe Wahadat e Islami, the most powerful Shiite group in Afghanistan. This made them to join hands with Taliban and decide to surrender with their weapons and positions to Taliban. But, this collaboration soon ended in dismay, when the leader of Shiite group Abdul Ali Mazari died in Taliban custody. After this incidence, Hazaras could not come close to Taliban; rather both groups became bitter enemy to each other. (Khalilzad Zalmay, 1996). &Ahmed Rashid (2000) have reviewed this incident that the Hazaras never forgave the Taliban for Mazari"s death and because of this incident a bloody ethnic and sectarian divide between Pashtun and Hazara Sunni and Shia, bubbling just below the surface, now came into open, (p. 35) In March 1995, Taliban faced a major setback since their birth when Masood forces launched a heavy attack when they left Kabul leaving behind hundreds of dead bodies so by the end of March Taliban seemed to disappear because they were losing rapidly.

After this defeat Taliban advanced towards North West where by late 1995, they captured Nimbroz and Farah. Ismail Khan could not stop their advances. The Burhan-ud-Din Rabani regime fearing of un-checked victories of Taliban sent two thousands Tajik fighters to defend Sindhand and Heart. Ismail Khan launched an offensive strike against Taliban and captured Dilaram on 23 Aug 1995, and some parts of Helmand, which apparently looked threatening power base of Taliban; however, Ismail Khan Governor of Herat was facing some problem in terms of supply payment and corruption. His Army indulged in harsh treatment with civilian population, made him unpopular among the Herat and surrounding areas. Due to these reasons, Ismail khan had not been in the position to sustain his strength against Taliban.

In the meantime, Taliban mustered their resources with twenty thousand men well equipped with arms and ammunition and cut the supply line of Herat. Finally, in the first week of Sep 1995 Ismail Khan fled away towards Iran. With the fall of Herat, Taliban were in complete control in Western Afghanistan. Taliban killed hundreds of Heratis, closed down girls schools and threw out thousands of women from work places. The fall of Herat became a prelude to ouster of Rabani government from Kabul. Taliban launched another attack on Kabul during October and November but Ahmed Shah Masood forces successfully pushed them back. Before the last offensive over the Kabul by Taliban, It massed by multitude of warring factions like force of Kabul government along with the bulk of left over equipment of the Former Communist Army and this was the strongest military force in the country. Abdul Rashid Dostam had twenty thousand men in his force. All these forces were engaged in fighting at one or the other place. In the Hazarajat at that time government forces and Shiite were contesting for the control of Bamiyan (Magnus Ralph H, 1997, p. 113)

These state of affairs facilitated Taliban as they on 11 Sep marched towards Jalalabad facing minimum resistance, ousted Haji Abdul Qadir who was accused of getting bribe from Pakistan and Taliban and fled away to Peshawar without fighting. After this capture, they moved towards Laghman and Kunar provinces where they also met with little resistance. These victories gave enough confidence to Taliban to attack Hikmatyar's controlled strategic city of Sarobi in Kabul province. Taliban occupied the city of Kabul without being a shot fired on 27 September 1996. Griffin has commented that Kabul was not won by arms but through strategic checkmate because the member of Ningrahar Shura left battlefield without fighting.

The Kabul, 27th, September 1996 on 27 September, this newly emerged rebel force occupied Kabul, the Capital of Afghanistan. The sitting President Burhanddin Rabbani and his allied Ahmed Shah forces abandoned it. (Dawn, September, 28, 1996) The first measure taken by them was the public hanging of ex-communist president Najibullah and his

brother accusing them to be brutal and un-Islamic, as in the words of Mullah Muhammad Rabbani, “He was against Islam. He was communist. He was a criminal” (Dawn, 28 September, 1996 & Megan, Arney, 1996) The bodies of Najibullah and his brother remained hanged for full 24 hours, but no sign of protest appeared at societal level because majority of population felt relieved on the takeover of Kabul by the Taliban in the hope of peace. The Kabul city had been prey to 80 percent destruction and devastation since very long, causing 30,000 deaths and complete economic collapse. (The New York Times, September, 29 1996,)

Taliban’s Governance Taliban came with an objective to purge Afghan society from criminals and make peace at large. The Islamist orientation was the inspirational and guiding force in Taliban’s governance. Mullah Muhammad was declared Amir-ulMomineen by the 1200 Islamic scholars in 1996. Taliban changed the name of Afghanistan from the Islamic State of Afghanistan to Islamic Emirates of Afghanistan. The Bureaucratic structure was patterned under the nomenclature of Shura, indicating the Islamic dimension of governance and system of consultation. Peter Marsden (2002) quoting Taliban’s Liaison officer presented Mullah Omer vision that “his main goal was rid Afghanistan of corrupt, western oriented time servers” (p. 61). There were three bodies of Shuras, one in Kandahar as Central Shura, the Kabul Shura, and a Military Shura.

The Supreme Shura at Kandahar actually authorized to take all decisions. The Provincial governors were also appointed. A unique feature of Taliban governance was that there was no line of demarcation between Military commanders and Ministers, as the same person had to go for fight in the battlefield and head an administrative department (Ghufran Nasreen, 2001, p. 74) In pursuance of their Islamic inspiration, their first and foremost task was to declare Islamic Sharia as Law of Land of Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. To eradicate crimes and infighting from society, a powerful unified and all pervasive Islamic government was considered vital across the country. The Taliban Government comprised twenty ministries, which worked to implement Sharia Law in all spirit

and soul. The most important ministry was of Religious Affairs, which meaning fully achieved its targets. This ministry instituted a law enforcement agency under the title of "Amar Bin Maroof Nahi Anil Munkir". This agency was responsible for the extensive implementation of Islamic punishment system, though sometimes excessively used these punishment to suppress common people unjustifiably. Sher Muammad Stankzai, the acting foreign minister speaking on Voice of Sharia on 20th November 1996 declared that Sharia's Hudood had ensured the safety of the lives and property of common man.

Form Herat to Jalalabad and Kabul no one could dare to commit theft or crimes. He also declared that God has revealed these laws to Muhammad (AS). "Those who consider imposition of this law against human rights are insulting all Muslims and their beliefs. (Peter, Marsden, 2002, p. 63) This reflects the stern belief of Taliban regarding the inevitability of Islamic law for ensuring the peace, security of life, property and dignity of people. The public hanging, speedy on the spot trial was rampant during the Taliban rule believing that these would bring far-reaching consequences. Even their opponents recognized that "robbery, rape, and murder had virtually vanished from Kabul since the first accused thief has been amputated". (John, F Burns, The New York Times, October, 22 1996, para.5 & Ghori, M.J, 2000, p. 57)

Though William Maley disagreed with this myth of peace by giving example from the writing of a Roman historian Tacitstus in the Agricol "they make a wilderness and they call it peace"(Maley, William, 1996, p. 275) Taliban formulated their policies under their own self-styled interpretation of Sharia; a great number of decrees were issued. These decrees specifically focused upon the role of women in society. The women fully denied from education, employment and any other social, recreational activities. However, men were made subject to strict dress code as western clothing and shaving became a prohibited act. On 5 December, 1996, the department for the promotion of virtues and prevention of vices, issued a verdict "since the Prophet Muhammad Peace be upon Him did not trim his beard all his life, therefore all

government employees are hereby informed that they should grow their beard within a month and half" (Marsden, Peter, 2002, p. 63)

All schools were closed down right after the assumption of power as Nancy Hatch Dupree (2001) mentioned in 1996, "The Taliban closed all schools in Kabul depriving 102,000 girls of education and 7,800 teachers of employment."(Maley, William, 1996, p. 277). Another decree made veiling mandatory for women which virtually secluded them minimizing their role in daily affairs. On December 6, 1996, it was announced that the department of promotion of virtues punished 225 women for being unveiled, which, according to hem, was an act against women dignity.(Dawn, September, 30, 1996) For enforcement of Sharia in true spirit, the extensive check posts were installed, where women were beaten or actually flogged.

Elaheh Rostami Povey (2003) observed that barring women from taking active part in day-to-day life activities deeply affected the economy and virtually lessened economic activities in the society. Resultantly, the hunger and poverty made many women prostitute. One most noticeable thing was that women were also forced to marry Taliban to end the prostitution. (p. 267). The decades long war and civil war fully distorted the social face of Afghan society, smashing the life pattern of Afghan women as a new type of women-headed family appeared. There were "approximately 35,000 women – headed household and these women were called "Zanane Bee Sarprast unprotected women". (Rostami, Elaheh Povey, 2003, p. 267 & Ghuffran, Nasreen, 2001& Rubin, Barnett

.R 1997). Because of Taliban's policy of women seclusion, these women were deprived of any livelihood which added their sufferings.

International community strongly condemned this policy. Though, initially the United States of America did not show any concern towards these repressive policies but due to growing condemnation and lobbying by women organization, the US government had to show their displeasure towards these policies when Madeline Albright in Nov 1997 first time

condemned Taliban's policies. Nevertheless, a meaningful response could come only after the attacks on the US Embassies in 1998 at Kenya and Tanzania and Taliban refused handing over of Osama Bin Laden to USA. The Taliban regime granted sanctuary to Osama Bin Laden. The UN Security Council also passed a resolution in condemnation of Taliban's policies in Oct 1996. The Taliban regime rejected this resolution in a statement on Voice of Sharia Radio saying "there are dozens and even hundreds of states in the world that do not comply in any way with genuine standards of human rights followed by the in the West"(Marsden, Peter, 2002, p. 122)

The North Offensive by Taliban

The North offensive immediately started after the fall of Kabul. The Taliban first came across with Dostam forces at Salang pass joining Northern and Southern Afghanistan. (chapman, Graham P,2008) and then Ahmed Shah Masood troops at Panjsher valley. Taliban had to retreat due to solid resistance by wellexperienced lion of Panjsher Ahmed Shah Masood in his own battle field. To counter the growing threat of Taliban, Dostam and Ahmed Shah Masood forgetting their long lasted enmity decided to form an alliance, which was also joined by Khalil iHazb-e-Wahdat. New fronts opened up in the end of 1996 when the Taliban captured Badghis province. During the early months of 1997 as Taliban had to encounter at South of Slang pass where the Hizbe Wahadat did not let them cross the Shibar Pass. Similarly Masood kept on fighting with Taliban in and around Punjsher valley resulting high casualties on both sides (Burns John F, the Newyork Times 8th oct 1997 & Ahmed Rashid 2000: 52)

Capture of Mazar-e-Sharif

Mazare Sharif was the power base of General Rasheed Dostam and Uzbik Militia. Northern Afghanistan is a prosperous area with 60% of resources and 80% of its farmer industry. Historically North Afghanistan has remained the source of economic development of Afghan state. Traditional north had been the center of Tajiks Turkmans and Uzbeks but a Pashtun element was also present who in 1996 helped Taliban

(Marsden, Peter: 19) General Abdul Rasheed Dostam during the entire winter stayed at Qila Jangi near the Mazare Sharif preparing to combat with Taliban. he had unlike other war lords efficiently administered all the provinces under his control with a properly instituted educational and health systems as eighteen hundreds girls were studying in Bulkh University at Mazare Sharif.

The North offensive started in spring 1997 and the Northern provinces fell one after another because of the personal feuds of Dostam and his second in command General Malik Pahalwan. On 19 May 1997, Taliban were invited by Malik Pahalwan to help him against Dostam forces. Malik with his three co-aides Uzbek Generals facilitated Taliban to move into north swiftly. Dostam had to flee first to Uzbekistan then to Turkey. Ahmed Rashid has concluded that Malik was wrong in this decision or to thinking of any benefit from his alliance with Taliban (Ahmed Rashid 2000, p. 58) Taliban first time entered into Mazar-e-Sharif with the strength of 2500 men under the command of Mullah Abdul Razaq. As soon as they entered, they started disarming Uzbeks and Hazaras. Barbra Crossett reported from Afghanistan that Taliban fiercely killed Hazara people as almost 53 civilians of various ages in one village and 30 in another the (Newyork Times 1997).

However, Hazras rose against Taliban, who later joined by other people as well, within fifteen hours of fighting between Taliban and local people of Mazar-e-Sharif some six hundred Taliban killed in streets and almost one thousand were captured at airport. There are reports that almost ten top political and military leaders of Taliban were either killed or captured (Ahmed Rashid, 2000, p. 59) A United Nation investigating team had reported that two thousand Taliban were, killed captured or might have been thrown into wells alive. (New York Times, Dec 1997, para.s 1). Malik Pahalwan soon disassociated himself from Taliban rather double-crossed them and retook Northern provinces Faryab, Jowzjan and Sari Pull. There was heavy fighting at the same time for other three provinces namely Balkh, Samangan and Kundoz. (Mullah Zaeef, 2010, p. 88). The situation in Southern and North Eastern Afghanistan was not also favorable for Taliban, where

Ahmed Shah Masood was trying to recapture some very important strategic positions around Kabul like Jabal Saraj at the Southern entrance of the Slang tunnel.

Ahmed shah Masood was trying hard to enter Kabul after Taliban defeat at Mazare Sharif front. Hazara's at Hazarajat also counter attacked Taliban to break nine months long blockade of their homeland. During May and July of ten weeks" tensed fighting, more than seven thousands civilian and forces people had been killed or either wounded on both sides. This defeat caused soaring anxiety among the high ranks of Taliban. Mullah Umar first time publically spoke to his fighters to raise the morale of his people. A fast recruiting activity started from Gilzai Pushtun Tribes in Eastern Afghanistan and Pakistan. The anti-Taliban forces also reconstituted themselves into a new form. On 13 June 1997, the United Islamic and National Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan was established declared Mazar their capital Burhanud Din Rabani President and Ahmed Shah Masood Defense minister.

Soon this unity shattered as personal feuds and divergence in the interest of Dostam Ahmed Shah Masood and Khalili prevented them to work together. In mid-July Masood recaptured Chaikar and Bagram Air base, which improved his strategic position. By September, he was only twenty miles away from Kabul; heavy bombardment of rocket forced one-lakh eighty thousand people to take refuge in Shomali valley. (Ahmed Rashid 2000, p. 62) The anti-Taliban forces at that point of time fully cordoned off Kabul city. In the West and North of the city, Masood forces were in control, Khalili forces were in East and South of Kabul. There were rumors around that by joining hands they would launch massive attacks on Kabul, however Taliban successfully curtailed them twenty-five kilometer away from Kabul.

The North offensive of Taliban fully caught Afghan society into ethnic and sectarian morass. The ethnic and religious divide became acute and all the parties got indulged themselves into ethnic and religious persecution widely and extensively against each other. From the defeat of Taliban in 1997, until their takeover in 1998 of Mazare Sharif, all the

area had been the victim of intense fighting between the Malik and Dostam forces. There was a wide spread looting from the Tajiks due to which, forces of UN agencies had to abandon Mazar-e Sharif. On 12 July 1998, Taliban crushed Dostam forces, eight hundred soldiers were captured majority of them later killed. On 1 August 1998 Taliban ceased Dostam head quarter Shiberghan by bribing his commanders. It also happened near Mazar city when Uzbik commander accepted bribe and left Hazara forces un-aided, surprisingly surrounded by Taliban. These Hazara forces fought bravely but failed to stop Taliban entry into Mazar city on 8 Aug 1998.

Massacre in Mazare Sharif After the fall of Mazar Sharif, there was a horrific phase of mass killing carried out by Taliban. Everybody on the street was shooting down. Soon the dead bodies became the dog"s food, as Taliban did not allow their burial. All this was done with the help of local Pashtuns. They knew the city very well and helped Taliban search parties to locate Hazara's home for killing. Taliban were on the way to clean the North from Shia presence. Through Mosques they announced that now Shia had only three choices that "convert to Sunni Islam, leave for Shia Iran or die" (Ahmed Rashid, 2000, p. 74). The estimated deaths were eight thousands but no independent, factual based information could come out due to Taliban closed-door policy.

The Bamiyan Fall Since August 1997, Taliban cordoned off the Bamiyan city, closing all the roads from South West and East. There was no relief possible from the North where snowy winter, law and order situation made impossible for the food convoys to reach Bamiyan. Hundred thousands of people in Bamiyan, Ghor, Wardak and Gazni were the victims of acute food and grain shortage. Bamiyan was attacked from three direction which lastly conquered by 13th Sep 1998 by Taliban. Before the fall of Bamiyan on 5 Sep 1998, Taliban also captured Tolqan province, which was the political head quarter of Ahmed Shah Masood. Finally, Ahmed Shah Masood fled to Badkhashan province.

The Bamyan Statues' Issue Initially Taliban showed no hostility towards cultural objects. In August 2000, the Taliban authorities granted permission to National Museum officials

for the display of cultural objects despite the fact that this cultural inventory included Neolithic figures, Hindu goddess in Toga like robes, intricate ivories combined with Indian and Greek style and excavations of gold coins from the Alexander the Great time. This Art repository also included tons of early Islamic Art articles with a library and a basement filled with tens of thousands of pottery shards spanning ten millennia. However, it is believed that Ex-Mujahideen plundered seventy-five percent of this ancient art treasure during the infighting between the different factions of Ex–Afghan Mujahideen. The harbingers of this civil war stolen 40,000 gold coins from the museum.

As stated earlier during the early days of their rule, Taliban had shown no disliking for cultural objects. with the passage of time a change crept into their policy, and on 26, Feb 2001 an edict was issued with the clear cut message about their non-tolerance policy towards all cultural icons, that's all shrines must be annihilated so that no one can worship or respect them in future" (Christian Manhart, 2001, p. 387). In pursuance of this policy, they inflicted heavy damages to cultural images, as Omer Khan Masudi, the National Museum Director mentioned, "From afternoon until evening they broke statutes… A few days later, they came back and they followed the same procedure. They came back many times." (Lawler Andrew, 2002, p. 1202) At this point of time, an international condemnation roared up against Taliban.

The UN Secretary General Kofi Annan termed it to be a lamentable act. OIC and other International organizations did their utmost to save these relics, declaring Bamiyan Statutes the Part of Human tradition. Japan, Sri Lanka and Pakistan as well requested Taliban not to destroy these cultural icons of Afghanistan, but all went in vain. An Egyptian Scholar Mufti Sheikh Nasar opined that the statutes never had any negative impact on Islam. Throughout Islamic history in Afghanistan, these relics were kept save and no Muslim doctrine never demanded their destruction. But Taliban showed no leniency in this regard, as the Foreign minister of Taliban Mutawakil Wakil Ahemd said that no statutes would be left undestroyed (ibid) UNESCO also launched an extensive campaign to save

Bamiyan Buddha form destruction. Besides press releases and personal letters to Mullah Muhammad Omer, UNESCO Director General held a series of meetings with the ambassadors of Muslim countries, specifically the countries who recognized Taliban Regime. On UNESCO persuasion, an eleven member‟s delegate of Muslim leaders went to Kandahar to convince Mullah Omer that "Koran does not prescribe the destruction of Statutes" (Manhart, Christian. 2001, p. 387). All these efforts could not save Bamiyan Buddah, they were smashed.

Various reasons have been pondered over by analysts; some viewed it in the background of Islamic Iconoclasm (Flood, Finbarr Barry, 2002) and some linked it with the timing of UN sanctions against Taliban.(The Nation, 25, Dec, 2000 & The Hindu, 25, Jan 2000). However Taliban never accepted this version. Muttawakil, the Foreign Minster stated, "There is no link between this or any political issue. It is our internal issue and has no political justification". (bbc.co.uk).

Finbarr argued that Taliban disliked Western pressure on the ground that Western institution had been hypocritic that they were ready to give millions of Dollars to save un-Islamic stone statutes, but unwilling to spend one cent to save the lives of Afghani men, women and children. (Finbarr, Barry. 2002, p.) Syed Rahmatullah Hashmi, an envoy to the States justified Buddah destruction in these words "when your children are dying in front of you then you do not care about a piece of Art". (ibid) However the Director of Kabul Museum commented on Taliban policy towards cultural icons in these words "first you heard of people burying their children, then they buried their history" (Lawler Andrew, 2002, pp. 1202-3)

The Human Rights Violations The human rights violation was also one of the major causes of international condemnation of Taliban Regime. The closure of roads to Bamiyan to cordon off Hazarajat resulted into acute shortage of food, which cost heavy human causalities combined with the suffering of frosty winter, which made it virtually impossible for food convoys to make available the food for starving population of Bamiyan. This was heavily criticized. Similarly public humiliation of any blamed convict also created a wave of hate against Taliban

rule. John F. Burns reported about two boys of 13 and 18 years; they were caught while gathering scrapings from a ruined place. Taliban forced them for standing hours with blackened face at a public place.

Such scenes were rampant during their rule. This style of governance eventually brought unpopularity to Taliban at large… its not 1996, its 1375" used to become a "common wise crack, but it is spoken only out of the Taliban ear shot with their shoulder slung rifles."(Jhon F. Burns, 1996) The physical assault on UN aid workers forced UN aid agencies to halt their programs in all areas, specifically it badly affected food supply, removal of land mines, repairing of war devastated irrigation system and building of houses. (The New York Times, March, 25 1998) Taliban did not bother about the human sufferings, which increased manifold due the closure of these programs. Taliban projected a perception as expressed by Taliban Planning Minster, alien to all human standards. He said, "We Muslim believe that God, the Almighty will feed everybody one way or the other. If the foreign NGOs leave, it is their decision we have not expelled them." (Ahmed Rashid, 2000, p. 23) Human rights violations were not confined to Afghan people, it was handed on to even visiting Pakistani football players when during a match, they were arrested and shaved by Taliban authorities on the accusation that they were wearing shorts which was considered violation of Taliban dress code (News).

Fall of Taliban Regime, 2001 Taliban regime was at its lowest ebb with The US and International community due to its persistent human rights violations, Bamiyan Statute issue and their denial to hand over Osama Bin Laden to the US authorities. He had been the prime suspect of attacks of the US embassies at Kenya and Tanzania in August 1998. The US initial stance towards the victories of Taliban was based on an optimism that finally a force would be in the position to bring peace and stability in Afghanistan. In a statement, the acting state Department representative on the 27 September announced that US see nothing objectionable about their version of Islam. The US initial approach was conditioned by the prospective role of the US and Western Oil companies to

squeeze their commercial interests regarding oil and Gas Reserves of Central Asian States.

The major issue, which these companies Bridas, Delta and UNOCAL faced, was the safe transportation of energy resources via Afghanistan as the alternative routes to Russia. The Fall of Kabul to Taliban was seen as an opportunity to screw maximum commercial interests by US policy makers for UNOCAL and Delta, as this was presumed that Taliban would restore a traditional Afghan society instead of exporting Islam. Soon this positivism disappeared when media swarmed with the news of maltreatment with Afghan women and their strict interpretation of Islam. A phenomenal change crept into US policy towards Taliban when US alleged Taliban for giving sanctuary to the terrorists and patronizing their camps in Afghanistan.

Terrorist Camps in Afghanistan

Al Badar Asadabad Chehrbagh (Heavy Weapons Trg) Ghazni Hikmat Yar camp Jaibal camp(Heavy weapons Trg) Jalalabad (Heavy Weapons Trg) Kabul Kandhar Kantara Khalid Markaz Khost (Muton) Kunar (AdvTrg) Markaz-e-taiba Pakhtia(Paktya) Pashad(Kunar) PharsiGund, Khost Sarkanar SalfiaMarkaz Tremangal (three months special course) Yawar (three months special course) Source : K Wariko.(2007) Afghanistan Factor in Kashmir Crisis, p. 213. The US attacked on August 20, 1998 at Khost, Ghazni and Jalabad to destroy the camps. The US officials also started pressurizing Pakistani and Saudi governments to influence Taliban for handing over of Osma bin Laden. UNOCAL also backed out from the pipeline project; President Clinton visited South Asia in March 2000, where he expressed US concern over the plight of Afghan people and human rights violations.

Until then Osama Bin Laden had fully become the main irritant for US officials. Finally, the fateful day of 9/11 came when US and World media shown to the millions of observers that America was attacked by invisible enemy from the Air, but soon the invisibility was dashed, and the US Intelligence Agencies identified the attackers and their connection with Osama Bin Laden‟s al Qaeda organization. The suicidal

attackers of Twin Towers and Pentagon, the emblem of American power Elite, were nineteen Arab hijackers. They had close links with Al Qaeda. The US Senate immediately and unanimously authorized President Bush to take all necessary actions. In consequent of the preceding events of large-scale condemnation of Taliban‟s refusal to comply with the US demands to hand over Osama bin Laden, on 7 October 2001, British and American forces attacked Afghanistan. Finally, in early December 2001, the Council of Afghan leaders in Bonn named Hamid Karzai as the head of new interim government in Afghanistan ending the four years rule of Taliban. (Tanner, Stephen 2002, pp. 290-295)

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Chapter 11

Private Military and Security Companies

Maria Nebolsina

Abstract

This article overviews the phenomenon of private military and security companies (PMSCs) through the prism of various theoretical concepts. The paper explores the heterogeneous nature of PMSCs, the reasons for their present-day increased activity, and interaction with state and non-state participants in global processes. The phenomenon manifests itself amid the change in the attitude towards traditional forms of violence, which allows states to partly outsource their security and law-enforcement functions. At the same time, some countries maintain their monopoly on violence and are even expanding the arsenal of mechanisms for consolidating their geopolitical influence through PMSCs. The study shows that PMSCs' activities in "weak" countries may impair the inviolability of their statehood. The article also discusses the possibility of democratic control of PMSCs' activities.

Keywords: non-state actors, private military and security companies (PMSCs), sovereignty, asymmetric conflicts, new types of war, privatization and outsourcing in the security field, democratic control, state monopoly on legitimate violence.

The growth of the global market of private security services and increased activity of PMSCs are taking place under the influence

of various trends. First of all, the world has been witnessing a transformation of the power component of the system of international relations amid diversifying threats, which are becoming less predictable. Traditionally, the efforts of states aimed at implementing their geopolitical interests were largely based on military principles (Koppiters, Foushin and Apresyan, 2002). However, today large-scale interstate armed clashes (like WWI and WWII) are being replaced by

“asymmetric,” “low-intensive,” “hybrid” wars involving such structures as PMSCs (Nye, 2014; Creveld, 2015; Kaldor, 2015; Kazantsev, 2013; Fenenko, 2015; Topychkanov, 2015).

The article aims to study PMSCs—an extensively developing factor of modern world politics—through the prism of different theoretical conceptions. As non-state actors, PMSCs are still a heterogeneous phenomenon characterized by both independency (“activism”) and dependency on other actors (“instrumentalism”). The two-sided nature of this phenomenon raises a number of questions about the regulation, recognition and usefulness of PMSCs. In order to answer them, an in-depth theoretical analysis is required.

It is important to start with the definition of PMSCs. Currently, there are two applicable international mechanisms regarding private military and security companies: the Montreux Document (an agreement on pertinent international legal obligations and good practices for states related to operations of private military and security companies during an armed conflict) adopted in 2008, and the International Code of Conduct for Private Security Service Providers (ICoC) adopted in 2010. The summarized definition deriving from these documents is this: PMSCs are private business entities that provide military and/or security services, either on their own or on behalf of other actors, irrespective of how they describe themselves. Military and security services include, in particular, armed guarding and protection of persons and objects, such as convoys, buildings and other places; maintenance and operation of weapon systems; prisoner detention; and advising/training of local forces and security personnel… or any other activity for which the Personnel of Companies are required to carry or operate a weapon in the performance of their duties (The ICoC, 2010; The Montreux Document, 2008).

The first methodological approach to studying PMSCs is institutional, which looks at PMSCs not only as commercial entities, but also as political institutions involved in the implementation of public interests. International organizations and states interacting with PMSCs in various circumstances legitimize their operations as a new and relatively independent

international political institution, since these companies implement state interests through their own means and capabilities, thus becoming guides and intermediaries of the will of the state. In the context of this study, the systemic approach is also used. It suggests a systematic analysis of the relationships and functions of state and non-state actors in ensuring the security of the state, society and the individual, and also their direct and reciprocal mutual influences.

In addition, for the purposes of this study the comparative-historical approach is used, which helps determine the stages of evolution and transformation of non-state private security and military activities, identify factors of PMSCs' growing role in international relations, and trace the increasing dependence of states on non-state actors, including PMSCs, in the historical perspective. According to J. Nye, force is by no means obsolete, and no moral principles particularly deter terrorists and other non-state players on the global arena, but force is much more expensive for most states and it is much more difficult to apply nowadays (Nye, 2014). This is partly due to the commercialization of a significant part of what was traditionally public policy, including in the security sphere.

Active interaction with PMSCs began in the United States in the 1980s. U.S. strategic national interests were largely implemented through conflict behavior which, as many believe, is inherent in American politics (Sushentsov, 2014). Public criticism of the U.S. leadership concerning extensive personnel losses in the Vietnam and Korean Wars made Washington review its military behavior (Syrkhaev, 2012). Despite the necessity to cut the military budget and personnel of various law-enforcement agencies, the implementation of U.S. geopolitical interests still required additional resources and means that would not cause discontent of American society (Nebolsina, 2016). The U.S. needed "a mechanism for participating in regional conflicts without bearing the burdensome political responsibility… which opened the way to outsourcing military functions" (Syrkhaev, 2012).

PMSCs in the context of various paradigms

In the paradigm of political neorealism, private military and security companies are viewed as a new tool that replenishes diplomacy and strategy based on force as a means of protecting and promoting a country's geopolitical interests (Tsygankov, 2011). The concept of neorealism allows for any action if it is beneficial to the state (Pugachev, Solovyov, 2002). In this sense, PMSCs appear as "an important actor of national security and a social partner of the state" (Semenova, 2012). The use of PMSCs by states allows them not to jeopardize the lives of the regular army personnel and create an illusion of the absence of armed forces on the territory of other countries, while avoiding direct responsibility for the actions of non-regular military personnel. In a way, by replacing regular armed forces with contracted personnel a state can continue to build up weapons and maintain the power balance.

The argument that PMSCs are a new tool of the state's security policy is confirmed not only by U.S. experience, but also by that of the UK, which was the first to engage a PMSC in the early 1960s. The political background for the company's emergence was that in 1962 London refused to recognize the legitimacy of the new government in Yemen, which had come to power as a result of a coup d'état and the ensuing overthrow of the then ruling monarch. The United States and the USSR recognized the new regime, but the UK considered a plan to restore the legitimate power with the help of mercenaries, without involving national armed forces.

The founder of the UK special air forces, David Stirling, suggested that retired officers of the special air force service should be privately employed as instructors to train the monarch's supporters in operating weapons and communications and to provide them with medical aid. The 1967 events in Yemen led to the emergence of Watchguard International, the first PMSC. Thus, the operation in the Middle East marked the beginning of a new form of political confrontation between global powers that allowed them to realize their geopolitical interests without involving regular armed forces and avoiding overt interference in the domestic affairs of other countries. This also paved the way for new

trends in the military-security sphere: education, preparation, and training of the armed forces personnel.

Involvement of PMSCs in conflicts is largely dictated by politically motivated reluctance of countries to perform certain functions by state structures. Such a leveling strategy allows a state to create the illusion of non-presence of regular armed forces personnel in the territory of other countries, while at the same time increasing its actual presence. That is, with a small contingent of regular armed forces, the U.S. seemingly realizes the declared democratic goals (fighting terrorism, restoring democratic values, changing dangerous regimes, providing security, freeing people from tyranny, etc.), while a "shadow" army of PMSCs fulfilling the mission and outnumbering the official contingent efficiently consolidates American influence in a particular region of the world (Nebolsina, 2016).

Following the neorealism paradigm, we can also mention Russia's experience of using Wagner and Patriot groups as PMSCs, although the example would not be quite accurate. Firstly, Russian PMSCs cannot be considered private military companies per se as Russian legislation prohibits any commercial military activity. Russian law permits licensed private security companies to perform the following functions: carry and use weapons in special cases, provide consulting and guarding services to individuals and companies, and protect objects and premises (Federal Law, 1992). Such companies are mostly engaged in protecting public and infrastructure premises in the territory of Russia. Private military companies that are active abroad, such as the RSB-Group and Moran Security Group, provide maritime and ground security services, convoying, training and consulting services or are contracted for demining operations. They have a complex legal structure that allows them to operate globally. While these groups of companies have Russian origins, their headquarters are registered abroad, making them international PMSCs.

Secondly, although the "soldiers of fortune" from Wagner and Patriot are known to move from one conflict to another (Ukraine, Libya, Syria, Central African Republic, and Venezuela), the obscurity of their functions, including

mercenarism, likens them to illegal groups. Russia has been denying its involvement in any kind of mercenary activity abroad and casualties among Russian citizens participating in these groups. Wagner and Patriot that consist of "soldiers of fortune" rather than contractors, can be compared with foreign mercenaries who once operated in the Congo crisis in the 1960s and in numerous African coup d'états in the 1980s and 1990s. Finally, illegal use of mercenary groups even by a powerful state cannot replenish its arsenal of tools in the long term.

The practice of outsourcing the state's military functions to PMSCs, established by the UK and the U.S. in the second half of the 20th century, triggered the growth of commercial military security services to unprecedented levels. Today these two countries alone account for 75% of the global private military services market (with the U.S.' share amounting to about 50% and that of the UK, to about 25%). In turn, the PMSCs that have sprung up in different countries over these decades are actively involved in the privatization of the state's security functions. That is, the processes of outsourcing and privatizing security go hand in hand. Of course, PMSCs can replace the state in terms of its force component only partially: national armies still retain control over large and most destructive weapon systems. At the same time, PMSCs have significant arsenals of light weapons, which for the most part are used in local and regional conflicts (Nye, 2014). In a recent interview former head of the notorious Blackwater Company, Erik Prince, did not exclude the possibility of private military contractors replacing U.S. troops after their withdrawal from Syria (Griffing, 2019). However, the reaction of the Afghan authorities to Erik Prince' proposal was expectedly more than negative. Society rejects profit-making by using irregular armed forces with precarious responsibility and refuses to turn into "kimberlite pipes" fueling crisis situations.

Western countries' trend towards broader employment of military and security contractors can be attributed to two main reasons: the willingness to reduce casualties among the state military personnel, and to covertly promote their geopolitical interests. It is not without reason that the functions and the

number of private military contractors engaged by U.S. intelligence services remain undisclosed. Should Erik Prince's proposal come true, there is a possibility that the information about the entire U.S. campaign in Afghanistan may be classified.

Outsourcing military functions is not a conventional practice in Russia. In its time, the Soviet Union broadly used its military advisors and specialists of all kinds for settling numerous regional conflicts abroad. Soviet military personnel were part of the state system that did not envisage delegation of any authority in any sphere, particularly in defense and security. After the collapse of the USSR in the 1990s, in line with Western liberal trends, business activity in Russia, including in the military sphere, increased for a short period of time. However, the distorted forms of privatization of security services in the 1990s posed a threat to the state's sovereignty. With invalid social and political institutions and the lack of solid legal regulation, characteristic of the transitional period, numerous armed groups comprised of unemployed former Soviet soldiers and militiamen overwhelmed Russia. The chaotic military activity of the 1990s triggered the emergence of separatist movements (specifically in Chechnya) and corporate raiding across the country.

In the 2000s, the Russian authorities displayed strong will to take military activity under their control; currently they rely on departmental and non-departmental security bodies. Russia's strong reluctance to outsource military functions and scepticism of private business in general put it into a conspiracy paradigm, hold back its competitive capability to operate globally, and preclude it from taking up the liberal trend, placing it at the opposite extreme to the military "outsourcing spree" proposed by Erik Prince.

Whereas from the neoliberal point of view the prevailing factor in international affairs is "the right of the strongest," the liberal concept recognizes the important role of international institutions, various entities and non-state actors (including PMSCs) in cooperation and policy implementation, and assumes that decision-making is influenced not only by state interests (Davydov, 2002). At the same time, the presence of

numerous actors on the global arena creates disorder in international relations, leading to conflicts and crises that do not fit into the traditional realist model of the international system as a simple sum of states.

Although the priority areas for liberalism are cooperation and collective security, these phenomena cannot be considered separately from conflicts. The end of the Cold War was marked by the emergence of many local conflicts, which also increased the demand for PMSCs' services to restore stability and order at the local level, with the involvement of a small number of aircraft and technical equipment. PMSCs actively began to enter the markets of those states which required their assistance, and where the international community did not show any special interest, particularly in internal armed clashes. In situations where foreign forces did interfere in conflicts, international organizations themselves began to draw in PMSCs for peacekeeping and humanitarian operations (Gumedze, 2011).

For example, the UN engaged PMSCs in many of its missions in Africa (Gumedze, 2011). It is reported that UNICEF, WFP, UNHCR, UNDP and the UN Procurement Division are amongst the largest UN agencies and bodies contracting PMSCs (Bianchetti, 2016). In 2012 the UN Department of Safety and Security issued a UNSMS Security Policy Manual titled "Guidelines on the Use of Armed Security Services from Private Security Companies." The document refers only to those armed PMSCs that are contracted directly by the UN agencies as a "last resort" for "the static protection of personnel, premises and property of the United Nations and to provide mobile protection as outlined in this Statement of Works" (Guidelines, 2012). It should be noted that although a contracted company can be known as a PMSC and be able to provide military services, for the purposes of the abovementioned UN tasks it will be involved in security activity only.

Not only the UN and its bodies directly outsource security functions, but so do its member-states involved in UN missions. The partnership programs of the member-states do not fall under UN regulation norms, that is, the process goes

beyond the UN Manual and Guidelines. The UN cooperation with PMSCs under partnership programs generally covers three main areas: logistics and transport support of the mission (bases, airports, etc.), security and policing provision (demining, disarmament, etc.), and frontline forces support (training and instructing peacekeepers). These have been traditionally fulfilled by UN peacekeeping personnel but are now outsourced to third parties due to the lack of UN specialists.

Nowadays virtually no UN operation which requires demining goes without employing PMSCs (Report of the Working Group, 2014; Langewiesche, 2014). For example, G4S actively assists the UN in demining activities. Previously, the South African company Denel cooperated with the UN in Somalia and Mozambique, providing mine protected vehicles and other equipment. According to the UN Working Group on the Use of Mercenaries as a Means of Violating Human Rights and Impeding the Exercise of the Right of Peoples to Self-Determination, as of May 2014, about 30 private military and security companies were involved in the organization's missions (Report of the Working Group, 2014). The extent of PMSCs' engagement in UN activities remains to be seen (Bianchetti, 2016).

The above-mentioned concept is complemented by the neoliberal model. Since the late 1970s, privatization of various spheres of life, the transfer of a multitude of functions at various levels to contractors, and public-private partnerships has spread globally (Nebolsina, 2014). Downsizing of armed forces across the world after the end of the Cold War and subsequent military missions in Afghanistan and Iraq not only made thousands of former military personnel seek employment in the ranks of private security agencies, but also provoked a shortage of military specialists at the state level. In the current situation of multiplying conflicts around the world and the outflow of skilled personnel from national military organizations to private entities, states and international organizations have to look for personnel in the PMSC market that has become very competitive due to protracted military operations in the Middle East (Brannen, 2015).

In the early 2000s, mobilization of resources, and means for the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) led to a new phase in the development of the PMSC market. The demand for security services has increased manifold. In the course of military campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan, the U.S. government transferred logistics functions (protection of military bases, transportation, convoy escorts, etc.) to PMSCs. The military campaigns in Syria and Iraq against ISIS have strengthened this trend. Also, a new giant has entered the market of private military and security services in recent years —China. Its buoyant economy and intention to protect commercial interests abroad have paved the way for the emergence of Chinese PMSCs. Simultaneously; we have been witnessing a transformation of the American and Chinese approaches towards violence (Volevodz, 2014).

PMSCs and the change of approach to violence

Since the establishment of the Westphalian system of world order, which in 1648 anchored the global political system for over 370 years now, the state has been considered the main actor in international affairs and military conflicts (Davydov, 2002). The force component of state power could not be delegated to any entity. This was the rule until a new phenomenon of modernity— PMSCs—emerged on the international scene. The outsourcing of power functions became part of a process that was initiated by the states themselves, creating demand for security (Nebolsina, 2014). This was also part of a more profound shift in the redistribution of state functions in general and in the security sphere in particular. The transformation of the attitude to violence has led to a revision of approaches to the state's exclusive monopoly on violence. This statement holds true only for the Westphalian countries and does not apply to former European colonies and dependent territories.

From the neoliberalist point of view, the modern state increasingly focuses on governance by involving private actors in the strategy of power. However, this statement is true only for states that are powerful in terms of resources and military means, states which do not perceive private security actors as a threat (that is, a force that can monopolize control and use its

influence to assume certain governance functions while ignoring the authority of other actors).

The result of such cooperation between "strong" states and non-state actors is the overlapping of the private security sector with that of the state. One of the most significant consequences of this is that the organization of power associated with a rigid hierarchy of state sovereignty is changing under the influence of the ongoing processes in the security field. For the neoliberal model it is important what means and capabilities a state has for governing the processes in the security field, with many actors incorporated in the security governance system.

The neoliberal model admits integration of additional forces into the security system, but one cannot say that the state arsenal is replenished with new capacities everywhere. That is, despite the fact that the diversity and the number of new non-state actors is increasing, they do not exist separately from states. Also, although not all states are fully able to control them, not all states lose their positions by partly transferring some of their security and law-enforcement functions. Transformational processes are not a simple substitution of governmental levers of power by non-state actors; rather they change the configuration of power in various spheres of activity (Abrahamsen and Williams, 2011). Commercial security services (PMSC) do not contest those provided by the state, and they do not act as a completely independent, autonomous sector within the state.

The global trend towards outsourcing security functions confirms the recent developments in China's private military and security services sector, which currently demonstrates a rapid worldwide growth. The shift from the "non-interference" approach to private security activity overseas started in 2010 when the Chinese government "passed legislation authorizing and regulating the establishment of commercial security firms" (Heath, 2018). The necessity was dictated by the need to protect the state's interests abroad. For example, the Chinese DeWe Security company, registered in Beijing in 2011, operates in Ethiopia, South Sudan, and the Central African Republic. Another Beijing-based company, Hua Xin Zhong

An (HXZA), is engaged in maritime security services and is actually a security monopolist for two Chinese state shipping giants (Center for China Analysis and Strategy, no date). The increased attention to commercial security stems from the need to protect Chinese assets globally "without resorting to an imperialistic foreign policy" (Clover, 2017). Simultaneously, Beijing continues cooperating with foreign PMSCs. For example, Hong-Kong-registered Frontier Services Group (FSG), founded by Erik Prince, and is contracted by Beijing for providing services within China and beyond (Security firm, 2019).

It is important to emphasize that the phenomenon of PMSCs is by no means homogeneous. In the case of the United States, the United Kingdom and China, they can be viewed as a tool for promoting state policies. In the case of international organizations, contracting PMSCs for peacekeeping missions is perceived as a way of cooperation. However, from the point of view of countries where such companies act under contracts in the interests of great powers, or entities assisting humanitarian and peacekeeping operations, PMSCs are represented as independent actors. As a result, the dividends from the balance of power are distributed between the participants in favor of militarily powerful states, and the PMSCs operating in Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan and various regions of Africa do not contribute to the realization of these countries' national interests at all (Kudryashova, 2012).

In the case of powerful countries, PMSCs for the most part do not pose a threat to national sovereignty, since in many ways they depend on the interests of states and the need to implement a political strategy with their help. A reduction in public spending and an increase in the number of new actors, including PMSCs, do not lead to a loss of control over ongoing processes. On the contrary, in poor countries, where economic liberalization has led to budget cuts, there has been a weakening of control and a loss of governing capacity. The growth in the number of PMSCs in Africa is partly due to the states' inability to provide security on their own.

Another example of PMSCs' heterogeneous nature is Latin American countries, where the market of security services

dates back to the 1980s and 1990s. Weak social and government institutions and the lack of regulation put the Latin American security market in a gray or even illegal zone, much like in Africa. There are examples of private providers outnumbering state security forces, and cases of law-enforcement personnel working for such private entities. Local security companies are semi-legal groups with not quite professional personnel, rather than legal entities. They are mostly engaged with the extractive industry, providing armed and unarmed guarding, logistic services, escorts, protection of infrastructure, etc.

Today, PMSCs are able to become an alternative to the state power machine and even surpass the military departments of some states in professionalism, demonstrating a high degree of diversification of the services they provide (Abrahamsen and Williams, 2011). In cases where such organizations do not act in the interests of the state, but are engaged exclusively in business, the chances for PMSCs turning into a serious actor are increasing. In other words, "where the state's monopoly on power is undermined (as a result of inefficiency of the local government, civil actions, etc.)" (Savaskov and Safranchuk, 2012), PMSCs replace the institutions of power, thus undermining the sovereignty of "weak" states. In that case the sovereign powers of the state as a participant in the political process are delegated to other actors.

In contrast to the theories of neorealism, the concept of the balance of power, the theory of international regimes and others, which proceed from the idea that it is states that are a source of threat and only they can ensure stability at the national and international levels (Krahmann, 2005a), the concept of network security governance denies the exclusive claims of a sovereign state to this role (Abrahamsen and Williams, 2011). This concept explores the emergence of fragmented but overlapping networks, which form the basis for cooperation between state and non-state actors.

Prof. Dr. Elke Krahmann (2005b) points out that "in fragmented governance arrangements resources are dispersed among a range of public and private actors who have to coordinate their efforts in order to resolve common problems."

He specifies that “governance implies an acceptance of the heterogeneous and sometimes conflicting nature of interests and seeks to ensure that each actor can pursue them as uninhibitedly as possible.”

The network model rejects the priority of any dominant center in determining and regulating the activities of other actors in global processes. Within this framework governance is seen as a set of relationships inside the changing networks. Les Johnston proposes studying security governance through the prism of network nodes (links) as different areas of knowledge, capacities and resources that operate as independent governing structures (Abrahamsen and Williams, 2011). That is, the network concept allows decentralization of the state’s positions in the sphere of security governance and does not imply its direct replacement by another independent actor. At the same time, the network model does not deny the dominant role of the state. As an institution enjoying the supremacy of power it is authorized to coerce and punish by legitimate judicial power. This capability of the state makes it a unique element of network governance.

The decentralized nature of the network “makes it possible for links to leave the network and connect to it at any time … The significance of links does not stem from their specific features, but from their ability to distribute information. In this sense, the main links perform as switching nodes. Each link (actor) in the system has certain network power, that is, the ability to influence other participants’ activities. However, this influence cannot be imposed on it, that is, the network power is different from the authority of the command” (Meteleva, 2008).

Such network behavior can be traced in the GWOT. When the campaign began in 2001, the PMSCs which accompanied the official armed forces became an important link in the network formed at the very start of the campaign. However, as the anti-terrorist operation moved from one region to another, the PMSCs, as a network link, followed the new armed operations. At the same time, they ceased to play an important role, leaving the network, when the operation was over in one place, and formed other links, entering other networks, in new antiterrorist operations.

Today, a similar situation can be observed in Syria, Iraq and other countries where antiterrorist operations against ISIS (McLeary, 2015) are being conducted. Military operations are organized as ad-hoc network strategies, which involve both the armed forces of various nation-states, for example, as participants in a coalition, and PMSCs which assist the main military forces. Remarkably, the PMSCs currently deployed to assist in Iraq are the same ones that participated in the military operation there a few years ago under contracts with the U.S. Department of Defense. These companies did not have to establish ties and engage in risk management from scratch. They are familiar with the terrain and know well the peculiarities of the situation inside the country, which greatly facilitates their activities.

The network strategy is also applicable to some countries in Asia and Africa, where states are often unable to provide security on their own. The network security governance system appears to be the most favorable alternative to other security mechanisms that work well in stable societies and states. In Africa, the privatization of the security sphere is proceeding actively. Traditionally, the African continent is perceived as an area which is slightly affected by globalization processes. At the same time, external assistance in ensuring security is in more demand here than anywhere else. This factor contributes to the intertwining of global and local processes in this region. In African countries, new forms of global (external) governance are emerging as international actors are increasingly getting involved in the governance system. The best-known actors, in addition to the PMSCs, are international organizations, financial institutions, donor countries, and NGOs. By consistent efforts in implementing their strategies for regional development, structural reforms and poverty reduction programs these actors have achieved enormous influence on the policies and decision-making in African countries.

Africa is an example of the reorganization of public-private relations, where global governance structures change due to the presence of private security actors, the diversified nature of global security manifests itself most vividly, and the “state-

territory-power" triad that has long dominated international relations is breaking up (Abrahamsen and Williams, 2011). Perhaps today the African continent exemplifies "eroding" sovereignty, quasi-states and various forms of external governance, including PMSCs. On the other hand, is it possible to talk about statehood in the strict sense of the word with reference to Africa?

Thus, viewed from the network conception perspective, PMSCs play the role of a binding element in a network system that ensures its safety and security. Another concept relevant for security issues is the securitization theory, developed by the Copenhagen school. This theory studies the context that affects the object and leads to its politicization, as well the process of assigning the status of a security threat to an object. Importantly, a new vision of the security problem does not automatically increase the list of threats, which include, in addition to military and security, non-military threats (Buzan, 2007). This can be seen in the example of macro-securitization of the United States in the fight against terrorism (Sushentsov, 2014).

By looking at terrorism as a threat to security and declaring war against it in the early 2000s, the United States attracted a huge amount of material and non-material resources, including by integrating PMSCs into the process. From 2000 to 2005, the budget allocated by the U.S. government for contracts increased from $203 to $377 billion, and more than doubled the number of contracts concluded on a non-competitive basis: from $67 to $145 billion (Lilly S., 2007). Thus, securitization of the fight against terrorism leads to an increase in the number and value of contracts with PMSCs.

In late February 2015, several thousand American troops were sent to Iraq when a new operation was launched there. According to the Pentagon, by early 2015 about 6,300 contractors had been deployed in Iraq (Brannen, 2015). Considering that at the peak of the previous military campaign in Iraq the number of contractors exceeded 163,000, in the current mission their number will evidently increase. It is important to note that during the current campaign, the U.S. authorities have focused more on the operation's

administrative support than on direct assistance to combat operations. For example, the Joint Command of the U.S. Strategic Armed Forces placed an advertisement in search of a private company capable of providing eight heavy-duty helicopters, each of which could carry at least 12 men and at least 2.2 tons of cargo (McLeary, 2015). Although it is well known that U.S. intelligence agencies engage PMSCs for tasks other than maintenance and advisory services, the true number of military contractors remains classified, it is never actually mentioned because "the military representative never has any estimates available" (Weisgerber, 2016; Zenko, 2016).

In June 2015, a U.S. company, SOS International (SOSi), the largest private contractor to support ground operations in Iraq, won an annual contract worth $700,000. In the summer of 2015, the U.S. government entered into two more contracts with the same company. According to one of them, a two-year contract worth $40 million, the company was to ensure life support and operation of the military complex in Besmaya (Lee, 2015b); and according to the other one, worth $100 million, it was to provide identical services on the territory of the Tajik military complex for three years (the contract was valid until the end of June 2018) (Lee, 2015a). Strictly speaking, SOSi is not a PMSC, nor does it fall under the Montreux Document or the ICoC, although it started providing security services in addition to "basic life support services" in 2015 (SOS International, 2015). This is how Allison Stanger, a professor of international politics and economics at Middlebury College, puts it: "In the era of contractor wars, there are many ways to avoid putting boots on the ground, while committing significant U.S. resources and actually being very much militarily involved" (Robson, 2014). In other words, in the context of the theory of securitization, the example demonstrates the diversification of private security means in order to meet the needs of counter-terrorist operations.

This trend can also be traced in Russia, which has securitized the problem of fighting terrorism (namely, ISIS) and, first, intensified the air military operation in Syria, and later launched large-scale joint Russian-Tajik military exercises

(REGNUM, 2016). On the one hand, in terms of this theory, the phenomenon of terrorism is being securitized. On the other hand, under the pretext of regulating international relations and combating terrorism with the help of norms and law, military operations are being intensified, the use of force is expanding to other spheres, and new opportunities for the use and implementation of new types of weapons and military equipment (Bogaturov, 2012) and new policy tools, such as PMSCs, are opening up.

Transformation of threats and new type of conflicts

The change in the nature of conflicts and wars can be explained within the framework of the concept of a new type of wars. To meet new challenges and threats, traditional wars are being replaced by non-classical and non-state conflicts. Among the factors stimulating the emergence of new types of warfare are various forms of terrorism, including cyberterrorism, ramified networks of international extremist groups, problems of global inequality, depletion of natural resources, inability to control cash flows associated with financing of terrorist organizations around the world, etc. As a result, today two types of conflict are most common. “On the one hand, there are intra-state conflicts for control over resources, the struggle for power, and economic dividends. On the other hand, there are asymmetric wars between major powers against rogue states or transnational threats” (Panova, 2005).

In the context of the study of the new type of conflicts “the process of globalization, which is increasing the number of poorly managed actors in international relations, can in some cases overcome the chaotic nature of the environment” (Davydov, 2002). This remark is important for the conclusion that the process of privatization of the security sphere and the formation of global security networks occur simultaneously with other global processes, in particular, with changes in the nature of modern conflicts and transformation of approaches to the use of violence in modern society.

Today, the state with its multifunctional and bulky military machine is more often opposed to groups of people whose

arsenal is made up of mobile phones, the Internet and social networks. They have neither headquarters, nor front lines, nor bases. Despite the enormous military power, it is increasingly difficult for the state to cope with faceless but numerous enemies. However, whereas in the past the wars that could not be classified as interstate ones were recognized as riots, rebels or national liberation movements, piracy, etc., modern types of conflicts, whether "asymmetric," "hybrid," "informal," or "low-intensity," in fact have the features of "non-traditional" (in the sense of "non-state") wars of the past, when the state has to deal with a non-state opponent.

The assertion of Saskia Sassen, a Dutch researcher and sociology professor at the University of Chicago, that it is not so much globalization that contributes to partial limitation of state competence, as that many states themselves strengthen globalization, looks as the most accurate observation. From her point of view, many of the structures currently associated with globalization emerged as a result of the initiatives of the states and continue to develop within the changed national institutions, which make it possible to simplify the activities of such structures (Sassen, 2006).

Sassen believes that modern global structures include three key processes:

1. The process of dismantling, during which previously considered exclusively state functions are increasingly concentrated in the hands of private actors;
2. Capacity building by private actors themselves, which allows them to operate at the international level;
3. The process of re-installation, during which new actors and the opportunities they possess become part of global networks embedded in national processes, but operating at the international level (Sassen, 2006).

Importantly, the process of dismantling is not considered a sign of the nation-state's extinction. Rather, some elements of traditional state functions are undergoing changes and/or are being denationalized. The dismantling of some state structures affects other structures, transforming the power relations

between various organizations and institutions within the state (Sassen, 2006). In this sense, global processes are not an external force that is capable of undermining the nation-state's sovereignty and destroy the integrity of states. Globalization is a process that is embedded in the functioning and reorganization of institutions and power relations within the state.

Partial dismantling of the state's participation significantly contributed to the emergence of PMSCs with expanded powers and material resources, which were concentrated in the hands of such companies. Moreover, since the "legitimacy of most transnational actors is based on universal, regional, sectoral, particular utility" (Kuznetsov, 1999), the described process has led to the emergence of a conceptually new phenomenon: socially recognized forms of legitimation of activities in which interaction of such companies with any actor allows them to effectively operate in the security sphere. The state plays a very important role here, since it allows PMSCs to be integrated, while remaining autonomous, in the work of state structures, thereby legitimating and stimulating the companies' activities. The result of this process is the legislative regulation of PMSCs at the state, regional and international levels.

If we consider the growth of "security privatization" through the prism of dismantlement, re-installation and transformation of relations within power structures, it becomes obvious that the commercial sphere of security goes beyond traditional state institutions but does not at all abolish the monopoly of states for legitimized violence.

In the Russian academic community, there are scholars who speak about the erosion of sovereignty "due to the increasing permeability of borders and the weakening of the traditional functions of the state" (Tsygankov, 2005; Muntyan, 2006), as well as "due to the growing influence of new actors, with simultaneous weakening of the power of the state itself and its inability to function without the support of international cooperation institutions" (Tsygankov, 2005), which indicates that the trends that accompany the globalization process "lead

to the weakening and change of the functions of nation-states" (Martynov, 1999).

It is important to note that the understanding of statehood, which has formed in political science, is based on the thesis that the government's legitimate monopoly on violence and the means to achieve this monopoly are fixed once and for all, unshakable and do not change over time. However, even with the formation of modern states, the state's monopoly on violence has never been absolute. This assumption allows us to assert that the relationship between the state that can legitimately use violence and the understanding of statehood may change (Berndtsson, 2009). Outsourcing per se does not undermine the basics of state sovereignty, and PMSCs do not pose a threat to the inviolability of the state as a system. Outsourcing rather demonstrates a "challenge to the effectiveness of state control" (Balakhnin and Zhigzhitov, 2008).

Outsourcing of military-security activities should not lead to automatic delegation of related control and responsibility to private structures. However, such control does not necessarily belong exclusively to the government. It can be public. This statement is especially relevant for "weak" states or for conflict situations where the possibility of state control is either limited or non-existent (Berndtsson, 2009).

The changing nature of threats has triggered the emergence of the so-called Security Sector Reform (SSR) concept that has been widely discussed around the world in recent years. The issue of PMSCs' participation in this process remains unresolved, although these structures are included in the security system. Often, when it comes to projects and proposals relating to the reform of the public security sector, they are simply ignored (Gumedze, 2008).

Why is the inclusion of non-state actors in the reconstruction of the security sector important? As some Russian authors note, "in democratic countries, control over a military organization and military policy rests primarily on three pillars. Firstly, it is the control of legislative power over executive power, including its law-enforcement agencies," as

well as the participation of legislators in military policy and military construction. Secondly, the basis of civil control is the institution of civilian defense ministers. And, thirdly, it is the openness of information, the access of scientific centers, press and public organizations to information about the vital activity of the armed forces and other law-enforcement agencies, 'replenishing' the legislative and executive authorities with civil society" (Arbatov, 2002).

In democratic societies, a nation-state, which exercises control over the use of force, holds direct and indirect consultations with society before resorting to means of violence (Fedorov, 2002). But if the state monopoly on the use of force is privatized by other structures, there is a possibility that the ban on the use of force would be overcome by other means. Then the participation of civil society in the dialogue with the state is ruled out, and the functions of public control are lost (Mandel, 2002).

On the one hand, the participation of PMSCs in ensuring security simplifies the process, removes the need to form and send military units to carry out tasks outside the country, and speeds up coordination and consultation procedures. On the other hand, mechanisms of democratic control, including that by civil society, are excluded from this process. Also, without a clear legal status, such security structures as PMSCs "that do not play a legitimate and democratically accountable role in providing security for citizens, are not only unable to prevent the emergence of conflicts, but they themselves can be a source of violence" (Born and Fluri, 2003; Lilly, Luckham and Von Tangen Page, 2002).

Speaking about the security system, it is important to understand that "not only is the object of democratic control expanding … but the procedures, functions … and some purposes of control are changing … These are the tasks of including military organization in all of its various manifestations in the democratic structure itself" (Nikitin, 2002). Therefore, such a phenomenon as PMSCs should be given special attention in the context of reforming the security sector in order to determine their place in this sphere, assign a

political status to them, and make them an object of democratic control.

Today private military security services are an actively developing and dynamic business with a multibillion-dollar turnover, a huge client network and a flexible structure that can compete, react quickly and successfully navigate the market. It is impossible to ignore such a force and not include it in the concept of security sector reform, just as it is impossible not to give it a universally recognized status and not to develop mechanisms of public control over these activities.

It is important to understand that democratic control over PMSCs' activities should be exercised in several ways. Firstly, the goals of companies' activities should be monitored, which implies oversight of the functions prescribed in PMSCs' contracts. Secondly, it is extremely important to assess the financing of PMSC contracts, that is, the financing party must clearly understand the assumed responsibility for proper use of funds by the PMSC (to avoid their misuse or fraud). Thirdly, control should address the issue of regulation for the compliance of PMSCs' activities with generally accepted norms regulating the operation of such companies, as well as transparency regarding the question of who they report to (Berndtsson, 2009).

As can be seen from this study, private military and security companies are a new, multifaceted and flexible element in the modern system of international relations. One of their significant features is that, being contracted by various clients (from state structures and international organizations to businesses, NGOs and individuals), PMSCs have a dual nature: they are "instrumental" in the hands of "strong" states, when acting as a continuation of the latter's policies, and independent in the eyes of "weak" states, when substituting for part of the functions of the state or international organizations.

Today, PMSCs provide transport and logistical support to U.S. forces in overseas campaigns and help the local authorities ensure order in African countries. They are included in UN missions for the protection of personnel, disposal of

explosives, and restoration of the armed forces of "weak" countries (Gumedze, 2011). Representatives of these companies advise top officials and train military personnel around the world. PMSCs are involved in the protection of diplomatic representations and mineral deposits, decipher information recorded with the help of drones (Brannen, 2015), and perform law-enforcement functions, restoring public order in some countries (Buzatu, 2008). The situations in which private military and security companies operate are not confined to conflict zones only, but also include post-conflict and peaceful territories.

However, what for some states is implementation of their own interests (PMSCs instrumentalism), for others is interference in internal affairs (PMSCs activism). Importantly, in both cases such security functions are concentrated in the hands of PMSCs, while previously they were performed only by the states themselves. These factors underscore the importance of creating a special mechanism for regulating PMSCs' activities that would take into account the specifics of this type of business.

It is crucial to identify functions that under no circumstances should be transferred to third parties. Since in each country the list of inalienable state functions in the security sphere will differ, the optimal measure for today would be the legislative fixation of the impossibility of delegating such activities as storage, delivery and escort of WMD and the means of their delivery.

This measure will help reduce tensions associated with the potential threat that PMSCs may pose to the state's sovereignty and monopoly on the legitimate use of violence. This is also important because the status of PMSCs in international law has not yet been determined. Although PMSCs are partly legitimatized by the very fact that the actions of states determining the trends in international relations "can become a norm if fixed by a chain of precedents" (Buzan B., 2007), as well as by PMSCs' involvement in cooperation with international organizations (Singer, 2007), undue attention to such a sensitive issue as WMD should not become a threat to the entire world.

Military missions and peacekeeping and humanitarian operations in the world will continue, while private security services will take different forms to meet new challenges and needs. So, the PMSC issue will remain on the international agenda. Consequently, discussions on possible forms of regulation and legitimization of PMSCs' activities will continue, thereby affecting the development of international law.

Private Military and Security Companies, Maria A. Nebolsina, PhD in Political Science, Centre for Euro-Atlantic Security, Institute of International Studies, Moscow State Institute of International Relations(MGIMO), Russia,https://eng.globalaffairs.ru/number/Private-Military-and-Security-Companies-2011. The Journal is published by Foreign Policy research Foundation. Russia in Global Affairs is an international platform that publishes the results of individual and collective research in political studies, foreign affairs and social and cultural as well as historical studies related to the international relations. Russia in Global Affairs publishes article in English only, while receiving articles in English and Russian as well (Russian articles are translated into English by the Editorial Office). Russia in Global Affairs aims to promote international political dialogue and foster better mutual understanding between scholars and policy-makers all over the world effectively facilitating track three diplomacy.

Chapter 12

Prisoners Raped by Dogs, the 'Modern' Torture Techniques of the US

Kawa Azem

The recent publication of documents by Senator Dianne Feinstein detailing the torture techniques and abuse of prisoners by the CIA has once again exposed the nasty and criminal nature of the bloodthirsty US government. A brief overview of the documents shows that CIA officers are savage sadists whose lust for inflicting suffering is satisfied by tying up, beating, and killing others. Any person who knows the bloody history of US invasions and interventions knows well that the US-installed military dictators and stooges in every corner of the world use inhumane torture methods as a weapon to intimidate their people and suppress uprisings. What interested me in this regard was a book called 'Thou Shalt Not Kill' by German journalist and politician Juergen Todenhoefer which is a memoir of his trip to Afghanistan and to Bagram prison in particular. Such rare books that expose the policies of imperialist countries are usually buried in the heap of pro-US books and forgotten.

Juergen speaks to Jack in Kabul, a former Canadian soldier and private security contractor. Jack says that the torture methods mentioned in the report released by the US senate is something common they do to all prisoners like chaining a person by their hands on a ceiling, tying up hands and feet, and sleep and food deprivation. But, he says, what happens in Bagram prison is unusual: "Afghan prisoners were tied face down on small chairs. Then fighting dogs entered the torture chamber. If the prisoners did not say anything useful, each dog got to take a turn on them. After procedure like these, they confessed everything. They would have even said that they killed Kennedy without even knowing who he was."

With such methods US forces abuse and humiliate Afghans to break their morale. Most Afghan arrested only for physically

looking like Taliban. There are no accurate statistics available of the number of prisoners in Bagram prison, but by an estimate there are more than 600 prisoners there and most of them are poor and innocent Afghans. The Afghan government has always stressed on the release of commanders and important figures of the Taliban from Bagram, not innocent Afghans. The government does this to earn points with its 'angry brothers'.

Jack tells the writer that he could not tolerate to see all this brutality by the Americans against innocent Afghans and left his duty. American torturers are not the first ones to have used dogs to obtain confessions. This crime has a long history. After the US-backed coup by Pinochet in Chile in 1973, many supporters of Salvador Allende's democratic government were arrested. Female political prisoners gave accounts of how Americans released dogs on them to rape them and break their morale. In an interview with Alternet.org (December 15, 2014), Mohammad, an Afghan interpreter in Bagram Airbase stated, "Todenhoefer's account of dogs being used to rape prisoners in the jail is absolutely realistic." He continued, "When I translated for them, I often knew that the detainee was anything but a terrorist." Mohammad said at the end, "Guantanamo is a paradise if you compare it with Bagram."

One of the shocking crimes in Bagram prison that also caused uproar was the death of Dilawar Yaqoubi. Dilawar was a farmer and taxi driver from the eastern Khost province. He was accused of being involved in a rocket attack on the US base and transferred to Bagram prison after being arrested. He was tortured and humiliated for five days after which he died. In the documentary 'Taxi to the Dark Side', Thomas Curtis who was a Reserve M.P. sergeant in Bagram confessed that Dilawar had been chained by his wrists for hours and brutally beaten till he died on December 10, 2002. An American medical examiner, Lt. Col. Elizabeth Rouse, who performed an autopsy on Dilawar said: "Dilawar's leg was pummeled so badly that the tissue was falling apart and had basically been pulpified… Torture marks could be seen all over his body… I've seen similar injuries in an individual run over by a bus." Carolyn Wood was a torturer and head of military intelligence

interrogators at Bagram. Dilawar, Habibullah and tens of others were killed under her murderous torture. But the US government awarded her a Bronze Star for 'exceptional meritorious service' and she was sent to Abu Ghraib on a new assignment! She is still said to be an instructor on torture methods in one of America's military intelligence centers.

Six days before Dilawar's murder, a man named Habibullah was also killed as a result of the US forces' savage torture. Many people who had worked in Bagram said that Dilawar and Habibullah were both common people; that they were both innocent and that the US army could not produce any evidence to prove that they were terrorists. Despite evidence proving that these two men were killed under torture by US forces, the official report maintains that the two have died of natural causes. Sher Aqa had spent six days in Bagram prison. He told BBC: "When I wanted to sleep I started shivering with cold… Nobody could sleep because there was a machine that was making noise." Mirwais, another detainee at Bagram said that his jaw had been broken when he was beaten after being arrested. Despite the injury, he spent 24 days in that 'hell'. He told BBC, "There was a small camera in my cell, and if you were sleeping they'd come in and disturb you." Mirwais also said he was made to dance to music by American soldiers every time he wanted to use the toilet.

Another victim of Bagram prison recounted that he was stripped naked and left in the cold. Later a water pipe would be inserted in his rectum and water would be released at a high pressure. Military prosecutor Stuart Couch who had seen both Guantanamo and Bagram said: "In my view, having visited Guantanamo several times, the Bagram facility made Guantánamo look like a nice hotel. The men did not appear to be allowed to move around at will, they mostly sat in rows on the floor. It smelled like the monkey house at the zoo." After twelve years, the nightmare of Bagram continues to haunt Afghans.

Although today Afghans are in charge of this prison, the mothers, wives, and daughters of Dilawar and Habibullah are still waiting for justice. Bagram prison has apparently been shut down but this does not put an end to US crimes in

Afghanistan. American criminals here are not bound by any law or rule and have absolute power. We can be certain that they still have their prisons in their bases. Those prisons may be much more dangerous than Bagram. US forces will continue to torture and humiliate innocent Afghans to quell their sadistic thirst. The stooge Afghan government has given US forces immunity from prosecution by signing the Security Agreement. Now nobody can hold these soldiers accountable for their viciousness and barbarity. *Courtesy: Prisoners raped by dogs, the 'modern' torture techniques of the US. Kawa Azem, 23 June 2015*

Rape dogs used by US in Afghanistan

By: Lasha Darkmoon

Did you know that attack dogs can be trained to rape everyone — literally? After the release of the CIA torture report by Senator Diane Feinstein (D-CA) the world is reeling in shock at the level of brutality revealed in the documents. In fact, the whole report is nothing more than a confession of sadistic procedures that could have been lifted from the diaries of Torquemada, from "rectal feeding" to nude beatings and humiliation—horrors that were well-known but not officially confirmed. But the report remains incomplete. Indeed, some 9000 documents have been withheld. What new horrors could be discovered with the publication of these records?

Perhaps the most gut-wrenching story to emerge from Bagram has been buried in the German media and remains unknown too much of the world. Published by German author and former politician Juergen Todenhoefer in his latest book, Thou Shalt Not Kill, the account stems from a visit to Kabul. At a local hotel, a former Canadian soldier and private security contractor named Jack told Jurgen Todenhoefer (pictured) why he could not longer stand working in Bagram. "It's not my thing when Afghans get raped by dogs," Jack remarked. Todenhoefer's son, who was present with him in Kabul and was transcribing Jack's words, was so startled by the comment he nearly dropped his pad and pen.

The war veteran, who loathed manipulating Western politicians even as he defended tactics of collective

punishment, continued his account: “Afghan prisoners were tied face down on small chairs,” Jack said. Then fighting dogs entered the torture chamber. “If the prisoners did not say anything useful, each dog got to take a turn on them,” Jack told Todenhoefer. “After procedure like these, they confessed everything. They would have even said that they killed Kennedy without even knowing who he was.” A former member of parliament representing the right-of-center Christian Democratic Union from 1972 to 1990, Todenhoefer transformed into a fervent anti-war activist after witnessing the Soviet destruction of Afghanistan during the 1980’s.

His journalism has taken him to Iraq and back to Afghanistan, where he has presented accounts of Western military interventions from the perspective of indigenous guerrilla forces. Unsurprisingly, his books have invited enormous controversy for presenting a sharp counterpoint to the war on terror’s narrative. In Germany, Todenhofer is roundly maligned by pro-Israel and US-friendly figures as a “vulgar pacifist” and an apologist for Islamic extremism. But those who have been on the other side of Western guns tend to recognize his journalism as an accurate portrayal of their harsh reality.

Lasha Darkmoon Comments: “It is no surprise that Todenhofer should be “roundly maligned by pro-Israel and US-friendly figures.” This is because any exposé of America’s torture regime, whether at Guantanamo, Abu Ghraib or Bagram base, invariably leads to the subject of Israeli torture advisors standing by to offer hot tips to the Americans on the best torture techniques. “The CIA did not just emulate Israel’s legal system to sanction torture,” we read in a recent report, “but it copied the same Israeli torture methods.” (See Israel — America’s Torture Consultant)

Though Todenhofer’s account of dogs being used to rape prisoners at Bagram is unconfirmed, the practice is not without precedent. Female political prisoners of former Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet’s jails have described their torturers using dogs to rape them. More recently, Lawrence Wright, the author of the acclaimed history of Al Qaeda, “The Looming Tower,” told National Public Radio’s Terry Gross, “One of my

FBI sources said that he had talked to an Egyptian intelligence officer who said that they used the dogs to rape the prisoners. And it would be hard to tell you how humiliating it would be to any person, but especially in Islamic culture where dogs are such a lowly form of life. It's, you know, that imprint will never leave anybody's mind."

I spoke to an Afghan named Mohammad who worked as an interpreter in Bagram and insisted on anonymity for fear of reprisals. He told me Todenhoefer's account of dogs being used to rape prisoners in the jail was "absolutely realistic." Mohammad worked primarily with US forces in Bagram, taking the job out of financial desperation. He soon learned what a mistake he had made. "When I translated for them, I often knew that the detainee was anything but a terrorist," he recalled. "Most of them were poor farmers or average guys." However, Mohammad was compelled to keep silent while his fellow countrymen were brutally tortured before his eyes. "I often felt like a traitor, but I needed the money," he told me. "I was forced to feed my family. Many Afghan interpreters are in the very same situation."

A "traitor" is also what the Taliban think about guys like Mohammad. It is well-known that they make short-shrift of interpreters they catch. Mohammad has since left Afghanistan for security reasons and is reluctant to offer explicit details of the interrogations sessions he participated in. However, he insisted that Todenhoefer's account accurately captured the horrors that unfolded behind the walls of Bagram. "Guantanamo is a paradise if you compare it with Bagram," Muhammad said. Waheed Mozhdah, a well-known political analyst and author based in Kabul, echoed Muhammad's account. "Bagram is worse than Guantanamo," Mozdah told me, "and all the crimes, even the cruelest ones like the dog story, are well known here but most people prefer to not talk about it."

Hometown for soldiers, hellhole for inmates

It is hard to imagine what more hideous acts of torment remain submerged in the chronicles of America's international gulag archipelago. Atrocities alleged to a German journalist by a

former detainee at the US military's Bagram Airbase in Kabul, Afghanistan, suggest that the worst horrors may be too much for the public to stomach. Bagram Airbase is the largest base the US constructed in Afghanistan and also one of the main theaters of its torture regime. You have to drive about one and a half hour from Kabul to reach the prison where hundreds of supposedly high-value detainees were held. The foundations of the base are much older, laid by the Soviets in the 1950s, when the last king of Afghanistan, Mohammad Zahir, maintained friendly connections with Moscow. Later, during the Soviet occupation, Bagram as the main control center for the Red Army.

Known as the "second Guantanamo," even though conditions at Bagram are inarguably worse, you will find the dark dungeons, which were mentioned in the latest CIA report, next to American fast food restaurants. During the US occupation, the military complex in Bagram became like a small town for soldiers, spooks and contractors. In this hermetically sealed hellhole, the wanton abuse of human rights existed comfortably alongside the "American Way of Life."

Lasha Darkmoon comments: "Where torture is secretly practiced in Bagram's underground dungeons, you can be certain that daily life at the American airbase, though "deceptively normal" on the surface, is in fact a simmering cesspool of sleazy sexuality. Though officially illicit sex is frowned upon and pornography forbidden, an alarming number of rapes and unwanted pregnancies are known to occur among female personnel. Massage parlors, discreetly pretending to be barbershops and beauty salons, offer masturbatory sex to American soldiers—"with buckets filled with free condoms for anyone to pick up."

"Bagram is deceptively normal," an eyewitness account reports: "The barbershops are called beauty salons, where haircuts cost twice as much as in Iraq. In these beauty shops, manicures and facials are on the menu of services, as are massages by the Russian-speaking Uzbek and Tajik women. It's all legit—a supervisor makes sure no cubicle or table is too private—but the lights are turned low and the clients lay on massage tables, in their shorts or boxer underwear. The base

hospital also has a bucket filled with free condoms for anyone to pick up."

One of the persons sucked into the parallel world of Bagram was Raymond Azar, a manager of a construction company. Azar, a citizen of Lebanon, was on his way to the US military base near the Afghan Presidential Palace known as Camp Eggers when 10 armed FBI agents suddenly surrounded him. The agents handcuffed him, tied him up and shoved him into an SUV. Some hours later Azar found himself in the bowels of Bagram.

According to Azar's testimony, he was forced to sit for seven hours while his hands and feet were tied to a chair. He spent the whole night in a cold metal container. His tormentors denied him food for 30 hours. Azar also claimed that the military officers showed him photos of his wife and four children, warning him that unless he cooperated he would never see his family again. Today we know that officers and agents have threatened prisoners with the rape and murder of their relatives.

Azar had nothing to do with Al Qaida or the Taliban.

In fact, he was caught up in the middle of a classic web of corruption. The businessman's company had signed phony contracts with the Pentagon for reconstruction work in Afghanistan. Later, Azar was accused of having attempted to bribe the US Army contact to secure the military contracts for his company. This was not the sort of crime for which a suspect is normally sent to a military prison. To date, no one has explained why the businessman was sent to Bagram. Most prisoners from Bagram are not rich business men or foreign workers from abroad, but average Afghan men who had a simple life before they had been kidnapped. One of these men was Dilawar Yaqubi, a taxi driver and farmer from Khost, Eastern Afghanistan.

After five days of brutal torture in Bagram, Yaqubi was declared as dead on December 10, 2002. His legs had been "pulpified" by his interrogators, who maintained that they were simply acting according to guidelines handed down to them by the Pentagon and approved by Defense Secretary

Donald Rumsfeld. The case of the Afghan taxi driver's killing was highlighted in the Oscar-winning documentary "Taxi to the Dark Side." The film established that Yaqubi had simply been at the wrong place at the wrong time. His family, his daughter and his wife, are now awaiting justice. (Watch the full version of Taxi to the Dark Side here). The latest CIA torture report is focused entirely on the crimes of the Bush administration. But it should not be forgotten that the horrors that have plagued Afghanistan continued under Barack Obama's watch.

When Afghanistan's new president, Ashraf Ghani, entered power two months ago, the first thing he did was sign a Bilateral Security Agreement with the US. According to the terms of this bogus deal, negotiated without the consent or agreement of the Afghan public, the Afghan judiciary is forbidden from prosecuting criminal US soldiers in Afghanistan. This means that any American, whether a torturer or a drone operator who destroys an entire family with the push of a button, is above the law. He is free to kill or torture anyone with impunity. During the last days of his presidency, Hamid Karzai railed against the bilateral agreement. On his way out, Karzai condemned the US occupation and remarked that Bagram had become "a terrorism factory."

Now that Karzai is gone, Ghani is doing all he can to prove his absolute obedience towards the US. On December 10th 2014, just one day after the CIA torture report's release, the US Defense Department announced it had closed the Bagram detention center once and for all. Yet it is not known how many secret prisons still exist in Afghanistan. In an Afghanistan still dominated by Western interests and American power, the torture never stops. Dr Lasha Darkmoon (b.1978) is an Anglo-American ex-academic with higher degrees in Classics whose political articles and poems have been translated into several languages. Most of her political essays can be found at The Occidental Observer and The TruthSeeker. Her own website, Darkmoon.me, is now within the top 1 percent of websites in the world according to the Alexa ranking system.

Chapter 13

The AIHRC Summary Report of the National Inquiry on the Protection of the Rights of Victims of Armed Conflict and Terrorism

The study showed that according to the information of the AIHRC, during the past 9 years (from Hamal, 1. 1388 to the end of Hoot 1396), 64,104 civilians became victims of armed conflicts and terrorist attacks, of which 23,130 people (36%) were killed and 40,974 people (64 %) were injured. Of the total civilian casualties, 4,779 victims (7.5%) were women,[1] 1465 victims (17.9 %%) were children and 3, 3516 victims (52.3%) were men. The identity of 14,344 victims, making up 22.3%, has been reported undetected.

The data obtained in this research confirms that the anti-government armed groups are responsible for 69.8% of total civilian casualties. While the number of victims killed or injured by the government or pro-government forces reaches 6,848 people, including 2,961 dead and 3,887 injured, making up 10.7% of all casualties in the past 9 years. The perpetrators of the remaining 19.5% have not been identified yet.

The victims' demands from the government

The information obtained through the questionnaire shows that the victims have six clear demands from the government.

1: Prosecution of the perpetrators of the case,

2: Compensation for victim's harms,

3: Establishing legal bases or enacting the Victim Compensation Act,

4: Ensuring the security of victims as one of the most important responsibilities of the government;

5: Victims participation in the peace programs.

6: Creation of appropriate conditions for victims to benefit from specific social services, such as the allocation of privileges in education and higher education, the distribution of educational scholarship, and the provision of more privileges for them in employment programs.

International experiences in the area of protection of victims' rights

The experiences of member states of the Council of Europe in the area of compensation for victims of violent crimes and terrorist attacks and the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Committee in South Africa are very important examples that have successfully defined the crisis management strategies of the armed conflicts and terrorist attacks in the protection of victims' rights.

European countries were able to create the first and most important regional convention in the early eighties (1983) entitled "European Convention on the Compensation of Victims of Violent Crimes", which regulates compensation for victims of violent crimes and terrorist attacks. Under the Convention, the protection of victims of violent crimes and terrorist attacks in most countries of the world was legislated in a separate law at the national level. In South Africa, after the defeat of apartheid, the Truth and Reconciliation Committee were established to help the peace process and heal the suffering of the victims by addressing the crimes committed against the blacks in the years 1960 to 1994. The committee created a mechanism according to which each victim filed a complaint and forgave the perpetrator at a public hearing after the perpetrator confessed his crime humbly. Currently, the increasing number of civilian casualties and damage caused by armed conflict and terrorist attacks in Afghanistan have become a major and worrying challenge.

The increase is reported while the government has not taken any significant step forward in protecting the rights of the victims of terrorist attacks, and despite the serious judicial challenges faced by the victims, there is no acceptable mechanism for providing financial support to the victims.

AIHRC, by understanding the existing problems, has launched a national inquiry in protection of the rights of victims of armed conflict and terrorist attacks. The main focus of this study is to answer the question of whether or not, with regard to increasing civilian casualties and the damage caused by armed conflict and terrorist attacks in Afghanistan, the government has been able to meet its national and international responsibilities in protecting victims' rights, and create the necessary legal and structural mechanisms?

The results of this study have shown that the Afghan government still has little success in ensuring the security of the citizens, and the wars and violence resulting insecurities are increasing. Every day, the number of victims of armed conflict and terrorist attacks is increased and heavy financial losses have been inflicted on the war-torn and suffering people of the country. In addition to library studies, the data of this study were obtained through questionnaires, public hearing meetings, focus group meetings, and separate interviews with officials and experts.

Afghan government support programs for victims' rights

Under international legal instruments, governments have the duty to provide victims of armed conflicts and terrorist attacks with judicial, cultural, security support as well as compensation or reparation. But in Afghanistan, on the one hand, the government does not have a judicial system of protection for victims of armed conflicts and terrorist attacks, and on the other hand the government of Afghanistan is, in some way, faced with a legal problem, because the National Reconciliation, General Amnesty, and National Stability Law1 is effectively enforced in the country.

The government's plan for peace, reconciliation and justice in Afghanistan has so far been overlooked. Although, the United Nations resolution on the commemoration of the victims of terrorism on 20/2/1397, confirmed the 30th Assad as the International Day for the Remembrance of the Victims of Terrorism in the National Calendar.[2] AS 19th of Qaws, corresponding to December, 10 (International Human Rights Day) as a result of the AIHRC's advocacy was marked as the

National Remembrance Day for Victims of Human Rights Volitions.

The government of Afghanistan has not yet developed a regular program based on a special law to compensate or support the victims of armed conflict and terrorism, but, has helped some victims or relatives of the victims, based on a normal procedure, with a sum of money ranging between 50,000 to 100,000 AFs

Damages inflicted on the victims

Field studies of this inquiry in which 3,129 victims in 30 provinces[3] were interviewed, shows that victims sometimes suffered several types of damages. For example, out of a total of 3,129 people, 1,934 (62%) of them have confirmed that they have lost at least one or more of their family members in the armed conflicts or terrorist attacks. Likewise, 1,190 people (38%) of them confirmed that one or more of their family members or including himself/herself were injured as a result of armed conflicts or terrorist attacks. 46 people (1.46%) of the interviewees said that a member of their family was missing. Also, 47 people (1.55%) of the victims confirmed that they or their relatives were taken hostage. 791 people (25.3%) lost their homes and other property. 459 people (14.7%) were deprived of their right to education, 794 people (25.4%) of the interviewees confirmed that they had been displaced from their place of residence due to armed conflicts and terrorist attacks. 423 people(13.5%) of them or one of their relatives were disabled. 170 people(5.4%) said they had been mistreated and tortured.

Request for support

Of the 3,129 people interviewed, 1,813 people, making up 57.9% of the interviewees, confirmed that they had received support or assistance from the government and other support institutions. While 1,316 people, 42.1%, said they had not sought support or assistance from the government or other support institutions.

The victims' reasons for not seeking government's support

Of the 1,316 victims who had not sought government's support, 289 people (22%) said, because of lack of trust, 183 people (13.9%) said due to lack of access, 66 people (5%) mentioned because of fear of anti-government forces, 13 people (0.99%), due to fear of the perpetrators of the case, 253 people (19.2%) did not go to the government for help because they did not know about the victim's rights, 503 people (38.2%) did not go to the government for personal reasons. Finally, 9 people (0.7%) had no particular reason for not seeking help from the government.

Supporting institutions, including the government

The interviewees' responses indicate that out of 3,129 people interviewed, 2,353 of them (75%) confirmed that they had been assisted. But 773 people (25%) said they had not been assisted by any organization. According to the interviewees the assisting or contributing institutions include:

The Presidential Office, which has so far supported 323 people(13.7%) of those interviewed. Ministry of Defense supported 8 people (0.3%), Ministry of Interior, 146 people (6.2%) NDS, 18 people (0.8%) Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission, 85 people (3.6%) Ministry of Public Health, 358 people (15.2%), Ministry of Education, 16 people (0.7%), Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled, 553 people (23.5%) Ministry of Justice, 3 people (0.1%), Ministry of Refugees and Returnees, 215 people (9.1%), Provincial governor 168 people (7.1%), District Governor 66 people (2.8%) Courts, 6 people (0.3%), Attorney General, 11 people (0.5%), Incident management office, 94 people (4%), International institutions 120 people (5.1%), Civil society, 33 people (1.4%), other people 57 people (2.4%), and finally, other national and international organizations have supported 73 people (3.1%) of the victims interviewed.

The type of support provided for the victims

Of the 2,353 supported victims covered in this inquiry, 964 people stated that they received cash assistance from one thousand to one million Afs: 78 people (3.3%) said they received cash aid from 1,000 to 10,000 Afs. 87 people (3.7%)

ranged it from 10,000 to 20,000 Afs, 94 people (4%) from 20,000 to 30,000 Afs, 245 people

(10.4%) from 30,000 to 50,000 Afs, 430 people (18.3%) from 50,0000 to 100,000 Afs, 28 People (1.2%) have received cash aid from 100,000 to 500,000 Afs, 2 people (0.1%) from 500,000 to one million Afs. The remaining 1,389 people (59%) did not receive financial support; however they had enjoyed other supports.

Receiving medical aid, sending to Hajj pilgrimage, receiving food, receiving land plots, financial compensation, and eventually identifying perpetrators and conduction of judicial proceedings are among the other protections received by the victims. Satisfaction of provided support, AIHRC's studies show that only 149 people making up 6.3% of all people supported, confirmed that the support provided to them had been satisfactory. But 861 people, (36.6%) said that the support provided was unsatisfactory and not enough. 687 people (29.2%) said the supports rendered were satisfactory, and 656 people (27.9%) had no comment on this regard.

Victims' suggestions for the improvement of supports

According to this study, 834 interviewees (26.7%) said that the government should have continual plans for supporting of victims. 280 people (8.9%) said ensuring security, 103 people(3.3%) suggested the creation of job opportunities, 46 people(1.5%) proposed the creation of educational and higher education opportunities, 41 people (1.3%) rendering of health services, 7 People (0.2%) elimination of corruption, 109 people (3.5%) distribution of land plots, 114 people (3.6%), prosecution of the perpetrators of the crimes, and 1,595 people (51%) did not have a particular comment on this issue.

The consequences of the lack of protection of victims' rights

The lack of government attention in this regard and the lack of continual support programs for the victims have caused serious gap between people and the government, and ultimately the base of the authority and the legitimate power of the ruling system and sovereignty will be undermined. 2,776

people, making up 89% of the interviewees, emphasized that the government's failure to protect the rights of victims or the government's lack of attention in this regard has damaged the other human rights of the victims. 522 people (18.8%) said that lack of support by the government or lack of care for the wounded have caused violations of the right to life of the victims' dependents. The right to freedom of movement, the right to human dignity, the right to liberty and security of person, the right to legal proceedings, the right to property, the right to adequate housing, the right to education, the right to access to health care, the right to adequate living conditions, the right to marry and form a family, the right to freedom of association, the right to freedom of opinion and expression, the right to participate in politics, and social, cultural and professional activities, the right to freedom of assembly are among the rights that are violated as a result of the government's inattention to the victims.

The perpetrators

This section focuses solely on the perpetrators of the cases that have caused the victimization of 3,129 interviewees in this study.

According to the information obtained from the interviewees, 1,485 cases (47.5%) are perpetrated by Taliban group, 562 cases (18%) by the ISIS group, 43 cases (1.4%) by the Haqqani Network, 54 cases (1.7%), by Pakistani forces. 43 cases (1.4%) are committed by other terrorist groups, 179 cases (5.7%), are attributed to irresponsible armed forces, 29 cases, 0.9% are committed by ANP, 59 cases(1.9%) relate to the local police, 8 cases (0.3%) are perpetrated by national security forces, 115 cases (3.7%) by the pro-government international forces, and 24 cases (0.8%) attributes to the public uprising. 528 cases (16.9%) was not identified and the interviewees said it was unknown.

Detailed study of public hearing meetings

Detailed studies of the public hearing meetings show that totally 13 meetings were held in 13 provinces of the country, participated by 1,132 people. Insecurity and increased violence, increased number of civilian casualties of armed

conflicts and terrorist attacks, and government support for the victims thereof are the most important questions that have been considered by speakers and participants at meetings.

A: Increased insecurity and violence

Increasing insecurity and violence in recent years has been one of the main concerns of the participants raised during the public hearing meetings' speeches and discussions. Speakers and participants believed that insecurity and violence in recent years have caused the citizens of the country to lose their security and face financial threats. Participants in the public hearing meetings emphasized that insecurity and increased violence have caused displacement or immigration of the citizens. Therefore, ensuring security and reviewing security programs by the government was one of the main demands of the participants in the public hearing meetings.

B: Increased number of victims

The increase in armed conflicts and terrorist attacks has resulted in the increase of civilian casualties in recent years. According to the participants, armed conflict in Afghanistan is not only contrary to the international humanitarian law, but it is also against the standards and principles of Islamic religion.

Demands

No attack on public places such as mosques, schools, shops, no attack on the highways and passengers, no invasion on civilians, respect for the rights of children and respect for human rights principles and norms and respect for Islamic law during conflicts and wars were the most important demands of the participants of public hearing meetings in this study, which were repeated raised and emphasized upon by the participants and in all of these meetings.

C: Victim Support

According to the heads of government departments, in particular the heads of labor, social affairs and martyrs and the disabled, the security commanders, the heads of the judiciary organs, the heads of public health in the provinces, the government has tried to provide support for victims of the

civilian casualties of armed conflicts and terrorist attacks to the extent possible. However, representatives of the victims and some representatives of government departments mentioned the problems in this regard and stated that the support provided for the victims of armed conflicts and terrorist attacks is very small, and more attention from the Afghan government is required.

A detailed study of focus group meetings:

At focus group meetings, five major questions were discussed in 33 meetings with a total of 677 participants, and the answers to the participants' questions were categorized:

The main questions

1:What are the causes and factors of increasing number of victims of armed conflicts and terrorist attacks in the country? Second Question: What steps should be taken to reduce the number of victims of armed conflicts and terrorist attacks? Question 3: What measures should be taken to protect the victims and dependents of the victims of armed conflict and terrorist attacks, especially women, the elderly and children? Question 4: What action should be taken to investigate war crimes and crimes against humanity? Question 5: What are your suggestions to prevent or reduce financial losses caused by armed conflicts and terrorist attacks at the national level?

A. The results of the discussion on the first question:

Summing up the comments of the participants in focus group meetings on the first question, the following issues were emphasized as the causes and factors behind the increasing number of victims of armed conflicts and terrorist attacks,

1. Failure to comply with the laws of war and the rules and principles of international humanitarian law by hostile groups;
2. Failure to prosecute perpetrators of war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide and terrorism, based on the obligations of the government of Afghanistan pursuant acceding to the Rome Statute;
3. Use of civilians as a war shield;

4. Changing war strategy of anti-government armed groups and increasing suicide attacks;
5. Use of heavy weapons in wars, especially in residential and public areas;
6. The weakness of the government and security and detective organs;
7. Support of anti-government armed groups and terrorists by the countries and foreign intelligence agencies;
8. The expansion of war due to the expansion of anti-government armed groups and terrorists by using a recruitment opportunity among the poor, the unemployed and those who in some way distance themselves from the government and the victims of the injustice or discriminatory treatment of the government;
9. The lack of government control over religious schools and the growth of radical religious groups that have so far contributed to the expansion of war;
10. The rise of new extremist groups;
11. Change in the NATO mission from direct war to training and counselling;
12. The weakness of national unity spirit, and the lack of national will, to secure peace;
13. Absence of full coordination between national and international military forces;
14. The fledgling of the country's defense and security structures and the low level of combat skills;
15. The lack of strategic warfare in the national defense and security institutions;
16. Increased number of irresponsible armed groups;
17. The existence of corruption in security institutions;
18. The government's policy of tolerance and pragmatism in dealing with insurgents and terrorist groups;

B: The results of the discussion on the second question:

Participants of the focus group of the National Inquiry on Protection of the Rights of Victims of Armed Conflict and Terrorist Attacks, presented the following comments in response to the second question, which focused on the ways to reduce the number of victims of armed conflict and terrorist attacks;

1. Observance of war laws and the rules and principles of international humanitarian law by hostile parties;
2. The trial of perpetrators of war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide and terrorism, based on the obligations of the government of Afghanistan pursuant to Rome Statute;
3. Civilians should not be used as war shields;
4. Preventing suicide attacks and spreading war in residential areas;
5. War management and no use of heavy weapons in wars, especially in residential and public areas;
6. Strengthening security and detective organs;
7. Strengthening government diplomacy in its relations with the countries of the world and persuading foreign countries and organizations to avoid supporting anti-government armed groups and terrorists, in cooperation with the United Nations;
8. Avoid the spread of war by preventing the expansion of anti-government armed groups and terrorists, and eliminate terrorist groups' recruitment opportunities among the people by eliminating the gap between the people and the government;
9. Combating discrimination and injustice in the relations between the government and the people;
10. Strengthening and expanding monitoring programs for gaining control over the religious schools to prevent the growth of radicalism;

11. Strengthening the spirit of national unity and national will for peace;
12. To establish full coordination between national and international military forces;
13. Strengthening the skills and knowledge of war, defense and security structures of the country;
14. Designing and drafting a strategic warfare program in national defense and security institutions;
15. Eliminating corruption in security institutions;
16. Strengthening people's cooperation with the government in the fight against antigovernment armed groups and terrorist groups;
17. Strengthening the ethical and religious principles and creating the ground for rightful thinking and moderation in society;
18. Provide clear guidelines, regulations and procedures regarding the use of weapons and devices and military bomber aircraft;
19. Finalize a national policy to prevent civilian casualties and establish a government-specific unit to investigate all damage caused by armed conflict and terrorist attacks;
20. Absolute disarmament of irresponsible armed groups and militias;

C: The results of the discussion on the third question:

In response to the third question regarding taking measures by the government to protect victims of armed conflict and terrorist attacks and their dependents, especially women, the elderly and children, the participants in the focus group meetings agreed on the following points:

1. The trial of perpetrators of war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide and terrorism, based on the obligations of the Government of Afghanistan pursuant to acceding to the Rome Statute;

2. Emotional and psychological support for victims through the fight against discrimination and poverty;
3. Preparation and approval of the law of compensation for victims of armed conflicts and terrorist attacks;
4. Implementation of the government Action Plan for Peace, Reconciliation and Justice in Afghanistan;
5. Observance of the Law on the Rights and Privileges of the People with Disabilities;
6. Denial of the policy of tolerance and expediency with anti-government groups and terrorists;
7. Strengthening and continuation of health cooperation and psychotherapeutic services for those injured by armed conflicts and terrorist attacks, by the government;
8. Addressing the situation of internally displaced persons and providing the appropriate grounds for their return to their residential areas;
9. Provide special education and training for victims of armed conflicts and terrorist attacks;
10. Provide employment opportunities for the victims of armed conflict and terrorist attacks;

D: The results of the discussion on the fourth question:

Discussion on the fourth question of focus group meetings of this study, which was asked about the steps needed to address war crimes and crimes against humanity, produced the following results:

1. The trial of perpetrators of war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide and terrorism, based on the obligations of the government of Afghanistan pursuant to the Rome Statute;
2. Establishment of a special court for the prosecution of war crimes and crimes against humanity by the government and unconditional punishment of the perpetrators of these crimes; 11

3. Strengthening diplomacy to introduce the countries that are involved in the continuation of hostilities in Afghanistan and are partners of terrorist groups, to the International Criminal Court, as part of war crimes and crimes against humanity,
4. Request for the cooperation of the International Criminal Court to address the above mentioned crimes due to the weakness of Afghanistan's justice and judicial institutions in dealing with these crimes at present;
5. Eliminate the culture of impunity;
6. Supporting those who suffered damages;
7. Prevent the interference of political parties in the prosecution of offenders.

E: The results of the discussion on question[5]:

The result of the last discussion on the prevention or reduction of financial losses because of armed conflicts and terrorist attacks is summarized as follows;

1. Preparation and approval of the law of compensation for financial losses caused by armed conflicts and terrorist attacks;
2. Strengthening the skills and knowledge of national security and defense institutions and developing strategies and mechanisms for the observance of the law of war and the rules and principles of IHL during the war;
3. Drawing the attention of the anti-government and terrorist groups to the observance of the laws of war and the rules and principles of IHL;
4. Bringing peace;
5. Strengthening cooperation and the spirit of interdependence and tolerance;
6. Deploying military bases in remote areas, away from the residential areas;

7. Trial of perpetrators of war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide, and terrorism, based on the obligations of the Government of Afghanistan pursuant to the Rome Statute;
8. Eliminating corruption in the justice and judicial institutions;
9. Establish more coordination between the security and defense forces of the country;
10. Eliminating administrative corruption and discrimination within the system;

AIHRC Report Summary of the National Inquiry on the Protection of the Rights of Victims of Armed Conflict and Terrorism. The AIHRC, based on its legal mandate pursuant Article 58 of the Constitution and the provisions of Article 21 of the Law on the Structure, Duties and Mandates of the AIHRC concerning protection, promotion and monitoring of human rights at the national level, is now releasing the AIHRC's fifth National Inquiry entitled "Protection of the Rights of Victims of Armed Conflict and Terrorism". Dr. Sima Samar, Chairperson of the AIHRC..

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Notes

1 Actually, this article does not limit itself to the city Kabul only. The spatial scope varies according to the issues in question. Social as-pects can be understood by focusing on the city strictly speaking. But the neighbouring towns, such as Paghman and Shar Asyab, from which Kabul can be bombed, and the surrounding countryside have to be taken into account as far as military strategies and economic issues are concerned.

2 For an account of the revolt see Dorronsoro (2005: 93).

3 In the perspective of their withdrawal, the Soviets had put Najibullah in place in 1986 to replace Karmal at the head of the pro-Soviet regime.

4 Journalists especially describe the events that took place in Kabul, where they could easily work. In this way, they contributed to the construction of a problematic perception of the war. Abroad, these images were until then rare and suggested increasing violence in the civil war.

5 Interestingly, two actors, important at the national level, did not get involved in the conflict. First, Ismail Khan, the Governor of Herat, who was not only too far from the capital but also too busy in establishing his authority in

the West. Plus, he belonged to the same party as Masud and their relations became more and sourer over the years. Second, Governor Haji Qadir in Jalalabad remained neutral. He headed a fragile coalition of commanders and was heavily implicated in the smuggling of contraband with Pakistan.

6 It seems that contact between Masud and Rashid Dostum began in Autumn 1991.

7 Following a meeting between Wakil, the minister for foreign affairs, and Masud, it was decided that the dignitaries of the regime would support the latter, partly out of fear of Hekmatyar.

8 The Hazaras are an ethnic group and live in the centre of Afghanistan. They constitute about 15 percent of the total population and mostly are Shiites, contrary to the majority of the population, which is Sunni.

9 Hekmatyar attempted a coup in 1991, forming an alliance with part of the army. The purges that followed this attempt weakened groups associated with Hekmatyar, making it difficult for them to help him during the fall of the capital in 1992.

10 Mazari, the leader of Hezb-i wahdat, would be imprisoned by the Taliban during an offensive afterwards. He died in unknown circumstances, though he was probably killed while trying to escape.

11 For a discussion of this concept in the Afghan case, see Rubin (1988).

12 Since the 1950s, the state's authority over Afghanistan's territory was almost uncontested. Yet, the administration remained badly under-developed.

13 Masud was initially based in the Panjshir, some few hours away from the capital by road. But his conflict with the Hizb-e Islami meant that he had to extend his political power towards the North. In addition, the military or police forces that were present in the capital were far

from constituting autonomous actors as they usually joined one political party or the other.

14 The Afghan government's currency was printed in Russia.

15 Masud did have, nevertheless, an important sphere of influence in the north-east, while Dostam ruled several cities in the north. But Hekmatyar, unable to establish any local stronghold, was compelled to put all his bets on the capital. The situation of the Hezb-i wahdat was more complex because there are no Hazara-dominated cities in Afghanistan. There are only strong Hazara communities scattered in Mazar-i Sharif and Kabul. Controlling part of these two cities meant therefore, for the party, to have access to the financial resources the Hazarajat was lacking.

16 Without going into greater details, it has to be recalled that each regional power supported a particular party in order to establish its influence in Afghanistan: Pakistan backed the Hezb-i islami, Iran the Hezb-i wahdat, Saudi Arabia the Ettehad and Russia was leaning towards Masud. This not only led to instrumentalist relations of the part of these countries and their Afghan clients but also introduced an additional level of constraints as far as reaching an acceptable solution was concerned: the interests of Iran and Saudi Arabia were just as conflicted as those between Pakistan and Russia.

17 Hekmatyar and Masud had been on very bad terms since the mid 1970s. Hekmatyar accused Masud (then close to Rabbani), of betraying the movement in the failed 1975 Islamist coup. He tortured and eventually killed a friend of Masud, Jan Mohamad, and ordered Masud's arrest, see Davies (1996).

18 The main macro-ethnic groups generally identified in Afghanistan are Pashtuns, Tajiks, Hazaras, Uzbeks, Turkmens, Baluchs and Nuristanis. On the complexity of ethnic identities in the region, see Jean-Pierre Digard (1988). In urban areas, the term 'Tajik' refers to Persian language (Farsi) speakers, although they do not form a

co-herent social group, nor can they easily be collectively mobilized. The city of Herat has, equally, a very strong identity, which partially transcends ethnic identities.

19 Originally, this Arabic term designated a group of patrilineal descent, but today it signifies ‘homeland’. The term also has a more extended usage in Afghanistan as it qualifies all groups of solidarity. The qawm tends to circumscribe a global system of exchange based on the model of the extended family, even when the real basis for affiliation is elsewhere (professional, partisan or confessional), see Centlivres and Centlivres-Demont (1988).

20 After a few generations, the inhabitants of the capital tend to adopt Persian (Farsi) in preference to Pashto or Turkish dialects; this is notably so in the case of the Pashtun tribal aristocracy.

21 The Shiite Kizilbashes are historically present in Chendawal, but this district has seen an increasing proportion of Hazaras (Fazelli 1983).

22 At that time, and for the first time, tensions between Uzbeks and Hazaras emerged in Mazar-i Sharif. For a more global description of this phenomena see Dorronsoro (2005: 257).

23 The Jumbesh are an interesting example because its militia and, especially, its leaders were far from being all Uzbeks, a concept that furthermore is not self-evident. The top-down construction of nationalism came into conflict here with insurmountable obstacles.

24 In general, the Hezb-i wahdat merged several revolutionary parties and had only a small following amongst the former Hazara elite, mostly eliminated during the internal conflicts in the Hazarajat during the 1980s (Sample 2000).

25 For a presentation on the economy of the Kabul region, see Etienne (1972: 167).

26 The contraband on the Afghano-Pakistani border provided a turnover of several billion dollars.

27 The militia that had formed the Jumbesh in 1992 was known throughout Afghanistan for its plundering.

28 During the 1928-1978 period the elite, according to Barnett Rubin's definition, includes governors, minister-judges of the Supreme Court, and heads of state (Rubin 1991).

29 A garment that completely covers the outer body, the hair, and the face. It should be distinguished from the chador, which left the face exposed.

30 The condition of women had been the source of governmental attention since the 1920s under Amanullah. However, there had never been a significant Afghan feminist movement.

31 The Afghans in the refugee camps in Pakistan have the same type of behaviour, particularly the more stringent monitoring of women.

32 But contrary to what is suggested by Amnesty International (1992), the three that were hanged by Masud's troops were not communists, but alleged delinquents accused of rape and murder.

33 I witnessed, in 1993, in the Badghis province, refugees from Kabul facing very similar difficulties.

34 Though anecdotal, the very hostile way the Mujahideen looked at flight attendants working for the Afghanistan national during an inauguration at the airport in 1992 exemplified the confrontation between the two worlds. The female flight attendants covered their hair but wore western dress.

35 The policy of the foreign secretary in 1992, more respectful of women's rights, seems to be an exception. In fact, this minister was not really representative of the Mujahideen, because he was a rich merchant who had tried to reconcile the Kabul regime with the parties' heads during the transition phase.

36 ‘Alors qu’en avril j’avais visité des postes de premier secours tenus par des femmes médecins, je découvre des rues presque sans femmes; le tchador (foulard) ne suffit plus, il faut porter le tchadri (survêtement couvrant la femme de la tête aux pieds)’ (When in April I visited the relief camps run by female doctors, I discovered streets almost without women; the chador (veil) was not sufficient, it was now necessary to wear the chadri (over-clothes covering the woman from head to toe) (Vontobel 1992).

37 But in Herat, for instance, wearing the chadri never prevented a strong tradition of female education. Herat Girls’ high school was one of the best in the country. After the arrival of the Taliban the education of girls had to be done in an informal manner.

38 The situation was different from that in Kandahar where instead of a political confrontation, the fighting was between small groups of racketeers. The outcome, however was the same: an exasperated population with aspirations for the return of order. Without Pakistani support, it is, however, highly unlikely that the Taliban movement would have been able to achieve such a military penetration of the south and to take Kabul.

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66 "Afghanistan," CIA World Factbook, last updated July 10, 2019.

67 Afghanistan was ranked as "Tier 2" in the State Department Trafficking in Persons Report for 2017, an improvement from 2016 when Afghanistan was ranked as "Tier 2: Watch List" on the grounds that the Afghan government was not demonstrating increased efforts against trafficking since the prior reporting period.

68 SIGAR, Quarterly Report to the United States Congress, January 30, 2019.

69 For more, see CRS Report R45329, Afghanistan: Legislation in the 115th Congress, by Clayton Thomas.

70 Cost of War Update as of March 31, 2019. That figure includes the DOD contribution to reconstruction.

71 Michael Semple, "The Taliban's Battle Plan," Foreign Affairs, November 28, 2018.

72 Anwar Iqbal, "Afghan Army to Collapse in Six Months Without US Help: Ghani," Dawn, January 18, 2018.

73 Sayed Salahuddin, "Strongman's Loyalists Show Taliban Isn't Only Threat in Afghanistan," Washington Post, July 4, 2018.

74 Twenty-second report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2368 (2017) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities, United Nations Security Council, July 27, 2018.

75 See, for example Jim Banks, "The Public Deserves an Afghanistan War Progress Report," National Review, October 23, 2018; Seth Jones, "The U.S. Strategy in Afghanistan: The Perils of Withdrawal," Center for Strategic and International Studies, October 26, 2018.

76 Semple, op. cit.

77 Kyle Rempfer, "H.R. McMaster Says The Public Is Fed A 'War-Weariness' Narrative That Hurts US Strategy," Military Times, May 9, 2019.

78 Charles Pena, "We Can't Win-and Don't Have To-In Afghanistan." Real Clear Defense, October 9, 2018.

79 U.S. Department of State, "Integrated Country Strategy: Afghanistan," September 27, 2018.

80 A. Trevor Thrall and Erik Goepner, "Another Year of the War in Afghanistan," Texas National Security Review, September 11, 2018. See also Micah Zenko and Amelia Mae Wolfe, "The Myth of the Terrorist Safe Haven," Foreign Policy, January 26, 2015.

81 Erik Goepner, “In Afghanistan, the Withdrawal of U.S. Troops Is Long Overdue,” Cato Institute, September 29, 2017.

82 Omar Samad, “A Pivotal Year Ahead for Afghanistan,” Atlantic Council, November 27, 2018.

83 See CRS In Focus IF11139, Evaluating DOD Strategy: Key Findings of the National Defense Strategy Commission, by Kathleen J. McInnis

84 Eric Edelman, “The US Role In The Middle East In An Era Of Renewed Great Power Competition,” Hoover Institution, April 2, 2019.

85 Benjamin Denison, “Confusion in the Pivot: The Muddled Shift from Peripheral War to Great Power Competition,” War on the Rocks, February 12, 2019.

Chapter 5: A Tale of Two Afghan Armies, Lemar Alexander Farhad

1. Robert Kaplan, “Soldiers of God,” (Vintage Books, New York: 1990), 166.

2. Anne Stenersen, “Mujahideen vs. Communists: Revisiting the battles of Jalalabad and Khost”, Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO), February 2012. 1

3. Anne Stenersen, “Mujahideen vs. Communists: Revisiting the battles of Jalalabad and Khost”, Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO), February 2012, 2.

4. Anne Stenersen, “Mujahideen vs. Communists: Revisiting the battles of Jalalabad and Khost”, Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO), February 2012, 2.

5. Anne Stenersen, “Mujahideen vs. Communists: Revisiting the battles of Jalalabad and Khost”, Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO), February 2012. 6; Mohammad Yousaf and Mark Adkin, “The Bear Trap,” (Casemate; 1St Edition edition 2001).

6. Robert Kaplan, “Soldiers of God,” (Vintage Books, New York: 1990), 160-161.

7. Robert Kaplan, “Soldiers of God,” (Vintage Books, New York: 1990), 161; The revolution mentioned refers to the Afghan communist revolution of 1977.
8. Robert Kaplan, “Soldiers of God,” (Vintage Books, New York: 1990), 161.
9. Stephanie Cronin, “Armies and State Building in the Modern Middle East,” (I.B. Tauris: 2014), 118
10. Cronin, “Armies and State Building,” 108.
11. Cronin, “Armies and State Building,” 120
12. Cronin, “Armies and State Building,” 120.
13. Peter Tomsen, “The Wars of Afghanistan: Messianic Terrorism, Tribal Conflicts, And The Failures of Great Powers,” (Public Affairs, New York: 2011), 90.
14. Cronin, “Armies and State Building,” 120.

Chapter 6: The Unintended Consequences of US Support on Militia Governance in Kunduz Province, Afghanistan. Toon Dirkx

1. See: US Army/Marine Corps 2006. The US Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual (FM 3–24).
2. For examples, see how the US Generals David Petraeus, John Allen, and Joseph Dunford spoke about the Afghan Local Police in their addresses to the House Armed Services Committee. See: C-SPAN 2011. “Operations in Afghanistan”; C-SPAN 2012. “Military Operations in Afghanistan”; C-SPAN 2013. “Troop Withdrawal from Afghanistan”.
3. These Mujahideen factions included Jamiat-e Islami, Jombesh-e Melli, Hezb-e Islami and Ittehad-e Islami.
4. See: US Embassy Kabul, 2009a. “Unconventional Security Forces —What’s Out There?” Cable No. 09KABUL3661_a.
5. For an elaborate discussion of these networks from 1992 to 2001 see Wörmer (2012).

6. The National Directorate of Security (NDS) is Afghanistan's State intelligence service. It has mainly been funded by the US government since its establishment in 2002.

7. Jamiat is short for Jamiat-e-Islami Afghanistan (Islamic Society of Afghanistan). It is an ethnic Tajik dominated movement, and was one of the main parties fighting against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s (Human Rights Watch 2015, iii).

8. See: US Embassy Kabul 2010. "Militias in Kunduz; A Tale of Two Districts" Cable No. 10KABUL12_a.

9. Ittihad is short for 'Ittihad-e-Islami Bara-yi Azadi Afghanistan' (the Islamic Union for the Liberation of Afghanistan), a predominantly Pashtun military and political group that was founded by Abdul Rabb al-Rasul Sayyaf, which fought against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s (Human Rights Watch 2015, p. iii).

10. In a 2010 US Embassy cable Mir Alam is described as 'the most powerful power broker in the province.' See: US Embassy Kabul 2010. "Militias in Kunduz; A Tale of Two Districts" Cable No. 10KABUL12_a.

11. See: Rubin, A. J., 2010. Afghan Governor Is Killed in Blast at Mosque. Also see: BBC 2010. Head of Afghanistan's Kunduz province killed in bombing.

12. Structured interview with an elder in the Ali Abad district of Kunduz province, 3 June 2013.

13. General McChrystal was an adherent of a new counterinsurgency doctrine that emphasised the importance of understanding Islamist insurgencies as networked organisations, rather than hierarchical structures. During his years in Iraq and Afghanistan it became clear to him that 'it takes a network to defeat a network' (2011), thus requiring the US military to create opposing networks to insurgencies in Afghanistan and beyond (Knoke 2013, p. 6).

14. See for example: US Embassy Kabul, 2009b. 'Kunduz Authorities Turn to Militias as Security Deteriorates' Cable No. 09KABUL3366.
15. NSOCC-A stands for 'NATO Special Operations Component Command – Afghanistan'.
16. Email correspondence with an official of NSOCC-A on 30 May 2016.
17. The programme is also referred to as 'Critical Infrastructure Program' and 'Critical Infrastructure Protection'.
18. See also Matta (2011).
19. See also a leaked email by Melanne Verveer to former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in which a message is forwarded of Brian Nichols of the State Department that asserts that CIP forces in Kunduz were paid with CERP funding. See: Verveer (2012).
20. Interior ministry Decree P-3196, 16 August 2010. See page 83 of US Department of Defense (DOD) 2012. Special Plans and Operations: Assessment of U.S. Government and Coalition Efforts to Develop the Afghan Local Police. Alexandria, VA: US Department of Defense, Inspector General.
21. See: US Embassy Kabul 2010. "Militias in Kunduz; A Tale of Two Districts" Cable No. 10KABUL12_a. [Online] Available at: https://www.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/10KABUL12_a.html [Accessed 5 June 2016].
22. Ibid.
23. See: US Embassy Kabul 2010. "Militias in Kunduz; A Tale of Two Districts" Cable No. 10KABUL12_a.
24. Structured interview with a shop keeper in the Qala-e-Zal district of Kunduz province, 5 June 2013.
25. Structured interview with a shop keeper in the Qala-e-Zal district of Kunduz province, 5 June 2013.

26. Structured interview with a community member in the Qala-e-Zal district of Kunduz province, 5 June 2013.

27. In-depth interview with a resident of Kunduz City in Kabul, 4 April 2016.

28. Structured interview with Nabi Gechi in the Qala-e-Zal district of Kunduz province, 5 June 2013.

29. Structured interview with an arbaki member in the Qala-e-Zal district of Kunduz province, 1 June 2013.

30. A leaked US Embassy cable notes in this vein that 'according to the Governor and NDS, Gechi's forces (…) convinced a Taliban commander to join the government side.' See: US Embassy Kabul, 2009b. 'Kunduz Authorities Turn to Militias as Security Deteriorates' Cable No. 09KABUL3366.

31. Structured interview with an ANP officer in the Qala-e-Zal district of Kunduz province, 6 June 2013.

32. Structured interview with Nabi Gechi in the Qala-e-Zal district of Kunduz province, 5 June 2013. See also the journalistic account of Sites (2013), in which he describes his meeting with Nabi Gechi in Qala-e-Zal in June 2013. According to Baczko and Dorronsoro (2016, p. 5) Nabi Gechi's militia was also funded by the German army.

33. In-depth interview with a former resident of Kunduz City in The Hague, 22 June 2017.

34. While there was hardly any Taliban activity in 2013 in the Khanabad district – the home ground of both Mir Alam and Pakhsaparan – clashes did occur between the militias of the two power brokers (Münch 2013, p. 37, Baczko and Dorronsoro 2016, p. 6).

35. In-depth interview with a resident of Kunduz City in Kabul, 3 April 2016.

36. See: US Embassy Kabul 2006. "PRT/Kunduz: New Police Chiefs Raise Hopes for Fundamental Improvements in Norteast" Cable No. 06KABUL2862_a.

37. Structured interview with a civil society member in the Ali Abad district of Kunduz province, 1 June 2013.

38. Structured interview with a housewife in the Ali Abad district of Kunduz province, 8 June 2013.

39. Structured interview with a civil society member in the Ali Abad district of Kunduz province, 1 June 2013.

40. In-depth interview with a resident of Kunduz City in Kabul, 3 April 2016.

41. In-depth interview with a resident of Kunduz City in Kabul, 4 April 2016.

42. In-depth interview with a resident of Kunduz City in Kabul, 4 April 2016.

43. In-depth interview with a resident of Kunduz City in Kabul, 3 April 2016.

44. See: US Embassy Kabul 2010. "Militias in Kunduz; A Tale of Two Districts" Cable No. 10KABUL12_a.

45. See: US Embassy Kabul, 2009a. "Unconventional Security Forces —What's Out There?" Cable No. 09KABUL3661_a.

46. In-depth interview with a German analyst in Kabul, 31 March 2016.

47. In-depth interview with a resident of Kunduz City in Kabul, 3 April 2016.

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1/operations-afghanistan [Accessed 20 July 2016]. [Google Scholar]

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Chapter 8: CIA-proxy militias, CIA-drones in Afghanistan: “Hunt and kill” déjà vu. Kate Clark.

Chapter 9: The Two Faces of the Fatemiyuon: Revisiting the Male Fighters Part-1and II. By: Mohsen Hamidi

1. The Iranian government is not a unitary actor. Some have referred to a “deep state” consisting of the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, and security and intelligence agencies in Iran that have the influence required to make key, but contentious, policy decisions, for example, on forming and supporting costly regional proxy forces. See: Alex Vatanka, Sanam Vakil and Hossein Rassam, “How Deep Is Iran’s State? The Battle over Khamenei’s Successor,” July/August 2017, Foreign Affairs.

2. See, for instance: Ali Alfoneh, “Tehran’s Shia Foreign Legions,” 30 January 2018, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace; Payam Mohseni and Hussein Kalout, “Iran’s Axis of Resistance Rises: How It’s Forging a New Middle East,” 24 January 2017, Foreign Affairs; W. Andrew Terrill (2015), “Iran’s Strategy for Saving Assad,” The Middle East Journal 69 (2): 222-36.

3. Tobias Schneider, “The Fatemiyoun Division: Afghan Fighters in the Syrian Civil War,” October 2018, Policy Paper 2018-9, Middle East Institute: Washington, DC, pp 1-3.

4. Given some Afghan involvement through the then Iran-based Shia mujahedin factions including one by Muhammad Akbari in the Iraq-Iran war called Pasdaran-e Jihad-e Islami (founded in 1983; it joined Hezb-e Wahdat with seven other groups when it was established in 1989), it is possible that Sepah-e Muhammad emerged from this involvement.

5. Sayyeda Zeinab is the daughter of Hazrat Fatema and Ali ibn Abi Taleb and granddaughter of the Prophet Muhammad. She is highly revered by Shia Muslims for her role in preserving and continuing the prophet’s lineage through Fatema and Ali.

6. The sources for the estimated 50,000 and 10,000-20,000 respectively are: Ahmad Shuja Jamal, “The Fatemiyoun Army: Reintegration into Afghan Society,” March 2019, Special Report No 443, United States Institute of Peace: Washington, DC, p 3; Lars Hauch, “Understanding the Fatemiyoun Division: Life through the Eyes of a Militia Member,” 22 May 2019, Middle East Institute. In October 2018, Schneider drew on an internal Fatemiyun source to put the range “at a more realistic peak of 12,000-14,000.” See: Schneider, “The Fatemiyoun Division,” p 5.

7. For instance, see: Adam Baczko, Gilles Dorronsoro and Arthur Quesnay (2018), Civil War in Syria: Mobilization and Competing Social Orders, translated by Louise Rosen and Henry Randolph, New York: Cambridge University Press. See also this review article: Daniel Neep (2018), “Civil War in Syria: Mobilization and Competing Social Orders by Adam Baczko, Gilles Dorronsoro and Arthur Quesnay (review),” The Middle East Journal 72 (4): 704-706.

8. In a recent reaction, which was a response to a 15 November 2018 event held in Kabul by the Afghan

Institute for Strategic Studies (AISS) to present and discuss the Dari version of Schneider's above-quoted paper, the Iranian embassy in Afghanistan rejected the paper as "incorrect propositions, contradictory arguments, doubts and ambiguities and, in numerous cases, exaggeration and hyperbole." In its obliquely-worded statement, the embassy described the paper as part of an "Iranophobia project in Afghanistan" by what it called "malevolent actors from outside the region" in which "a part of Afghanistan's society is unjustly subjected to accusation and criticism." It finally emphasised the "continued constructive and close interaction" between Iran and Afghanistan based on "mutual interests and common threats."

9. Ahmad Shuja Jamal, "The Fatemiyoun Army: Reintegration into Afghan Society," March 2019, Special Report No 443, United States Institute of Peace: Washington, DC, p 18.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid, p 19.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid, pp 20-21.
15. Ibid, p 21.
16. Ibid, pp 14-15.
17. This dispatch is based on interviews with ten women with close relatives among the Fatemiyun: three wives, two mothers, three sisters, one maternal aunt and one woman who was both wife and mother to Fatemiyun fighters (ie her husband and her son). Given their indirect involvement in and deep knowledge of the Fatemiyun group, these women are key informants. To capture the potential geographic and other variations in experiences of Fatemiyun women, the author decided to conduct interviews in Afghanistan, in Herat city, and Tehran – five in each. They were carried out in late 2018 and early

2019. Of the ten families studied through these women, four were already in Iran when their men went to war in Syria, three left Afghanistan to live in Iran, one was preparing to move, one's male relative was back in Herat and had stopped fighting in the war, and the interviewee from the last family had prevented her male relative from returning to Syria.

The women were approached by two female research assistants (one in Herat and one in Tehran) who had previous acquaintanceship and therefore already some rapport with them. This prior familiarity provided easier and safer access, both for the key informants and the research assistants, and contributed to a 'do-no-harm' research approach. The anonymity of both the key informants and the research assistants is maintained here to protect their privacy and the confidentiality of the conversations.

Having secured the consent of the interviewees to take part in this research (in a few cases, potential interviewees refused to do so, something which was fully respected), the research assistants used a rough list of general, open-ended questions to stimulate conversation. The questions were about family decision-making prior to the men joining the war in Syria, family life while the men were fighting away from home, family life if the men were killed, injured or affected otherwise and family life after Syria, at least at the time of the interviews. The interviews were largely unstructured and the interviewees were not interrupted to allow as natural flow as possible in the conversations. The conversations were either recorded (if permission was granted) or written down. The transcribed and handwritten conversations were analysed and form the basis of this dispatch.

AAN takes research security seriously. Without stressing that the topic was 'sensitive' and thus making it so beforehand, the author held several rounds of consultations with the research assistants over the course of a couple of months, talking through the need to make sure their research would pose no risk to them or their

key informants and that both had the right to quit the research whenever they wanted to. Since the research assistants approached women they knew and relationships of trust already existed, they determined that the research was reasonably safe and therefore doable.

The ten key informant interviews are complemented by the author's intermittent observations, since 2014, of an extended family that has members in the Fatemiyun. Through on-and-off observations and informal conversations over the course of five years, it became possible to study several members of the Fatemiyun from within and over time, contrasting with research approaches that have so far looked at the group from without or only at one point in time.

Finally, this dispatch does not claim to be representative. The sample size is small (n = 10) and the interviewees were chosen through convenience sampling. However, given what was feasible, it is an exploratory study that is relevant to the topic under discussion (experiences of the Syrian war by women whose men have participated in it). Such subjects are often best captured through qualitative approaches.

18. One of the things clerics including this Afghan one have done in Syria has been to recite religious songs such as nohas (lamentations) and maddahis (panegyrics) to reinforce fighters' morale. For example, to challenge the idea that individuals have gone to war in Syria just to get better pay than what they could find back in Iran, one noha quotes a child whose father was killed in the Syrian war as saying: "Love is priceless. To fight and to die has no price but for love [of defending Shia faith]." The clerics are mostly stationed in military bases or mosques that the Fatemiyun fighters visit in Syria.

19. Hazrat Fatema is the daughter of the Prophet Muhammad and wife to Ali ibn Abi Taleb, the first imam for Shia Muslims and the fourth caliph for Sunni Muslims.

20. In sofreh salawat ceremonies that were held or attended by the interviewees, a woman usually hosted other

women in her home to recite thousands of salawat (salutations to the Prophet Muhammad and his progeny) with tasbih (prayer beads). The women also prayed to God to answer their praying, including entreaties for their men to be well and return from Syria safe and sound. They then ate food that was mostly ash (soup). These events were also opportunities for both hosting and participating women to meet and socialise.

21. It refers to the shrine/mosque in southern Damascus, the Syrian capital, in which lies the Prophet Muhammad's granddaughter, Sayyeda Zeinab. Her tomb is an important Shia shrine. She is highly revered by Shia Muslims for her role in preserving and continuing the prophet's lineage through her grandparents, Fatema and Ali.

22. The Office of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei (aka Beit-e Rahbari or the House of Leadership) is reportedly one of Iran's wealthiest institutions with "holdings of about $95bn," according to this BBC report about recent United States sanctions targeting his assets. However, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani responded to these US sanctions by saying: "They [the Americans] say they want to confiscate the property of our leader. His property is just a hosseiniya [a place of worship] and a simple house. Our leaders are not like the leaders of other countries who have billions in their foreign accounts that they want to sanction and confiscate."

23. There have been protests in Iran against the Iranian government spending billions of US dollars financing and supporting its regional allies including Syria, given deteriorating economic conditions for Iranians inside the country. There was also heated discussion in Iran when militia groups such as the Fatemiyun got involved in assisting people affected by recent destructive floods there. Regarded as an 'alien' involvement, some Iranians said they had been sent to suppress domestic protests.

Chapter 10: The Rise and fall of Taliban Regime (1994-2001) in Afghanistan: The Internal Dynamics Dr. Qamar Fatima

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Chapter 12: Prisoners raped by dogs, the 'modern' torture techniques of the US

a: Rape dogs used by US in Afghanistan. Lasha Darkmoon

Chapter 13: The AIHRC Summary Report of the National Inquiry on the Protection of the Rights of Victims of Armed Conflict and Terrorism

1. All political factions and hostile parties who were involved in a way or another in hostilities before establishing of the Interim Administration shall be included in the reconciliation and general amnesty program for the purpose of reconciliation among different segments of society, strengthening of peace and stability and starting of new life in the contemporary political

history of Afghanistan, and enjoy all their legal rights and shall not be legally and judicially prosecuted.

2 Those individuals and groups who are still in opposition to the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and cease enmity after the enforcement of this resolution and join the process of national reconciliation, and respect the Constitution and other laws and abide them shall enjoy the benefits of this resolution.

3 The provisions set forth in clause (1) and (2) of this article shall not affect the claims of individuals against individuals based up on Haqullabd (rights of people) and criminal offences in respect of individual crimes. (Article 3 of National Reconciliation, General Amnesty, and National Stability Law

4 https://twitter.com/OCS_AFG/status/990568177263312900

5 Urozgan, Badghis, Bamyan, Badakhshan, Baghlan, Balkh, Parwan, Paktia, Takhar, Jawzjan, Khost, Daykundi, Saripul, Samangan, Ghazni, Ghor, Faryab, Farah, Kandahar, Kabul, Kunduz, Kunar, Laghman, Logar, Maidan Wardak, Nangarhar, Nuristan, Nimroz, Herat, Helmand.

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