

**A SOLUTION FOR ETHNIC CONFLICT:  
DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE IN AFGHANISTAN, A CASE STUDY**

**By**

**PETER D.S. LYON**

**A Thesis  
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies  
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of**

**Master of Arts**

**Department of Political Studies, Faculty of Arts  
University of Manitoba**

**August, 2006**

## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis considers Michael Ignatieff's theory regarding ethnic conflict and applies Afghanistan as a case study. Ignatieff correlates the outbreak of ethnic violence to the breakdown of state government which creates societal anarchy and war. Ignatieff argues that ethnic relations can improve through the creation of democratic institutions. Afghanistan represents a model empirical case study to explore the central tenets of the Ignatieff thesis.

Ignatieff's argument is critically analyzed by assessing the viability of transplanting democratic institutions into Afghanistan. According to democratic theory a successful democracy requires a strong economy, a vibrant civil society, an advantageous institutional history and a positive security and geopolitical environment. Based on these five key variables it is reasonable to conclude that Afghanistan is not predisposed to pluralistic governance. Such analysis highlights the limitations of Ignatieff's thesis as his theory is only relevant to those post-conflict societies that possess the requisite preconditions for democracy.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my appreciation to my advisor, Professor James Fergusson, for his support and encouragement throughout my Master's degree. He truly made all the difference for me. Many thanks are also due to Dr. Lasha Tchantouridze for his willingness to discuss ideas and key theoretical concepts. Lasha was of great assistance due to his knowledge of Afghanistan and Central Asia.

I would also like to note the helpfulness and support provided by Cathy Dunlop, Shirley McFaren, Linda Latour, and Pat Kruchak. Collectively, they ensured that deadlines were met and that all appropriate forms were completed. Thank you all.

In addition I would also like to thank my family and friends for their patience and commitment to me throughout this process. In particular, my wife Alexandra's unwavering support enabled the completion of this thesis. Thank you.

## **DEDICATION**

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my wife, Alexandra Wright, and to my son, Fraser Lyon.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### BACKGROUND AND THEORY

#### **Introduction**

This thesis considers Michael Ignatieff's theory regarding ethnic conflict and applies Afghanistan as a case study. This thesis consists of six chapters. Chapter One begins with a brief background on the centrality of ethnic conflict to international affairs today and offers an overview of the key theoretical definitions central to this topic. It continues with an outline of Ignatieff's thesis regarding the origins of ethnic conflict as well as his prescriptions for its resolution. In short, Ignatieff credits the emergence of ethnic conflict to the collapse of the domestic government structure and conversely cites the building of liberal democratic political institutions as the remedy for ethnic strife. If the establishment of democratic institutions constitutes the solution for ethnic conflict it is thus necessary to explore democratic theory in order to understand the conditions that presage pluralistic governance. Consequently, this chapter devotes considerable attention to the necessary preconditions for democratic rule and concludes with a discussion regarding the relationship between institutions, political culture and democracy.

Based on the theoretical perspectives in Chapter One this thesis applies Afghanistan as a case study. Afghanistan represents an ideal model to assess Ignatieff's theory of ethnic conflict. Afghanistan has experienced ethnic war, the collapse of its state institutions and is currently undergoing a reconstruction process centred on establishment of liberal democratic model of governance. Consequently, as a means to analyze



Ignatieff's thesis, it is essential to consider the viability of transplanting democratic state institutions to Afghanistan. In order to assess Afghanistan's proclivity for liberal democracy it is vital to examine the history of Afghanistan. Consequently, Chapters Two and Three are devoted exclusively to the political, economic and social history of Afghanistan.

Chapter Four and Five identifies five key variables that directly affect the success of nation building efforts in Afghanistan. These include the nature of the economy, civil society, the country's institutional history and the security and geopolitical environment. Based on an analysis of these five key preconditions for democratic governance, this chapter assesses the viability or likelihood of sustainable democracy in Afghanistan. The outcome of this analysis is commensurate to a critical assessment of Ignatieff's thesis regarding ethnic conflict. Indeed, for Ignatieff's theory to attain credible status, democracy must be a viable proposition for post conflict societies. Chapter Six is the concluding chapter which summarizes and evaluates the findings in this thesis.

## **Background and Definitions**

Since the end of the Cold War, the world has witnessed a considerable rise in internal violence. Brown characterizes internal conflict "as the most pervasive form of armed conflict in the world" (1996: i). For instance, from 1950 –1959, there were 42 internal conflicts compared with 246 in 1990 – 1999 (Eberwein, 2001: 9). Between 1990 and 1996, out of a total of 98 armed global armed conflicts, only seven were between states, and the rest were internal (Von Hippel, 2000: 3). Brown defines internal conflict as "violent or potentially violent disputes whose origins can be traced primarily to

domestic rather than systemic factors, and where armed violence takes place or threatens to take place primarily within the borders of a single state” ( 1996:i).

The human costs of these conflicts are profound resulting in up to 7 million deaths and almost 38 million displaced persons (Lake & Rothchild, 1998). A prominent feature endemic to many of these conflicts is a division between the antagonists along ethnic lines. Kaufman defines ethnic war as a war spawned from a contest for political power involving “ethnic markers such as language or religion or the status of ethnic groups themselves” (2001:17). Ethnic conflict constitutes an important subgroup of internal wars for a multitude of reasons that include its ubiquity, the scale and intensity of violence, its impact on regional stability, its propensity to involve external powers and international organizations and its centrality in theoretical and policy debates (Brown, 1996). As Lake and Rothchild conclude, “at the close of the twentieth century, ethnic and other social conflicts are without a doubt the world’s greatest cause of human suffering” (1998: 339).

In response to the ascendancy of ethnic conflict, scholars and journalists have developed theoretical explanations devoted to uncovering the source of this violence<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>This multiplicity of theories can be broken down into three main subgroups: primordialism, instrumentalism and constructivism (Lake & Rothchild, 1998). First, primordialists argue that ethnic difference in and of itself constitutes the necessary and sufficient precondition for conflict. Primordialists believe that through genetic inheritance or the power of cultural socialization involving “centuries of past practice,” individuals and groups acquire an unchangeable ethnic identity and become singularly attached to their “primordial group” (Lake & Rothchild, 1998: 5). Geertz comments on the primacy of ethnic attachment: “These congruities of blood, speech, custom and so on, are seen to have an ineffable, and at times overpowering coerciveness in and of themselves” (1973: 259). Moreover, given the centrality of ethnicity to personal identity coupled with the intractable nature of ethnic belonging “divisions and tensions are natural” (Lake & Rothchild, 1998: 5). Primordialists thus envision ethnicity as the root cause of ethnic conflict. Lake and Rothchild comment: “When viewed through this lens, ethnic conflict is sui generis; what one learns about ethnic conflict is typically not relevant to other social, political, or economic conflicts” (1998: 5). Samuel Huntington, Anthony Smith, Robert Kaplan, Edward Shils and Clifford Geertz are key advocates of the primordialist approach (Lake & Rothchild, 1998; Forbes, 1997)).

The instrumentalist approach rejects ethnicity as a predetermined phenomenon and instead considers ethnicity as a device used by actors to secure political or economic rewards. In this regard

One group of theorists identifies the centrality or nature of governance as the key variable predicating whether a society will succumb to ethnic conflict. More specifically, the centerpiece of this theory relates to the breakdown of the state order, which in turn leads to a series of events culminating in ethnic conflict. In short, the feature that links these theorists together is the “structure of the situation” (Kaufman, 2001: 8). Thus, ethnicity, nation and state are linked together from a structural perspective as the core concepts underpinning ethnic conflict. This perspective represents a dominant body of liberal thought as a number of prominent scholars have advanced parallel theories. For instance, Barry Posen, Susan Woodward<sup>2</sup>, Stephen Saideman, David Lake and Donald Rothchild

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ethnicity is indistinguishable from any other societal interest group that is mobilized to achieve political and material goals (Lake & Rothchild, 1998). Under this rubric, elites typically use ethnicity to mobilize group support for reasons of self-interest. As a result, self-interest and “rational choice” underpin ethnic allegiances rather than any innate sense of belonging (Kaufman, 2001:17). In turn, it is the competing interests of the elites that leads to conflict rather than the pre-existing status of ethnicity. Consequently, according to instrumentalists, if the motives underwriting ethnic conflict are unrelated to ethnicity, it can be concluded that ethnic conflict is no different “from other conflicts based on interest or ideology” (Lake & Rothchild, 1998: 6).

The constructivist approach also rejects the primordialist view that ethnicity is immutable and instead argue that ethnicity is “constructed” from the vast networks of societal interaction (Lake & Rothchild, 1998: 6). For constructivists, the pervasive influence of social forces rather than individual agency represents the key determinant of ethnic identity. Thus, ethnicity is not fixed because it alters due to the transforming nature of the social context. For instance, given the power of state and societal interactions, changes to the state can profoundly alter conceptions of identity. Citing the Yugoslavia example, Lake and Rothchild illustrate how state influences worked to mold a “Yugoslav identity” among the disparate regional populace during Tito’s rule. However, following the collapse of the Yugoslav state, “individuals, whether they wanted to or not” reverted back to identities formulated along ethnic lines (1998: 6). Similarly, regarding ethnic conflict, constructivists differ from the primordialist’s view that the fixed nature of ethnicity naturally leads to strife. Constructivists also differ from the instrumentalist’s view that ethnic war stems from the competing self-interest of individuals or groups. Instead, for constructivists, ethnic conflict is the product of a “pathological social system” that cannot be altered by individual activity (Lake & Rothchild, 1998: 6).

A number of political theorists have found that the identified three models are either too limiting or not applicable to ethnic conflict. For instance, Ignatieff’s theory rejects primordialism but has incorporated elements of the instrumentalist and constructivist’s perspective regarding ethnicity and ethnic war.

<sup>2</sup> Woodward in her assessment of the Balkan’s conflict parallels many aspects of Ignatieff’s thesis. For instance, she argues that primordialism constitutes an insufficient explanation for the outbreak of ethnic conflict: “the conflict is not a result of historical animosities” (Woodward, 1995: 15).. While she cites a number of causal factors such as economics and foreign involvement, the breakdown of the state infrastructure represents a central variable presaging the rise of warlords and ethnic conflict. Woodward comments: “The final collapse of all formal institutions for providing security left individuals and households to provide for their own through informal networks and relations they could trust...there was a

and Michael Ignatieff have all developed theories correlating ethnic conflict to the breakdown of state structures. This paper specifically focuses on the writing of Michael Ignatieff, however, references are also made to the above mentioned academics. Prior to an examination of Ignatieff's theory of ethnic conflict it is necessary to briefly clarify and differentiate the terms under consideration such as, ethnicity, ethnic group, nations, states and nationalism.

Ethnicity is the "process or phenomenon that underlies or gives rise to ethnic groups" (Eller, 2002: 8). A key element of this 'process' relates to efforts that associate "group belonging" with "cultural, biological or territorial" features" (Eller, 2002: 8). Thus ethnicity relates to the process of attachment, identity "cohesion, solidarity and belonging" (Eller, 2002: 8). The features of identification with the group, as well as group solidarity inherently imply that ethnicity represents a "consciousness of difference" and a "mobilization around difference" (Eller, 2002:9).

An ethnic group is a collective whose members feature racial or cultural bonds, shared traits and customs with mutual identification and solidarity (Farnen, 1994). According to Schermerhorn, an ethnic group is a "collectivity within a larger society having real or putative common ancestry, memories of a shared historical past, and a cultural focus on one or more symbolic elements defined as the epitome of their peoplehood...A necessary component is some consciousness of kind among members of the group" (1970: 12).

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natural tendency to rely on older (pre-state) mechanisms of solidarity and insurance adapted to survival – family, kinship, ethnicity" (Woodward, 1995: 237). In short, Woodward states "the real origin of the Yugoslav conflict is the disintegration of governmental authority and the breakdown of a political and civil order" (Woodward, 1995: 15).

There are two general views regarding the relationship between nation and ethnic group. The first perspective envisions the nation as an ethnic group writ large or as Eller notes an “institutionalized ethnic group” (2002: 17). For instance, Smith characterizes nations as “politicized ethnic groups” who possess citizenship rights (1983: 176). The twin concepts of nation and ethnic groups are closely related for “ethnic groups have the potential to become nations” or as Smith notes many nations derive from “an ethnic core” (1983: 9). The second perspective finds the close association between ethnic groups and the nation as problematic. Instead, the relationship between ethnic groups and nations is more “complex and variable” as “some ethnic groups are nations; some are not” and “some nations are ethnic groups and some are not” (Eller, 2002: 20). For instance, when nations expand their notion of group belonging to include political autonomy, their membership may attract units that are not ethnically homogeneous. Thus, according to this view, the nation is not a ‘politicized ethnic group’ because the nation is not formed from common ethnicity.

The concept of nation as it relates to the state is also fundamental to this discussion. Eller defines the state as “a sovereign centralized political entity with a government empowered over a territory to make laws, collect taxes (including coining money), and maintain an army” (2002: 16). Associations between the nation and the state can be reduced to two sub groups: “states that are coterminous with nations and states that are not” (Eller, 2002: 19). Although the term ‘nation-state’ represents the “dominant social model” from a Western and increasingly global perspective, few countries are

formed from a homogeneous grouping<sup>3</sup> as most states are “multinational by definition” (Eller, 2002: 19). Since most states contain multiple nations and some nations are without statehood “it should therefore be clear that not all states are nations and that not all nations are or have states” (Eller, 2002: 20). Connor is emphatically clear on the distinction between state and nation. Connor premises his analysis with the definition of the nation as a “group of people who are ancestrally related” (2002: 23). Therefore, for Connor, since most states are multinational the term nation is “not a proper synonym for either a state or for the entire population of the state without regard to its ethnic composition” (2002: 23). Consequently, “the term American nation, whether used in reference to the United States or to its citizens, is therefore a misnomer” (Connor, 2002: 23).

Following from this analysis is a consideration of the terms ‘nation-building’ and ‘state building’. As Eller notes the terms nation building and state building are often inappropriately conflated, however, a relationship does exist between the two concepts. State building, the establishment of “statewide civil and political institutions, often across great cultural divisions” focuses principally on the “legal-political aspects of the state (police, military, political parties, tax system, etc” (Eller, 2002: 23). However, a chief prerequisite of state building is to foster a “sense of nationhood” among the citizens of the state (Eller, 2002: 23). Specifically, Eller comments that it is necessary to “amalgamate different and independent groups (which may already conceive of themselves as nations on the smaller scale) into a single large unit whose horizon is not local but statewide – to erase ethnic or national differences and to establish a single-

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<sup>3</sup> Eller comments on the few homogeneous states: “Perhaps Japan, Iceland, and Norway truly constitute nation-states, but even these instances come under doubt as indigenous populations are considered and immigration and internationalization take effect” (Eller, 2002: 19).

unified state-nation” (2002: 23). This naturally leads to a debate regarding nationalism. In other words, how one defines inclusion to the state’s “sense of nationhood” is a core issue tied to nationalism.

Nationalism is a contested term subject to multiple interpretations. Nationalism is distinct from ideological beliefs like socialism or ‘liberalism’ in that it does not adhere to a core set of established principles. It is the changeable nature of nationalism and its attachment to many entities, which constitutes its principal characteristic. Indeed, religious groups, conservatives, liberals, fascists, protectionists and separatists have all espoused nationalistic claims (Moore, 2001). A key point of dispute regards the question of how nationalism is defined. More specifically, by discerning how one defines the nation coupled with the political goals of that nation relates fundamentally to how one defines inclusion to the state.

For instance, theorists like Ernest Gellner argue that nationalism can be strictly interpreted as the belief the nation is the foundation for political sovereignty and that such political expression constitutes the ultimate destiny of the nation. This construct is only realized when the state and the nation form a union as the nation-state (Poole, 1999). As Gellner states, “nationalism is primarily a political principal, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent” (1983:1). Thus, for Gellner, the political goal of the nation is the achievement of national power through the establishment of a state. Moore views this definition as problematic for it associates all nationalist movements with separation or independence. Eller shares this perspective as he observes, “not all nationalism necessarily seeks or results in a national state” (2002: 25). Thus, nationalism may find expression in groups that seek regional political

autonomy or even more modest goals such as “recognition, respect and justice for a nation – its people and their culture” (Eller, 2002: 25). This is an important distinction for it implies willingness for separate nations to live together under one state.

The conjuncture when ethnic groups seek aspirations of national sovereignty or control of the national state apparatus to the exclusion of other groups is when tensions can escalate resulting in conflict. As Kaufman notes, “cases of ethnic war, however, are always cases of competition for political dominance, so they all involve ethnic nations on at least one side” (2001:16). Thus, theorists like Ignatieff site the emergence of ethnic nationalism as an underlying condition that presages ethnic conflict<sup>4</sup>. It is therefore necessary to overview the concept of ethnic nationalism prior to an examination of Ignatieff’s theory.

Ethnic nationalism is a typology of nationalism that defines its nation’s members based on consanguinity. Ethnic nationalists seek to establish the ethnic nation as the “sole criterion of statehood” (Smith, 1981: xii). Therefore participation in the membership of ethnic nations is not based on free will but rather the fixed inheritance of bloodlines. For instance, in Germany citizenship is based on the principal of *jus sanguinis* or the ‘law of blood’ (Lichenberg, 1999: 170). Thus, ethnic Germans who have lived in another country for decades may return with full citizenship. However, “guest workers” from Turkey, Spain or Hungary who have lived for years in Germany and are fully immersed in German culture are denied full citizenship (Nielson, 1999). Most modern states, however,

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<sup>4</sup> Kaufman forms a distinction between nationalism, chauvinism and hostility and he concludes that nationalism does not always equate to hostility although in its extreme variant it usually does: “The phenomena are separate: nationalists may seek equality for their group, and avoid being chauvinists; chauvinists may be content with their nation’s status and see others paternally as ‘younger brothers’ rather than enemies. Frequently, however, extreme nationalists tend to be chauvinists, and chauvinists tend to be hostile to nationalists of other groups” (Kaufman, 2001: 16).



do not reflect a confluence of sovereignty with the ethnic nation. Thus, many scholars such as Walker Connor believe the term nation-state is misleading. Connor points out that in 1971 only 12 or 9.1% of the world's 132 states were ethnically homogeneous while 53 states or 40.2% of all states contained more than five ethnically distinct groups (1994: 29). Despite the fact that most nations do not conform to a strict grouping of ethnically homogeneous people, ethnicity continues to exercise an integral role in the politics of nationalism.

Central to the notion of ethnic nationalism is the concept of identity. Parekh defines identity as “how one identifies or defines and distinguishes oneself, and with whom as a result one feels a sense of identification. It is a form of both self-definition and common belonging” (1999: 309). For ethnic nationalists, the ethnic group constitutes an individual's primary sense of belonging. Thus, an individual's deepest sense of loyalty derives from the ties of common ancestors and kinship, distinct language and culture, the unique historical legacy of the group, shared traditions, customs, norms and values and attachment to a particular territory. Consequently, ethnic nationalists seek political autonomy to preserve, protect and defend their collective identity from the encroachment of competing cultures to ensure their continued survival. The offspring of this development is a world increasingly characterized by the binary division of “us and them”. Indeed, beginning in the 1970s, in what Smith terms as the “ethnic revival,” ethnic nationalists pursued political claims in “every continent” (1981: xii). The conjuncture when ethnic groups do seek aspirations of national sovereignty is when tensions can escalate resulting in conflict. As Cohen notes, during such episodes of ethnic conflict, “people stress their identity and exclusiveness” (1969: 4).

Thus, ethnic nationalism is often construed as a negative force that has led to a “new age of violence” (Ignatieff, 1993: 5). Ignatieff states: “The key narrative of the new world order is the disintegration of nation-states into ethnic civil war; the key architects of that order are warlords; and the key language for our age is ethnic nationalism” (1993: 5). Ignatieff provides support for his criticism of ethnic nationalism by invoking the writing of Sigmund Freud. Freud undertook a clinical study of group aggression and concluded that “it is precisely the minor difference in people who are otherwise alike that form the basis of feelings of strangeness and hostility between them” (Ignatieff, 1998:48). Freud labeled this effect the “narcissism of minor difference” and Ignatieff cites this dynamic as a critical factor underpinning ethnic violence. Thus, nationalists transform “minor differences” between ethnic groups into major differences. It is narcissistic because its supreme self-aggrandizement translates into a political quest for self-determination and the establishment of statehood based solely on ethnicity. Narcissism implies a focus on the self and a disregard or “devaluation” for the circumstance, interests and rights of others (Ignatieff, 1998: 51). Moreover, narcissism also asserts that outsiders have no understanding or place within the boundaries of one’s own group. The offspring of this phenomenon is the false construction of profound group difference.

Thus, according to Ignatieff, ethnic nationalism is immoral as it is a call for ethnic majority rule that seeks to subordinate or limit the political, social and economic inclusion of minority groups. As Ignatieff writes: “ What is wrong with ethnic nationalism is not the desire to be the master in your own house, but the conviction that only people like yourself deserve to be in the house” (1998:59). Consequently, like many liberal scholars, Ignatieff’s chief criticism of ethnic nationalism relates to its exclusive

definition of national membership. Woodward comments that for ethnic nationalists, “exclusion is as important as inclusion<sup>5</sup>” (Woodward, 1995:223). As Lichtenberg notes “it is not obvious how to avoid the slippery slope from ethnic identification to racism” (1997: 160). Ignatieff concludes that ethnic nationalism as a template for state rule is socially divisive, heightens tensions and increases the likelihood of inter-group conflict.

### **Ignatieff’s Theory of Ethnic Conflict**

Ignatieff argues that in the case of ethnic conflicts, ethnicity itself is not the chief antecedent variable explaining the outbreak of violence. In so doing, Ignatieff seeks to differentiate his thesis from the primordialist position advocated by theorists such as Samuel Huntington. Indeed, Ignatieff states that nationalism “is not what Huntington would wish us to see: an eruption of ancient historical rivalries and antagonisms” (1998: 58). Instead, he posits that the rise of ethnic nationalism and the descent into ethnic strife is the end product of a series of events initiated by the collapse of the national political order:

Again, the facts of differences themselves are neutral: there is nothing genetically coded about the antagonisms between ethnicities, races and genders. Differences of language, tradition and history may be of relative insignificance if there is some form of political settlement between ethnic groups, some overarching state that guarantees that all can go about their business without fearing for their security. (1998: 52)

Ignatieff argues that accompanying the disintegration of the state is the loss of the institutional machinery designed to guarantee law and order. Without a viable national

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<sup>5</sup> Woodward comments: “Nationalist expression may be a positive assertion of commonality in culture, political history, and obligations of social reciprocity. But it is at the same time necessarily a negative assertion of who does not belong, of mistrust, fear, even hatred of persons seen as ‘other’ as ‘foreigner,’ and of the characteristics of persons who should be excluded” (1995:223).

army, police protection, an independent judiciary or the principle of equality before the law, the societal environment destabilizes to a condition of “Hobbesian” anarchy marked by widespread fear and uncertainty (Ignatieff, 1998: 45). Thus, Ignatieff’s theory highlights the centrality of structure to explain the breakout of ethnic violence.

Ignatieff’s thesis credits the outbreak of violence to a shift in the domestic structure from a hierarchical model to a state of anarchy. Local warlords capitalize on this climate of fear and promote ethnic belonging as an alternative form of protection to meet basic security needs<sup>6</sup>. It is at this stage that Ignatieff incorporates the instrumentalist approach to his analysis as ‘maladjusted leaders’ or ‘manipulative elites’ exploit an anarchical condition to advance their own political goals (Kaufman, 2001). Ethnic nationalism thus becomes “persuasive” among the populace because it appeals to basic needs and offers a kinship sanctuary during periods of fear and uncertainty (Ignatieff, 1993: 10). The warlord acquires a “vocabulary of opportunistic self justification” and gains credibility and enhanced status as the “people’s protector” (Ignatieff, 1993: 9-10). Echoing Ignatieff’s argument, Bogdan Denitch comments on how the Serbian leadership stimulated ethnic hatred in the former Yugoslavia through media manipulation: “Rather than being caused by a popular upsurge of national hate from below, the civil war was the result of policy decisions from the top combined with an all-too-effective use of the mass media, especially television” (Kaufman, 2001: 5)

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<sup>6</sup> Axel Hadenius comments on how institutional failure forces people to seek refuge in family and kinship groupings for support and security: “where people cannot rely on the existing system of rules, they usually seek out, as a substitute, networks founded on personal contacts. If you cannot trust the official institutions, you must rely on your friends.” (2001: 95).

Denitch argues that the elites exaggerated ethnic difference where ethnicity becomes “the only politically relevant identity” so leaders can “better position themselves to deal with future challenges” (Kaufman, 2001: 5). Ignatieff illustrates how ethnic nationalism correlates to state failure and the need to seek security through ones ethnic group:

Nationalist sentiment on the ground, among common people, is a secondary consequence of political disintegration, a response to the collapse of state order and the interethnic accommodation that made it possible. Nationalism creates communities of fear, groups held together by the conviction that their security depends on sticking together. People become ‘nationalistic’ when they are afraid; when the only answer to the question ‘who will protect me now?’ ‘becomes ‘my own people.’ (1998: 45)

This retrenchment to polarized camps heightens competition and fosters discord between ethnic groups, thus creating an internal ‘security dilemma’ (Ignatieff, 1998: 45). This security dilemma signifies a version of a zero sum game whereby actions that strengthen one group’s security are perceived as a loss of power by another group<sup>7</sup>. The ‘dilemma’ occurs because each group cannot perceive the motivation of the other and therefore purely “defensive” actions are perceived as acts of aggression (Lake & Rothchild, 1998: 17). In response, the aggrieved group enhances its own posture, which

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<sup>7</sup> Barry Posen shares Ignatieff’s perspective that ethnic war is triggered by the breakdown of domestic political structures. Posen derives his argument from international relations theory and was the “first to apply it to ethnic relations” (Lake & Rothchild, 1998: 17). Posen links the outbreak of war in the Balkans to the condition of anarchy and the resulting ‘security dilemma’: “In areas such as the former...Yugoslavia, ‘sovereigns’ have disappeared. They leave in their wake a host of groups... [that] must pay attention to the problem of security...[Thus], there will be competition for the key to security – power. The competition will often continue to a point at which the competing entities have amassed more power than needed for security and, thus, consequently begin to threaten others. Those threatened will respond in turn.... This is the security dilemma: what one does to enhance one’s own security causes reactions that, in the end, can make one less secure.... [T]hese strategic problems show that very little nationalist rabblorousing or nationalistic combativeness is required to generate very dangerous situations” (1993: 27-47).

in turn yields an equivalent reaction from the opposed group. Ignatieff argues that this dynamic triggers a spiraling cycle of group mobilization and increased tensions, which lead ultimately to open conflict:

Initially, the narcissist competition between groups may take comparatively innocent forms, so long as there is a state to guarantee security for both. Processions, marches speeches that have no provocative intent but the awakening of group pride may set in train emulative display by the other side. Once these displays of group pride begin to include claims to territory, demands for self-determination, revisiting of old grievances and hurts, the cycle of narcissism begins to pass beyond emulation into antagonism. (1998: 52)

Ignatieff's thesis thus posits that an anarchical domestic structure creates the permissive environment which predicates the outbreak of war: "Note here the causative order: first the collapse of the overarching state, then Hobbesian fear, and only then nationalist paranoia, followed by warfare" (1998: 45).

The corollary to Ignatieff's theory that ethnic conflict occurs after the breakdown of institutional structures is that ethnic relations can improve through the creation of a stable political order<sup>8</sup>. Under such circumstances, security from violence is provided by the state instead of ethnic factions. As Ignatieff states, ethnic violence subsides "when individuals feel sufficiently free of fear that they do not need to depend exclusively on their ethnic, religious, or tribal groups to secure their basic interests" (1998: 61). However, the success of this approach relates to the nature and form of the reconstructed state. In short, the state cannot be used as an instrument of privilege for one group over another: "Interethnic accommodation anywhere depends on equilibrium of forces. An

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<sup>8</sup> Ignatieff states: "If you have spent time in Zaire, Rwanda, Afghanistan, the former Yugoslavia, one conclusion stares you in the face. More than aid or emergency relief, more than peacekeepers, these societies need states, with professional armies under the command of trained leaders" (1998: 160).

ethnic minority can live in peace with an ethnic majority as long as that majority does not use its preponderance to turn the institutions of the state into an instrument of ethnic favoritism or ethnic justice” (Ignatieff, 1998: 44).

For Ignatieff, ethnic violence stems not only from the collapse of state institutions; conflict also occurs when ethnic groups fear that national institutions will be captured and controlled by opposing ethnic groups. Ignatieff uses the Balkan conflict to demonstrate this principle. Specifically, he cites Serbian concern that Croatian independence would yield Croat control of the government to the detriment of the Serbs: “National independence for the Croats meant ethnic minority subservience for the Serbs in Croatia. It was the fear of domination that imbued the consciousness of the Serbs with paranoia” (1998: 44).

According to Ignatieff, it was at this juncture that Serbian warlords gained local ascendancy by capitalizing on fears over Croatian dominance of the state apparatus. Ignatieff states that based on concerns of Croat institutional dominance, the warlords could deliver the following appeal: “Tito is dead; the Croats are taking power; you’ve nobody but us to protect you” (1998: 45). Thus, concern over state control by a different ethnic group generated an internal security dilemma, which in turn, fostered the cycle of violence. Therefore, Ignatieff believes that the nature of state control and how power is distributed constitutes a chief variable relating to the propensity for ethnic conflict. Saideman shares this position as evident in the following comments:

Ethnic groups will feel most secure if they have control, or share control, over policies that affect them – political security. Political security will be most extreme when a particular ethnic group captures the state, or an ethnic group is denied access to the state, or when the state is not yet captured but can be seen as

susceptible to domination by one group. When a single ethnic group controls all of the state apparatus, all other ethnic groups will be threatened, as they no longer rely upon an impartial adjudicator of disputes or an unbiased protector. Instead, the resources of the state may be used against ethnic groups out of power in favor of those in power. Again, two responses are likely – attempts to gain control over the state or to opt out of it. (1998: 136)

For Ignatieff, the “key precondition” for peaceful relations between ethnic groups is the establishment of a legitimate state order that guarantees equality of rights and that provides the “capacity for different peoples to behave towards each other not as members of tribes or clans, but as citizens” (2000: 141). Consequently, when Ignatieff discusses the need to create a rights-based state to mitigate conflict he is referring to the establishment of a liberal democratic state system.

The establishment of citizen’s rights represents an innate feature of democracy. For instance, the association between rights and democracy conforms to White’s definition of democracy as “a set of institutional procedures to guarantee basic civil and political rights and allow political competition between political forces, usually organized through parties” (1998: 20). Thus, according to Ignatieff, in failed states the reconstruction of democratic national institutions will stabilize internal relations by creating the requisite political machinery to arbitrate disputes through peaceful means<sup>9</sup>. As Ignatieff argues, “Constitutionalism and the civic state are the institutional sine qua non of effective human rights protection in multinational states” (2001: 32). Indeed, he

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<sup>9</sup> Democratic institutions such as national assemblies or parliaments represent formalized structures that regulate societal affairs and help to minimize internal conflict. Drawing on European history, Hadenius describes how the development of these institutions resulted in the “institutionalization of forms of conflict resolution” (Hadenius, 2001: 168). Indeed, the transition from local assemblies to national forums such as Parliaments, Estates, and Diets facilitated societal cooperation affected in a number of ways. For instance, these national forums provided an institutional venue for disparate members of the populace to organize national affairs. Members representing local constituencies engaged in a process of interaction and whereby the propagation of local interests necessitated negotiation and cooperation. Collectively, this process of national decision-making resulted in national unity and the peaceful exchange of difference.



advocates the promotion of liberal universalism premised on civic nationalism as a means to harmonize ethnic relations. Thus, through the establishment of national political institutions, Ignatieff argues that ethnic nationalists can be transformed into civic nationalists<sup>10</sup>.

Like most theories of nationalism, identity features as a central factor in Ignatieff's theory of civic nationalism. For Ignatieff, identity is individually constructed where a person's primary sense of belonging is shaped by personal experience and choice that transcend cultural boundaries. Thus a person's occupation, relations with friends and family and interests all reflect examples of the attributes of a chosen identity. Ignatieff states that due to the multiplicity of traits that form personal identity, the major differences between people occur at an individual level within groups. Minor differences, however, exist between groups – "yet perversely, intolerance focuses on the latter, rather than the former" (Ignatieff, 1999: 99). Notions of ethnic belonging, however, reflect only one attribute of a person's multivariate identity.

Ethnic nationalism therefore is "a fiction" which demands the suppression of all previously held identities in favour of one national identity<sup>11</sup>. As Ignatieff states, ethnic nationalism does not "express" a preexistent identity; it 'constitutes' a new one" (Ignatieff, 1998:38). For Ignatieff, the establishments of democratic national institutions "enable individuals to form civic identities strong enough to counteract their ethnic

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<sup>10</sup> Nodia agrees with Ignatieff that civic attachments offer a remedy to mitigate the excesses of virulent national movements. In short, through democratic national institutions, ethnic nationalists can be transformed into civic nationalists: "The illiberal flesh of ethnicity cannot be wholly denied, but it can be tamed if dealt with reasonably. Ethnic pride in common ancestors, a glorious history, great traditions, a shared language, a noble culture...can be sublimated into patriotic esteem for the institutions and achievements created by a democratic (not just ethnic) 'we'" (1994: 15).

<sup>11</sup> Ignatieff comments: "For nationalists intolerance requires a process of abstraction in which actual, real individuals in all their specificity are depersonalized and turned into carriers of hated group characteristics" (1998: 70).

allegiances”<sup>12</sup> (1998: 7). More specifically, such institutional protection transforms the single identity of ethnic nationalists to the multiple identities of civic nationalists. Thus, Ignatieff advocates the promotion of an alternative “fiction” of civic nationalism as a means to harmonize ethnic relations.

Civic nationalism is premised on *jus soli* where citizenship is determined by the ‘law of the place’ (Lichtenberg, 1999: 170). Thus, membership to the state and full citizenship are accorded to those who meet civic requirements rather than the criterion of common ancestry. In this regard, civic nationalism is fundamentally a democratic expression of nationality as it “vests sovereignty in all the people” (Ignatieff, 1993: 6). As Ignatieff writes, civic nationalism is “premiered on a civic model of inclusion, on the idea that what holds a society together is not common religion, race, ethnicity, language or culture but common normative attachment to the rule of law<sup>13</sup> and to the idea that we are

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<sup>12</sup> Axel Hadenius also discusses the role democratic institutions can play in transforming identities. For instance, institutions like national Parliaments or assemblies can serve as a vehicle to dismantle local identities in favor of “horizontal identities” (2001: 171). Local identities are centred on “ascriptive bonds” with blood-based or kinship groups. Horizontal identities are not on birthright but associations with others centred on professional or “socioeconomic interests” (2001: 171). National forums facilitate interaction “across geographic zones” enabling participant to acquire “social identities” beyond the closed and narrow bounds of local membership (2001:171).

<sup>13</sup> As discussed, Ignatieff’s theory centers on the importance of national democratic institutions as a means to resolve ethnic conflict. Axel Hadenius provides a more complete understanding on the link between the rule of law and internal stability. Hadenius discusses the importance of rule-based systems to the conduct of human relations. Specifically, he charts the differences between established informal agreements among kinship groups to a larger system of law sanctioned and enforced by the state. A system of law constitutes an essential element in ordering society and managing human interaction in a peaceful and orderly manner. Rules facilitate peaceful relations because they establish an accepted and predictable means of social engagement that enables disparate parties to interact with confidence. In short, rules create “fixed norms” of behavior that fosters a co-operative and peaceful exchange (2001: 164). As Eckstein comments, “Societies are built around expectations that actors have to other actors. Only if such expectations are reliably complied with can orderly, regular social interaction occur. Reliably fixed expectations are the nervous system of societies that bond their parts and particles into a whole” (Hadenius, 2001: 164). This basic principle offers insights regarding the conditions that facilitate the growth of societies.

As societies evolved from independent family units to larger kinship and clan-based groupings, order was maintained through adherence to “customary law” (tribal codes) (Hadenius, 2001: 164). Tribal codes represent a rule-based framework that established norms of behavior and reinforced group identities (Hadenius, 2001). Survival in such environments was often contingent on tribal association, which in turn, was premised on compliance to tribal rules and enforced through notions of honour. Thus, a system of

all rights-bearing equals” (1998: 69). Civic nationalism proscribes the inclusion of all members of a society to the political machinery of the state. It views all citizens as rights-bearing equals with a shared attachment to a “common set of political practices and values” (Ignatieff, 1993: 6). In other words, rather than promoting the myths of group difference, civic nationalism emphasizes the bonds of commonality among peoples, which are expressed politically through equal rights. Indeed, the basic prerequisite of a rights culture is founded on the claim that humans are all of one species; it is the understanding that all humans have basic needs to food, shelter, clothing and that share a mutual equality of “body, suffering and mortality” which engenders a discourse of responsibility and obligation (Ignatieff, 1984: 28).

The Western ethic has correlated the idea of human need, that which is necessary or essential to live, to a vernacular of obligation, both moral and legal<sup>14</sup> (Doyal & Gough, 1991). In other words, the reverse sides of need are obligations defined as rights. Rights are viewed as obligations due to their “reciprocal” nature or as Ignatieff writes “having rights means respecting the rights of others” (2000: 33). It is in this regard that rights

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customary law established social norms that regulated community activity and facilitated peaceful exchange within the group.

Hadenius argues that while tribal codes strengthen intra-tribal relations they contribute to a worsening of relations between tribes. In short, the features of tribal law that reinforce identity and induce co-operation, do not extend to those outside the group. Hadenius comments that the chief “drawback of organizational and legal particularism” relates to its inability to forge peaceful “interaction with other population groups” (Hadenius, 2001: 165). Consequently, conflicts are endemic to societies that lack an overarching rule of law. Hadenius comments: “ A distinguishing mark of clan and tribal societies has typically been a latent suspicion and enmity, periodically erupting into open hostilities, between different segments of the population” (Hadenius, 2001: 165). Thus, a more broad-based and inclusive framework of law is necessary to bridge group difference. Hadenius comments: “If you have faith in the legal institutions spanning different particularist identities, such that everyone, Jew as well as Greek, is subject to the same rules and is treated equally, then the risks of ‘investing’ in cooperation with people of another sort than your own are immediately reduced” (Hadenius, 2001: 165). It is in this regard that state constructed institutions of law provide a universal application to all factions of society and thus subordinate tribal codes as a tool to minimize inter group conflict.

<sup>14</sup> “Obligation is a central concept in law as well as in morality. But morality is logically prior to law. There can be morality without law, but not law without morality” (Milne, 1998: 40)

become social and serve as a vehicle to “create community” (Ignatieff, 2000: 32). Indeed, a system of rights connotes a highly interactive and complex relationship between the state and society. Through a framework of rights, the authority of government is restricted and the state is held responsible to society to confer both negative and positive freedoms. A state’s essential obligation to its people rests in the extension of both positive and negative rights. Positive rights include such guarantees as the maintenance of physical security or an adequate provision of food while negative rights protect a population from the coercive and violent acts of government (Ignatieff, 2000).

In turn, the provision of rights to society by the state creates an understood obligation of society to the state. Ignatieff comments: “Belonging to a rights community implies that we surrender some portion of our freedom to sustain the collective entitlements that make our life possible. This idea of sacrifice is the very core of what it means to belong to a national community: paying taxes, obeying the law, submitting disputes to adjudication and abiding peacefully by these decisions” (2000: 126). Thus, central to the functioning of a modern nation state is the understanding of the reciprocal rights and obligations between society and state.

Ignatieff argues that a framework of rights is upheld by the power of the state and provides an institutional mechanism for society to resolve differences “through negotiation rather than fighting” (2000: 22). Ignatieff comments: “the purpose of rights language is to facilitate peaceful adjudication by defining precisely what is at stake between contending parties, and in doing so to prevent conflict from turning into violence” (2001: 9). The extension of rights to all segments of a population endows the legal framework with capacity to resolve group difference peacefully. Indeed, the concept

of “deliberative equality” is essential to ensure universal access to legal institutions and to legitimize and validate all claims based on the merits of the case rather than birthright (Ignatieff, 2000: 26).

Deliberative equality expands the “democratic conversation of societies” and forces groups to recognize and legitimize each other through an institutional forum (Ignatieff, 2000: 26). For Ignatieff, mutual recognition between groups goes beyond “concession and negotiation” to include “an act of enlargement that enables both sides to envisage new possibilities of living together” (2000: 136). In other words, a system of rights stimulates a “liberal imagination in society” that fosters recognition and empathy for another individual or group (Ignatieff, 2000: 139-140). Thus, the diffusion of rights to multiple groups in a population makes the political process more inclusive, more democratic and operates on the premise that “everyone - literally everyone - has the right to belong” (Ignatieff, 2000: 140).

Conversely, individuals or groups that are excluded and denied rights are dehumanized; that is denied human status and thus relegated to differential treatment. Thus, ethnic nationalism results in both the exclusion of other ethnic citizens from state legal guarantees and the dehumanization of such groups. Woodward shares this perspective: “According to the myth of right-wing nationalism, ethnicity is pure and a natural basis for states rights. Those who refuse to accept an ethnically defined political loyalty are reclassified as enemies of their people” (1995: 271). The process of dehumanization between groups facilitates violence between groups and, in turn, a cycle emerges where violence fosters dehumanization. Ignatieff states:

Once the killing has started, dehumanization is easily accomplished: the fact that the other side has killed your own defines them as nonhuman and then legitimized nonhuman behavior on your part. The puzzle comes earlier: How is dehumanization achieved before the shooting starts? It is fear that turns minor difference into major that makes the gulf between ethnicities into a distinction between species, between human and nonhuman. (1998: 56)

Thus, Ignatieff believes that the establishment of democratic national institutions is necessary to include all societal groups in the political process and to mitigate the cycle of fear, ethnic polarity, inter-group dehumanization and ethnic violence. It is through the creation of such liberal institutions that ethnic nationalism can be replaced by civic nationalism:

From Bosnia to Afghanistan, from Rwanda to Kosovo, ethnic warriors seem bent on proving that rights equality among human beings of different races is sentimental fiction. In place of societies built on rights, they are hacking out societies whose unity is based in blood and fantasies of common origin. What we are trying to prove in societies that incorporate all human beings into the same political community is that ethnic cleansers are wrong, and that their vision of the future need not come to pass, for us or for the people they tyrannize. (Ignatieff, 2000: 140)

Ignatieff's theory contributes to a body of thought devoted to understanding the sources of ethnic conflict. In addition to his placement within the confines of ethnic conflict theory, parallels and influences can be drawn between Ignatieff's work and older traditions within general political theory.

## Western Liberal Political Philosophy

Ignatieff's theory is premised on the tradition of western liberal thought. Indeed, the development of the rights-based state as an institutional structure to guarantee the peaceful management of societal relations through positive and negative freedoms represents the culmination of Western Civilization's thought and action. The intellectual roots of the liberal state are predicated on the conception of a common humanity based on the recognition that humans are all of one species. The provenance of shared humanity originally stemmed from Greek philosophy and was further influenced by Christian beliefs<sup>15</sup>. For example, Plato's belief in shared "humanness" provides the basis for his philosophy of Archetypal Ideas: universal truths transcending the temporal world and accessed through human reason.<sup>16</sup> The inheritance of the Greek classical tradition had a profound influence on the Romans who advanced the idea of universality through the philosophy of Stoicism.

Articulated by Cicero, Seneca Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius, the Stoic view envisioned a global humanity where all humans are "inherently equal" as they share with God a capacity for reason (Greer, 1977: 100). Building from this concept the Stoics developed the theory of Natural Law. Natural law is an idea premised on the existence of a higher order of universal and rational truths created by nature, or God. Under Natural

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<sup>15</sup> The "homogenizing" concept of universal equality was adopted, developed and expanded theologically through the spread of the Judeo-Christian religion: "The claim that Christian morality was universal meant that all people were equal before it: high and low would be judged equally on the day of judgment" (Lummis, 1992: 40). The Christian doctrine redefined human society by disregarding ethnic, social, gender and legal differences and emphasized the oneness of mankind: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Jesus Christ" (Gal.3, 28) (Geary, 2002: 54).

<sup>16</sup> "It seemed evident to Plato that when many objects share a common property – as all humans share 'humanness' or all white stones share 'whiteness' – that property is not limited to a specific material instance in time and space....A particular thing may cease to be, but not the universal property that the particular thing embodied. The universal is a separate entity from the particular and, because it is beyond change and never passes away, it is superior in its reality" (Tarnas 1993:8).

Law, man is intrinsically bound by these higher laws and all human rules should conform to this standard. Thus, natural law leads invariably to two interrelated notions: first the correlation of Natural Law with ‘human law’ strengthened the need to develop a system of rules to manage society and second, the supremacy of Natural Law infers that government power has limits, and obedience to mortal rules is subject to challenge<sup>17</sup>. From its nascent stage under the Romans, the conception of the need for societal rules coupled with the necessity of limiting those rules expanded considerably during the Renaissance.

Western civilization has been broadly delineated into three distinct periods: antiquity, medieval and modern (Tarnas, 1993). Literally meaning ‘rebirth’, the Renaissance ushered in the modern era. Predicated on the guiding principles of ‘humanism’, a philosophy that celebrated the centrality of man as an independent, creative, rational and aesthetic being, the Renaissance unleashed the creative and intellectual powers of the individual. The Renaissance thinkers endorsed the claim of a common humanity through their emphasis that every individual possesses the internal capability to rationalize and to attain truth and knowledge to forge their own destiny. In addition to echoing the Ancient Greek notion of a shared humanity, the emergence of the “autonomous individual” heralded lasting and profound changes to the development of Western Civilization (Tarnas, 1993). In order for people to realize this inner potential they needed to be free from tyrannical and authoritarian rule. Thus, the ethic of individual liberty and rationality fundamentally challenged religious, social and political authority

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<sup>17</sup> Due to the conception that Natural Law supercedes ‘Man’s Law’, the Stoics challenged the Roman practice of slavery and promulgated instead the ethic of toleration, forgiveness, equality and compassion (Greer, 1977).



paving the way for the Reformation, the Scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment (Tarnas, 1993).

Again, concurrent with the notion that authority can impinge individual freedom is the idea that organized rule is necessary for peaceful relations. During the Renaissance, Niccoli Machiavelli's remedy for the pervasive violence, and conflict within and between the Italian principalities was the consolidation of the political order by a powerful prince (Melossi, 1990). The "state of the prince" represented the intellectual foundation for the state as the guarantor of political and social stability as articulated in the pioneering work of Thomas Hobbes (Melossi, 1990: 17). Hobbes, witness to the considerable devastation and insecurity wrought by the seventeenth century English Civil War envisioned the state as a prescription for anarchy. Hobbes's argument is premised on the view that man's basic nature of self-interest and self-preservation instilled a condition of fear for survival and thus fostered actions based on power and aggression (Cumberland, 1969). In turn, mankind's pursuit of power inexorably leads to conflict thereby reducing the "state of nature" to a "state of war" ((Medina, 1990: 12). Hobbes's prescription for anarchy and the "war of all against all" entailed the recognition that society needs a higher authority with "sufficient power" to enforce the "laws of nature" (Medina, 1990: 16). Given the profound requirement for self protection and peace, Hobbes believed it necessary for the state to become the "ultimate authority" on all legal affairs wherein all laws must be unquestionably obeyed (Medina, 1990: 16). Consequently, Hobbes argued that society forms a "social compact" in which the public collectively agrees to transfer sovereignty from the individual to the sovereign (state) or 'Leviathan'<sup>18</sup> (Melossi, 1990: 17).

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<sup>18</sup> Melossi states that the Leviathan is "named after the Biblical monster against 'which there is no power on earth that can oppose it'". Melossi also indicates how Hobbes associates this term with the state:

The social contract represents a key concept in Western political theory that enshrines the notion that society requires a higher authority to govern its affairs. The social contract is an agreement between individuals in society and does not entail a contract between the citizens and the state. However, the social contract not only transfers power to a higher authority it also identifies the nature or type of higher authority. Thus, from a conceptual standpoint, the social contract's continued evolution has underwritten profound advances in democratic theory. For instance, under Hobbes's formulation, the social contract transfers individual sovereignty to an "all-powerful sovereign" (Medina, 1990: 20). For Hobbes, the concentration of authority to a single entity constitutes a necessary and sufficient condition for societal peace as individual sovereignty (anarchy) leads to war. The implications of Hobbes's social contract are profound for once the sovereign attains absolute power there is no mechanism in place to check that power. As Medina writes, "in the Hobbesian model of absolute sovereignty, there are no safeguards against tyranny" (1990: 21). This was precisely the problem identified by the Enlightenment thinkers.

The Enlightenment witnessed the creation of the nascent foundations of a rights - based society through the influence of writers such as Diderot, Rousseau, Voltaire, Condorcet and Locke. The Enlightenment theorists such as John Locke articulated the need for state authority as well as the need to limit such authority. These twin notions bridge both the concepts of social contract and natural rights. Building on the ancient notion of "Natural Law", the Enlightenment philosophers such as Locke argued that individuals possess 'natural rights' such as the "right to life, liberty, and property" which

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"Leviathan – Hobbes wrote in his Introduction – is 'a Commonwealth, or State, in Latin Civitas'" (Melossi, 1990: 18).

must be protected legally by the state to ensure individual freedom and civilizational progress (Medina, 1990: 21). For Locke, the social contract represents the means to attain those natural rights. Indeed, Locke accepts the need for a state; however, he rejects Hobbes's prescription of an absolute ruler. Consequently, in order to prevent absolutist tyranny, Locke's social contract envisions society forming the agreement regarding the transfer of individual sovereignty (anarchy) to popular sovereignty (majority rule) (Katzner, 1975).

However, as a proponent of popular sovereignty it was necessary for Locke to address concerns regarding the 'tyranny of the majority'. Consequently, for Locke, the formation of a government on the basis of majority rule is only legitimate if such a government upholds and respects natural law and natural rights. Medina comments: "Political authority is legitimate, according to Locke, only if people consent to it and only if it does not violate their natural rights" (1990: 41). Thus, the powers of the government are limited by the necessity to uphold natural rights. Moreover, Locke argues that the people have the right to overthrow a government that they have chosen if that government fails to uphold natural rights. This is a clear example where, under Locke's conception, sovereignty remains with the people.

The significance of these theoretical developments cannot be understated for these philosophies found expression as the ideological underpinnings of the American and French Revolutions and the subsequent creation of the liberal democratic state. Bobbio regards the contribution of Locke and the subsequent social contract theorists to the development of the liberal state:

Without this Copernican revolution, which allowed the problem of the state to be viewed for the first time through the eyes of its subjects rather than the sovereign, the doctrine of the liberal state, which is first and foremost the doctrine of juridical limits to state power would have been impossible. Without individualism, there can be no liberalism. (2005: 9)

The subsequent development of liberal thought built upon the basic tenets articulated by Locke: society's need for state authority invokes a social contract wherein the people consent to majority rule provided such rule is just and based upon the claims of natural law. Thus, the need to limit such authority in order to ensure the natural rights of the individual represents the intellectual basis for the evolution of democracy and the establishment of the liberal democratic state. As Bobbio notes, "historically, the liberal state was the outcome of a continual and ever-growing erosion of the sovereign's absolute power" (2005: 7). This conforms with Horowitz's perspective that "democracy is about inclusion and exclusion, about access to power, about the privileges that go with inclusion and the penalties that accompany exclusion" (1994: 35). It also conforms to Zakaria's observation that constitutional liberalism "refers to the tradition, deep in Western history, that seeks to protect an individual's autonomy and dignity against coercion, whatever the source – state, church or society" (2004: 19).

It is important to note, however, that foundations of liberal theory rest on normative claims; expressions of what ought to be. While normative claims serve as an important influence or foundation for action, the notion of 'what ought to be' is fundamentally different than 'what is'. Specifically, theoretical advancements and debates while important, are not a sufficient condition for the implementation of the rights-based state. Indeed, power is not automatically ceded because liberal theorists articulate the need for individual autonomy through the provision of rights. The actual

development of the liberal democratic state<sup>19</sup>, replete with a constitutional framework, free and fair elections “the rule of law, a separation of powers, and the protection of basic liberties of speech, assembly, religion, and property” represents an achievement based on centuries of “struggle” whereby individuals groups and organizations demanded political inclusion to the power of the state through various means including force (Zakaria, 2004: 17; Ignatieff, 2001). Zakaria argues that “liberty in the West was born of a series of power struggles” and on how such struggles produced the Western liberal democratic state:

The Consequence of these struggles – between church and state, lord and King, Protestant and Catholic, business and the state – embedded themselves in the fabric of Western life, producing greater and greater pressures for individual liberty. (2004: 31)

Ignatieff posits that the reluctance to cede power and the paradox that those who have secured their own entitlements are reluctant to extend them to excluded groups explains the slow evolution of the extension of rights from titled land-holding males of the thirteenth century to enfranchised, visible minorities in the twentieth century (2001). Ignatieff concludes that the culmination of these efforts has been the articulation of the political principle of equality and the acceptance that the liberal state should confer “all human beings” equal political rights (1998: 67):

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<sup>19</sup> The modern liberal democratic state defined by Ignatieff consists of as “ free political competition with multi-party elections, an independent judiciary and rule of law, free markets and rights that guarantee juridical equality, property, privacy and freedom of religious belief and political opinion” (Ignatieff, 2005: 69).

The liberal ideal may be four hundred years old, but it is only within the last forty years...that we have actually begun the experiment in earnest – establishing a polity based on equal rights with the full incorporation of all available human differences. This is not to say that multiethnic, multicultural societies have not existed in the past – they have – but they have not been rights-based democracies. (1998: 69)

The importance of overviewing the development of the rights-based state in Western Civilization is manifold. First, it anchors Ignatieff's thesis within the larger theoretical and practical developments in Western history. In this sense, Ignatieff's application of the democratic state as a remedy for ethnic conflict is a natural extension or evolution of the basic precepts of Western thought. Second, such an overview illustrates the centuries long evolution and struggle that has occurred towards the realization of the liberal democratic state. Third, the very nature of this struggle and evolution emphasizes the importance of society in the creation of the democratic state. It is essential to understand the theoretical importance of these three factors when considering Ignatieff's prescription of democratic state building for countries that have endured state collapse and ethnic conflict. Collectively, these factors indicate the very difficulty of creating a democratic state for three chief reasons.

First, the liberal democratic state is a product of Western Civilization. It is therefore viewed by many as a "Western" construct with little applicability to non-Western regions of the world. Second, given the historical scope and evolutionary nature of the liberal democratic state, its construction into a fully functioning entity is a complex and time consuming endeavor that involves a multiplicity of factors. Third, given the profound interrelationship between society and the state during the formation of the liberal democracies it is important to analyze societal factors when considering

democratic transitions. Simply put, an understanding of society is equally important as the study of state institutions during the formation of democracy.

Thus, when considering Ignatieff's thesis that the establishment of a democratic state represents a solution to ethnic conflict it is necessary to consider the key variables necessary for the successful implementation of democratic institutions. Indeed, pluralistic institutions themselves do not guarantee a peaceful and viable transformation of society, particularly in a post conflict setting. Therefore, in order to examine the feasibility of transplanting democracy to another country it is necessary to overview key elements in democratic theory that explain the features underpinning the development of successful democratic states. More specifically, it is important to examine the theoretical relationship between society and state and to overview key societal preconditions that are essential for a functioning democracy.

### **Theory of Pre-Conditions for Democracy**

Throughout the literature of democratic theory, a number of writers and scholars have identified that successful democratic states require more than the presence of constitutional mandated political institutions. For instance, Almond and Verba in their "pathbreaking" work, *The Civic Culture*, argue that stable democracies require a form of collective agreement from the populace that legitimize government institutions (Diamond, 1999: 161). Written after the Second World War, Almond and Verba sought to explain how German and Italian democracies transformed into Fascist dictatorships. Based on a systematic comparative study of five states, Almond and Verba introduce the notion of political culture as an essential component for stable democracies. Political

culture is defined as specific “political orientations” that reflect “attitudes toward the political system and its various parts, and attitudes toward the role of the self in the system” (Almond & Verba, 1963: 13). Stable democracy is possible if citizen political involvement is complimented by “passivity, trust, deference to authority and competence” (Almond & Verba, 1989:16).

The notion that an enlightened and competent citizenry is necessary to forge a successful democracy has a long historical lineage. Indeed, philosophers and writers such as Aristotle, Rousseau, Montesquieu, Madison, and Tocqueville have all emphasized the importance of an active, virtuous and capable citizenry to a functioning democracy (Hadenius, 2001; Diamond, 1999). As Diamond notes, paralleling the work of Almond and Verba, theorists such as Lipset, Dahl and Inkeles identify a healthy political culture “as necessary for the development and maintenance of democracy” (Diamond, 1999: 166). Following in this tradition is the work of Axel Hadenius who examines the importance of societal and institutional features to democracy. This section will focus principally on the work of Hadenius, but will also include references by key theorists who specialize in the study of democracy and its formation.

Hadenius argues that the key to a healthy democracy resides in a “democratic citizenship” imbued with certain attitudes and resources that are attained at an individual and collective level (Hadenius, 2001: 17). At an individual level, attitudes that correlate to a democratic citizenship include an interest in politics, an open, rational intellect, tolerance and a willingness to engage in political affairs. The necessary resources or political skills at the individual level include knowledge of political issues, the capability and opportunity to become politically involved and the ability to make autonomous



political decisions. March and Olsen comment on how a skilled and able citizenry constitutes a prerequisite for democracy: “Democracy presumes political capability. It cannot succeed without it. In particular, it cannot succeed unless citizens are capable of being citizens and officials are capable of being officials” (1995: 129). The key variables providing individuals with the requisite attitudes and resources for democratic citizenship are wealth, social status and educational background. Internationally, the propensity for democratic citizenship is correlated to nations with high economic and educational rates and standards (Hadenius, 2001). The development of democratic attitudes and resources at the individual level is also prompted by and directly related advancements at the collective level.

The centerpiece of Hadenius’s thesis resides at the collective level, which focuses not on the attributes of individuals but instead the “relations between individuals” (Hadenius, 2001: 18). At the collective level, attitudes that are associated with a democratic citizenship relate to “feelings of affinity, trust, and solidarity between people” (Hadenius, 2001: 19). The importance of ‘trust’ between individuals constitutes a key requirement of democratic citizenship<sup>20</sup>. March and Olsen comment on certain values and attitudes among the citizenry constitutes a prerequisite for a functioning democracy: “Democracy requires citizens and officials whose beliefs, commitments and conceptions of self and society sustain processes of civilized democratic politics” (1995: 73). Drawing on the research of Putnam and Coleman, Hadenius emphasizes the importance of ‘social capital.’ Social capital, wherein a citizenry has developed attitudes of mutual trust and the resources of civil society, provides a populace with “civic power” (Hadenius, 2001: 11).

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<sup>20</sup> Diamond comments on how ‘trust’ constitutes a key democratic attitude that is necessary for a functional democracy: “Trust, both as a generalized social phenomenon and as confidence in political institutions, increases political patience and the readiness to compromise and cooperate” (1999: 215).

Putnam's study of Italian democracy focused on the relationship between the "degree of civic spirit" and governance (Hadenius, 2001: 11). Democracy was deemed successful in areas where the population was politically involved and "cooperative" (Hadenius, 2001: 11).

The attitudes and resources at the collective level are highly inter-related for trust between peoples facilitates organization and, conversely, organization facilitates trust. Resources at the collective level tied to democratic citizenship refer to the development of organizations or institutional networks that facilitate collective action. This category is further delineated into two subgroups: primary and secondary associations. Primary associations denote organizational forums limited to family or kinship groups while secondary associations are synonymous with the term 'civil society.' Hadenius draws great emphasis on the centrality of a vital civil society to the emergence of a durable democracy.

### **Civil Society as a Democratic Precondition**

Civil society is a much-debated term in political theory with a long history and multiple definitions. Hadenius defines civil society as the organized networks that occur in the "social zone between the family and the state" (2001: 19). Hadenius builds on the work of Kornhauser who associates a vital and durable democracy to the presence of a well-developed civil society. Indeed, Kornhauser identifies the importance of "intermediate relations" between primary units (individual and kinship groups) and the state to the development of democracy (Hadenius, 2001). These intermediate relations reflect the growth of civil society and the development of organizations such as "religious

congregations, trade unions, producer associations and political parties” (Hadenius, 2001: 9). Diamond catalogues the multiplicity of civil society organizations into the following categories: economic, cultural, informational and educational, interest, developmental, issue-oriented, and civic (1999: 222). As an example, his category of “economic” includes the following definition: “productive and commercial associations and networks” while his category of “interest” is: “groups that seek to advance or defend the common functional or material interests of their members (e.g., trade unions, associations of veterans and pensioners, and professional groups)” (1999: 222).

Civil society facilitates the development of democratic rule in a number of ways. First, as mentioned, civil society can advance democratic attitudes among the populace. Indeed, participation in civil society organizations can foster feelings of trust towards others, and can generate a capacity for group cohesion. Thus, interaction with individuals from “another identity” can engender tolerance of others and a willingness to work together “for the common good” (Hadenius, 2001: 23/25). These notions of collective solidarity can advance the development of interests beyond the self toward ideas and actions that serve society as a whole. More specifically, group solidarity can serve two functions necessary in democracy: the “mobilizing function” of achieving public goals through collective activity and the “conciliatory function” of minimizing conflict due to intra-group tolerance and cohesion<sup>21</sup> (Hadenius, 2001: 9). As discussed, trust is a central

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<sup>21</sup> Hadenius discusses the importance of identity as it relates to participation in civil society organizations and its effect on conflict. For instance, individuals who interact in civil society organizations with others who hold differing identities can acquire attitudes of “tolerance and understanding” (2001: 44). In the ideal case, such individuals represent Gellner’s “modular man”, that is, someone who participates in multiple organizations within civil society and thus attains multiple weak identities (Hadenius, 2001: 43). Such weak identities help to generate “bridges” between various societal factions as primary identities diminish and people become “more integrated” (Hadenius, 2001: 44). Through the experience of interaction in civil society attitudes and skills of working with others can be applied at a “broad popular level” (Hadenius,

component of democratic citizenship. Friedman states that the creation of “interpersonal trust” among citizens is a vital requirement for the successful operation of democratic institutions: “It [interpersonal trust] is important in particular to the functioning of democratic political institutions, under which governing parties that lose elections willingly surrender power because they assume that in the future their successors will do the same” (2005: 308). Thus, civil society plays a critical role in fostering the requisite democratic attitudes that are essential in a pluralistic political order.

Second, participation in civil society organizations can provide individuals with the skills and abilities essential for public service. Understanding the processes of a functioning organization, how to manage and motivate people and how to resolve complex problems through organizational means all constitute essential skills acquired in civil society and applicable to public life (Hadenius, 2001; Diamond, 1999). Civil society associations thus provide an opportunity for “recruiting and training” of “new political leaders” (Diamond, 1999: 245).

Third, civil society is essential for democracy as it forms a powerful counterweight to the state itself (Hadenius, 2001; Diamond, 1999). The state can become an exceedingly powerful entity due to its overarching authority, its control over the monopoly of violence and its complex and extensive bureaucratic framework. Thus, for liberal democratic rule, it is essential to preclude state control by any individual or group that seeks to yield absolute power, concentrate authority and create a repressive regime. The need to devise measures to prevent authoritarian rule has a great historical lineage in political theory. The French philosopher Montesquieu advocated the creation of

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2001: 44). It is in this regard, that civil society organizations can facilitate peaceful relations between differing groups and thus serve to “dampen conflict” (Hadenius, 2001: 44).

“institutional pluralism” or the separation of the chief branches of government as a means to disperse power and preclude absolutism (Hadenius, 2001: 1). This principle is embedded in the United States’ Constitution through the formula of ‘checks and balances’ that limits the power of each government branch. In the Federalist Papers, James Madison countered that institutional structures were insufficient alone to counter the abuse of power. Madison argued that state despotism and the suppression of popular rule could be offset by “a great variety of interests, parties and sects” within society itself (Hadenius, 2001: 2). In other words, liberal democratic governance requires more than institutions. It also requires the presence of a vibrant civil society to mobilize public interest and check government power<sup>22</sup>.

Civil society counters state power by empowering citizens through organizational strength. Indeed, public interests are achieved more effectively through civil society due to power in numbers, coordinated activities, accumulated resources and organizational cohesion. Civil society organizations attain greater “external strength” when they achieve national and even international status<sup>23</sup> (Hadenius, 2001: 21). This can provide the organization with a secure funding base as well as a membership derived throughout the nation from disparate societal factions. Thus, the state faces and has to respond to an entity that is far more powerful than individual agency. Indeed, in societies that lack strong civil society associations, individuals are “atomized and unconnected” and thus constitute a “weak citizenship” (Hadenius, 2001: 49). A limited “civic coordination capacity” accompanies a weak citizenship and thus renders such a society vulnerable to

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<sup>22</sup> A number of theorists such as Durkheim, Badie and Birnbaum, Kornhauser, Putnam, Diamond and Hadenius all identify the importance of civil society as a means to offset the establishment of authoritarian government.

<sup>23</sup> Diamond cautions that some civil society organizations may become too dependent on foreign support or indeed, they may reflect “at best a thin base of indigenous initiative, support and organization” (1999: 253).

state “manipulation and oppression” (Hadenius, 2001: 49). Conversely, societies with strong civic associations become more immune to state subjugation. Hadenius credits civil society organizations for harnessing nationwide support against the establishment of autocratic rule in several countries:<sup>24</sup> “The research done on the fall of democracies has pointed to a fundamental fact. Military juntas and other would-be coup-makers have seldom succeeded in seizing power when civil society has stood united in democracy’s defence” (2001: 49).

In sum, civil society can facilitate democracy by generating social capital through a democratic citizenship imbued with populist attitudes and skills. Civil society associations can also mitigate the propensity for authoritarianism by providing a powerful counterweight to the state. However, in order to serve these functions, the mere presence of civil society organizations is not sufficient to support democratic rule.

Civil society must be endowed with additional enabling conditions and features to sponsor and support democratic systems. First, civil society organizations must share a relationship with the state that is both autonomous and inclusive. Autonomy is essential for if civic organizations are to serve as an effective counterweight to state authority, they themselves must be free from state control. Hadenius identifies three essential types of autonomy: policy, staff and resource autonomy or simply the independence to determine goals, to hire staff and to procure financial and administrative resources (2001: 30). The Soviet Union’s control of trade unions represents a clear example of civil organizations

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<sup>24</sup> Specifically, in the early 1990s, an attempt by the Guatemalan President George Serrano to dissolve key democratic institutions and establish a dictatorship were thwarted by a citizen’s revolt mobilized and directed by the civil society organization entitled the National Forum for Consensus (Hadenius, 2001: 23). See also Diamond, 1999 for more examples where civil society associations played a “leading role” in championing democratic transitions in a number of countries (Diamond, 1999).

that failed to achieve autonomy and thus became subject to state dominance. Consequently, for civil society to function as a democratic enabler, the state must recognize these associations as “legitimate” and able to pursue their interests free from government control (Gill, 2000: 59). Without such guarantees, “then civil society does not exist” (Gill, 2000: 59).

For effective democracy, the relationship between civil organizations and the state should be marked by inclusion as well as autonomy. If civil groups are too autonomous from the state, they cannot perform the vital role of facilitating state and societal interaction. In order to represent society in an effective and meaningful way, civil groups must forge a viable channel to the state. As Hadenius notes, “If the activities and opinions of civil society are to have any impact on the operation of the state, there must in a democracy be various linkages between civil society and the public sphere” (Hadenius, 2001: 31). Conversely, state society interaction can enable the state to maintain legitimacy with the populace and to conduct public policy that serves societal interests. Political parties represent a key civil organization that serves as an essential conduit between state and society.

In its most democratic form, political parties should share both an autonomous and inclusive relationship with the state. In this ideal case, political parties and the state are separate entities possessing distinct functions and “organizational autonomy” (Hadenius, 2001: 32). Conversely, political parties and the state share an inclusive relationship with parties serving as a principal agent between state and society. Political parties both represent society at large and are “represented in the governing bodies of the state” (Hadenius, 2001: 32). Parties accommodate public interest by incorporating

“popular demands” into public policy (Hadenius, 2001: 32). Similarly, other civil organizations such as commercial associations link state and society by representing public interest to government and effecting political change.

In addition to the condition of autonomy and inclusion, civil organizations must hold additional internal attributes in order to serve democracy. A chief consideration relates to the structure, the activities and the purpose of the organization in question. In short, if civil organizations are to represent a local training ground for democracy at the national level they themselves must invoke “democratic practices” (Hadenius, 2001: 38). Thus, social capital is formed from organizations that impart tolerance, openness, responsibility, trust towards others, effective group coordination, and leadership accountability (Hadenius, 2001; Diamond 1999). Consequently, while certain groups meet the definition of civil society as organizations that exist between the “family and the state”, their internal structure and collective objectives may not serve democratic ends.

In short, civil society organizations must be “civil” (Whitehead, 2002). For instance, criminal organizations, terrorist groups and warlord factions do not facilitate “democratic social capital” (Hadenius, 2001: 35). Other “closed groups” derives their membership based solely on a shared identity such as ethnicity and thus only emphasizes their particularistic grouping (Hadenius, 2001: 44). While such factions may generate internal cohesion they can also foster external intolerance and distrust towards other groups or the state itself. As Diamond states “such totalistic parties or movements weaken democracy and, I would argue, are fundamentally uncivil, while pluralistic organizations strengthen democracy” (1999: 223). Thus, civil society organizations must be constructed and designed to “meet public ends rather than private ends” (Diamond,



1999: 223). In this regard, civil associations must allow easy access to the public and cannot be “embedded in exclusive, secretive or corporate settings” (Diamond, 1999: 223).

Civil society enhances both the establishment and continuity of democracy when it is pervasive and ‘dense’ (Diamond, 1999: 233). That is, heightened numbers of civil society organizations maximizes the democratic potential of a given society. The existence of multiple civil society groups enhances democracy by providing more options and opportunities to participate in organizations that advance democratic attitudes, values and skills.

In sum, democratic citizenship, according to Hadenius and numerous other theorists, is thus directly linked to a vibrant civil society. Gill comments on the importance of civil society to countries embarking on a transition to democracy:

In those countries where civil society forces have not been destroyed by authoritarian rule, the chances of a rapid transition to democracy are much greater than where such forces have either been crushed or lacked vigour to begin with...The presence or absence of vibrant or vigorous civil society forces can thus be central to the prospects for regime change and democratization. Without a perspective which gives serious attention to the shape and contours of the potentially emergent civil society, the explanation of transition will be incomplete (2000: 60).

While the presence of an active associational life represents a key precondition for the establishment of democracy it is insufficient alone as a causal factor. Hadenius also identifies the socio-economic factors of a healthy and durable economy and high educational standards as key variables that bolster democratic citizenship both at the individual and collective level:

Persons with longer schooling and a higher place on the social ladder are usually better 'equipped', democratically speaking, than others. The same pattern emerges when we compare nations as a whole with each other: in countries with a high level of economic development and general education, citizens' political attitudes and resources are usually better matched to democracy's demands. (2001: 100)

### **Socio-Economic Development as a Democratic Precondition**

Socio-economic success as a key precondition or even as the principle catalyst for democracy is well developed in political theory. In the 1960s, theorists from the 'modernization school' argued that large-scale economic advances led to socio-political transformations that underscored democratic change. Specifically, "industrialization, urbanization and economic growth" overturned traditional feudal economies and the accompanying social structures (Hadenius, 2001: 72). The social environment is thus transformed from a static, hierarchal system to one marked by social mobility and widespread economic improvement. In short, economic change fosters profound social change. Paralleling the role of civil society organizations, economic development facilitates the development of democratic citizenship both in terms of attitudes and resources. For instance, trust towards other citizens represents a central democratic attitude that is tied to economic growth. Indeed, a number of studies correlate high levels of interpersonal trust to nations with a high per capita income<sup>25</sup> (Friedman, 2005: 308). Friedman comments on how economic growth forwards democratic attitudes: "Economic growth - meaning a rising standard of living for the clear majority of citizens - more

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<sup>25</sup> Scholars such as Lipset, Diamond, Inkeles and Ingelhart have all conducted studies correlating economic development to democratic attitudes among the populace such as "tolerance, trust and efficacy" (Diamond, 1999: 161).

often than not fosters greater opportunity, tolerance of diversity, social mobility, commitment to fairness, and dedication to democracy” (2005: 4).

Greater economic resources can lead to widespread employment growth and higher individual and state incomes, which collectively results in improvements in public infrastructure such as transportation networks, schools, and hospitals. These improvements in employment, incomes and infrastructure require collective action to maximize their overall benefits, which in turn builds group solidarity, organizational skills and interpersonal trust (Friedman, 2005). Again, paralleling the experience with civil society organizations, key skills and attitudes acquired at local levels provide the requisite background for interaction at the national level. Friedman states: “Indeed, the development of tolerance, of individual rights, and of democracy itself has historically evolved out of just this kind of give-and-take, in which different groups vie with one another to achieve to advance their interests yet ultimately recognize either that they cannot achieve total victory or that they are better off not to do so” (2005: 307). Thus, the need for society to coordinate employment growth and large infrastructure projects fosters democratic citizenship.

Once built, social service infrastructure greatly enhances social capital. For instance, the expansion of educational facilities and improved public access to schools constitutes a vital factor underpinning democratic citizenship. The diffusion of knowledge throughout society creates greater political awareness and fosters democratic attitudes such as tolerance, trust, and openness. Moreover, education elevates skill levels essential for both self-advocacy and public service. In short, education contributes to the very attitudes and abilities among the populace necessary for democratic citizenship.

Statistical data underscores that a broader redistribution of incomes in poor countries elevates school participation “especially for girls” (Friedman, 2005: 359). Following the acquisition of these resources and skills, these educated civilians begin to demand greater inclusion into the political system (Hadenius, 2001). With greater socio-economic levels, citizens eventually “seek entitlements and other redistributive arrangements” (Friedman, 2005: 345).

Historically, economic growth also fostered widespread prosperity and the development of a middle class. The primacy of the middle class as an agent for democratic change, again, has a rich historical lineage and dates back to Aristotle<sup>26</sup>. Barrington Moore Jr., author of a landmark study comparing the social origins of authoritarian and democratic states, was a chief proponent of the view that the ascendancy of the middle class presaged the development of democracy. Moore illustrated his theory using England as a model case study. Moore tied the rise of the English bourgeoisie to the collapse of feudal agrarian order and the emergence of the capitalist system. The English feudal order was a complex system of rights and obligations whereby land ownership was bound by “tenurial relations” between “lord and man” (Moore, 1966: 5). In the fifteenth century, a number of factors including the development of a vibrant wool trade collectively undermined the English feudal system. Specifically, the appeal of trade profit altered the English nobility’s view of land as an

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<sup>26</sup> Aristotle in *The Politics* highlights the importance of the middle class for a stable and secure democracy: “It is therefore the greatest of blessings for a state that its members should possess a moderate and adequate property. Where some have great possessions, and others have nothing at all, the result is either an extreme democracy or an unmixed oligarchy; or it may even be – indirectly, and as a reaction against both of these extremes—a tyranny....Where democracies have no middle class, and the poor are greatly superior in number; trouble ensues, and they are speedily ruined” (Barker, 1962:182).

entity that enshrined political obligations and the “command of man” and to entity that exacted income and the “command of money” (Moore, 1966: 5).

The transition of the English countryside from feudal agrarian system to one based on commercial profits became finalized with the enclosures movement. Between 1760 and 1832 a “brutal” series of enclosures occurred whereby the landed upper classes asserted control over their rural properties, denied the peasants property rights and expelled them off the land (Zakaria, 2004: 46). The dissolution of the English peasant community constituted a key precondition that enabled English democracy. More specifically, the peasantry represented a large, traditionally oriented, uneducated and a potentially radical community and thus their removal as a political entity served the progress of democracy. Moore comments on the affects of the peasants demise in England:

It meant that modernization could proceed in England without the huge reservoir of conservative and reactionary forces that existed at certain points in Germany and Japan, not to mention India. And it also meant that the possibility of peasant revolutions in the Russian and Chinese manner were taken off the historical agenda. (1967: 30)

The role of political institutions also represented a key variable in the transition of English society from its feudal moorings to a democratic capitalist society. Indeed, enclosures became possible due to the power of the English parliament and its control by the English gentry who formalized the enclosures process through a series of legislative acts. Royal control over landholding diminished and the principle of private property became firmly entrenched. The efficient use of land, greater economies of scale and

improved farming techniques elevated both individual profits and national wealth (Moore, 1966).

Paralleling the socio-political upheaval in the English countryside, an urban transformation also occurred. Industrialization and a thriving maritime trade fostered the growth of private enterprise in the English cities and towns. The urban merchant classes were emboldened by the transition of the landed nobility from feudal landlords to free enterprising capitalists. Indeed, due to shared capitalist orientations and reciprocal trade dealings, the interests of the landed gentry coincided with the commercial leaders or bourgeoisie in the urban centers. Given the prominent social position of the landed gentry the pursuit of profit was deemed a respectable and legitimate pursuit. As Zakaria notes, a revolution occurred in British political life because “entrepreneurial activity became the principal means of social advancement” (2004: 47). Consequently, economic transformations in England facilitated the growth of an educated, informed and prosperous class that grew to attain heightened political and societal clout.

From a democratic standpoint, the alliance between the landed gentry and the bourgeoisie was critical because both groups were able to generate wealth independent from the Crown. Again, analogous to civil society organizations, a strong middle class constituted an independent entity that offset the power of the state. Thus, strengthened by an autonomous economic base and through the control of Parliament, the English nobility and the bourgeoisie represented a powerful force that precluded royal absolutism. Moreover, they utilized their power to serve their own interests, which in turn furthered democracy. Voltaire comments on this symbiotic relationship: “commerce which has enriched the citizens of England has helped make them free...that liberty has in turn

expanded commerce” (Zakaria, 2004: 49). Indeed, the gentry and the bourgeoisie were positioned to enact progressive measures such as “free trade, free markets, individual rights and freedom of religion” that both advanced free enterprise and modernized society (Zakaria, 2004: 47). Bourgeoisie social and economic power thus translated into political inclusion as reflected by the Reform Bill of 1832, which extended the franchise to England’s “industrial, commercial, and professional upper-income classes” (Moore, 1966; Friedman, 2005: 223). At a proximate level, this legislation led to almost a twofold increase in eligible voters to fewer “than half a million to over 800,000” (Friedman, 2005: 223). At a broader level, the Reform Act led to a qualitative change from a system based on bloodlines and patronage to one based on greater equality through “universalistic criterion” (Friedman, 2005: 223). The resultant constitutional and institutional changes attenuated Royal power and led to the establishment of a more pluralistic political order. Moore comments on the import of the bourgeoisie to English democracy: “Thus in England the chief carriers of what was eventually to be a modern and secular society were at this time fundamentally men of commerce in both the countryside and the towns” (Moore, 1966: 13). Moore sums up his theory of democratic change with the simple axiom, “No bourgeois, no democracy” (1966: 418).

A significant degree of scholarship has studied the relationship between a nation’s socio-economic development and democracy<sup>27</sup>. Specifically, research initiated in the 1950s, identified a positive association between democracy and variables such as per-capita GNP, literacy and media exposure (Hadenius, 2001). These studies found that a

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<sup>27</sup> Seymour Martin Lipset is among the most prominent scholars who document the association between economic standing and democracy. Lipset comments: “Perhaps the most widespread generalization linking political systems to other aspects of society has been that democracy is related to the state of economic development. Concretely, this means that the more well-to-do a nation, the greater the chances that it will sustain democracy” (1959: 75).

higher socio-economic level contributes both to the establishment of democracy in countries during transition periods as well the longevity of democracy in countries where it had been previously established. Thus, countries undergoing a democratic transition had a high chance of initial success if their per capita GNP fell between \$US1,000 and \$US3,000 (Hadenius, 2001). Przeworski and Limongi conducted a longitudinal study between 1950 and 1990 of 135 democratic countries and found that if a nation's per capita income (PCI) is below \$1,500 democratic rule lasted on average only eight years. Countries with \$1,500 and \$3,000 PCI could sustain democracy for eighteen years while those with \$6,000 PCI were largely immune from failure (Hadenius, 2001/Zakaria, 2004). As Zakaria notes, nascent democracies with a PCI between \$3,000 and \$6000 will likely establish a durable democratic system (2004). Conversely, the relative failure of democracy in nations with a PCI below \$1,500 provides a statistical underpinning for Samuel Huntington's observation: "Poverty is a principal - probably the principal - obstacle to democratic development" (1993: 22). Recent trends support this analysis. For instance, from the 1970s to 2000 the number of countries noted for democratic liberties and institutions escalated from fifty to ninety. In almost all cases, the most successful of these newly minted democratic states had experienced significant economic growth (Friedman, 2005).

Hadenius, Zakaria and Friedman all cite exceptions to the above stated statistical findings. For instance, many of the world's oil producing nations have national per capita income levels that surpass the \$6,000 benchmark figure, however, their political systems "remain deeply authoritarian" (Hadenius, 2001: 75). Zakaria explains this anomaly by examining the socio-economic composition of these societies and its relationship to the



state. Specifically, in countries such as the “Persian Gulf sheikdoms, Nigeria and Venezuela” oil profits are easily accessed and enrich only an elite constituency (Zakaria, 2004: 73). As a consequence, the majority of society remains “primitive” formed from a populace that remains “uneducated and unskilled” (Zakaria, 2004: 73). In short, these societies lack a key precondition necessary for a pluralistic system - the existence of a vibrant middle class. Friedman reinforces the view that prosperity must be shared among a large portion of society in order to affect democratic change: “economic growth needs to be broadly based if it is to foster social and economic progress. That progress requires the positive experience of a sufficiently broad cross section of a country’s population to shape the national mood and direction” (2005: 6). Thus, in oil rich autocracies, the citizens lack the social capital necessary for democratic governance.

The interrelationship between state and society in these countries is also problematic from a democratic standpoint. Since the state controls the chief source of national wealth, it precludes the development of a commercial class that is independent of the state. Thus, these societies lack a powerful, autonomous entity to check the power of the state and to demand political inclusion.

The nature in which a state derives its income thus represents a key variable that shapes its overall political structure. Moore’s concept of “earned versus unearned income” provides a useful framework to understand the link between the nature of state revenue and political development (Moore, 1998: 94). “Earned income” occurs when states meet two chief conditions; First when states develop an elaborate “bureaucratic apparatus” to collect taxes and second, when states deliver “reciprocal services” to its citizens such as “the provision of law, order, justice and security” (Moore, 1998: 94).

“Unearned income” occurs through the acquisition of “easy money” such as oil revenues or foreign assistance thereby creating “trust-fund” states that do not need to extract revenue from the general population. (Zakaria, 2004: 73). When governments depend on “unearned income”, the level of interaction between state and society is limited, which, in turn engenders profound political implications (Moore, 1998: 84).

For instance, in ‘earned income’ states, a symbiotic relationship develops between state and society wherein the government draws tax income from the populace in return for the provision of state services (Zakaria, 2004: 75). Thus a “reciprocal bargain” is formed wherein state and society have mutual obligations to each other in the form of “taxation and representation” (Zakaria, 2004: 75). The outcome of this process is the evolution of “liberty” through representation and the expansion of democratic institutions (Zakaria, 2004: 75). Indeed, a body of scholarship has correlated the development of pluralistic institutions and constitutional frameworks to the negotiations that occur between state and commercial leaders over issues of taxation (Moore, 1998). As Moore concludes, “the more government income is ‘earned’, the more likely are state-society relations to be characterized by accountability, responsiveness and democracy” (Moore, 1998: 95). Moreover, governments that honor such state-society obligations gain legitimacy and trust by its populace. In order for democracies to successfully function it is necessary that its citizens deem the state legitimate.

In the “unearned income’ or ‘easy money ’countries, the state and society construct a different relationship where the populace is neither burdened by taxes nor granted extensive political rights. In short, they experience no taxation but also no representation (Zakaria, 2004). Therefore, in ‘trust-fund’ states, the state’s easy access to

non-societal wealth precludes the fundamental exchange between state and society that is essential for a functioning democracy. It is important to emphasize that this condition affects both the ‘unearned income’ states with high revenues like the oil producing countries as well as ‘unearned income’ states with low revenues like many poor nations dependent on foreign aid. In unearned income states that are poor, the lack of state-society networks render the state “vulnerable to the organizational challenge of competitors – guerillas, private armies based on the narcotics trade and non-state movements of various kinds” (Moore, 1998: 105). Simply put, through its reliance on international income such states, “neglect its domestic tax base” which thus makes it available for the “insurgents to exploit” (Moore, 1998: 105). Finally, poor unearned income states are highly vulnerable due to a cessation of revenue due to the mercurial and often unreliable nature of foreign aid. This acutely affects these regimes ability to foster democratic growth, and expand government services. In short, such a condition directly impairs its “political stability” which represents a key “precondition for effective accountability and democracy” (Moore, 1998: 106).

In sum, the theory developed is as follows: Ignatieff prescribes the establishment of democratic state institutions as a remedy to stabilize internal relations in countries that have experienced ethnic conflict. However, a body of political theory argues that the creation of an institutional framework is a necessary but not sufficient precondition to create a functioning democracy. Instead, stable democracies require a political culture marked by citizens who possess social capital. Social capital reflects a democratic citizenship expressed in terms of the requisite attitudes and resources to sustain democracy. In turn, democratic citizenship derives from the presence of an active civil

society and a strong economic base replete with a vibrant, educated and independent middle class. Moreover, an active civil society and middle class also serve as a check on government power and thus provides a medium to ensure the formation and continuity of democracy. In order to further explore this theory it is necessary to examine the relationship between state institutions and political culture.

### **Institutional History, Political Culture and Democracy**

The relationship between institutions and political culture represents a complex, interrelated dynamic. As Almond and Verba note political culture constitutes both an “independent and dependent variable, as causing structure and as being caused by it” (1989: 29). This is a very important departure point for understanding the relationship between state and society. Consequently, the creation and acceptance of the political institutions of a state reflect an ongoing process of negotiation and involvement from the members of the community. Thus, the values, norms and customs of the overall culture become integrated and incorporated in the construction and maintenance of civic institutions. In short, political culture is a determinant of political institutions. March and Olsen comment: “Why do political institutions differ from one country to another? Because the social and economic environments of the countries differ. How are differences in specific institutions to be explained? By pointing to specific differences in their environments” (1995: 40-41). Consequently, due to the importance of political culture even democracies differ from each as their respective institutions vary. Almond and Verba identify Great Britain and the United States as two healthy democracies that have forged durable yet separate political cultures. However, differing values, customs

and historical experiences have shaped distinct and divergent national governments and corresponding institutions. Almond and Verba comment:

In Britain, the persisting deferential and subject orientations foster the development of strong and effective governments and the maintenance of an efficient and independent administrative structure. Americans, on the other hand, tend to be uneasy with a powerful government – and their uneasiness is reflected in the institutional structures of government. (1963: 494)

While political culture shapes state institutions, state institutions also shape political culture. As Hadenius notes “Institutions exist, in other words, in a reciprocal relationship to their social surroundings” (2001: 82). This rationale implies that both political culture and institutions are not immutable and both thus can be transformed in a positive way. In other words if democratic institutions require a democratic political culture, the institutions themselves can assist in its creation. This dynamic occurs due to the potential power of institutions in society. In this regard, institutions represent “regulative frameworks” which rewards certain actions among the populace and condones others (Hadenius, 2001: 82).

This process of reward and punishment enables institutions to shape social behavior and exert control over society. Habits and patterns emerge through this continued interaction and eventually become self-sustaining. Indeed, those whose interests are served by state institutions seek to maintain an institutional status quo thus rendering these structures with “conservationist tendencies” (Hadenius, 2001: 83). Consequently, as Hadenius notes, once institutions are established they become “recalcitrant structures” and cast a durable imprint upon society (2001: 82). As a result, after a society lives for decades under a particular institutional setting, a political culture

develops that is accustomed to certain institutional rules and behavior (Colomer, 2001). Under these circumstances, it is therefore difficult to reorder society under an alternative institutional framework. In short, as Hadenius notes, institutions “can be hard to implant; and some are harder than others” (2001: 83). Eckstein reaffirms this notion stating that while people do adjust to new institutional arrangements “reorientation is always difficult” (Diamond, 1999: 165).

Thus, for established democracies, institutions themselves encourage pluralistic societal behavior (March & Olsen, 1995). However, the above stated dynamics can be problematic for emerging democracies as they transition from differing types of state systems. In other words, a nation’s political history, the type of state structure and its interrelationship with its citizen’s can thus foster a political culture that is antithetical to the creation of democracy. Diamond comments: “Inkeles portrayed democratic political culture as the inverse of an authoritarian personality syndrome, which includes faith in powerful leaders, hatred of outsiders and deviates, a sense of powerlessness and ineffectiveness, extreme cynicism, suspicion and distrust of others, and dogmatism” (Diamond, 1999: 167). Whitehead also comments on how certain authoritarian forms of government produce a populace marked by “incivility”: “In both post-authoritarian and post-communist settings, efforts at democratization are frequently overshadowed by antisocial forms of individualism and group organization that substitute for, or even seek to subvert, the sort of civil associationalism favored by theorists of ‘civil society’” (2002: 76). White comments on how the institutional legacy of authoritarian regime can affect a nascent democracy. Specifically he states that “popular disillusionment” of the prior government can impair the democratic transition process: “In such circumstances, it is

probably unrealistic to assume that populations will lower their expectations of the political system and be content with the specific gains, important though they may be, which derive from democratic guarantees and rights” (1998: 25).

Therefore the institutional history of a country or the type of state societal relationship can thus represent a key precondition that either supports or hinders the establishment of a democratic state. In order to further comprehend the relationship between a nation’s institutional history and its propensity for democracy, it is thus essential to review the types of states. Hadenius has developed a framework of analysis that orders states into four distinct types: the interactive state, the Leviathan state, the predatory state and the marginal state.

### **Types of States**

The interactive state theoretically represents the “institutional foundation” for the democratic form of governance (Hadenius, 2001: 150). As Hadenius states, the interactive model “has laid the institutional basis for the developments in the direction of broader popular rule” (2001: 150). While prior discussion in this chapter has already highlighted many aspects of the democratic model, it is necessary to further examine key elements for comparative purposes. The interactive model envisions a state with certain identifiable features such as a constitutional framework that establishes a system of rights, freedoms and a division of authority (Hadenius, 2001: 253). Its relationship with society is based on both a mutual independence and systematic interdependence or as previously discussed, autonomy and inclusion. First, both states and society are autonomous. Indeed, because states under this model adhere to a system of rules and an

institutional separation of powers, society and state are also both independent from one another, and share a “reciprocal autonomy” (Hadenius, 2001: 251). The state ensures the autonomy of society and maintains its own independence of action. In turn, society is conferred its own rights and responsibilities and is granted the freedom to develop its own “social and economic activities” creating the requisite environment for thriving “civic networks” and economic growth (Hadenius, 2001: 252).

Under this model, state and society also share an inclusive relationship. The interactive state’s code of rules and bureaucratic structure also ensures “great governance capacity” which strengthens its ties with society. Indeed, under the interactive construct, society and state are intermeshed in their affairs with a durable and interactive relationship. For instance, through national institutions like the military and the judiciary, the state regulates and controls societal violence. Through such “co-coordinating capacities” the state facilitates a healthy, cooperative exchange with society that strengthens both entities (Hadenius, 2001). A reciprocal exchange develops such as the mutual advantages accrued in the economic field. Thus, while society is acceded autonomy to achieve robust economic growth, in turn, it accepts the role of government as one that draws tax revenues and provides services. Access to a reliable and thriving revenue base, facilitates the expansion of government and the survival of the state.

In sum, the interactive state’s characteristics of autonomy and inclusion strengthen both society and state. As discussed, an independent civil society and economic conditions that create a vigorous middle class represent two essential preconditions for democracy. Therefore, a “virtuous circle” is created where democratic institutions foster the growth of civil society and socio-economic growth, which in turn



creates the necessary preconditions for democracy<sup>28</sup> (Friedman, 2005: 327). As Hadenius concludes, the interactive state's "relative strength" resides in its ability to "reinforce its own preconditions" (2001: 264).

The second type of state as proposed by Hadenius is the 'Leviathan' state. This type of state functions largely independent from society, yet, it is able to "penetrate and control" society through the development of a strong central government and the imposition of autocratic measures (Hadenius, 2001: 248). Such centralized authority requires the establishment of an effective military and police force, and often includes an intelligence gathering service. As mentioned society is controlled by the state and has no ability to form autonomous groups and thus does not achieve an "independent coordination capacity" (Hadenius, 2001: 248). Thus, any local organization that does occur is subject to state control. In short, under this model, "society is paralyzed" (Hadenius, 2001: 249).

A chief difficulty for the leaders of the Leviathan state, relates to the long-term maintenance of power, when the populace does not voluntarily support the regime. Compliance to the state is often sought through the promotion of a state ideology, the use

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<sup>28</sup> Democratic institutions foster the development and strength of civil society organizations in a number of ways. First, civil society can achieve the quality of autonomy through constitutional rights established and guaranteed by organs of the state (Hadenius, 2001). Without such constitutional provisions, civil society would lack the ability to organize a strong and independent front to counter the power of the state. Second, through access and involvement in national structures and participation in the political process, elements of civil society can achieve the quality of inclusion to the state that is an essential democratic requirement. As well, democracy facilitates economic growth in a number of ways. First, its rule-based system brings order and stability necessary for commercial relations and business investment. As Zakaria notes a vibrant capitalist economy could not thrive "without a government capable of protecting property rights and human rights, press freedoms and business contracts, antitrust laws and consumer demands" (Zakaria, 2004: 77). Second, its pluralistic society both creates an expansive employment pool as well as greater career options and choice for individuals. By maximizing society's human resources, democracies become more economically productive. Third, democracies develop "extensive" education systems that offer greater universal access (Friedman, 2005: 333). In short, "democratic institutions lead to greater educational attainment" which in turn strengthens economic growth and overall prosperity (Friedman, 2005: 335). Fourth, democracies produce the highest levels of domestic saving rates internationally. Higher savings yield greater investment flexibility, which in turn heightens economic development (Friedman, 2005).

of religion to justify state rule or the spoils of war through external conquest. The longevity of the Leviathan state is predicated on whether the emphasis of rule is based on bureaucratic capability or coercive power. As a regime becomes more repressive, the tools of coercion tend to extend to and weaken the government machinery. States that gain consent through fear become increasingly reliant on the projection of force and thus direct considerable government revenues toward military and police capabilities. Such expenditures deviate from efforts directed to provide services to the populace or expand the economy. Moreover, in the absence of foreign expansion, Leviathan states become reliant on domestic sources of income placing pressure on an already weakened tax base. As Hadenius writes, “an autocratic regime without access to necessary economic resources is a regime in deterioration (2001: 148).

The predatory state (the third type of state) is one that often follows a failed attempt to achieve the Leviathan model. This form of governance lacks the material, administrative and personal resources to dominate society impelling it to co-opt a segment of society through patronage and other forms of benefit. The predatory state becomes dependent on a societal faction for its existence and thus differs from the Leviathan construct that functions autonomously from society. Due to its dependence on a societal group, the predatory state is inherently weak. In turn, under the predatory construct, civil society lacks an independent base, is hierarchically ordered and controlled by an elite membership. Collectively, these features produce a weak civil society. Thus, the predatory state lacks a key democratic precondition of a strong and vibrant civil society.

The mutual interdependence between state and society under the predatory model differs in nature and scope from the state-societal linkages formed with the interactive state. In the interactive state, linkages with society are broad based and governed by a rule-based framework, which ensures both a division between the “private and public spheres” but also “institutionalized collaboration” (Hadenius, 2001: 251). Under the predatory construct, the linkages with society favor one particularistic grouping and the contact point is limited to the leadership of the patronage group. Because favoritism rather than rules govern state-society relations, the predatory model produces a form of “divide and rule” (Hadenius, 2001: 250). These practices encourage societal divisions and competition resulting in inter-group rivalries “based on clan and faction” (Hadenius, 2001: 250).

As mentioned, under the predatory model the dependency of the state on a societal group results in a weak state. Indeed, the state’s longevity is contingent on the power of the group it supports as well as the ability of the government to supply the spoils. It is the inherent challenges in maintaining this form of rule that fosters a weak governance structure. A “feudalization of the state” occurs as the government’s ability to act is increasingly dependent on the approval of the local leadership (Hadenius, 2001: 250). As Hadenius writes, the “state which seeks to rule by capturing elite actors in society becomes itself captured by these actors” (2001: 250). The ongoing transfer of power from the state to the societal faction if left unchecked can lead to the dissolution of the state.

The continued regression of state control leads to the development of the fourth model called the *marginal state*. The marginal state portrays an artificial presentation of

statehood that seeks to mask its effective loss of governance. Under this condition, the government is unable to penetrate the countryside and society functions largely independent of state involvement. With the absence of a viable central government, society orders itself in different sub-types. Three variants of this framework include: 1) a warlord system, 2) a system where society is controlled and dominated by the religious establishment, and 3) where authority and social control is managed by a number of local self-governments (Hadenius, 2001: 251). Unlike the interactive state, the marginal state model lacks the institutional interface between state and society. Consequently, society in the marginal state tends to form groupings that are “sharply divided and separate” and that fundamentally lack meaningful “coordination capacity” (Hadenius, 2001: 253).

A key trait that distinguishes the four types of states relates to the concept of legitimacy. Hadenius posits that a state can achieve legitimacy based on three features: First, whether the process of decision-making is either directly or indirectly inclusive of the populace or if the rules for making decisions are universally accepted; second, whether the decision maker is perceived as legitimate based on such traits as ability, charisma, tradition or cultural association; third, whether policy outcomes produce “accomplished results” in either “material or normative” forms and whether they accord with the interests of the common populace or just a grouping of the population (2001). Brautigam identifies state legitimacy through the nature of the legal system and the populace’s respect for and compliance to the framework of rules (Hadenius, 2001: 255).

It is societal legitimacy that endows the interactive state with strength and durability. The interactive model harnesses economic efficiencies and stability when “the citizens give their consent in some form and allow themselves to be governed”

(Hadenius, 2001: 255). Its adherence to governance centred on a framework of law fosters societal participation, underscores just and neutral actions and thus confers great “procedural legitimacy” (Hadenius, 2001: 259). Consequently, the state is seen as an impartial arbitrator of group conflict rather than an active participant that supports certain factions.

In contrast, the predatory state lacks procedural legitimacy for it is viewed as governance that shares a co-dependence with certain factions and thus does not represent all of society. Consequently, the institutions it develops are seen to serve the patronage group and thus cannot be trusted to procure fair, objective and equitable results. As Hadenius notes; “few phenomena would appear to be so demoralizing, and so detrimental to popular consent, as widespread corruption, nepotism, and public ‘kleptomania’” (2001: 259). The marginal state holds little influence in society and accrues largely symbolic legitimacy.

The Leviathan state can gain legitimacy through the propagation of the state ideology and through patronage to those who support the state and are co-opted by its benefits. However, propaganda and patronage are fleeting and superficial and can “boomerang on the regime” (Hadenius, 2001: 259). The Leviathan state can also achieve legitimacy through the creation of an efficient bureaucracy; however, the coercive nature of the regime limits the efficacy of the administrative structure (Mann, 1986). Thus, over the long term the despotic nature of the state limits its bureaucratic capacity and its ability to serve society thus limiting its overall legitimacy (Hadenius, 2001). Moreover, under the Leviathan model, the state authority is not subject to rules or limitations on its actions rendering it free to act in its own interest. With no safeguards in place, the despotic leader

can become a “parasitic power in society” which again, hinders the legitimacy of the Leviathan state (Hadenius, 2001: 262).

In sum, it is societal legitimacy that endows the interactive state with strength and durability. Indeed, of the four types of states identified by Hadenius the interactive state represents the only model that derives a meaningful element of legitimacy. Again, as Hadenius notes, the interactive state’s “relative strength” resides in its ability to “reinforce its own preconditions” (2001: 264). A core element precondition of democratic governance relates to the necessity that the citizens perceive the political system as legitimate. Indeed, as Diamond argues it is “a cardinal tenet of empirical democratic theory that stable democracy also requires a belief in the legitimacy of democracy” (1999: 168). The important point, however, relates to the fact that legitimacy is the product of an established interactive state or system of democratic governance. As a result, for countries experiencing a democracies transition, legitimacy towards the government is uncertain because it has yet to be gained through concrete practice. Consequently, as Huntington notes, emergent democracies face a central paradox because “lacking legitimacy, they cannot become effective; lacking effectiveness they cannot develop legitimacy” (1991: 258).

## CHAPTER TWO

### AFGHANISTAN: 500 B.C. TO 1929

#### Introduction

The political reconstruction of a post conflict society represents a complex and complicated undertaking. The success of establishing democratic political institutions in a country emerging from a 25 year period of warfare hinges on a multiplicity of intersecting factors and dynamics. In order to gain insight into the viability of such a vast and multifaceted endeavor, it is necessary to understand the country's susceptibility to pluralistic governance. A starting point to achieve this objective necessitates a historical review of the country's chief events<sup>29</sup>. As a result, Chapters Two and Three of this thesis is devoted exclusively to the history of Afghanistan. It is structured with a chronological approach that highlights the key events and leaders that have marked Afghan affairs throughout the past 2600 years. Attention will be drawn to the economic, political, social, cultural and geopolitical factors that have shaped the history of Afghanistan. More specifically, these two chapters will consider how the above mentioned factors have impacted the development of the Afghan state. Chapter Two will begin in the period of

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<sup>29</sup> Noah Feldman, an American constitutional expert involved in the post-war reconstruction of Iraq, highlights the necessity of gaining historical knowledge of the country undergoing nation-building efforts. Feldman was critical of fellow advisors who focused solely on previous US nation-building efforts in other regions of the world and argued that the particular conditions of each reconstruction case necessitated a relativist approach. Feldman comments: "My initial shock at my colleagues' reading matter was almost purely situational. Although it is possible to draw some more than superficial analogies between Ba' thism and National Socialism, Iraq was nothing like postwar Germany and Japan. Economic, political, social, and cultural conditions in Iraq after the U.S. invasion were distinct from any occupation situation that anyone had ever encountered, and if there was to be any hope of handling the situation effectively, the first step was to immerse oneself in what information was available about the country" (2004: 1).

500BC and will end with the 1929 overthrow of King Amanullah. The chapter breaks with the fall of Amanullah for two chief reasons. Amanullah's period represents a watershed era in Afghan history because the country achieved full independence during this period and also due to the failed attempt to engender broad scale socio-economic reform and its subsequent impact on Afghanistan's development.

### **Afghanistan's Early History: Invasions by Neighbouring Empires**

During the pre-Islamic period, three invading Empires dominated the affairs of Afghanistan; the Persian Achaemenid Empire (550-331 B.C.), the Graeco-Bactrian Kingdom and the Kushan Empire (Gregorian 1969: 13). The Achaemenid Empire under its first ruler, Cyrus the Great, conquered the territory from "Palestine to Afghanistan" within a twenty-five year period (Tanner, 2002:9). Cyrus led two known invasions into Afghanistan conquering the lands around Kandahar, and the Kabul River as well as Bactria in northern Afghanistan around 540 B.C. The Achaemenid Empire reached its height under Darius I (522-486 B.C.) that "expanded and consolidated "Persian rule creating "the greatest empire yet seen in the ancient world" (Dupree, 1973: 274; Tanner, 2002:10). In Afghanistan, Darius encountered fierce resistance by the local tribes prompting the establishment of fortified garrisons in order to hold Afghan territory. Furthermore, Darius structured present-day Afghanistan into seven distinct satrapies to facilitate administrative control of the conquered territory (Wilber, 1962: 11). However, under the Satrapy framework, Afghan tribal leaders maintained great autonomy over local affairs (Dupree, 1973:274). The Achaemenid Empire began to decline after death of



Darius in 486 BCE due to internal rivalries, a succession of weak leadership, and a series of military losses in Egypt, Babylonia and Greece.

The downfall of the Achaemenid Empire was determined when Alexander the Great destroyed the Persian army at the Battle of Gaugamela in 331 B.C. From 330-327 B.C., Alexander led his Macedonian Army east through present day Afghanistan and parts of the Central Asian States. In Afghanistan, Alexander experienced continued unrest from the tribal peoples and expended great resources in his efforts to contain the revolts. As Griffiths notes, Alexander “conquered but could not subdue” the peoples of present day Afghanistan (1967:9). Dupree comments: “Alexander failed to realize that he was fighting a nationalist war, not simply destroying an empire. The tribal kingdoms, no longer allies of the defunct Achaemenids, fought to protect their own form of mountain independence and were an important factor which eventually forced Alexander to retreat to Babylon” (1973: 276). Although Alexander’s conquest of Afghanistan was short-lived, the influence of his invasion endured. Alexander established fortified cities at strategic locations including sites near present-day Herat, Kandahar, and Bagram (Dupree, 1973). These outposts were built to secure the conquered territory as Alexander’s invasion force continued east into the Indian subcontinent. Griffiths states that in Afghanistan today the “lay-out of villages and towns” follow the Greek pattern (1967:9). On a broader level, Alexander introduced the Hellenistic culture to the region and as Tanner observes, “Greek values would hold sway for hundreds of years” (2002: 54).

After Alexander's death in 323 B.C., his empire was fragmented into separate kingdoms. The Eastern territories of the Empire, including present-day Afghanistan, fell under the control of Alexander's cavalry commander, Seleucus, who founded the

Seleucid dynasty. In 305 B.C., Seleucus was attacked and defeated in southern Afghanistan by Indian forces under the command of Chandragupta Maurya (Tanner, 2002). Thus, the peoples of Afghanistan found themselves positioned within two competing empires –the Greek Seleucids and the Indian Mauryans. The Mauryan Empire gradually extended north, overtaking Kandahar, Ghazni and Kabul and the southern reaches of the Hindu Kush. Chandragupta Maurya's grandson Ashoka, assumed the leadership of the Mauryan Empire in 268 B.C. and introduced Buddhism throughout his kingdom. The Mauryan Empire fell into decline after Ashoka's death in 232 B.C.

Within the Seleucid Empire, an autonomous Greek-led state was established in Bactria around 250 B.C. In an 80-year period, the Graeco-Bactrian Empire expanded to include parts of present-day Turkmenistan, all of Afghanistan and the lands east to the Ganges (Tanner, 2002). After almost three centuries of rule, the Graeco-Bactrian kingdom collapsed from internal rivalry and from invading nomadic tribes led by the Scythians and the Parthians. The Scythian invasion of 130 B.C. represents the first of many Central Asian nomadic attacks that would plague the sedentary communities of present-day Afghanistan. After nearly a century of rule, the Scythians were confronted by a related group of Steppe warriors known as the Parthians. The Parthians and the Scythians collectively ruled the Afghan tribes until 75 A.D. when the invading Kushans overthrew them.

The Kushans were a Caucasoid, Indo-European group who migrated south due to tribal wars originating in China (Dupree, 1973). The Kushans established an empire that endured for almost four hundred years and ranged from the mouth of the Indus River, east to the Ganges, west into present day Iran and north into the Chinese provinces near

Tibet. The Kushans did not impose “rigid cultural ideals” upon the conquered tribal peoples and were “tolerant of local customs and religion” (Tanner, 2002: 65). However, during this period the spoken language of the Afghan people shifted from Greek to an Iranian dialect (Wilber, 1962). Under their rule, the Kushans engendered a flourishing arts culture, re-introduced Buddhist thought to the region and fostered the development of a great trade exchange between China and Rome. As Tanner notes: “the Kushans opened the doors from their central geographic position to the wider world, serving as an eager conduit between East and West. At the height of the Kushan Empire, Afghanistan stood at the hub of the great civilizations of the Old World – Persian, Indian, Chinese, and Graeco-Roman” (2002: 68).

In the third century A.D., the Kushan Empire broke into semi-autonomous states and became vulnerable to the growing power of the Persian Sassanians to the west and the Indian Guptas to the east. Led by Ardashir I, the Sassanian tribes swept the Parthians from power in Persia, attacked the Romans to the West and conquered the Kushan states from Afghanistan to the Punjab (Dupree, 1973). The Sassanids exercised nominal control over their newly conquered states allowing the Kushan and tribal leaders great autonomy over local affairs.

The loose Sassanid -Kushan confederation could not counter the threat posed by a new group of mounted warriors from the north that attacked in the mid-fifth century A.D. The Central Asian Hephthalites or White Huns conquered over thirty independent states to create an Empire that would last over one hundred years. In Afghanistan, the Hephthalites brought widespread destruction and engaged in ongoing clashes with the overthrown Sassanids. Gregorian comments that in some instances the massacres were so

complete that “cities remained depopulated for centuries” (1969: 13). While in power the Hephthalites maintained their nomadic lifestyle forestalling the development of settled communities. Despite their destructive rule, the Hephthalites respected local religions such as the Buddhist sect that continued to develop in the central highlands. The Sassanians united with a Western Turkish group and overthrew the Hephthalites in 565 A.D. As Wilber notes, “the Hephthalite element, however did not disappear without leaving its traces in the ethnic composition of modern Afghanistan in the Haytals of Badakhshan” (1962:13). During the seventh century A.D., the Sassanid Empire finally succumbed to attacks by Muslim Arab forces from the west and Indian forces from the east. The Indian Hindu-Shahi held Kabul while the Muslim Arabs conquered Kandahar and central Afghanistan.

During the eighth century, the Abbasid Caliphs, the successors to Mohammed, gained ascendancy throughout the region from their center in Baghdad. During the peaceful rule of the Abbasids, a rich Persian-Sunni Islamic culture began to develop in present day Afghanistan and Central Asia. In the ninth century, Abbasid power declined fostering the emergence of independent Muslim kingdoms from the “Mediterranean to Central Asia” (Dupree, 1973: 313). Chief among these new states was the Samanid Dynasty, led by Turkish –speaking nomads. The Saminids expanded their kingdom from their capital of Bokhara encompassing the lands from India to Baghdad. In 977, a Turkish slave named Alptigin rebelled against Saminid rule and established a powerful following in Ghazni.

The Turkic Ghaznavids eventually overthrew the Saminid Dynasty and under their third king Mahmud, they built a great empire that included all of Afghanistan, most

of the Iranian plateau and parts of India. Through their conquest of India, the Ghaznavids acquired great wealth, which fostered the rise of Ghazni as an important political, economic and cultural center. Of greater significance, the Ghaznavids were fierce proponents of Islam and their rise to power created the first “Muslim Empire” in the region (Wilber, 1962:13). Indeed, the introduction of Islam to Afghanistan served as a unifying force to a region known for its political, ethnic and cultural divisiveness (Gregorian, 1969). The religious foundations established by the Ghaznavids ensured the dominance of the Sunni faith over Shia in Afghanistan and also marked the end of the Hindu presence. Moreover, as Gregorian argues, Islam also contributed to the rise of “Afghan military feudalism” for the Ghaznavids enlisted the Afghan tribes in their foreign conquests to expand the borders of the Muslim world, “Dar-ul-Islam“(1969:15).

The Ghaznavid Empire fell into decline after the death of Mahmud in 1030 and was overthrown by the Seljuk Turks and an indigenous tribe called the Ghurids. The Seljuk Turks overtook lands in northern Afghanistan and central and western Iran and continued the development of military feudalism under their rule (Dupree, 1973). Specifically, the Seljuks formalized the Afghan feudal system with a legal structure that empowered military fiefs. Under the new system, feudal lords who held military fiefs received considerable sums from royal revenues as opposed to a percentage of taxes collected locally. This greatly enhanced the power of Afghan tribal leaders with military capabilities or those that presided over strategically important areas (Gregorian, 1969). Thus, under the Seljuks, the power of the central authority declined with the growth of the feudal system and the ascendancy of regional military chiefs.

When the Ghurids destroyed Ghazni in 1149 and captured Lahore in 1186, the Ghaznavid Empire formally collapsed. The Ghurids were an Afghan tribe from the "remote valleys of the Hindu Kush" (Tanner, 2002:76) and have been characterized as the "first Afghan dynasty"(Gregorian, 1969:15). From their center near Herat, the Ghurids overran most of Afghanistan, eastern Iran and much of today's Pakistan (Dupree, 1973). The Ghurids maintained the feudal practices employed by the Seljuks and continued to reward the Afghan chieftains for military services (Gregorian, 1969). The Ghurid dynasty was short-lived for between 1205 and 1215 Khwarezm Turks attacked the Ghors and conquered Afghanistan (Tanner, 2002).

In the thirteenth century, the invading armies of Genghis Khan's Mongol Horde overwhelmed Central Asia and profoundly transformed the region with its large-scale devastation. Indeed, Dupree characterizes the Mongol invaders as the "atomic bomb of the day" (1973:316). In 1221, the Mongols swept through Afghanistan leaving "a dismal path of ruin that is visible to this day" (Tanner, 2002:81). The Mongols incorporated Afghanistan into an empire that extended from the "China Sea to the Caspian Sea"(Dupree, 1973:316). After Genghis Khans death in 1227, the Mongol Empire eventually broke into four Khanates and was ruled by the descendents of the Tartar leader until the arrival of Tamerlane in the late fourteenth century.

Tamerlane was a Mongol-Turkic steppe warrior who established an empire that encompassed the territory between India and Turkey. Like Genghis Khan's Mongol Hordes, Tamerlane's army was a ruthless force known for its cruelty and mass destruction. In Afghanistan, Tamerlane inflicted widespread carnage and devastation during a campaign south of Herat in 1383. Tamerlane also retarded the cultural growth

of his conquered lands by transferring the libraries, scholars, artisans and craftsman to the Timurid capital at Samarkand (Gregorian, 1969).

After Tamerlane's death, the Timurid Empire underwent a cultural rebirth and political decline. In Afghanistan, the city of Herat became a center of cultural renewal during this brief period known as the "Timurid Renaissance" (Gregorian, 1969). Tamerlane's successors, however, did not embark in foreign conquests and the Timurid Empire was weakened by a series of internal power struggles.

In the early sixteenth century, an Uzbek nomadic group founded by Muhammad Shaybani overthrew the Timurids. The Shaybani Uzbeks represented the last of the nomadic warriors that occupied the lands of northern Afghanistan. During their rule of over one hundred years, the Uzbeks demanded strict adherence to the Sunni faith and were highly intolerant of other religious beliefs (Gregorian, 1969).

The consolidation of the Shaybani dynasty paralleled the ascendancy of two rival empires that would exercise a central role in the history of Afghanistan: the Indian Moghul Empire and the Persian Safavid Empire. Babur, a descendent of Tamerlane and Genghis Khan, created the Moghul Empire. In 1504, the Uzbeks forced Babur out of Samarkand and after several failed efforts to regain the Timurid territory, Babur captured Kabul (Dupree, 1973). In 1526, Babur invaded India where he established an empire that endured until 1707.

The Safavid Empire was a Shia Muslim dynasty that held the lands of Persia and western Afghanistan for over two centuries. Consequently, in the sixteenth century, three dynasties vied for control of Afghanistan: the Moghuls in the east and south, the Safavids in the west and the Uzbeks in the north. The Moghul and Safavid rulers both recognized

the strategic importance of Kabul and Kandahar as the two chief approaches to India and thus the two empires vied for control of these two cities. In the course of this struggle the occupation of Kandahar traded several times between the Persian and Moghul empires. Religion also featured as a prominent source of discord between the competing dynasties. According to Gregorian, the Safavid advocacy of Shia Islam "formalized, intensified and politicized the Sunni-Shia doctrinal and regional schism within the Islamic world" (1969:21). Specifically, hostilities between the Shia Safavids and the Shaybani Uzbeks were aggravated by religious differences as the two groups fought for control of western Afghanistan: "Persecutions were common, for, in the ensuing politico-religious struggle, each religious group under the political jurisdiction of an opposing power was treated as an actual or potential enemy" (Gregorian, 1969:21).

The clash between the three empires for the possession of Afghanistan had a profound impact on the Afghan people and the social, economic and political development of the country. The Afghans endured loss of life, religious maltreatment, and dislocation from their homes and villages. Moreover, the continued instability coupled with the development of sea routes between Europe and the East, produced economic hardship through a reduction in land borne trade. The decline in overland trade through Afghanistan weakened the growth of the merchant community and hastened the decline of the urban centers. Increasingly, control over the commercial routes fell to local tribes who exacted tributes and taxes for continued passage. Collectively, these trends reinforced the feudal structure of Afghanistan society and heightened the power of tribal leaders. Gregorian states that the rise of the feudal lords represented a "formidable



obstacle to urban attempts at self-regulation and self-government, and a serious impediment to the socioeconomic development of Afghanistan" (1969:21).

### **The Ascendancy of the Durrani Empire and the Birth of the Afghan Nation**

The ascendancy of Afghan tribal power in the sixteenth and seventeenth century can also be attributed to two other factors; the proliferation of firearms and the increased ability of the local factions to exploit the dynastic overlords. The introduction and diffusion of firearms among the Afghan tribes fundamentally recast the balance of military capabilities between local forces and invading armies. Indeed, Dupree and Tanner argue that the use of firearms by Afghan tribes was the chief factor that halted the waves of "cavalry-oriented, steppe-based" warriors from invading Afghanistan (Dupree, 1973: 319; Tanner, 2002). The combination of modern weapons and the combat abilities of the Afghan people produced the "most formidable warrior class in the region" (Tanner, 2002:110). Consequently, the three occupying empires were unable to completely subdue the fractious tribal groups. Moreover, the Afghans became highly adept at manipulating the ruling powers and engaged in a sophisticated practice of extorting benefits from all parties. As Wilber notes, the shrewd tribal leaders mastered the ability to "play off one suzerain power against the other" (1962:17). By the end of the seventeenth century most Afghan tribes had attained a quasi-independent status (Gregorian, 1969).

Chief among the ascendant tribes were two sub groups of the Pashtuns known as the Abdalis and the Ghilzais. The Abdalis fell within the domain of the Persian Safavids and inhabited the lands of western Afghanistan from Kandahar to Herat. The Ghilzais lived in Moghul territory of eastern Afghanistan near the base of the Suleiman Mountains

and from Kabul south to Ghazni. Both Pashtun tribes favored the rule of the Persians over the Moghuls for even though the Safavids were adherents of Shia Islam, they were tolerant of the Afghan Sunnis (Tanner, 2002). As well, many Afghan tribes were highly influenced by the Persian culture, some spoke Persian Dari instead of Pashtun and many fought for the Persian army. However, the benevolent rule of the Persians changed under the rule of Sultan Husain who sought to convert the peoples of his empire to Shiism. In Kandahar, a group of Ghilzais tribesman under the direction of Mir Wais rebelled against the harsh rule of the Persian Governor-General. The revolt was suppressed and Mir Wais was captured and transferred to the Persian capital at Isfahan. While in captivity, Mir Wais observed the weakened state of the Persian court, which indicated the fragility of the empire. Mir Wais secured his release and in 1709, his Ghilzais forces captured and destroyed the Persian stronghold at Kandahar (Tanner, 2002). The Ghilzais victory stimulated ideas of independence among other Afghan tribes and in 1716 Abdali forces overthrew the Persians at Herat (Gregorian, 1969). As Tanner notes the Safavids discovered "the age-old lesson that entering Afghanistan was a simple task; holding it was quite another" (2002:115).

The Ghilzais achieved their greatest success under the leadership of Mir Wais's son, Mahmud. In 1722, Mahmud attacked the Persians, captured Isfahan and conquered south and central Persia (Wilber, 1962). The Ghilzais, however, failed to unify the disparate Afghan tribes and Mahmud's short rule was noted principally for its instability and its excessive cruelty. After Mahmud's death the Persians rallied under Nadir Shah Afshar and in 1729 overthrew the Ghilzais, seized Herat from the Abdalis and reclaimed the Safavid Empire. Known as the "Persian Napoleon," Nadir Shah occupied Kandahar

and Kabul in 1739, and continued on to India where he defeated the Moghul army and sacked Delhi. Under Nadir Shah's rule, the Persians reestablished feudal control over the Afghan tribes. In this capacity, Nadir Shah elevated the role and power of the Abdalis over the Ghilzais. Abdalis tribesmen were incorporated into the Persian army and they played a vital role in the suppression of Ghilzais forces. As compensation for service, Abdalis chieftains were often rewarded Ghilzais territory. For instance, in return for participating in the Persian attack on Kandahar, the Abdalis received lands held by the Hotakis clan of the Ghilzais (Gregorian, 1969: 45). The importance of the Abdalis preeminence during this period cannot be overstated for it precipitated the establishment of an Abdalis empire that would endure until 1973.

The collapse of the Persian Empire and the rise of an indigenous Abdalis kingdom occurred after the assassination of Nadir Shah in 1747. After Nadir Shah's death, the Abdalis assembled a Jirga or council near Kandahar to select a tribal leader. Two groups of the Abdalis, each forwarded their own claimant: Ahmad Shah from the Saddozai clan of the Popalzai subtribe and Hajji Jamal Khan from the Mohammadzai clan of the Barakzai subtribe (Dupree, 1973:332). Although the Saddozai were a relatively weak clan, Ahmad Shah emerged as the "paramount khan" for a variety of reasons. He was a charismatic individual and an esteemed warrior who controlled a force of 4000 experienced soldiers. As well, Ahmad Shah was a direct descendant of Saddo, the founder of the Saddozai clan and he held riches obtained from Nadir Shah. The newly crowned leader designated himself Ahmad Shah, *Durr-i-Durrani* (Pearl of Pearls) and thereafter the Abdali Pashtuns were called Durrani (Dupree, 1973).

Ahmad Shah Durrani began to establish what Dupree terms as the "greatest Muslim Empire in the second half of the eighteenth century" next to the Ottoman Turks (Dupree, 1973: 334). He consolidated his power in Afghanistan by suppressing Ghilzais resistance and seizing the cities of Ghazni, and Kabul. After 1749, Durrani forces conquered the Moghul lands west of the Indus, the city of Herat, and the capital of Persia at Mashhad as well as northern Afghanistan. In 1752, Ahmad returned to India conquered Kashmir and the cities of Lahore and Multan. Five years later he occupied Delhi and the Moghul leadership granted Afghan control over Kashmir, Punjab and Sind (Dupree, 1973).

The decline of the Mughul Empire fostered the rise of a Hindu dynasty known as the Marathas. In 1761, Ahmad checked the ascendant Marathas in a battlefield victory at Panipat. Ahmad Shah's conquest of the Marathas marked the culmination of Durrani power. Indeed, as Tanner notes, by 1762 the Durrani kingdom included "all of modern Afghanistan plus Iran's Khorasan, nearly all of modern Pakistan, part of India and the province of Kashmir" (2002: 121). From 1762 to Ahmad's death in 1772, the Durrani Empire lost the Punjab after continuous fighting with the Sikhs and his territory in northern Afghanistan receded to the boundary of the Amu Darya River (Dupree, 1973).

Sirdar Iqbal Ali Shah writes that Ahmad Shah promoted Afghanistan to a "national existence" (1938: 36) and his 1747 ascendancy is characterized as the "birth of the Afghan nation" (Tanner, 2002: 122). Tanner points out that that the rule of Ahmad Shah marked a historical transition where Afghanistan shifted from a "boundary between other empires" into an "independent political entity" (2002: 122). Rasanayagam notes that Ahmad Shah initiated "the process" that inaugurated the "subsequent political history

of Afghanistan" (2003: xv). However, both Tanner and Rasanayagam acknowledge that Ahmad Shah's kingdom was more comparable to an association of tribes dominated by one ethnic group rather than the structure of a modern state.

The Durrani regime represented a "tribal-feudal" order where Ahmad Shah's power stemmed from the support of Afghan chieftains and religious leaders. Specifically, the king was beholden to a council of nine tribal leaders who exercised considerable authority over the administration of the new government "on all major matters of state" (Fraser-Tytler, 1953:65). Moreover, as Fraser-Tytler states, the Afghan people granted "allegiance to local chieftains rather than the state" (1953:65). Thus, various tribes demanded the collection of state revenues through local chieftains rather than a central government bureau (Gregorian, 1969: 48). Central authority was also diminished by the powerful Muslim religious establishment that was financially independent, and that exercised control over educational institutions, moral codes of conduct and all legal matters (Gregorian, 1969: 48). Ahmad Shah Durrani was thus faced with a central paradox that would plague future governments in Afghanistan: the central authority required the support of the tribal leaders to maintain power, however, the expansion of central rule necessitated the suppression of tribal power. Ahmad opted to share power with the tribal leaders through his rule of "feudal federalism" (Griffiths, 1967: 14).

Several academics have also noted that the new Afghan government was not a truly "national" administration because its domination by one ethnic group rendered it unrepresentative of the Afghan population. More specifically, Ahmad Shah's dynasty not only marked the ascent of the Pashtun tribes, it also consolidated the power and authority of the Durrani in Afghanistan. Gregorian states that Ahmad's survival as the Afghan

king was contingent on "the good will and military strength" of the "Durrani *sardars*" (1969: 46). Consequently, Ahmad Shah conferred the greatest proportion of territorial patronage and political appointments to the Durrani leaders. The Durrani tribe also benefited from privileged tax arrangements and fewer military obligations than the members of other Afghan tribes. For instance, Gregorian writes that the "non-Durrani tribes" were granted an "insignificant" amount of landholdings but were required to supply "50 to 60 per cent more soldiers than the Durranis" (1969: 46). The outcome of this policy was a heightened sense of ethnic awareness and the establishment of tribal hierarchies with the Durranis positioned at the top.

The unity that did exist among the disparate Afghan tribes can be attributed to two principle factors: the personal ability and charisma of Ahmad Shah Durrani and the sense of cohesion gained through foreign conquest. Ahmad Shah was a "great leader" and a "born administrator" who was able to successfully maintain his position through patronage, diplomacy and able management (Fraser-Tytler, 1953:64-65). As Caroe writes, Ahmad Shah was a "natural genius" that was "adept in the difficult art of the management of men and tribes" (1954:259). Dupree states that Ahmad "ruled wisely" by creating a weak central administration and sharing power with the Afghan chiefs (1973:340). Griffiths adds that unity among the Afghans could only be realized through Ahmad Shah's "loosely-knit system" of rule where the central government ceded control to the tribal chiefs in exchange for military service (1967: 14). Ahmad Shah was also able to unify the Afghan tribes through an ongoing series of foreign invasions. For the first time in Afghan history, Pashtun tribes were integrated into a national army, which coalesced the tribal factions into one fighting force. Thus, the often combative tribes

directed their hostile activities outward to foreign adversaries and away from each other (Gregorian, 1969). Moreover, successful foreign expeditions strengthened the allegiance of the Afghan troops to the Monarchy and the Afghan nation. Mountstuart Elphinstone comments on this phenomenon:

For the consolidation of his power at home he relied in great measure on the effects of his foreign wars. If these were successful, his victories would raise his reputation, and his conquests would supply him with the means of maintaining an army, and of attaching the Afghan chiefs by favours and rewards; the hopes of plunder would induce many tribes to join him, whom he could not easily have compelled to submit; by carrying the great men with his army he would be able to prevent their increasing, or even preserving, their influence in their tribes; and the habits of military obedience would prepare them for a cheerful submission to his government at home; the troops also, having the King constantly before their eyes, and witnessing the submission of their hereditary chiefs, would learn to regard him as the head of the nation; and he might hope, as the event proved, that his popular manners, and the courage, activity, vigilance and military virtues which he possessed, would impress all ranks with respect, and strongly attach his soldiers to his person. (1992: 283)

Any sense of national cohesion attained under the rule of Ahmad Shah dissipated after his death in 1772. As Dupree notes, Ahmad Shah "fused but left fission in his wake" (1973:340). The breakdown of tribal unity following Ahmad's death highlights the institutional weakness of the Afghan feudal structure. Specifically, it reveals that the continued loyalties of the tribes to the central authority hinged on the personal dynamism and leadership of the monarch. Following the reign of Ahmad Shah, Afghanistan was led by a succession of leaders who ruled "neither wisely nor well" (Dupree, 1973:340).

Ahmad Shah chose his second son Timur to inherit the Afghan crown. However, like many tribal-feudal societies, the succession of a new leader proved to be divisive. The Saddozai leadership in Kandahar contested Ahmad Shah's choice preferring instead

Timur's elder brother Suleman. Timur drove Suleman from Kandahar, executed Prime Minister Shah Wali Khan and was designated "king of the Afghans" (Singh, 1959: 387). Timur no longer trusted his own Saddozai clan, and he transferred the government capital from Kandahar to Kabul. These actions inaugurated a rift between Timur and the Pashtuns that would continue to plague his twenty-year reign and undermine his tribal support. The Pashtuns also distrusted Timur as he was born in Persia, and was highly influenced by Persian customs and culture. For instance, he spoke a Persian dialect instead of Pashtu, he appointed Persian scribes to his ministry and he created an elite personal guard known as *ghulamshahs* from Persian and Tajic soldiers. He also formed a 12,000-man cavalry unit comprised from Persian Shia *Qizil-Bash* troops and other non-Pashtuns (Gregorian, 1969). Through such measures, Timur challenged the power of the Durrani chiefs and as Fraser-Tytler observed, "there is no surer way to breed distrust" among the Afghan tribes than to "ignore their leaders and cast doubts on their loyalty and good faith" (Fraser-Tytler, 1953:66). In response, some leading Durrani formed an alliance with the Ghilzai in opposition to Timur's rule. Pashtun discontent increased, which stimulated internal revolts in Sind, Balkh, Sistan, Khurasan and Kashmir (Dupree, 1973).

The Durrani Kingdom continued to degenerate after Timur's death in 1793 due to internecine conflicts and foreign incursion. Afghanistan's deficient laws of succession contributed to an internal struggle among Timur's many heirs as they vied for control of the monarchy. The struggle for Afghan throne grew into a larger tribal clash as the Durrani sub-tribes sought to leverage their position through a preferred claimant. Out of Timur's twenty-three sons, Zaman, Mahmud, and Humayan emerged as the chief



competitors (Fraser-Tytler, 1953:66). With the support of the powerful Barakzai tribe, Zaman became the new Durrani leader. However, Zaman's hold over power remained tenuous due to a failed invasion of India and the continued challenge posed by his brothers. In a move that secured his own downfall, Zaman murdered the Mohammadzai tribal chief Payinda Khan in an effort to consolidate Sadozai power (Dupree, 1973). Payinda's son Fateh Khan sought revenge and helped Mahmud Shah depose his brother Zaman and seize the throne (Gregorian, 1969). As Gregorian states with such continued internal instability, Afghanistan "entered the nineteenth century a politically disunited, ethnically and religiously heterogeneous, tribal-feudal state" (1969: 51).

Mahmud ruled ineffectively and in 1803 Shuja Mirza, the full brother of Zaman Shah, overturned him. Shah Shuja held power until 1809 when Mahmud, backed by the Barakzais, reclaimed the leadership of Afghanistan. In 1818, Mahmud blinded then murdered his principle advisor Fateh Khan. Again, a Sadozai King had killed a Mohammadzai chief. This action initiated a "blood feud" between the royal Sadozai clan and the Mohammadzais and also created a larger division between the Popalzai and Barakzai sub-tribes (Gregorian, 1969: 51). The Barakzai tribesmen drove Mahmud from Kabul, which marked the demise of the Sadozai monarchy and the ascendancy of the Barakzais.

At first, the Barakzais fared no better than the Sadozais in producing a leader to unite the Afghan tribes. Between 1818 and 1826, the sons of Payinda Khan fought each other for control of the Durrani Empire and Afghanistan fragmented into a series of competing fiefdoms ruled by Barakzais chiefs. Afghanistan's internal discord was accompanied by dissolution of the Empire's non-Durrani holdings such as Sind,

Baluchistan and parts of northern Afghanistan. As well, the Amir of Bokhara gained Balkh and the Sikhs under Ranjit Singh overtook the Punjab and Kashmir (Rasanayagam, 2003).

### **The Reign of Dost Mohammad**

In 1826, Dost Mohammad, the youngest son of Payinda Khan seized Kabul and declared himself Amir. Although he laid claim to the Durrani Empire, Dost Mohammad only held authority over Kabul and Ghazni (Dupree, 1973). From his base in Kabul, Dost Mohammad inaugurated a series of measures to consolidate power and reclaim the lost empire. For instance, he established a national army of 12,000 soldiers, he rewarded his fellow Barakzai tribesmen with key government positions and he declared a jihad against the rival Sikhs to unite the Afghan Muslims. Dost Mohammad also instituted certain economic reforms to increase government revenues. These include a centrally administered system to collect customs duties, efforts to collect back-taxes from non-Durrani tribes as well as new measures designed to standardize the rate of taxation (Gregorian, 1969). Gregorian notes that the Amir imposed the heaviest tax burden upon the urban centers and the merchant class because a change in the "basic feudal structure" would result in a tribal revolt (1969:80). Dost Mohammad's program of institutional reforms and his attempts to centralize authority in Afghanistan were interrupted by international events that would overwhelm the region.

A common theme that transects Afghanistan history relates to the importance of external actors on the nation's social, political and economic development. The decline of the Durrani Empire after the death of Ahmad Shah paralleled the rise of European

imperialism and its accompanying global expansion. By the time of Dost Mohammad's reign, the European powers began to penetrate Central Asia and profoundly reshape the region's geopolitical situation. The main drama centred on the rivalry between the British and the Russian empires whose spheres of interest moved inexorably closer to each other. Afghanistan became the buffer zone between the competing empires and thus figured prominently in this confrontation famously characterized by Kipling as the 'Great Game.'

When Dost Mohammad became Amir of Afghanistan in 1826, the British Empire was the predominant world power. Great Britain possessed a vast holding of colonial territories and an unmatched naval capability with a global reach<sup>30</sup>. After the defeat of Napoleon in 1815, Britain could pursue its international aims unencumbered by France<sup>31</sup> (Tanner, 2002). The British directed most of their energies in Asia with the goal of strengthening its hold over the Indian subcontinent. Historically, Britain's involvement in India had been marked by an incremental expansion of commitment and responsibility leading ultimately to the active control of the country. Indeed, Britain's initial interests in India were confined to the commercial operations of the East India Company.

Since its inception in 1599, the East India Company expanded from a private entity into an "instrument of supremacy" (Morris, 1998:20). As the company developed, its requirements for security increased which facilitated a growing military presence and greater political control (Tanner, 2002). As Niall Ferguson wrote: "What had begun as a business proposition had now become a matter of government" (2003): 44). Gradually

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<sup>30</sup> As Ferguson writes, by 1815, Britain "had acquired the largest empire the world had ever seen, encompassing forty-three colonies in five continents" (Ferguson, 2003:56).

<sup>31</sup> The defeat of Napoleon not only freed considerable British resources from the European theatre, it also removed France as an imperial contender in Asia. Gregorian notes that in 1798, Napoleons forces attacked Egypt for three principle reasons; to build a canal at Suez; to gain French control of the Red Sea and the maritime route to India; and to challenge and overturn British authority in India. Napoleon had also developed operational plans with Paul I of Russia for a joint French – Russian invasion of India through Afghanistan (Gregorian, 1969:91).

British interests and authority spread from south and central India into the northern fringe of the country. An agreement with the Sikh leader Ranjit Singh formalized the northern boundary of British control at the juncture of Sikh lands (Tanner, 2002). By 1837, most of India "was under British suzerainty" complete with a Governor General, civil administration, the rule of law and over 50,000 soldiers (Morris, 1998:27). The importance of India to Britain cannot be understated<sup>32</sup>. As Ferguson notes, Britain viewed India as "more than the 'jewel in the crown' it also represented the "whole diamond mine" (Ferguson, 2003: 39).

India was not only Britain's most prized territory; it was also perceived as the most vulnerable (Morris, 1998). While Britain's maritime superiority ensured the security of the British Isles and most of its colonies abroad, the defence of India required more than a naval presence. Thus, Britain employed the greatest percentage of its "offensive military capability" to defend India's 2000-mile "land frontier" (Ferguson, 2003: 173; Morris, 1998:90). Britain viewed north-west India as particularly susceptible to Russia whose own imperial expansion equaled that of the British.

In the four centuries after 1500, Fridtjof Nansen estimated that the Russian Empire increased at a rate of fifty-five miles a day, approximating a yearly average of 20,000 square miles (Meyer, Brysac, 1999:113). The historical quest for warm-water ports either in the Persian Gulf or the Indian Ocean, the desire to protect and extend its southern trade network and the imperial goal of maintaining regional hegemony along its south-eastern frontier served as a chief strategic motives propelling Russian interest in Central Asia (Dupree, 1973, Tanner, 2002). The continued decline of the Ottoman

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<sup>32</sup> India served as an imperial base, which Britain used to rule its eastern colonies, it was a source of significant British commercial trade and investment and it represented an important symbol of British power and imperial pride (Judd, 1996; Ferguson, 2003; Morris, 1998).

Empire facilitated Russia's strategic designs. Indeed, growing nationalist sentiments among the Sultan's Christian populace engendered dissatisfaction with Ottoman rule and thus created a climate that "invited outside intervention" (Rasanayagam, 2003: 4). In the zero sum game of imperial strategy, the conquests of the Russian Empire innately threatened the security of the British Empire. Consequently, by the 1830s, although the Russian frontier was still a considerable distance from Afghanistan, its advance through the Caucasus<sup>33</sup> and improved relations with Persia heightened British concern (Fraser-Tytler, 1953).

In response to Russia's expansion, British authorities considered two broad policy options for the defence of India. The first strategy, termed the "forward line" policy or "Forward Policy", conceptualized Afghanistan as the outward boundary of India. Consequently, any involvement in Afghan affairs by European powers would be deemed hostile to Britain. This policy also considered Persia within the sphere of British interests and thus countenanced efforts including military intervention to preserve its territorial independence.

The second strategy, called the "stationary policy," advocated the establishment of British defensive lines within India. According to its advocates, this stratagem would strengthen the British colony by centering activities within India and would preclude any imprudent use of British resources in Afghanistan or Persia (Gregorian, 1969).

Dupree argues that Britain's Afghan policy wavered between the "two extreme" choices of annexation or non-interference and "ended by adopting neither" (1973: 405). In their consideration of these divergent strategies, British policy-makers assessed the

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<sup>33</sup> As Rasanayagam notes, from 1800 to 1833, Russia conquered the territory "between the Black Sea and the Caspian and began in 1834 to penetrate the Central Asian steppes" (2003: xvii). Russia acquired the south Caucasus from Persia through the Treaty of Turkmenchay in 1837.

nature and scope of Afghan power and its impact on Britain's interests. For instance, the establishment of a strong Afghan state could deter Russian advances, however, it could also destabilize the region by threatening Persia, the Sikhs and British India. As Gregorian states, the British developed a policy to "keep the Afghans weak and divided" in order to achieve regional equilibrium<sup>34</sup> (1969:97).

In addition to the presence of the two imperial powers, Dost Mohammad faced pressures on the east from Ranjit Singh's Sikh army and on the western frontier from Mohammad Shah's Persian force. As Tanner writes, "by the 1830s four separate powers had begun to press against Afghanistan from each point of the compass" (2002: 129). Of the four powers that surrounded Afghanistan, the Sikh confederacy represented the "chief preoccupation" of Dost Mohammad (Fraser-Tytler, 1953: 73). As noted, during the internal struggles for Afghan power in the early 1800's, Ranjit Singh's formidable Sikh force conquered the Punjab and Kashmir, formerly under the control of the Durrani Empire. In May 1834, Singh overtook Peshawar, a key city along the northern transit route coveted by the Afghans for its great historic and strategic value<sup>35</sup>. In 1836, Dost Mohammad dispatched the Afghan army commanded by his son Muhammad Akbar that defeated a Sikh force near Jamrud (Fraser-Tytler, 1953). The Amir, however, was unwilling to retake Peshawar and chose instead to seek British assistance to resolve the Afghan-Sikh dispute.

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<sup>34</sup> Rashid comments on the British policy to weaken the Afghan state in order to strengthen British interests: "The feuds amongst the ruling Durrani which were fueled by British intelligence officers ensured that the Afghan kings remained weak and dependent on British largesse to make up for their inability to raise revenues" (2000: 11).

<sup>35</sup> Fraser-Tytler comments on the importance of Peshawar to Dost Mohammad: "Peshawar and the trans-Indus territories were peopled by his own race; they had been an integral part of the Durrani Empire; and their loss to a Hindu Raj was indeed grievous to the Afghan leader" (Fraser-Tytler, 1953: 87).

In 1837, the British responded by sending Captain Alexander Burnes to Kabul to advance relations with the Afghans and to gain intelligence information. Burnes presented Dost Mohammad with a list of British demands and, if accepted, the British agreed to advance an Afghan-Sikh rapprochement. The Amir accepted these conditions, however, negotiations collapsed when the British refused to seal the agreement in writing (Dupree, 1973). The key issue preventing an accord related to Sikh control of Peshawar. Indeed, as Fraser-Tytler notes, “this was the climax of the whole affair” (1953: 96). In communications with Lord Auckland, Burnes intimated that Afghan-Sikh reconciliation would only occur if Dost Mohammad reclaimed Peshawar from the Sikhs (Fraser-Tytler, 1953).

The British were thus forced to make a choice between the Afghans and the Sikhs. In this calculation, Britain’s allegiance remained firmly tied to the Sikhs. The British-Sikh alliance represented a critical element of Britain’s policy in India for the Sikh’s provided an effective buffer against foreign invasion and their compliance to British rule fostered internal stability. British authorities instructed Captain Burnes that the “avowed first principle” of Britain’s Afghan policy was the “firm maintenance of our old alliance and friendship with Ranjit Singh” (Fraser-Tytler, 1953: 93). Consequently, “the Government of India did not agree with the proposal to restore Peshawar to the Afghans” (Arghandawi, 1989: 56).

During this period, two key events dramatically alarmed British officials: Burnes reported the presence of Russian operatives in Kabul<sup>36</sup>, and Persian forces supported by Russia attacked Herat. Moreover, following the collapse of British-Afghan negotiations,

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<sup>36</sup> The Russians were equally threatened by Britain’s Asian conquests and their growing regional presence. In December 1837, Russia dispatched Captain Ivan Viktorovich to Kabul to enhance Russian-Afghan relations and to counter British influence (Dupree, 1973).

Dost Mohammad initiated discussions with the Russian envoy raising British suspicions that the Amir had turned “pro-Russian” (Badsey, 2001: 54). Collectively, these new developments heightened British fears over Russia’s growing regional aspirations and underscored an “agonizing reappraisal” of Britain’s Afghan policy (Dupree, 1973: 372). Indeed, following the collapse of British-Afghan negotiations, British authorities began preparations to institute the ‘forward line’ strategy culminating with the military intervention of Afghanistan and The First Anglo-Afghan War.

The plans for invasion were formalized in 1838, when Lord Auckland, the Governor-General of India, formed an agreement with Ranjit Singh, and Shah Shuja, the former Afghan king exiled in India, to forcibly overthrow Dost Mohammad and place Shuja on the throne<sup>37</sup>. Singh agreed to support the invasion force with a Sikh contingent in return for a guarantee of Sikh autonomy over the former Durrani lands in the Punjab and the North-West Frontier<sup>38</sup> (Dupree, 1973). Thus, with this accord, Britain sought to harmonize Afghan-Sikh relations, and implant a British friendly government in Afghanistan to offset the Russian threat. British intentions were expressed through the 1838 Simla Manifesto<sup>39</sup>, which accused Dost Mohammad of gross misdeeds justifying his removal from power.

### **The First Anglo-Afghan War**

The First Anglo-Afghan War as been characterized by many historians as one of the worst military disasters in British history. While the details of this failed military intervention are beyond the purview of this paper, it is necessary to overview the chief

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<sup>37</sup> The Tripartite Treaty was signed on June 25, 1838.

<sup>38</sup> Singh rescinded his promise and chose not to participate in the British invasion (Arghandawi, 1989).

<sup>39</sup> The full text of the Simla Manifesto is available in Arghandawi, (1989) Appendix 1.



events. The British “Army of the Indus” invaded Afghanistan in the spring of 1839. Paralleling the experience of past invaders and presaging later interventions, the British army rapidly conquered key cities but had greater difficulty holding them. The British captured Kandahar, sacked the fortress city of Ghazni and arrived in Kabul on August 6 1839 (Fraser-Tytler, 1953). Dost Mohammad escaped from Kabul and Shah Shuja reclaimed the leadership of Afghanistan after a three-decade exile (Arghandawi, 1989).

The forceful imposition of an unpopular ruler coupled with the existence of foreign infidel soldiers immediately fueled discontent among the Afghan populace. The new king not only lacked respect and a popular constituency but also his reliance on British forces alienated tribal warriors. It was not only dishonorable for the Afghan leader to rely on foreign security forces but also key tribes no longer benefited by providing security to the Amir (Tanner, 2002). The financial strain of occupation led the British government to impose two cost-cutting measures that further attenuated the vulnerable British position. The British reduced both the subsidies paid to tribal leaders<sup>40</sup> and the size of their occupation force (Fraser-Tytler, 1953). Shah Shuja also fostered discontent by instituting unpopular tribal taxes, collected with the assistance of British troopers and through repression as he killed a number of “real and potential” enemies to his rule (Tanner, 2002; Dupree, 1973: 381). As a final insult, rising local prices and a growing repugnance over British social practices “inspired a deadly hatred” among Kabul citizens towards the foreign invaders (Tate, 1973: 144).

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<sup>40</sup> The British government paid subsidies to a number of Afghan tribes that inhabited key strategic territory. For instance, the Afridi sub group of the Ghilzai Pashtuns received an annual disbursement of £ 8,000 to facilitate peaceful travel through the Khyber Pass. When the British reduced this stipend by 50 percent, the Ghilzai warriors began to attack British convoys thereby severing the “British lifeline to India” (Tanner, 2002: 157).

By 1841 Afghan discontent transformed into active revolt. An uprising in November 1841 led to the death of the British deputy Envoy Alexander Burnes. The plight of the British force became desperate when Afghan rebels captured the British supply fort located separately from the main garrison. Thus, the British troops were surrounded in a hostile country and faced starvation. In December 1841, the British envoy Sir William Macnaghten was murdered during peace negotiations with the tribal leadership. At the end of December, British officers signed an agreement with Dost Mohammad's son Muhammad Akbar and "eighteen tribal chiefs" that guaranteed safe passage of the British garrison in its evacuation through the Khyber Pass to India (Fraser-Tytler, 1953: 117). On January 6<sup>th</sup> 1842, 16,500 members of the British contingent<sup>41</sup> began the infamous retreat through the Khyber Pass. The combination of bitter weather and continued Ghilzai attacks along the "narrow mountain defiles" almost completely annihilated the British force in a "harrowing death march"<sup>42</sup> (Rasanayagam, 2003: xvii).

Following the disastrous British retreat, Shah Shuja was killed and a power struggle ensued for the Afghan throne. During this period of internal strife, a British force led by Major General Pollock re-entered Kabul via the Khyber Pass, where he united with the British contingent formerly based in Kandahar. The combined British force, in an effort to "restore British prestige," rescued the British survivors and in an act of vengeance, razed the central bazaar in Kabul (Arghandawi, 1989: 59). The British force withdrew from Kabul thus formally ending the First Anglo-Afghan War. As Fraser-Tytler

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<sup>41</sup> The retreating column consisted of 4,500 British and Indian soldiers plus 12,000 camp followers and family members (Dupree, 1973).

<sup>42</sup> Although many subsequent historical accounts record the survival of only one European, Dr. William Brydon, a number of soldiers and civilians were held captive and later rescued when the British returned to Kabul (Dupree, 1973).

concludes, “thus in bloodshed and disaster ended the first attempt of the British to gain control of the Hindu Kush” (1953: 117).

### **The Return of Dost Mohammad**

Following the British withdrawal, Dost Mohammad regained power in Afghanistan and resumed his “interrupted reign” (Fraser-Tytler, 1953: 123). Two key directions marked Dost Mohammad’s second rule: the consolidation of Afghan territory and improved British-Afghan relations. First, the Amir regained control over key Afghan cities such as Mazir-I-Sharif, Kandahar, and ultimately Herat (Dupree, 1973). Second, in the twelve years following the British withdrawal, British-Afghan relations were “moribund” as Britain was preoccupied with events in India, where victories in two wars against the Sikh confederacy (1845-46; 1848-49) resulted in British control of the Punjab and thus a shared boundary with Afghanistan (Dupree, 1973: 401). As well, fallout from the disastrous Afghan invasion led Liberal British Government’s in this period to establish a policy of “masterly inactivity” that prescribed non-interference in Afghan affairs (Dupree, 1973: 406).

Persia’s intentions regarding Herat reawakened British interest with Afghanistan. In 1855, the Treaty of Peshawar renewed diplomatic relations between Britain and Afghanistan. The Treaty of Peshawar contained three key elements: a commitment to peace and friendship, to each nation’s territorial sovereignty and to assume common friends and enemies (Dupree, 1973). In October 1856, Persia’s capture of Herat triggered a three-month war between Britain and Persia. Through Britain’s subsequent victory, Dost Mohammad regained Herat and consequently “for the first time, imperial Britain,

acting on its own self-interest, guaranteed Afghanistan's territorial integrity" (Rasanayagam, 2003: 2).

Dost Mohammad died in June 1863 and following the historical pattern, the offspring of the deceased Amir engaged in a power struggle for the leadership of Afghanistan. In 1869, Dost Mohammad's son, Sher Ali Khan emerged as the successful claimant to the Afghan throne. Again, echoing past and future experiences, the new Amir began a nascent program of centralization that ultimately became subverted due to internal conflict and external interference<sup>43</sup>.

External interference during Sher Ali's reign was driven by two key events; Russia's continued southward expansion and the election of a new government in Britain. The First Anglo-Afghan War exacerbated the imperial rivalry and fueled Russia's quest to expand its Empire in Central Asia. Russia pursued regional hegemony by controlling the "Asian khanites" through outright occupation or through "economic vassalage" (Dupree, 1973: 404). In the period following the First Anglo-Afghan war, Russian control extended through the territory south and east of the Caspian Sea that included the Khanates of Khiva, Kokland and by 1869 Bukhara, "to the shores of the Oxus [Amu Darya]" (Fraser-Tytler, 1953: 130).

In 1873, Sher Ali sent a delegation to India in an appeal for British support against the impending Russian threat. Adhering to the policy of non-interference, the British made no promises of military assistance and instead advised the Afghan leader that his territory would be safe from absorption as the Russians formally respected the Oxus River as Afghan territory (Dupree, 1973).

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<sup>43</sup> Dupree catalogues Sher Ali's ambitious plans: "He created a national army, instituted a system for collecting land revenues in cash, founded a Council of Elders to advise him on affairs of state, began a postal system, and published the first newspaper in Afghanistan" (1973: 405).

The British policy of non-interference radically transformed in 1874 when Benjamin Disraeli formed a Conservative government in Britain. Disraeli, together with Lord Lytton, the new Viceroy to India, launched the new “Forward Policy” to guide British Central Asian affairs. Britain’s strategy followed the template issued in a 1868 paper by Sir Henry Rawlinson that called for Britain to “occupy Quetta; gain control of the Afghan area by subsidizing the Amir in Kabul; [and] establish a permanent British Mission in Kabul to keep the Russians out” (Dupree, 1973: 404). Based on readings of Lord Lytton’s correspondence, Fraser-Tyler identifies three outcomes deemed acceptable to the Viceroy. Lytton’s first option was to form “an exclusive alliance” between Britain and Sher Ali. Second, failure to achieve the first objective would warrant the forceful replacement of the Amir with a “friendly” and “dependent” Afghan leader. Third, an inability to secure either of the first two options would necessitate the forceful annexation of Afghanistan (1953: 143).

The British initiated the new policy in 1876 with the establishment of a military outpost in Quetta. British actions alarmed Sher Ali who became “suspicious” over British intentions (Dupree, 1973: 406). British-Afghan tensions escalated when the Amir refused to accept a British Mission on the grounds that the Russians would demand a reciprocal arrangement. The situation reached a crisis proportion when Russia, bypassing objections by the Amir, dispatched a diplomatic envoy to Kabul in July 1878. Despite Russia’s diplomatic presence, the Amir refused to sanction a counterpart British delegation. Lytton’s response was to send one anyway, however, Afghan border guards in the Khyber Pass prohibited the British Mission from entering Kabul. The Amir’s continued

refusal to rectify this “national insult” presaged the British invasion of Afghanistan and the Second Anglo-Afghan War (Dupree, 1973: 408).

### **The Second Anglo-Afghan War**

In November 1878, the British Army invaded Afghanistan in a three-column assault. British forces overwhelmed the poorly equipped Afghan army weakened by desertion and tribal loyalties (Tanner, 2002). Sher Ali fled to Mazar-I-Sharif, and died shortly thereafter. He was succeeded by his son, Yakub Khan who sought a peaceful settlement with the British. The resulting Treaty of Gandamak, signed on May 26 1879, contained three key elements. First, the British gained control over Afghan foreign affairs. Second, the British received jurisdiction over Afghan territory including the Pishin, Sibi and Kuram Valleys and the Kyhber and Michni Passes. Third, the British were granted permission to establish a diplomatic mission in Kabul. The Treaty of Gandamak embittered many Afghans, who felt Afghan concessions far outweighed British obligations that included a £60,000 annual stipend to the Amir and the British pledge to support Afghanistan against external threats (Rasanayagam, 2003: 2).

In July 1879, the British established a Residency in Kabul led by Sir Louis Cavagnari. In September, an uprising of Afghan soldiers and local citizens stormed the residency and killed the “entire British mission” including Cavagnari (Tanner, 2002: 210). A British force led by General Roberts reached Kabul in October and commenced the “second phase of the Second Anglo-Afghan War (Tanner, 2002: 209). The Afghan Amir Yaqub Khan immediately relinquished his title and fled the country. Roberts enacted revenge upon the Kabul populace and executed those deemed responsible for the

murders of the British contingent. Opposition to the foreign presence grew rapidly culminating with the gathering of an Afghan force led by religious and tribal leaders. Within two months, the British cantonment was under siege by tribal fighters, however, under Robert's adroit leadership the Afghan force dispersed.

With the capture of Kabul and Kandahar, Britain was now in a position to implement Lord Lytton's objective to foster the "permanent disintegration" of Afghanistan and establish the "undisputed supremacy of the British power" in Asia (Fraser-Tytler, 1953). Indeed, as Griffiths states, between 1879 and 1880 the British military could have opted to secure Afghanistan "south of the Hindu Kush" in an effort to actualize the Forward Policy's stated purpose (1967: 22). However, differences between theory and reality or more specifically, the discrepancy between "defeating and controlling" Afghan tribal factions engendered a reassessment of Britain's Afghan policy (Griffiths, 1967: 22). Indeed, the high material and human costs of occupation coupled with the dubious prospect of controlling a rebellious population in a geographically isolated and harsh land heightened British uncertainty. Even Lord Lytton, the fierce advocate of Britain's Forward Policy, feared to repeat the disaster of the 1839-1842 war and sought "some plausible excuse for withdrawal from Kabul" (Fraser-Tytler, 1953:149).

In early 1880 two events served to hasten the British withdrawal from Afghanistan. First, in April 1880, the fall of Disraeli's Conservative government to Gladstone's Liberals presaged a transformation in Britain's Asian policy. The first indicator of a new policy direction occurred when the Marquess of Ripon replaced Lytton as Viceroy of India (Griffiths, 1967). Second, the arrival of a new claimant to the Afghan

throne represented a solution to Britain's Afghan conundrum. Abdur Rahman Khan, grandson of Dost Mohammad, and nephew of Sher Ali arrived in Afghanistan in February 1880 after spending a decade in exile. Not only was Abdur Rahman gathering a local following, the British also considered him a suitable leader. On July 22 1880, British officials made preparations for the British withdrawal from Afghanistan and formally sanctioned Abdur Rahman's claim as Amir. In April 1881, British forces departed back to India formally ending the Second Anglo-Afghan War (Dupree, 1973).

In sum, Britain's determination to contain the growth of the Russian Empire and protect their colonial interests resulted in the implementation of the Forward Policy that envisioned Afghanistan as the outer boundary of British colonial territory. However, the successful realization of this policy required the British not only to conquer Afghanistan but also to control it after the intervention. After two failed invasions, Britain exacted few national gains given the "vast expenditures in blood and treasure" and subsequently assumed a policy posture of non-intervention (Tanner, 2002: 217). According to its advocates, Britain's non-intervention policy would generate Afghan favor and thus serve British interests in the event of a Russian-Afghan war. Moreover, a British presence in Afghanistan was deemed unnecessary, as the Afghans themselves would defy a Russian invasion. Consequently, after 1881, Britain's Afghan policy was centred on the view of Afghanistan as a buffer state and the hope that Abdur Rahman would serve British interests.

From the Afghan perspective, the two British invasions served to profoundly deepen a pre-existing disregard and distrust of foreigners (Griffiths, 1967). The two wars also heightened a sense of independence and Afghan nationalism even though the country



only truly unified when faced with an external threat. Thus, as Afghanistan approached the twentieth century, its ability to develop and modernize was severely compromised because of its historical inability to unify during periods of external calm as well as its avowed refusal to engage with external powers. Poullada comments: [Afghanistan] "...developed a xenophobia and a determination to exclude foreign influences which persisted until the middle of the twentieth century and has not entirely disappeared even today. This isolation seriously retarded the modernization of Afghanistan." (1973:4)

### **Abdur Rahman Khan**

In 1880, when Abdur Rahman Khan became the Amir of Afghanistan, he found a country in a weakened state due to foreign interventions, an ongoing civil conflict, an economy devastated by war, and a society dominated by the power of feudal chieftains and the religious establishment. As Kakar states, Afghanistan at this time was in a "state of disorder" and its government machinery was "nonexistent" (1979: 7). The new Amir, whose power base was restricted to Kabul, embarked on the "first major and concerted effort to reform Afghanistan" (Gregorian, 1969:129). Abdur Rahman sought the establishment of a strong nation-state through the centralization of power. The fulfillment of this task required the Amir to overcome significant external and internal obstacles. First, Abdur Rahman had to achieve some form of formal accommodation with Britain and Russia to safeguard Afghanistan from imperial absorption. As he wrote in his autobiography; "How can a small power like Afghanistan, which is like a goat between two lions, or a grain of wheat between two strong millstones of the grinding mill, stand in the midway of the stones without being ground to dust?" Second, the new Amir had to

overcome centuries of entrenched tribal and feudal power<sup>44</sup>. As Abdur Rahman wrote, the task of bringing order to Afghanistan “necessitated breaking down the feudal and tribal system and substituting one grand community under one law and one rule” (Dupree, 1973: 419). Simply put, Abdur Rahman sought three principle objectives in his pursuit of Afghan nationhood: “internal cohesion, external security and territorial integrity” (Poullada, 1973:8).

A key feature of Abdur Rahman’s rule and the growth of Afghanistan nationhood was the establishment of national boundaries. Abdur Rahman, however, had little input over the delineation of Afghanistan’s borders as Britain maintained control over Afghan foreign affairs. Consequently, Britain along with Russia became the key determinants over the size and alignment of Afghanistan<sup>45</sup>. Thus, in what has been termed “demarcation without representation”, the configuration of Afghanistan reflects the political and strategic imperatives of foreign powers as opposed to the internal ethnic, political or economic interests of Afghans (Dupree, 1973: 421). For instance, in northern Afghanistan, the British sought to establish boundary lines, not to champion Afghan independence, but to contain Russia’s southward advance. In March 1885, Russian and Afghan troops clashed at Panjdeh, north of Herat. The “Panjdeh Incident” raised concerns regarding a larger imperial war, prompting Britain and Russia to seek a diplomatic solution. The two countries formed a series of boundary commissions that established

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<sup>44</sup> Abdur Rahman describes the historic imbalance of power between local and central rule: “Every priest, mullah and chief of every tribe and village considered himself an independent King, and for about 200 years past, the freedom and independence of many of these priests were never broken by their sovereigns. The Mirs of Turkestan, the Mirs of Hazara, the chiefs of Ghilzai were all stronger than their Amirs (Munshi, 1900: 217).

<sup>45</sup> Afghanistan’s borders were established through a series of Anglo-Russian Commissions and Agreements that include the British-Russian agreement of 1873, the Lumsden Commission in 1884, the Joint Boundary Commission in 1887 and later between 1895-1896 which finalized the northern boundary in the Wakhan corridor (Dupree, 1973). The Durand Agreement in 1893 determined the eastern limit of Afghanistan while an agreement in 1905 established the western border with Persia (Goodson, 2001).

Afghanistan's northern boundary along the Amu Darya River, excluding previously claimed Afghan territory north of the new line. The resulting border agreement was settled at the "expense of Afghan territory and British integrity (Dupree, 1973: 423).

In 1893, the Durand Agreement<sup>46</sup> formalized the eastern boundary of Afghanistan with British North-West India. The impact of this accord on Afghanistan's history was profound. The Durand Agreement not only ceded considerable Afghan territory to British India, it also granted Britain authority over the important border passes. With control over the eastern passes, Britain gained great coercive power over Afghan affairs as the threat of border closure would seriously impair the Afghan economy. Increased British activity along the eastern frontier led to many clashes with the local Afghans, heightened tribal distrust of the British and strengthened Afghan xenophobia. Gregorian argues that the Durand Line also bolstered the power and prestige of the border tribes due to their importance they conferred to Afghan security (1969).

The Durand Agreement is of central importance to Afghanistan's history because the demarcation line transected tribal villages and effectively divided the Pashtun population into separate political spheres. The Durand Line served imperial purposes for it facilitated greater British control over the rebellious Pashtun tribes. By splitting their population in half, British authorities could co-opt those tribes east of the line through subsidies and patronage thus diminishing their collective power. By disregarding the local ethnography, the Durand Line represents "the classic example of an artificial political boundary cutting through a cultural area" (Dupree, 1973: 425). Finally, the 1893 Agreement generated controversies regarding the exact delineation of the Durand Line as

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<sup>46</sup> The full text of the Durand Agreement is available in Arghandawi, (1989) Appendix III.

well as questions as to whether the British and Abdur Rahman actually intended to fix an international border.

The north-eastern boundary of Afghanistan was also established by the British to serve British strategic interests. Increased Russian interest in the mountainous Pamir region raised concerns with the British over the prospect of a contiguous border with Russia and British North-West India. The resultant Pamir Convention of 1895 between Britain and Russia, extended Afghan sovereignty through the Wakhan Corridor to serve as a buffer between the two empires<sup>47</sup>. In this case, the two imperial powers expanded the territory of Afghanistan despite objections by Abdur Rahman who did not want the responsibility of distant tribes in an inhospitable landscape.

In sum, while Afghanistan achieved “territorial integrity” during the rule of Abdur Rahman, foreign powers controlled the process of boundary negotiation and determined the demarcation of the new lines. The construction of Afghanistan’s boundaries was designed to meet the strategic and political exigencies of the outside parties and thus did not reflect the political, cultural and economic interests of the Afghans. Afghanistan’s ‘artificial boundaries’ led to ongoing border disputes and imposes fundamental questions regarding its cohesion as a nation-state.

Abdur Rahman’s quest to centralize power entailed a program of administrative reform. He established a nascent form of constitutional government through the creation of a General Assembly, Supreme Council and ministerial departments (Dupree, 1973). However, these reforms served to consolidate the rule of the Amir rather than disperse power through an institutional framework. Indeed, these institutions held no independent

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<sup>47</sup> The acquisition of the Wakhan Corridor extended Afghanistan’s territory to the border of China. In 1963, China formally acknowledged its shared border with Afghanistan (Griffiths, 1981).

authority and functioned principally in an advisory capacity to the Amir<sup>48</sup>. This served to strengthen the Amir's position by facilitating revenue, placating tribal leaders through patronage and keeping the most powerful chiefs in Kabul "under his watchful eye" (Poullada, 1973: 6). As Kakar notes, the most ambitious leaders were banished or killed, while the rest "became dependent on the state" (1979: 23). Thus, Abdur Rahman coupled despotic actions with institutional reforms to limit tribal power.

Abdur Rahman also extended central rule throughout the country through a new administrative framework that established provincial governments and appointed Governors<sup>49</sup>. The Governors possessed great autonomy over local affairs. However, they were directly responsible to the Amir and were obliged to channel tax revenue to the central government. To ensure the compliance of his appointed Governors, the Amir created an elaborate spy network throughout the country in order to monitor their allegiance. In addition to revenue, the new provincial structure was also designed to strengthen national stability as provincial armies ensured that any local disturbance was quickly suppressed. Tribal power was weakened not only by the presence of the provincial authorities but also by the new administrative lines that divided tribal lands. Indeed, the new provincial units rarely conformed to established tribal lands and many Afghan tribes were separated by the new boundaries (Dupree, 1973).

Abdur Rahman understood the importance of religion to Afghan society. Indeed, he viewed Islam as a source of power held by the religious establishment that undermined his rule. Consequently, he sought to secure control over theocratic affairs as a means to

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<sup>48</sup> Given the despotic nature of Abdur Rahman's rule, the Council only provided "advice" that conformed to the Amir's established policy. As Kakar states, "no member of this council freely discussed subjects. They only endorsed the Amir's opinion..." (Kakar, 1979: 22).

<sup>49</sup> Abdur Rahman created four provinces –Turkestan, Herat, Kandahar and Kabul as well as seven new administrative districts (Gregorian, 1969).

consolidate power. He declared himself *iman*, the ultimate spiritual leader and interpreter of Islam thus usurping the religious community's right to administer shari'a law. Henceforth, only the Amir could define the powers of the Monarch or declare jihad (holy war). He further circumscribed the power of the Islamic leadership by appropriating their endowments, thus making them financially dependent on the central government. He created a government department to oversee religious and educational affairs, and transformed the Afghan mullahs into "mere bureaucrats" (Gregorian, 1969: 135).

Abdur Rahman also employed religion to justify his absolute power. He stated it was his divine right to rule, as Kings represented the "vice-regents of God" (Gregorian, 1969: 130). He also proclaimed that it was the religious duty of Afghans to obey the Amir, which overturned the historic understanding that the monarch's authority stemmed from the Afghan tribal council. The Amir's religious absolutism furthered the distance from the development of responsible government where power is directed upward from the people. Newell argues that Abdur Rahman's theocratic autocracy initiated a "conservative-modernist conflict" among Afghanistan's future leaders (Newell, 1972:44). Religion was also used as a tool to unify Afghans against foreign infidels and to suppress Afghans who revolted. As the Amir wrote, it was God's wish "to relieve Afghanistan from foreign aggression and internal disturbances" (Gregorian, 1969: 129). Thus, Islam served not only to sanction his harsh rule but also to foster notions of xenophobia.

The Amir's plan to centralize power and modernize Afghanistan included a program of economic development. Toward this end, the Amir established a national currency, a department of revenue to administer tax collection and a number of government workshops in Kabul. He sought to facilitate trade through road development,

the elimination of provincial tolls and common standards of custom duties. While these efforts increased annual revenues to the central government, the internal and external obstacles to Afghanistan's economic growth were formidable.

Continuous tribal warfare, endemic poverty, a largely uneducated and illiterate population, a large un-taxable nomadic population and a harsh geographical environment with little or no infrastructure represented key internal variables hindering Afghanistan's economic development. The inability and unwillingness of the central government to penetrate the tribal-feudal economy forced the Amir to depend on the small sedentary population and the urban business elite in Kabul for tax revenue. This is important for three chief reasons. First, it clearly displayed the modest level of the Amir's economic reform. Efforts of change were concentrated primarily on Kabul with no real efforts to transform the overall economic structure of the country. Second, the limited scale of his reforms procured modest revenues to the government. Third, through excessive taxation, he economically suppressed and ostracized the merchant class; the very group whose growth was essential for a large-scale modernization program<sup>50</sup>.

Externally, Afghanistan's land-locked position imposed severe restrictions on its ability to foster trade. Indeed, the rise in sea-bourn commerce not only excluded Afghanistan from trade opportunities, it also heightened its economic dependence on neighboring countries. Moreover, without secure commercial accords with the British and Russian empires Afghanistan experienced considerable trade fluctuations, as trade sanctions became a powerful political tool in the imperial rivalry. Afghanistan's commercial potential was further hampered by political instability and inhospitable travel

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<sup>50</sup> See Kakar, who details how the Amir appropriated the financial reserves of Afghanistan's wealthy elite forcing a rise in bankruptcy and emigration of the merchant class (1979).

conditions, as well as high tariffs established by Abdur Rahman<sup>51</sup>. Cumulatively, these factors lead to a significant trade decline in both imports and exports with Russia and British India from the 1880s to 1900<sup>52</sup>.

The external political environment constituted a central factor limiting both Afghanistan's economic growth and its ability to develop a meaningful program of modernization. Since the Amir could not draw the requisite internal resources to finance significant reform, the only available option was foreign assistance. However, Abdur Rahman's fear of imperial absorption by Britain or Russia translated into a policy that discouraged foreign involvement into the internal affairs of Afghanistan. Consequently, investment and economic development undertaken by foreign players was strictly prohibited. Thus, the construction of basic infrastructure fundamental to all modern states such as rail and communication networks was curtailed due to foreign concerns. While the Amir recognized that railway systems were essential to foster Afghanistan's economic growth, their existence could expose Afghanistan to foreign takeover. As a result, he advocated the development of Afghanistan's resources and the construction of vital infrastructure only when the central government possessed adequate military capabilities to deter external threats (Gregorian, 1969).

The British, like the Amir, actively opposed the expansion of rail lines through Afghanistan as it threatened their own vital interests. For instance, several key Russian and European proposals to include Afghanistan in a rail network extending from Russia and Western Europe to India were declined by Britain due to fears of Russian regional

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<sup>51</sup> Kakar argues that the Amir's excessive border tariffs not only limited overall trade but resulted in an increase of illegal commercial traffic and the development of a smuggling economy (1979).

<sup>52</sup> Gregorian notes that trade through Afghanistan from British India had fallen 80 per cent by 1895 (1969: 146). See Gregorian, pp145-146, for charts indicating Afghanistan's loss of trade with Russia and India.



hegemony. As well, while some key British authorities rejected the continental system linking west with east, they did, however, advocate the development of rail lines from India to western Afghanistan (Gregorian, 1969). As discussed, the Amir rejected the prospect of this rail expansion. Thus, the building of communication networks in Afghanistan, central to the modernization of an underdeveloped nation, became an issue largely shaped by external forces.

For Abdur Rahman, autocratic control of Afghanistan, the suppression of the tribes and Mullahs, national independence, economic development and a program of modernization, all necessitated the establishment of a national army. Within five years of becoming Amir, Abdur Rahman had raised a central army, 80,000 strong. He not only created a sizeable force, he also introduced key institutional reforms. For instance, he modernized the organizational structure of the military<sup>53</sup>, improved its administrative system, instituted a training regimen, established a system of regular pay, developed a logistic base and supplied material resources such as modern weapons and new uniforms (Gregorian, 1969). The new military force placed an overwhelming burden on the Amir's budget which constituted 78% of all national revenue (Kakar, 1979). In order to finance his military reforms, Abdur Rahman, relied chiefly on annual payments and material contributions from the British government. By 1897, the British were granting a yearly subsidy of 1.85 million rupees to Afghanistan (Rasanayagam, 2003).

The development of a military capability was central to Abdur Rahman's efforts to consolidate power. His reign rested heavily on the use of coercion and brute force. Indeed, through repressive measures or what Dupree terms as "internal imperialism,"

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<sup>53</sup> Modeled after the British Indian army structure, Abdur Rahman reordered his military force into three principle units: artillery, cavalry and infantry (Gregorian, 1969).

Abdur Rahman became known as the “Iron Amir” (1973: 417). During his 21-year rule, the Iron Amir’s army subdued an ongoing series of tribal uprisings<sup>54</sup> resulting in the “mass execution,” torture and deportation<sup>55</sup> of rival factions (Rasanayagam, 2003:11). The new army also played a role in enforcing the Amir’s strict legal reforms, which were known principally for their harsh punishments. In short, under Abdur Rahman the violent nature of the central authority was “without parallel in Afghan history” and his reign became known to future Afghans as a “symbol of terror” (Kakar, 1979: 232).

While the Iron Amir was able to subdue the rebellious tribes through force, tribal, ethnic and religious factionalism characterized his rule. Conflict was fought along tribal lines and the solutions the Amir imposed were based on tribal considerations. He reinforced the belief that the Durrani were the natural leaders of Afghanistan through political and economic patronage to Durrani chiefs as well as through marital unions to strengthen tribal bonds. He exacerbated the traditional Ghilzais-Durrani division by punishing the Ghilzai tribesmen with excessive force, deportation and high tax rates. He also heightened both ethnic and religious divides when he brutally suppressed the Hazaras Shi’ahs in 1888 with a call to arms of Sunni Muslims<sup>56</sup>. Ethnic and religious fractures were further exacerbated in the 1890s when he declared a jihad against the infidel Kafirs, forcing their submission to Islam<sup>57</sup>.

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<sup>54</sup> According to Abdur Rahman, there were four major civil wars during his rule as well as six general revolts and a series of minor insurrections (Poullada, 1973).

<sup>55</sup> He forcibly transported over 10,000 Ghilzai Pashtuns from their homeland in southern Afghanistan to the lands north of the Hindu Kush to achieve two simultaneous goals: to establish a sizeable Pashtun presence in the north and to diffuse Ghilzai power in the south (Gregorian, 1969).

<sup>56</sup> Kakar states that Abdur Rahman was the first Afghan ruler to develop a “systematic anti-Sh’ia policy” in the country’s history (1979:158).

<sup>57</sup> Abdur Rahman subdued the isolated Kafirs of the mountainous North-Eastern Afghanistan resulting in their conversion to Islam through persuasion and force. The region Kafiristan or Land of Unbelievers was subsequently changed to Nuristan or land of light, to reflect its new Islamic status (Rasanayagam, 2003).

In sum, although Abdur Rahman reign marked the political unification of Afghanistan, the development of the new state was “based on force and compulsion” (Kakar, 1979: 232). As Gregorian notes, “reform and modernization were only the means, independence, under an absolute monarch, the end” (1969: 156). Prior to his death, Abdur Rahman named his son Habibullah as his successor to preclude a potential power struggle for the throne. In 1901, Habibullah became Amir in a peaceful transition.

### **Habibullah Khan**

The ascension of Habibullah Khan to power enabled the establishment of a nascent reform movement that advocated the socio-economic transformation of Afghanistan. Indeed, Mahmud Tarzi, a key proponent of Afghan modernization emerged during Habibullah’s reign. Tarzi was the editor of *Siraj al-Akhbar Afghaniyah*, Afghanistan’s first established newspaper and he became a key figure in a nationalist reform movement called the Young Afghans. He was also appointed to Habibullah’s royal court where he served as a central advisor to the new Amir. Through his bi-monthly journal, Tarzi created a forum to expound his views on the need to revitalize Afghanistan and the Muslim world through socioeconomic reform (Dupree, 1973).

Tarzi attributed Afghanistan’s economic, social and political deterioration to its isolation from the west. The failure of the Muslim world and Afghanistan in particular to cultivate and disseminate knowledge, to separate religion from education, to develop modern infrastructure and to adopt successful western political institutions had fostered its overall decline and promoted internal disunity. Tarzi believed the source of this failure

could not be attributed to Islam but to the Islamic religious establishment who controlled education and conflated scientific progress with infidel values (Gregorian, 1969).

Tarzi espoused a thesis that bridged the seemingly disparate notions of modernization, nationalism and Islam. Tarzi was a fierce Afghan nationalist who eschewed the expansion of European imperialism and British colonialism in particular. However, he greatly admired the modern attributes of western civilization. For Tarzi, the compatibility of Islam and modernity rested on a key distinction. While the growth of modernity has been western in origin, its principles are universal and could be directly applied to the Muslim world. Indeed, Tarzi argued that the values of modern thought were consonant with the precepts of Islam.

Second, Tarzi argued that nationalism was compatible with, and derived from Islamic beliefs. The Koran stated that God inspired patriotism and a fatherland (*watans*) existed within the Islamic world (*umma*). Thus, if nationalism and Islam are indivisible it is incumbent upon all good Muslims to support and strengthen the nation. Moreover, since modernity is universal and represents the model approach to embolden the nation state, it was an Islamic duty to support a program of reform and modernization (Gregorian, 1969).

Tarzi extended his appeals of modernization and nationalism to all of the Muslim nations. He believed large-scale reform would revitalize all the Muslim nations and serve as an impetus to bind the world Islamic community. Thus, only through the coupling of reform and the creation of a Pan-Islamic faction could the Muslim world offset the expansion of European imperialism. Tarzi's Pan-Islamic message was not only designed

to foster cohesion among the Muslim nations but was also intended to address the internal Sunni- and Sh'ia divide within Afghanistan.

Consistent with his message on the importance of science and education to societal development, Tarzi published articles on a myriad of topics that explored the major academic disciplines, technological advances, public health and education, women's rights, and literature, as well as the central social, economic, political and religious issues of the time. Given the high rate of illiteracy in Afghanistan, the circulation of the *Siraj al-Akhbar* was chiefly limited to the Afghan urban centres. However, the importance of this journal is manifold. Tarzi formalized a discourse of Afghan nationalism based on the precepts of Islam and centred on the socio-economic reformation of the country. Moreover, he contributed to the development of an educated elite in Afghanistan whose views ran counter to the conservative and religious leadership that supported the traditional feudal-tribal society. Finally, the *Siraj al-Akhbar* created a public forum to legitimize and promote all efforts by the Monarchy to institute reform. Tarzi himself would directly contribute to the modernization of Afghanistan in his capacity of chief council to two Amirs; Habibullah and later his successor, King Amunullah (Gregorian, 1969; Dupree, 1973).

Habibullah Khan was an outspoken advocate for a program of overall reform in Afghanistan. He adopted and advanced Tarzi's message regarding the need to secure Afghan independence through socioeconomic change. During his eighteen-year reign as Amir, Habibullah instituted a series of reforms affecting the military, the administrative structure of government, education, health, industry and trade. However, while his program was ambitious in breadth, it was modest in depth. Most of his reforms

constituted incremental changes to the basic framework established by his father Abdur Rahman. For instance, in terms of military reform, Habibullah maintained the army established by his father by continuing to import and develop modern weapons, raising the salaries of the soldiers and expanding the recruitment of army personnel to include minority ethnic groups. He also continued Abdur Rahman's policy of officer training by establishing the Royal Military Collage in 1904 (Gregorian, 1969; Dupree, 1973).

Similarly, his reforms in education represented an incremental improvement from his predecessor's time. Again, these measures were modest both in scale and scope as they were largely confined to the urban centers and led to improved conditions for a small number of people. Moreover, the disparity between the measures undertaken and the societal need placed into clear relief the overwhelming challenge of modernization in Afghanistan.

Habibullah instituted several education reforms including the establishment of the Department of Education in 1913 as a means to centralize control over the country's schools. The Amir also established Habibiya College in 1904; the first post-secondary institution in the country's history<sup>58</sup>. However, despite these efforts, the obstacles impeding education reform were prodigious. In 1901 the illiteracy rate in Afghanistan was 98 per cent, the schools were few and badly run and the religious establishment exercised great control over the education system. Indeed, the Monarch's attempts to institutionally separate education from religious control achieved limited results. The curriculum was centred on Islamic studies and the state-employed Mullahs dominated

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<sup>58</sup> Habibiya Collage was situated in Kabul; its enrolment was limited and confined to the Afghan elite. For instance, in 1918 only 296 students attended Habibiya. Moreover, despite Habibullah's desire to create a secondary school modeled on a contemporary western framework, the curriculum at Habibiya remained centred on Islamic teachings (Gregorian, 1969).

the teaching staff and were resistant to change. In the countryside education and religious study were indivisible. Education was confined to Mosque schools whose principal focus was centred on the memorization of the Koran (Gregorian, 1969).

Habibullah's reforms in health<sup>59</sup>, industry and trade follow a similar pattern. Necessary yet insufficient improvements were introduced that benefited an urban minority while the rural population remained largely unaffected and reliant on traditional practices. Impediments to a large-scale modernization program included insufficient financial resources and a large segment of the population that adhered to traditional practices and were resistant to 'Western reforms.' Moreover, like his father Abdur Rahman, Habibullah would not consider foreign investment or the development of modern infrastructure such as railways or telegraphs due to geopolitical concerns (Gregorian, 1969).

It is also important to note that Afghan western xenophobia was heightened during this period due to international events. Tarzi's message of Pan-Islamism struck a resonant chord during the First World War. Afghan nationalists, including the Young Afghans, urged the Amir to enter the war in support of the Ottoman Empire against the British and Russian imperial powers. However, due to fears of a British or Russia backlash as well as the loss of British subsidy, Habibullah pledged Afghan neutrality. Habibullah's position on this issue led to a rift between the Monarchy and the Young Afghans culminating in a "complete break" after an assassination attempt on the Amir by one of their members (Poullada, 1973: 45). The Amir's Pan-Islamic and anti-imperial

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<sup>59</sup> Gregorian comments on the condition of public health during Habibullah's reign: "There was just one hospital and only a handful of doctors; health education was nonexistent; and superstitions in matters of medicine were widespread...In general, the masses continued to rely on charms, omens, astrology, and similar practices, and to put their faith in the spiritual powers of the local mullahs and holy relics" (1969: 189).

beliefs gained the necessary popular support of Afghans and ensured the loyalty of the educated elite to initiate reform. However, the success of an overall program of modernization was contingent on foreign support. Moreover, the exigencies of geopolitics dictated that Afghanistan's survival hinged on cordial or at least neutral relations with its powerful imperial neighbors (Gregorian, 1969).

In February 1919, Habibullah was assassinated in Jalalabad. While no person was officially named as the assassin, the Young Afghans and their supporters including Habibullah's son Amanullah, were suspected of involvement.

### **Amanullah Khan**

Habibullah's youngest son Amanullah, ascended to the Afghan throne in February 1919 after a brief power struggle with his brother Nasrullah. The bitter rivalry, common to Afghan succession, also reflected a deeper division in Afghanistan between traditional and modernist factions (Gregorian, 1969). Amanullah led the reformist camp. However, his ascension related largely to his control of Kabul and the Afghan army (Dupree, 1973). Thus, Amanullah began his rule of Afghanistan with a tenuous grip of power over forces hostile to his leadership.

Amanullah's decade long rule from 1919 to 1929 represented a watershed era in Afghanistan's history and was marked by a radical transformation in both Afghan foreign relations and the internal political environment. However, while his internal and foreign programs were both ambitious in scale, they were divergent in outcome. Indeed, Amanullah's policies in external affairs initially served to strengthen his vulnerable position while his dramatic economic, social and political reforms undermined his rule



and led to his downfall. This section will overview the Amanullah period with a focus on his program of modernization and the factors impeding its implementation.

Amanullah's foreign and domestic policies were shaped by the opinions and the influence of his father-in-law, the Afghan nationalist and reformer, Mahmud Tarzi. Indeed, shortly after the death of Habibullah, Tarzi prompted Amanullah with the statement that "now is the time for action" (Dupree, 1973: 441). Under Tarzi's influence, Amanullah initiated three actions to strengthen his position of power; he arrested many of his chief rivals; he secured most of Afghanistan's major cities and he invaded British India in May 1919, inaugurating the Third Anglo-Afghan War. While it seems counterintuitive that a foreign invasion would embolden Amanullah's rule, certain factors made such a move propitious for the Amir. First, Tarzi's Pan-Islamic, Afghan nationalist and anti-imperialist message resonated with the Afghan populace<sup>60</sup>. Second, in a pattern that echoes throughout Afghan history, the fractious tribes set aside internal differences and united against a foreign threat. Third, international political considerations were advantageous for the Afghan position. For instance, the British were weary after the carnage of World War One and the losses incurred in the earlier Afghan campaigns. As well, the 1917 Russian Revolution, the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and President Wilson's message of self-determination bolstered independence movements. British colonial interests were also undermined by rising unrest in India and Egypt and increased British domestic pressure to curtail costs and engagements (Gregorian, 1969; Dupree, 1973).

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<sup>60</sup> Several scholars have argued that because of his vulnerable internal situation, Amanullah attacked the British to achieve domestic cohesion. Gregorian argues that by "1919, no ruler could have succeeded in establishing a strong hold over the Afghan nation without pledging himself to the cause of total Afghan independence (Gregorian, 1969: 229).

However, the outcome of this war was predetermined; advanced technology, a modern army and superior resources ensured a battlefield asymmetry favoring the British. Indeed, after the shock of British bombing raids on Jalalabad and Kabul, the Afghans capitulated. The British, in turn, agreed to end hostilities, fearing a long and protracted conflict. The resultant peace talks produced the Treaty of Rawalpindi in 1919 where the Afghans gained autonomy over their “internal and external affairs” prompting many observers to cite the 1919 Treaty as the “birth of the modern Afghan nation” (Tanner, 2002: 219). However, the benefits of autonomy were costly for with independence the Afghans lost their annual British subsidy. As well, frictions developed between the two countries as conclusive terms could not be reached over the legitimacy of the Durand Line.<sup>61</sup> Nevertheless, Amanullah’s decision to combat the British resulted in a “military defeat” but also a “political victory” (Roy, 1986: 63).

Having achieved full sovereignty for Afghanistan, Amanullah developed a foreign policy designed to balance relations between the Soviet Union and the British. In this regard, Amanullah successfully played one power against the other as a means to extract benefits for Afghanistan. For instance, the Amir established formal relations with the Soviet Union culminating in the 1921 Treaty of Friendship. The Bolsheviks followed the agreement with financial aid, trade concessions, military supplies and the development of infrastructure<sup>62</sup> (Tanner, 2002). The Russian motives included a desire to counter British influence in Afghanistan and to develop a strategic and economic channel to the east (Gregorian, 1969). However, relations between the two countries declined due to the

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<sup>61</sup> The Afghans argued for a limited form of sovereignty over the Pashtun tribes on the Indian side of the Durand Line. The British, however, insisted on the inviolability of the 1893 agreement that established the boundary and clear areas of authority (Dupree, 1973).

<sup>62</sup> Poullada notes that the Russian financial assistance fell short of the agreed terms and was limited to “partial and intermittent payments” (1973: 137).

Soviet suppression of fellow Muslims in their re-conquest of Central Asia (Rasanayagam, 2003). After minor border skirmishes along the Amu Darya, Afghan-Soviet relations normalized with the 1926 Treaty of Non-Aggression and Neutrality. Amanullah also improved strained relations with Britain and signed a treaty in 1921 formalizing their rapprochement. Thus, Amanullah pursued a policy of “positive neutralism” in order to preserve Afghanistan’s independence and to help facilitate his primary goal of overall reform (Gregorian, 1969: 395). Newell argues that Amanullah recognized that “independence could no longer be based upon isolation” (Newell, 1974: 79). Like his father Habibullah, Amanullah faced the paradox that modernization efforts in Afghanistan necessitated neighborly relations, however, such accommodations diminished his local political capital that was equally essential for reform.

Amanullah Khan’s central aim was to reconfigure Afghanistan into a modern nation state through a program of political, social and economic reforms. Indeed, his plans for reform have been characterized as a “revolution,” a “transforming national experience” and a program that was “integrated, grandiose and bold” (Poullada, 1973: 143). Amanullah initially sought political and administrative reform through the establishment of the first Constitution in the nation’s history. The 1923 Constitution contained seventy-three articles that formalized the Afghan monarchy, a Council of State, several consultative boards, a guarantee of civil rights, and an independent judiciary (Wilber, 1962). Poullada argues that the Amir, however, developed a more “sophisticated” approach to modernization, recognizing that “a model government on paper was a far cry from achieving the goal of a united and politically loyal nation in fact” (1973: 92). The creation of a modern Afghan state would only occur after a massive

reordering of the social system through social and economic reforms. As Newell writes, Amanullah sought to transform “ideas, knowledge and styles of behavior” (Newell, 1972: 54). Toward this goal, the Amir followed the constitutional framework with a legal code termed *Nizamnamah* (Poullada, 1973). Influenced by Turkish jurisprudence, the *Nizamnamah* created a secular body of rules distinct from, and often contrary to both the Islamic Shar’ia law and the informal tribal code, *Pushtunwali*. Thus, the introduction of the new secular law constituted a threat to both the Islamic leadership and the tribal order.

A transformation of the education system and the emancipation of women constituted two key goals of Amanullah’s program of social reform. With the assistance of foreign advisers and teachers, Amanullah expanded education in Afghanistan through increased enrollment, the establishment of new primary, secondary and assorted professional schools as well as the first school for girls (Gregorian, 1969). However, while the Amir engendered steady improvements to education, a wholesale transformation was not possible due to many of the obstacles faced by his predecessors: financial limitations, a paucity of trained administrators and teachers, as well as overt resistance from Islamic leaders and Afghan nationalists to ‘western’ concepts of education. Thus, the Amir was unable to implement his major proposals including mandatory schooling, the establishment of a university, and the expansion of secular education throughout the country.

The political, economic and social emancipation of women represents one of the more radical and liberal aspects of Amanullah’s goal of modernization. Through the *Nizamnamah*, executive decrees and future proposals, Amanullah advanced the cause of women’s rights. For instance, women were granted equal rights with men regarding

marriage, divorce and claims of inheritance. The Amir disdained the practice of *purda* or veiling stating that it “hid half the Afghan nation” and he encouraged women to abandon their veils (Gregorian, 1969: 244).

Amanullah’s military reforms were a reflection of his style of leadership and his administration’s priorities. Unlike his father and grandfather’s rule, Amanullah strove to implement his overall reform program through persuasion rather than coercion and force. As well, the Amir prioritized his social and political reforms over military growth resulting in an effort to minimize expenditures on his armed forces. As a result, under the guidance of Turkish military advisers, Amanullah sought to create a “small but efficient” force that employed some modern technology (Poullada, 1973: 114). In an effort to remodel the new army, the older guard was replaced with younger recruits at a lower pay scale. Amanullah also replaced the recruitment system from one where the tribes controlled selection to conscription by lottery. These changes, however, not only alienated the tribal community but also resulted in the creation of a poorly outfitted and demoralized force.

A problem faced by Amanullah and one endemic to past and future central governments in Afghanistan related to the country’s scarce economic resources and limited government revenues. Compounding these difficulties, Amanullah lacked a coherent industrial development strategy resulting in incomplete projects, overpriced equipment purchases and stagnant growth (Gregorian, 1969). Moreover, his ambitious reform programs consumed all revenues and “bankrupted the treasury” (Rasanayagam, 2003). The Monarchy also suffered from a poor administrative capacity to collect taxes,

an economic system rampant with corruption and graft, as well as an inability to penetrate the tribal economy.

In an effort to centralize and increase government revenues, Amanullah invoked measures designed to break tribal power and to combat overall corruption. For instance, the Amir prohibited the use of tribal titles, eliminated many direct payments and other forms of patronage to tribal leaders, campaigned against nepotism and, in an effort to curtail corruption, government payments were only sanctioned for “work of value to the nation” (Poullada, 1973: 108). Amanullah’s tax reforms also involved removing the tribal maliks and khans as tax collectors and the imprisonment or firing of top officials caught for bribery. Poullada comments that when Amanullah tried to impose “Western standards of probity” to the complex interchange of tribal payment and return allegiance, he alienated the tribal community, challenged the economic standing of his key supporters and thus weakened his own position (Poullada, 1973: 109).

Although Amanullah was a devoted Muslim, he believed that the power of religious leadership in Afghanistan was self-serving and undermined the growth of the country. Initially, the Amir sought to minimize the control of the religious establishment through persuasion. However, relations soon degenerated into a larger “struggle between church and state” (Poullada, 1973: 121). The Islamic leaders were fundamentally threatened by Amanullah’s administrative, legal and political reforms. The Amir’s policies designed to secularize areas of justice and education directly challenged the authority of the Mullahs and higher clerics and his overall efforts to curb corruption threatened their financial well being. As well, the village mullahs, who were integrated with and dependent upon the tribal framework, were adversely impacted by the

Amanullah's quest to break tribal power (Poullada, 1973). Consequently, when the tribal discontent broke into open revolt, the religious establishment supported the rebellion.

In March 1924, the Mangal Tribe of Khost rebelled against the central government. After nine months of fighting, the government suppressed the Khost rebellion. Gregorian attributes the insurgency as a reaction against the social reforms promulgated by Amanullah. Specifically, he argues that the liberal laws in the Nizamnama such as those that advanced women's rights were considered un-Islamic and undermined the traditional authority of the tribal and religious leaders (Gregorian, 1969). Poullada also traces the Khost revolt to Amanullah's political and administrative reforms. Specifically, he identifies military conscription and the call for identity papers as chief irritants to the Mangal tribe (Poullada, 1973). The rebellion led to an immediate suspension of Amanullah's reform program due to the unstable environment and the prodigious government expenditures required to subdue the revolt<sup>63</sup>. The revolt also led to a rift between Amanullah and Tarzi over the implementation of the reform program. Tarzi, who was heavily influenced by Ataturk's modernization of Turkey, believed that the Amir should follow the Turkish model and slowly introduce reforms only after the establishment of a powerful armed force and the creation of a competent bureaucracy (Rasanayagam, 2003). This rift over differing approaches to modernization prompted Tarzi resignation in 1925.

A pivotal event occurred in 1927 that reshaped Amanullah's program of reform. The Amir and his wife Soraya embarked on an extensive tour through Europe in which he was overwhelmed and inspired by the accomplishments of western civilization. The

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<sup>63</sup> For instance, the Amir amended many of the provisions in the Nizamnama and almost new legislation was introduced from 1925 to 1928 (Gregorian, 1969/Poullada, 1973). The government expended approximately two years worth of revenue to subdue the Khost Rebellion (Gregorian, 1969).

“Grand Tour” also placed into sharp relief the backwardness of his own country. In 1928, Amanullah assembled a Loya Jirga (grand council) and introduced a series of ambitious reform proposals. His program highlighted three main proposals; first, the creation of a constitutional monarchy featuring an elected parliament, cabinet and an appointed upper house; second, a call for the separation of church and state authority and third, key social reforms including the “emancipation of women, enforced monogamy, compulsory education and coeducational schools” (Rasanayagam, 2003). Amanullah also issued an edict requiring Afghans to wear Western clothing. This was designed to minimize the visual differences between ethnic groups by mandating common attire and represented an effort by Amanullah to create a common identity and was considered an “important step in nation-building” (Poullada, 1973: 81). Finally, Amanullah introduced a series of proposals designed to contest the power of the religious establishment<sup>64</sup>. The Amir’s pronouncements were greeted with widespread derision from many elements of Afghan society. As Gregorian notes, Amanullah by 1928 “had little public support” and his reform proposals fostered an “extremely dangerous situation” (1969).

Two concurrent events led to the downfall of Amanullah. In November 1928, several tribes led by the Shinwaris openly rebelled against government forces at Jalalabad<sup>65</sup>. A second rebellion was led by Bacha-I-Saqao, ‘the son of the water carrier’

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<sup>64</sup> Poullada comments: “The proposals for the education of the mullahs, the qazi school, the secular law school, the complete liquidation of the waqfs, the abolition of pirs and murids in the army, and the banning of all mullahs educated in Deoband were correctly interpreted by conservative religious leaders as a declaration of war” (1973: 126).

<sup>65</sup> Poullada cites Amanullah’s dual efforts to reduce trade corruption and enforce tax collection as the underlying cause of the Shinwari revolt. The Shinwaris along with the Mohmand tribe engaged in a practice called ‘badraga’ in which they charged ‘protection’ fees to traders for safe passage through the Khyber Pass. It was essentially a form of extortion for if traders declined to form an agreement they were vulnerable to attack by the tribesmen who initially offered protection. The Shinwaris and Mohmand tribes often clashed with each other to gain control of this profitable trade. In October 1928, Amanullah sent an army division to the area and he directed the local governor to end the system of badraga in order to create



a Tajik tribesman and “outlaw” who gained the support of religious leaders (Roy, 1985: 66). Bacha-I-Saqao took advantage of the Shinwaris revolt and attacked Kabul. The national army weakened and disenfranchised by Amanullah’s reforms represented an ineffective fighting force. It was also a “microcosm of the larger tribal society” and thus ethnic loyalties subordinated their national commitments (Poullada, 1973: 119). Consequently, when Amanullah deployed the government forces against the rebellious tribes, the army quickly surrendered and in some cases joined the tribal rebels. Poullada states that the “lines of loyalty and authority between the government and the army proved tenuous indeed and snapped under the first serious test of wholesale tribal rebellion” (1973: 200). Amanullah negotiated a temporary break in fighting and proceeded to revoke most of his contentious reform measures. These concessions, however, failed to appease Bacha who lead a final successful attack on Kabul in January 1929 forcing Amanullah’s abdication. Amanullah fled the country through India en route to Italy and left Afghanistan in “political anarchy” (Gregorian, 1969: 266).

There has been a considerable amount of analysis regarding Amanullah’s program of modernization and the resultant overthrow of his regime. Many Soviet and European writers have highlighted the importance of British interference into Afghan affairs as a major factor underpinning the revolt that forced Amanullah’s abdication. According to this argument, Britain’s fear that Afghan independence and renewal threatened their strategic interests in India underwrote British support for Bacha’s rebel forces (Gregorian, 1969).

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a peaceful and corruption free environment along Afghanistan’s principle trade route. These actions preceded the Shiwaris revolt of November 1928 (1973).

Gregorian begins his analysis of the Amanullah period by identifying the inherent structural difficulties impeding a program of wholesale reform in Afghanistan. Specifically, the modernization of Afghanistan required large-scale changes in the socio-economic framework of the country that fundamentally threatened the power base of the religious and tribal leaders. In turn, the Amir's position of power was contingent on the support of the Islamic and tribal elite. The Amir's only option to offset his dependency on the country's leaders was through popular support. He argues that Amanullah could have gained such a general appeal if he avoided his controversial social measures and focused instead on economic, educational and political reforms.

However, Gregorian fails to consider that economic, educational and political reforms inherently involve and stimulate social change<sup>66</sup>. Thus, it is not clear which social change would foster overall support and which would stimulate dissent. Even if Amanullah was able to gain some broad appeal it is questionable whether such support would override the fundamental ties that bound the tribal leaders and their kin based armies. Finally, Gregorian also sites the importance of economic reforms as a route to gain popular support, however, he then proceeds to argue that Amanullah's economic policies alienated both the rural and urban population.

Like his predecessors, Amanullah's ability to modernize Afghanistan was innately limited by economic constraints. His unwillingness to sanction foreign direct investment and development for fears of external control and internal revolt forced the Amir to rely on domestic means to stimulate growth (Gregorian, 1969). Consequently, he

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<sup>66</sup> Poullada comments on the interrelated nature of Amanullah's program of reform: "At a higher level, the economic reforms reinforced and supported the educational reforms and vice versa, while economic, social, religious and military reforms were necessary adjuncts to the political formation of a constitutional state governed by laws, which in turn formed the overarching framework within which all the other modernizing influences could operate freely" (1973: 143).

inaugurated a tax, customs and tariff policy that placed a heavy burden on both rural and urban communities and ultimately fostered widespread dissent.

Poullada attributes Amanullah's downfall to the Amir's attempt to "create a strong central government" in Afghanistan (1973: 152). The underlying political struggle between the national government and the tribal and religious leadership created an innate, formidable obstacle to Amanullah's modernization plan. He further notes that efforts to "modernize a tribal society" were structurally difficult, and the successful implementation of such an undertaking was highly uncertain. Nonetheless, he argues that Amanullah's reforms were "certain to fail" due to the political naiveté of the Amir and his advisors who believed they could introduce a comprehensive reform program to a country that lacked a "united and loyal national entity" (Poullada, 1973:153). Amanullah's failure to appreciate the power of the tribal factions and his belief that he could usurp their authority through persuasion underscores the weakness of his leadership. Instead, Amanullah should have followed the model established by his grandfather, Abdur Rahman, whereby reforms proceed only after the establishment of a strong national armed force. As well, Poullada states that Amir erred by initiating widespread reform without the requisite political infrastructure such as an efficient government bureaucracy and an effective system of communications.

Like Gregorian, Poullada states that Amanullah should have focused principally on economic and political improvements and delayed the implementation of the contentious social and religious reforms. However, he emphasizes that Amanullah's social programs were not the primary cause of the revolts as most edicts were either ignored or restricted to the prosperous urban elite who quickly adapted to the new

changes. Nevertheless, religious leaders used concerns over social modernization as an effective propaganda tool to heighten discontent among the traditional and conservative tribes. Finally, Poullada acknowledges the importance of external variables on Afghan reform and modernization. For instance, he argues that successful reform necessitated British control over the “tribes on the Indian side of the frontier” and he concludes that the reconstruction of a tribal society can become “intractable” due to the involvement of external powers (1973: 273).

The Amanullah period highlights the recurring theme in Afghan history that the country will unite against a foreign adversary and will revert to internal fragmentation once the external threat has passed. Gregorian concludes that the “lesson the modernist-nationalists drew from the triumph of traditionalism in 1929 was that reform and modernization in Afghanistan had to be gradual” (1969: 396).

## CHAPTER THREE

### AFGHANISTAN: 1929 - THE POST-TALIBAN PERIOD

#### **Introduction**

Chapter Three continues with the historical review of Afghanistan. This Chapter begins with the ascent to power of Bacha-I-Saqao in 1929 and ends with the Post-Taliban reconstruction period.

#### **The Fall of Bacha-I-Saqao and the Rise of Nadir Khan**

Tajik rule under Bacha-I-Saqao lasted nine months before the Pashtun tribes rallied behind Nadir Khan<sup>67</sup> who captured Kabul and took power in October 1929. Pashtun inability to accept a Tajik leader of Afghanistan underscored Pashtun dominance in Afghan society and the overall ethnic dimension of national power. In turn, the acceptance of Nadir Shah as King through a traditional Loya Jirga reinforced Pashtun authority and the importance of tribal lineage to Afghan power. Nadir Shah was the oldest brother of the Musahibans who were leading members of the royal Mohammadzai Barakzai, the next in line for the throne after Amanullah.

Cognizant of the factors that lead to the downfall of Amanullah, Nadir Shah consolidated power by accommodating the tribal and religious leadership. Nadir revoked Amanullah's contested social reforms and he reintroduced traditional tribal and Islamic

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<sup>67</sup> Nadir Khan's name became Nadir Shah when he ascended to the Afghan throne (Rasanayagam, 2003).

rulings such as those governing women's social status and dress<sup>68</sup>. In 1931, Nadir introduced a new constitution that included symbolic liberal overtures but in essence formalized the power of the Pashtun monarchy<sup>69</sup> with commitments to conservative Islam<sup>70</sup> (Dupree, 1973). For instance, the 1931 Constitution established the Hanafi School of Sunni Islam as Afghanistan's official legal code to be interpreted by the Jamiiyat-ul-Ulama, a body of Muslim clerics (Gregorian, 1969)<sup>71</sup>. The new King also placed tribal and religious power brokers key into key positions within the government bureaucracy (Shahrani, 1984). Nadir also reinforced the position of the tribal chieftains by empowering a national Loya Jirga, to regularly convene on issues that include tax rates, foreign policy and constitutional change (Gregorian, 1969).

The new King initiated some modest modernization efforts principally directed toward efforts to foster private enterprise and trade through road improvements, the establishment of a national bank, and agricultural development. Nadir's program of "gradualism" or "selective modernization" also included the expansion of the army to a 40,000-man force (Gregorian, 1969: 293). It is important to note that in Kabul, a pro Amanullah faction continued to press for reform and became highly critical of the new regime. The government responded harshly by imprisoning and executing key dissident leaders. In November 1933, a relative of an executed political activist assassinated Nadir Shah (Kakar, 1974).

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<sup>68</sup> The Burqa was compulsory for women and the practice of polygamy was sanctioned (Gregorian, 1969: 295).

<sup>69</sup> The 1931 Constitution institutionalized the hereditary claim of Nadir Shah's descendents to the Afghan monarchy.

<sup>70</sup> As Dupree writes, "Islam pervades the 1931 Constitution" (1973: 468).

<sup>71</sup> The Constitution also created a civil court, principally responsible for commercial disputes, to be administered by provincial governors (Dupree, 1973).

## **Zahir Shah and the Musahiban Brothers**

The Afghan throne passed to Nadir's son Zahir Shah. However, given Zahir Shah's youth, Nadir's brothers held power; first, Hashim Khan, who ruled as prime minister until 1946 followed by his brother, Shah Mahmud who held the same position until 1953. Shah Mahmud initiated a modest set of liberal reforms that included the release of political prisoners and open support for the National Assembly elections that produced the "Liberal parliament" of 1949 (Rasanayagam, 2003). The new Parliament fostered press freedoms resulting in the formation of several newspapers that were highly critical of the government. Shah Mahmud's "experiment with democracy" also witnessed the creation of several radical political groups and the formation of an active student union that collectively sought widespread political liberalization and modernization (Dupree, 1973: 494).

Faced with growing opposition, the government moved to quell dissent by reversing its reforms. It closed the newspapers and the student union and also arrested many of the key dissidents (Dupree, 1973). This period highlights the disparity in Afghan politics between the educated urban elite who sought political and social reform and the countryside populace wedded to the traditional religious and tribal values. The Royalist Musahiban oligarchy was not willing to sacrifice their hold on power by "disturbing vested tribal-feudal interests and alienating the religious establishment" (Gregorian, 1969: 397). The failure to implement the new reforms led to a power struggle within the Royal clan wherein the ruling guard yielded authority to the younger generation.

### **Sarder Daoud Khan (1953-1963)**

Musahiban rule continued under Sarder Daoud Khan, the King's cousin and brother-in-law, who became Prime Minister in 1953. However, his foreign policies overwhelmed his political agenda and ultimately lead to his downfall. The changing geopolitical landscape profoundly shaped the Musahiban rule.

The Musahiban leaders were faced with the recurring Afghan predicament; socioeconomic development was considered essential for Afghan security and independence, yet insufficient internal resources required the government to seek external economic support for modernization efforts (Newell, 1974). Given the concerns over Afghanistan's vulnerable geopolitical position their first choice was to acquire aid from "distant and politically disinterested industrial powers" (Gregorian, 1969: 396). Consequently, prior to the Second World War, Afghanistan accepted aid from Germany, Italy and Japan. However, geopolitical realities fundamentally proscribed and restricted the nature and source of the foreign assistance. Thus, following the outbreak of war, Afghanistan succumbed to pressure from the Allies, declared neutrality, and expelled all non-diplomatic individuals from the Axis countries<sup>72</sup> (Rasanayagam, 2003).

Following the Second World War, the exigencies of global geopolitics continued to dominate Afghan affairs. The decline of the British Empire and the resultant partition of India in 1947, coupled with the start of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union fundamentally recast Afghan political realities. British departure from India and the Cold War produced three interrelated dynamics. First, the Musahiban dynasty questioned the legitimacy of the 1893 Durand Line. Second, Cold War

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<sup>72</sup> Iran's refusals to grant a similar request lead to the partial takeover of that country by British and Soviet forces in August 1941 (Rasanayagam, 2003).



competition funneled Soviet and the US development aid to Afghanistan. Finally, the Afghan government became apprehensive over Soviet aggression (Newell, 1981; Rasanayagam, 2003).

First, the partition of British India reawakened Afghanistan's simmering preoccupation with the contested Durand Line that divided the Pashtun tribes between Afghanistan and British India. The Musahiban rulers, dependent upon the tribal support of the Afghan Pashtuns, rejected the legality of the 1893 border and pressed the newly created Pakistan to allow their Pashtun citizens to vote for independence. The goal of the Afghan leadership was to unite the Pakistan Pashtun tribes into one entity entitled "Pashtunistan" over which the Afghan government would exercise control. Pakistan, fearing the loss of territory and the threat an independence movement posed to its internal cohesion, rejected the pleas for Pashtun autonomy. The Pashtunistan issue fractured relations between the two countries culminating in a series of border closures by the Pakistan government.

The impact on Afghanistan's economy was staggering. Given its landlocked status, Afghanistan was dependent on transit trade through Pakistan for vital imports, its export market and significant custom's revenues. In light of Afghanistan's faltering economy, the Monarchy agreed to a comprehensive trade and aid pact with the Soviet Union in 1950 (Rasanayagam, 2003). The Pashtunistan issue thus compelled the Musahibans to overturn previous reservations regarding extensive economic relations with the Soviet Union (Goodson, 2001).

Second, the Cold War rivalry fostered a competition between the two superpowers for the provision of economic assistance in many of the world's developing

countries. The theory underlining this approach tied development aid to increased political and economic control. As Dupree states, “a nation does not accept technology without ideology” (1973:516). The Musahiban rulers, in a “radical departure” from traditional Afghan policy, allowed, “great power competition” within the country (Poullada, 1974: 42). Afghanistan was thus able to garner considerable resources by allowing the two rivals to seek regional influence through development aid.

Dupree characterizes Afghanistan in this period as an “economic Korea” for the US controlled development projects in the south while the USSR focused principally in northern Afghanistan (1973: 514). US development assistance was principally directed toward the massive and controversial Helmand Valley Dam project overseen by the Americans from 1946 until 1979 <sup>73</sup>(Cullather, 2002). In addition, US aid was directed to lower profile and less noticed areas such as education infrastructure projects (Dupree, 1973). Proximity to Afghanistan and the desire to maintain eastern hemisphere control ultimately determined Soviet dominance in the penetration of the Afghan economy. For instance, from 1956 to 1978 Soviet financial assistance totaled \$1.265 billion while US assistance from the 1950s to 1977 reached about \$470 million (Goodson, 2001: 50). Soviet and Eastern Bloc assistance largely took the form of extensive development loans, high profile improvements such as road works in Kabul, small industrial factories and major infrastructure projects related to the construction of highways, hydro-electric plants, dams, oil storage facilities and airports (Dupree, 1973). The establishment of bilateral trade agreements between the two nations offset trade losses due to Pakistan

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<sup>73</sup> The Helmand and Arghandab Authority (HAVA) was a multifaceted Dam and irrigation mega project overseen by an US engineering firm, designed to provide energy and foster agricultural redevelopment of the Helmond River Valley. Instead of generating widespread economic renewal, the Helmand Project resulted in extensive soil salinization and the attendant loss of arable land, over saturation of land, modest crop production and a massive drain on government expenditure (Cullather, 2002).

border closures and heightened trade dependency with the Soviet Union. By 1978, the Soviet Union was Afghanistan's chief trading partner (Goodson, 2001).

Third, the strategic void created by the British withdrawal heightened Afghanistan's need for economic and military growth to offset the Soviet threat. The Musahiban rulers first sought to gain military support from a distant source and thus made direct appeals to the United States to not only provide such assistance but to also guarantee Afghan territorial integrity (Poullada, 1974). The US declined both requests due to fears of a superpower confrontation as well as concerns that military support to Afghanistan would threaten the strategically important US – Pakistan relationship (Newell, 1981). Moreover, Daoud's request for US military support was met with an invitation for Afghanistan to join a regional security bloc against the Soviet Union (Rasanayagam, 2003). Daoud, seeking to preserve Amanullah's policy of "positive neutralism" refused to become strategically aligned to either superpower but sought to continue positive economic relations with both nations. Daoud, "outraged" at the US rebuff, but insistent upon building a military force to counter internal and external threats, reversed traditional Afghan policy and succumbed to Soviet pressures for military assistance (Rasanayagam, 2003: 29).

Daoud thus ushered in a new era in Afghan history by initiating a process that modernized the Afghan armed forces with Soviet financial credit, weapons and equipment and training of all forces including the officer corps. From 1955 to 1978, Soviet aid totaling \$1.25 billion transformed the Afghan military into a modern force. The "Sovietization" of the Afghan armed forces also presaged larger strategic

consequences, for as Newell writes, “from this point onward, Soviet intervention in the political system was ensured” (Goodson, 1981: 51; Newell, 1981: 41).

Initially, Daoud’s foreign policy complimented his internal program of reform. It can be argued that Daoud’s chief concern was to strengthen the authority of the Monarchy over the fractious Afghan tribes. This required the establishment of a strong national army. In turn, to build such a force required the influx of foreign capital and resources. To offset internal fears of foreign domination, Daoud raised the issue of Pashtunistan to rally popular support and provide the requisite backdrop to justify Soviet and Western aid (Poullada, 1974).

Heeding the lessons from Amanullah’s failed reforms, Daoud’s modernization program emphasized economic progress and cautious social change enforced by a strong military. In terms of social reform Daoud held progressive beliefs regarding the emancipation of women, however, his approach was subtle. Rather than issue a law mandating the ban of purdah (seclusion) and the burqa (veil) Daoud led by example. During an official ceremony in Kabul, Daoud, and an official delegation appeared in public with their wives and daughters who were unveiled (Dupree, 1973). The public reaction in Kabul was “electrifying” prompting the voluntary removal of burqas among the urban elite (Rasanayagam, 2003: 29). The religious establishment immediately condemned such ‘un-Islamic’ actions<sup>74</sup>. In response, Daoud stated that purdah and the

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<sup>74</sup> Dupree comments on how social reforms in this period continued to threaten the religious establishment: “Not all religious leaders accepted the voluntary abolition of the veil and other reforms, however, because each intrusion into their customary power erodes their secular influence. They oppose secular education, for in the past they have controlled the educational institutions; they called land-reform anti-Islamic, for they own large tracts of land in the name of waqf (religious endowments); they oppose a constitutionally accepted church and state, for such a move diminishes their temporal power” (1973:35).

burqa were not sanctioned by Islamic beliefs. He arrested several rebellious clerics and he quelled a riot in Kandahar with force (Rasanayagam, 2003; Poullada, 1974).

Daoud's economic reforms produced mixed results. He facilitated the development of necessary infrastructure, and created an impetus to a small but expanding urban middle class. However, the "majority of rural people and urban poor" witnessed either adverse conditions or no improvements (Shahrani, 1984: 37). Nonetheless, there were two key areas where Daoud's reforms conferred a lasting effect; education and public administration. Financed principally through foreign aid, Daoud expanded and secularized the education system increasing significantly the number of schools and student attendance. Commensurate with education reform, the government expanded its administrative capacity to provide employment opportunities for the new educated professional class. The rational underpinning these twin reforms was to create an efficient bureaucracy educated by, and loyal to the national government.

However, Daoud did not accompany his economic and social reforms with institutional political change. Indeed, Daoud led an authoritarian regime with power concentrated in the oligarchic Monarchy. Rather than developing a loyal faction, tensions grew with the development of an elite educated in Western thought who demanded a diffusion of political power. Consequently, in addition to the traditional tribal and religious opposition, the Monarchy faced an emergent political entity that challenged their authoritarian rule (Shahrani, 1984). As a result, a new dynamic faced the Monarchy in the Musahiban era that would dominate Afghan politics until the fall of the Durrani royalty: "It must either suppress the democratic demands and run the risk of failure of the

modernization program or it must liberalize and share its tight hold on political power” (Poullada, 1974: 45).

In addition to growing internal challenges to his rule, Daoud faced an international crisis that ultimately forced his resignation. Daoud’s forceful advocacy of Pashtunistan prompted the Pakistan government to close the borders to both Afghan trade and the transit of Afghan nomads. Official relations between the two countries were severed in 1961 and the Afghan economy plummeted. Daoud resigned in 1963 under pressure from the King.

### **King Zahir Shah (1963-1973)**

King Zahir Shah assumed power and ruled Afghanistan from 1963 to 1973. This period represents the last decade the Afghan monarchy held power and it was also marked by a modest attempt to introduce democratic reform. The King’s efforts at liberalization were inaugurated with the 1964 constitution. The constitution granted equal rights to all Afghan citizens; it instituted the primacy of secular law; it established Islam as the national religion, and it created a new parliament formed from an upper and lower house (Dupree, 1973). Elections were held in 1965 and 1969.

Several dynamics collectively served to create widespread dissatisfaction with Zahir Shah’s rule. First, like Shah Mahmud’s experience, Afghan intellectuals were critical of the limited nature of the King’s reforms. Specifically, the division of authority between the executive and legislative bodies drew criticism as members of the powerful cabinet were not drawn from the elected lower house but were instead appointed and controlled by the monarchy. In 1965, riots in broke out in Kabul after the Monarchy

selected a cabinet comprised of members of the previous administration. Demonstrators had expected a change from the corrupt and conservative old guard (Rasanayagam, 2003). As well, while the constitution allowed for the establishment of political parties, the government did not formalize this right through legislation. Consequently, the new parliament was comprised of individuals whose allegiance was tied to local factions and ethnic groupings rather than loyalties based on party ideology and membership (Poullada, 1973). There was a strong demand to institute political parties as a means to foster a new locus of power in Afghanistan. After the 1965 riots, the government limited its modernization efforts and allowed the liberal reforms to “stagnate” (Newell, 1981: 44). Afghanistan’s elite did not embrace the measured reforms, and became increasingly embittered by government corruption (Newell, 1981).

Second, deteriorating economic conditions contributed to domestic unrest. Three key factors triggered economic stagnation. First, Afghanistan experienced a widespread drought that severely handicapped the predominately agricultural based economy. Second, high interest costs on foreign loans and capital repayments taxed government resources.<sup>75</sup> Finally, the influx of foreign capital began to diminish severely during this period (Brant, 1974). This last factor was of particular significance. By the 1960s, Afghanistan was firmly established as a “rentier state” whereby the operation of government and the development of infrastructure were wholly contingent on foreign support. For instance, from 1958 to 1968, 40 percent of all government expenses were derived from external sources (Rubin, 1995). In the late 1960s and early 1970s both the

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<sup>75</sup> Debt service costs increased from \$7 million in 1966 to close to \$26 million by 1972 (Brant, 1974).

Soviet Union and the United States significantly reduced their aid and development support to Afghanistan<sup>76</sup> due to several factors<sup>77</sup>.

Afghanistan's dependency on foreign aid coupled with the variability and uncertainty of its provision highlights the challenges faced by the Afghan state in its efforts to modernize the country. Moreover, in the 1970s the shortfall in revenues coalesced with several factors to produce a combustible situation. As mentioned, much of the aid from western sources was designated to expand the Afghan education system. As a result, under Daoud's rule and continuing through the King's reign in the 1960s, Afghanistan witnessed an explosive growth in education facilities and its student population<sup>78</sup>. Student dissent heightened in this period for several reasons. First, many of the students were drawn from rural communities and the new "educated proletariat" could not identify with either their traditional community or the Afghan elite (Magnus, 1974: 60). Frustration mounted within this group as access to employment was often based on class or ethnic associations (Shahrani, 1984).

Second, shortfalls in foreign aid curtailed the expansion of government and severely limited employment opportunities (Yousefzai, 1974). The government bureaucracy represented the traditional source of employment for educated Afghans and the few positions that were available in the early 1970s were usually granted to the foreign educated elite (Dupree, 1973). Thus, discontent rose as traditional ethnic and

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<sup>76</sup> Brant comments that net foreign aid to Afghanistan "declined from a high of \$95million in 1965 to about \$16million in 1970" (1974: 106).

<sup>77</sup> Newell credits four factors which led to a decrease in Superpower aid to Afghanistan: First, US involvement in global hotspots such as Vietnam and the Middle East subordinated other external commitments; second, domestic lobbies sought to lessen foreign aid; third, both powers believed their commitments ended with the completion of their infrastructure projects; and fourth, the rapprochement in superpower relations during the early 1970s led to a reduction in economic competition in developing countries (1974).

<sup>78</sup> Magnus comments that "between 1950 and 1965 the total number of schools and students increased by 400 percent" (1974: 60).



social power structures dominated access to key positions. Third, through education the Afghan students became exposed to a wide range of perspectives and ideologies that heightened their demand for socio-political change. Emboldened by their status as the educated class they became inspired to promulgate and advance new revolutionary ideas (Rubin, 1995). Consequently, Kabul became populated with large numbers of unemployed, revolutionary, disenfranchised and angry student graduates. As Dupree notes the large student population began to “channel their resentment into growing political activity” (1973: 657).

The divisions in the student population were reflected in the disparate political groupings that were subsequently established. Consequently, student opposition did not fuse into a united political front. Instead, Afghan political resistance during the 1960s can be broadly separated into two principle factions: first, communist-nationalist’s organizations and second, Islamic oriented groupings (Shahrani, 1984).

Leftist intellectuals formed a number of informal political groupings based on ethnic and tribal associations (Rasanayagam, 2003). The most prominent group, called the People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) was established in 1965. Secretary General Nur Mohammad Taraki and his deputy Hafizullah Amin led the PDPA. By 1967, the PDPA split into two rival wings named after their respective newspapers; The Khalq (Masses) led by Taraki and Amin and The Parcham (Banner) led by Babrak Karmal. The two factions reflected Afghanistan’s rural – urban divide as Khalq appealed to mainly Pashtun speaking provincial youth while Parcham were largely Farsi speaking urbanites. Many of the key leaders from both factions benefited from Soviet military and educational support (Rubin, 1995).

Islamic political organizations also developed in this period to offset the influence of the secular Marxist groups. Islamic students formed the “organization of Muslim youth” that promulgated a militant, conservative and anti-Western doctrine. In 1973, Muslim youth established a leadership council called the Jamiat-i Islami (Islamic Society) led by the influential professor Burnhanuddin Rabbani (Roy, 1986). A second group known as the Hizb- i Islami Gulbuddin (HIG) (Islamic Party) separated from Jamiat based on ethnic and ideological differences. HIG, led by the Ghilzai Pashtun Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, advocated a radical doctrine centring on Islamic revolution and the overthrow the Monarchy. The Tajik Rabbani pursued a more moderate and gradual approach premised on the ultimate Islamic control of the state through the slow acquisition of military and government positions (Rasanayagam, 2003).

In 1971, Marxist and Islamic groups clashed in street demonstrations heightening the already volatile atmosphere. During this period of widespread dissent, Daoud developed a close relationship with Parcham leaders and their associates in the military. In 1973, while King Zahir Shah was in Italy, Daoud backed by the PDPA, dissolved the Durrani monarchy and instated himself as President of the Republic of Afghanistan (Goodson, 2001). Daoud’s overthrow of Zahir Shah not only signaled the end of the Durrani monarchy but also the first instance where the government’s fall was not caused by a rural-tribal insurgency but rather by the newly educated elite who filled the Soviet - trained Afghan military and the Parchum leadership (Rubin, 1995).

### **The Daoud Republic (1973-1978)**

Internally, two key features marked Daoud's republic: gradual reform and authoritarianism. Daoud initiated a series of reforms noted for their moderation. As Dupree notes, he "charted a reasonable path for Afghanistan" (1984: 58). For instance, in 1975 Daoud initiated modest agrarian reforms that entailed limits on rural property ownership in an effort to counter feudal control over landholdings. He reimbursed landowners for expropriated property and lands were redistributed through government sales to those with financial means (Rasanayagam, 2003). Daoud's pragmatic approach to land reform was reflected in his comment that any "measure for the sudden overcoming of centuries of backwardness and the immediate reforming of all affairs is a futile and immature act" (Rasanayagam, 2003: 62).

Daoud's authoritarian rule was reflected by his suppression of all active and potential dissent. He imprisoned and executed many potential rivals, removed Parcham supporters from key positions and demoted many others to positions in the countryside, and quelled open rebellion with force. Daoud also targeted the Islamic political groups, as their stated goal was to overturn Durrani rule and create an Islamic state. Daoud's repression of the Islamic organizations forced their exile to Peshawar, Pakistan (Shahrani, 1984). His governance style also reflected that of an "old-style tribal khan" as he concentrated authority and placed friends and "sycophants" in top positions (Dupree, 1984: 60). Thus, the emergent political class of educated Marxists and Islamists were sidelined under Daoud's dictatorial regime.

Externally, Daoud cooled relations with the USSR and sought to offset Soviet support by developing military and financial aid from alternative sources such as Iran,

India and Saudi Arabia (Dupree, 1984). His twin actions of marginalizing the PDPA and reducing ties with the Soviets mobilized the Afghan communists into action. The USSR encouraged the rival Parcham and Khalqi factions to form an alliance and the temporarily united PDPA gained strength and planned the overthrow of the Daoud republic (Urban, 1988; Rasanayagam, 2003).

### **The Saur Revolution (1978-1979)**

In the Saur Revolution of April 1978, military units tied to the PDPA murdered Daoud and the PDPA established the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (DRA). Initially, the newly created government included both factions of the PDPA, however, Khalq quickly gained effective power and removed Parcham members from the government. Khalq's Taraki and Amin held the top two posts as Prime Minister and deputy prime minister respectively while Parcham's Karmal was demoted and sent to Czechoslovakia as Ambassador (Tanner, 2002).

The PDPA identified themselves as the successors to King Amanullah and promulgated a radical program of socioeconomic reform designed to transform Afghanistan into a modern state. Adhering to the precepts of Marxist thought, the DRA sought to instate ethnic<sup>79</sup>, gender and class equality to the Afghan populace. A series of decrees articulated the government's ambitious agenda entailing measures such as agrarian reform, improvements in education, and the emancipation of women (Roy, 1985). The implementation of the PDPA's radical program engendered bitter resistance

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<sup>79</sup> Despite the pronouncements by the DRA to "bring ethnic equality to Afghanistan", ethnic factionalism pervaded PDPA rule. The Khalq faction was led by Ghilzai Pashtuns who have traditionally contested Durrani dominance of central power. Indeed, Newell argues that ethnicity underscored Daoud's overthrow by the PDPA as animosity between the two groups derived from "an ancient rivalry that was essentially tribal" (1981: 73). The overthrow of Daoud has been characterized as "the Ghilzay's revenge" (Roy, 1991).

as it “struck at the very heart of the socioeconomic structure of Afghanistan’s rural society” (Goodson, 2001:56). For instance, the PDPA’s agrarian reform was ambitious in scope, poorly implemented and widely opposed<sup>80</sup>. As Rais notes, the social and educational reforms, while laudatory in intention, were also too far-reaching for a population that had “lived with its customs for centuries” (1997: 56). The social reforms were also antithetical to a conservative society that resented state intrusions into family matters. Consequently, the dramatic implementation of social reforms on an “unwilling population” generated widespread “opposition and resistance” (Rais, 1997: 56).

The breadth of the reform was matched by the limitations of the PDPA. It held a small membership base, was politically divided and promulgated a foreign, non-Islamic ideology. As Urban comments, with its “tiny constituency” the PDPA “hoped to change an independent, obstinate, conservative people” (1988: 2034). Indeed, the PDPA failed to understand the complexities of Afghan tribal society as they hoped to bypass the traditional powerbrokers and appeal directly to the peasant population. Since Afghan loyalties were directed primarily to their tightly ordered kinship groups, government strategies designed to bridge the bonds of community only emboldened the local

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<sup>80</sup> The PDPA program of agrarian reform was designed to modernize Afghanistan and transform the Afghan rural economy. It also sought to gain the support of the Afghan peasantry (who represented 81 per cent of the rural population) by equalizing economic relations between landowners and landless workers. The program contained three key elements: First, the elimination of the traditional mortgage system through the cancellation of debt and mortgages. This measure was directed to assist deeply indebted Afghan peasants who mortgaged their small landholdings to obtain credit. Second, limits on the amount of acreage held per individual and third, the redistribution of land to Afghan peasants. The reforms were destined to fail principally because they reawakened traditional rural urban divisions. The rural community resented the intrusion into their affairs by the central government that failed to understand local socio-economic structures. The reforms were introduced and enforced by educated urbanites noted for their inexperience, condescension and their Marxist rhetoric. As well, the transfer of ownership from landowner to peasant ran counter to tribal customs and Islamic views regarding private property. Thus, the reforms alienated landholders, peasants and the religious establishment. The reforms also engendered great opposition because they cancelled the local method of financial and property exchange without providing a new system of rural credit. Finally, discontent rose as the dislocation caused by the new reforms led to a decline in farm productivity and a resultant shortage of food (Roy, 1986; Rasanayagam, 2003).

community against the government. Thus, in a pattern that echoes throughout Afghan history, the modernization efforts of the central government stimulated the opposition of traditional forces in the countryside: “As the idealists in Kabul unveiled their programme they succeeded in alienating the key social force in the country: leadership at the village level. These leaders, whether spiritual, tribal or landowners, could all agree on the threat to their interests posed by the ‘communists’ in the big city” (Urban, 1988: 203).

Finally, discontent grew as the government, aware of Amanullah’s failed approach of persuasion, suppressed tribal and Islamic leaders and implemented their dramatic reforms with force (Newell, 1981). Mass arrests, imprisonment, torture and executions were widespread culminating in the disappearance of between 50, 000 and 100,000 people under PDPA rule (Roy, 1985).

In response, local uprisings occurred in several non-Pashtun areas of the country signaling ethnic discontent toward the PDPA regime (Rasanayagam, 2003). Opposition soon became widespread and the rural population broke into open rebellion in twenty-five out of twenty-eight provinces (Newell, 1981). In March 1979, insurgents briefly seized Herat, the country’s second most important urban center during a bloody revolt. The Afghan army, previously numbering 100,000 men strong, lost two thirds of its force due to PDPA purges and continual defections and desertions (Rasanayagam, 2003). The uprising took a regional dimension as the Peshawar-based Islamic groups declared jihad on the PDPA government and began initial guerrilla operations against government forces. In September 1979, Amin murdered Taraki and gained power.

During this period, the Soviets had increased military and economic support to the PDPA regime but had declined requests by Taraki for direct military intervention <sup>81</sup>(Cold War International History Project, 2005). However, the Soviet position regarding an intervention altered after Amin's ascension to power. The Soviets, who had historically disliked and distrusted Amin, became deeply concerned that Amin's increased contacts with the US officials signified an Afghan political realignment "toward the west" (Cold War International History Project, 2005: 64). Amin's suspected western advances coupled with the deteriorating position of the PDPA government against the tribal insurgency raised alarming concerns within the Politburo over the loss of its client government in Afghanistan. The notion of a US friendly state on its southern border constituted a fundamental security threat to the Soviet Union. Moreover, official Soviet policy as articulated in the Brezhnev Doctrine declared that the Soviet Union would enforce the preservation of any communist government under threat of capitulation (Roy, 1991).

### **The Soviet Union's Invasion of Afghanistan and the Soviet-Afghan War**

In December 1979, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan. Soviet Special Forces murdered Amin and the Parcham head, Babrak Karmal, was instated as the new Afghan leader. The Soviet Union initially planned on a three-year military commitment to enable the "moderate" Karmal government to strengthen the Afghan national army, gain local

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<sup>81</sup> In a meeting with Taraki and prominent Soviet leaders on March 20 1979, Kosygin articulated the Soviet refusal to commit military forces stating that a Soviet intervention would result in "unfavorable multipronged consequences" such as a wider imperial conflict, a Vietnam-like quagmire as well as an intractable civil war. In short, Kosygin told Taraki that with the introduction of Soviet forces "the situation in your country would not only not improve, but would worsen" (Cold War International History Project, 2005: 37).

support and suppress the rebellion (Jalali and Grau, 2000; Roy, 1991: 17). However, instead of pacifying the country through moderate governance, the Soviet invasion heralded a new dimension to the Afghan insurgency by elevating the scale and the scope of the conflict both internally and externally.

Internally, the tribal insurgency against the PDPA regime grew from a series of widespread yet locally focused uprisings to a national movement unified by Islam and Afghan nationalism towards the defeat of the invading, infidel foreign force (Roy, 1991). As Tanner notes, the Soviet invasion unified the disparate Afghan factions with a “political purpose that cut across tribal, ethnic, geographic and economic lines” (2002: 243).

Externally, the Soviet invasion internationalized the Afghan conflict. A new ‘Great Game’ emerged where Afghanistan became a Cold War battleground between the United States and the Soviet Union. The US condemned the Afghan invasion as Soviet expansionism and harbored deep concerns regarding Soviet consolidation of territory near the Persian Gulf and its vital oil reserves<sup>82</sup>. Moreover, the 1979 Iranian Revolution overturned a US friendly government and the resulting strategic void heightened US regional interest (Tanner, 2002). The United States led a coalition of disparate countries that include Pakistan, Iran, Saudi Arabia and China, which established a conduit of aid, weapons and financial support to the Afghan resistance.

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<sup>82</sup> Official US policy, initially promulgated through the Carter Doctrine, stated that the US would protect its interests in the Persian Gulf with military force (Roy, 1991). President Carter declared that the Soviet invasion represented the “greatest threat to world peace since the Second World War” (Rubin, 1995: 30). The US response to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan escalated under President Reagan. The Reagan Doctrine declared that the US would counter Soviet expansionism on a global basis through the support of the local resistance or “freedom fighters” (Rasanayagaqm, 2003; Roy, 1991).



External involvement in the Afghan conflict conferred two chief effects. First, the commitment of external players to the defeat of Soviet-DRA forces ensured a steady and reliable flow of military supplies and modern weaponry to the rebels or Mujahedeen. Collectively, the Afghan resistance received over \$10 billion in foreign aid during the Afghan-Soviet conflict<sup>83</sup> (Rashid, 2000). The impact of foreign support to the Afghan resistance was profound as this commitment constituted a central factor in the ultimate overthrow of the DRA government and the withdrawal of Soviet troops. Second, because each external benefactor pursued their own strategic and regional goals, they allied themselves with differing factions within Afghanistan to realize their own interests. Since the Mujahedeen factions were largely ordered around tribal and ethnic lines, the nature of foreign support directly contributed to a fractured Afghan polity. This section will briefly overview the involvement of Pakistan and Iran in the Soviet-Afghan conflict to illustrate how the national interests of the supporting countries reinforced the ethnic divisions within the Mujahedeen.

The Afghan resistance movement comprised three chief groupings: active fighters in the field known as the Mujahedeen or “holy warriors” led by local commanders and a number of Islamic parties centered in Peshawar, Pakistan as well as Shi’a groupings based in Iran. While Iran was a regional participant in supplying the Mujahedeen, Pakistan provided the principle staging area for resistance support.

The international efforts to supply the resistance movement entered three distinct stages. First, the CIA supplied weapons and other essential supplies with US and Saudi funds and transferred them to Pakistan. Second, the Pakistan Inter-Services Intelligence

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<sup>83</sup> The United States and Saudi Arabia were the principle financial supporters of the Afghan resistance. The US contributed between \$4 and 5 billion from 1980 to 1992 while the Saudis provided almost \$4 billion to the Afghan resistance (Rashid, 2000).

Agency (ISI) transported the weapons to storage facilities close to Afghanistan. Third, the Islamic parties arranged the delivery of the supplies to the Mujahedeen commanders in Afghanistan (Rubin, 1995). Consequently, Pakistan was the central player controlling the shipments of arms into Afghanistan and thus played a pivotal role in shaping the nature of the resistance movement. As a result, the makeup and structure of the Afghan resistance was inextricably tied to Pakistan's security interests.

Pakistan's primary goal was to expel Soviet military forces through support to the Mujahedeen. Soviet occupied Afghanistan innately threatened the security of Pakistan due to the concern of continued Russian expansion. As Tanner writes, "after Afghanistan, Pakistan's own barren Baluchistan province was the only remaining barrier between the Soviets and the Arabian Sea" (2002: 250). As well, ties between the Soviet Union and India dictated that a Soviet sponsored Afghan government would garner Pakistan's opposition (Roy, 1986). Moreover, General Zia benefited from his anti-Soviet stance by bargaining for considerable US financial support, legitimizing his rule internationally by opposing Communist aggression and gaining internal support from key power elites within Pakistan (Rais, 1997).

Pakistan's second key goal was to influence the shape of the post-Soviet Afghan government. Pakistan's involvement in Afghanistan affairs and its desire to sponsor a pro Pakistan government was centred on multiple strategic and regional interests. Pakistan desired to create a "pliable pro-Pakistan Pashtun Mujaheddin" proxy state to stem Afghan nationalism and mitigate calls for "Pastunistan" (Roy, 1991). Pakistan reasoned that it would have greater control over a Pashtun led Afghan state given the multiple Pashtun

associations between the two countries. This rationale highlights the regional nature of Afghanistan's ethnic fragmentation.

Strategically, Pakistan hoped to establish a Sunni Islamic partnership with Afghanistan to counter three regional adversaries: India, the Soviet Union and Shia Iran. Pakistan's ongoing rivalry with India dominated Pakistan's foreign policy considerations. With a hostile neighbor on its eastern border, Pakistan sought to create a friendly government on its western flank. In military terms, an allied regime in Afghanistan would provide Pakistan the necessary "strategic depth" in the event of open hostilities with India (Rashid, 2000: 186). Pakistan's long and narrow configuration renders it innately vulnerable to a sudden and rapid ground attack from India. Strategic partnership with Afghanistan would provide the requisite defensive base or "military hinterland" to both absorb the shock of an Indian assault and to marshal a Pakistani counter attack. (Weaver, 2002: 79).

In order to facilitate Pakistan's goals towards Afghanistan President Zia and the ISI exercised considerable control over the Afghan resistance. This control was manifested in several fashions. First, Pakistan demanded that the Mujahadeen ethnic factions assign themselves to one of the Sunni Islamic parties as a precondition for aid and supplies (Jalali and Grau, 2000). Second, in 1984, Zia stipulated that the disparate Islamic groups coalesce into a formal alliance of seven separate parties<sup>84</sup>. The Islamic parties were differentiated into three moderate and four fundamentalist factions<sup>85</sup>. The

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<sup>84</sup> Prior to Pakistan's consolidation of the Islamic parties, the Mujahadeen had "formed about 100 different parties who ran sixty offices in Peshawar" (Glatzer, 1998: 179).

<sup>85</sup> Weaver states that the division of the two groups into moderate and radical factions is questionable given the violent tendencies of both groups: "Few of us who covered the war were at all certain who the 'moderates' were. All seven of the groups were a cantankerous and deadly lot, who had quarreled with each other for years. In some cases they killed each other on Afghanistan's battlefields" (2002: 79).

moderate parties included one tied to the traditional Afghan Islamic leadership while the remaining two were Pashtun nationalist groupings loyal to the royal Afghan lineage. The fundamentalist parties include Hekmatyar's Hizb-i-Islami Gulbuddin (HIG), Rabbanni's Jamiat-I-Islami, a radical anti-Shi'a faction led by Abdur Rasoul Sayyaf and finally a second Hizb-I-Islami splinter group led by Yunus Khalis called Hizb-i-Islami Khalis (HIK) (Rubin, 1995).

The composition of the alliance into seven distinct parties accorded with Pakistan's strategic interest. In short, Zia sought to keep the Mujahedeen effective yet fragmented. Thus, while the Pakistan government channeled prodigious amounts of aid and military supplies to the Mujahedeen, Islamabad also obstructed efforts by the resistance to consolidate the various Islamic groups into one integrated body. The ascendancy of a powerful and cohesive Afghan resistance could only threaten Pakistan's rule over its Pashtun territory (Roy, 1991). Moreover, as Rashid indicates, a fragmented resistance heightened its competition for support and dependence on Pakistan:

Pakistan only helped fuel this process of disunity...by maintaining a disunited movement with no single leader, Zia was able to keep the Mujahedeen leaders obliged to Pakistan and Western largesse...This disunity was to have a profound effect on Afghanistan's future inability to achieve a consensus government" (2000: 96).

Consequently, Pakistan provided assistance to all parties to ensure continued leverage among all factions. Nonetheless, Hekmatyar's Hizb-I-Islami (HIG) received the largest amount of Pakistani aid drawing in over 50 per cent of all allocated funds (Weaver, 2002). There were a number of reasons explaining Hekmatyar's preferred status with Pakistan. First, HIG was predominantly Pashtun whose membership was drawn

largely from the Ghilzai tribe. The Ghilzai Pastuns shared multiple ties with Pakistan as they inhabited lands along the eastern Afghan border near Pakistan and they constituted a large segment of the Pakistan-based refugees (Goodson, 2001). Second, Hekmatyar's radicalism emphasized Muslim theocracy over Afghan nationalism thus alleviating Pakistan's concerns over the Pashtunistan issue. Third, Hekmatyar was the most "anti-Indian Afghan politician" with close ties to the influential Pakistan party, Jam'at-I-Islami (Rubin, 1995: 40).

The ISI's preference for Hekmatyar was centred on the strategic interests of Pakistan. A body of critics challenged the rational underpinning the CIA-ISI effort to supply Hekmatyar for two chief reasons. First, Hekmatyar's battlefield performance was questionable and secondly, Hekmatyar's radicalism precluded his ability to develop a broad-based coalition government (Rubin, 1995).

Like Pakistan, Iran's involvement in Afghan affairs during the Soviet occupation reflected its own national security concerns and resulted in the support of proxy groups based on ethnic and religious ties. Iran supported the Afghan resistance. However, its assistance was modest for three principal reasons. First, the Iran-Iraq war from 1981 to 1988 occupied Iran's attention and resources. Second, Iran's animosity towards the United States precluded its willingness to support a US led coalition against the Soviet invaders<sup>86</sup>. Third, religious and ethnic imperatives proscribed a limited Iran role in anti-Soviet campaign as Sunni Pashtun dominance of the resistance movement dissuaded Shia Iran from more active participation. Moreover, Pakistani and Saudi sponsorship of the fundamentalist Sunni Islamic groups further distanced Iran from greater involvement.

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<sup>86</sup> Moreover, the US refused to supply Iran with resources to fund the Iranian centred Mujahedeed or provide aid to the large Afghan refugee population in Iran. As Rashid writes in the 1980s "the USA effectively blocked off Iran from the outside world on Afghanistan" (Rashid, 2000: 198).

Iran encouraged the consolidation of the disparate Shia factions in Afghanistan into eight parties in order to embolden its position within the resistance and to heighten Iran's influence in Afghan affairs: "The goal that Iran seems to be pursuing is to strengthen its control over the Shi'a minorities and to use them as pawns in a policy of regional expansion, for, in spite of its fine phrases, Iranian policy is more a manifestation of Persian nationalism than a universal revolution" (Roy, 1986: 213). However, like Pakistan, Iran preferred multiple parties instead of one cohesive group as "Hazara loyalty to Tehran was viewed as more important than unity among themselves" (Rashid, 2000: 198). Again, as Rubin notes Pakistan and Iran's policy of a disunited resistance "intensified the existing social fragmentation" within Afghanistan (1995: 39).

### **The Soviet-Afghan war**

The Soviet-Afghan war underwent a number of phases. In the first years of the war, Soviet forces secured the principle urban centers and airfields, established strategic outposts in most Afghan provinces and gained control of the country's central ring road. A classic insurgency campaign developed reflecting the asymmetrical nature of the opposing forces. The Soviets controlled large fortified centres and the main transportation routes while the Mujahedeen held over 75 per cent of rural Afghanistan (Goodson, 2001). The Mujahedeen attacked from mountain positions utilizing typical guerrilla tactics such as ambushes, sabotage, night raids and small scale hit and run operations.

Soviet actions in this first phase followed the doctrine designed for a large scale European ground war: offensives marked by initial artillery bombardment followed by large armored column assaults along the main highway routes and key strategic valley

basins. This approach proved ineffective for counter-insurgency operations in Afghanistan as it warned the Mujahedeen of impending attacks and the Soviet division-sized ground forces lacked the flexibility and training to counter the small, mobile Afghan guerrillas in a mountainous environment. As Jalali and Grau note, the Afghan terrain “dictates different tactics, force structure and equipment from those in a conventional war” (2000: xx). Consequently, the Soviets suffered high casualty rates and failed to hold large tracts of conquered territory (Roy, 1991).

The Soviet Union recognized they could not achieve a quick victory and that the current approach was failing. Moreover, the Afghan army proved unreliable in combat, weakened by defections<sup>87</sup> and unable to contain the rebellion on their own (Rais, 1997). Gradually, the Soviets escalated the conflict by introducing improvements in weapons, organization and tactics to meet the requirements of counter-insurgency warfare. Helicopters, airborne units and night operations were employed to increase the tempo of operations, access remote guerrilla strong points and to block Mujahedeen escape routes. Organizational changes such as combined arms integration, the use of smaller units, and heightened autonomy for junior officers coupled with specialized training also improved the effectiveness of both Soviet -DRA forces. By 1984, Soviet strategy evolved from the fortification of cities, highways and outposts to an intensive counter insurgency campaign designed to target aggressively the Mujahedeen (Goodson, 2001). The new tactical and strategic modifications reflected a growing commitment by the Soviet Union to secure

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<sup>87</sup> Desertions plagued the Afghan Army and remained constant during the entire conflict representing 18.2% of the force in 1984 and 19.3% in 1988 (Giustozzi, 2000). Mass desertions of individual units were commonplace. Border Troops experienced higher rates due to the intensity of the fighting and heightened escape opportunities near the border. Ethnicity and tribal membership represented a key causal factor explaining desertion. For instance, the propensity to desert was highest among Pashtun soldiers belonging to the same tribe as the rebel forces. Conversely, desertion rates lessened when soldiers fought in areas populated by different ethnic groups than their own (Giustozzi, 2000).

Afghanistan and defeat the Mujahedeen through a war of attrition (Roy, 1991; Urban, 1988).

A key strategic element of the war centred on the destruction of the opposing force's logistical networks. The Mujahedeen became proficient in attacking Soviet convoy movements along the main communication routes. Soviet efforts to destroy the Mujahedeen supply network centered on two distinct enterprises. First, the Soviets embarked on a scorched earth policy directed at the destruction of all significant rural infrastructure. Towards this end, Soviet forces wiped out entire villages, destroyed crops and livestock, irrigation structures and agricultural facilities (Jalali and Grau, 2000). This concerted policy of destruction led to the 'rubbleization' of Afghanistan and stimulated the largest exodus of refugees since the Second World War (Goodson, 2001; Roy, 1991). By 1990, almost 3.3 million people sought refuge in Pakistan while Iran held 2.94 million refugees (Rasanayagam, 2003:111).

Second, by 1985 the Soviets had succeeded in destroying and depopulating the key agricultural hamlets in rural Afghanistan. Thus, the Mujahedeen could no longer rely on internal Afghan resources for logistical support and were forced to rely on the transport of provisions from Pakistan. The Afghan resistance carried war materials with them and stockpiled bulk supplies at storage depots within Afghanistan. The Soviet interdiction strategy transferred from scorched earth to the direct targeting of Mujahedeen supply lines and storage outposts within the country. Given the formidable terrain of the Afghan Pakistan border area, Soviet efforts to restrict the supply of soldiers, goods and war material were largely futile. In 1986, at the height of the Soviet interdiction activity, over two thirds of Pakistan war material was successfully delivered to the Mujahedeen



soldiers (Roy, 1991: 22). As Roy notes, the Soviet Union's inability to contain border traffic constituted "the most significant Soviet setback of the war" (1991: 22). In addition, the seemingly ceaseless flow of traffic contributed to the difficulties faced by the Soviet Union in containing the growth of the Mujahedeen. The international commitment to finance and supply the anti-Soviet effort ensured that the Mujahedeen received a prodigious supply of men, money and war materials. Moreover, the pool of available fighters seemed boundless due to the numbers of soldiers drawn regionally from the burgeoning refugee camps and internationally from the global call for jihad<sup>88</sup>. The safe haven provided by Pakistan was a key-contributing factor allowing the Mujahedeen to field an average force size of between 150,000 and 200,000 soldiers throughout the conflict (Roy, 1991).

The period from 1985 to 1986 represented a critical turning point in the war. In 1985 Mikhail Gorbachev's ascension to power in the Soviet Union fundamentally altered the course of the Soviet-Afghan war. Upon taking office, Gorbachev directed the key Soviet Generals to "bring the war to a resolution" within a year (Goodson, 2001:69). Soviet-DRA forces dramatically increased the tempo and scale of offensive operations against the Mujahedeen resulting in the "bloodiest year in the war" (Jalali and Grau, 2000: xviii). The Soviet Union, recognizing the vital import of the ISI support to Mujahedeen forces targeted Pakistan directly with air and artillery attacks, terrorist actions, tribal payoffs and a propaganda campaign (Goodson, 2001: 68). However, these collective measures only increased the intensity and scale of combat while failing to

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<sup>88</sup> The Soviet-Afghan War fostered an Islamic global crusade, attracting around thirty-five thousand foreign fighters from 43 Islamic nations to fight the 'infidel Soviets' (Rashid, 2000).

destroy Mujahedeen garrisons, contain the influx of weapons and supplies or yield additional Soviet control over the Afghan countryside (Roy, 1991).

A critical factor inhibiting Soviet success was an upsurge in the quantity and sophistication of weapons from the CIA-ISI pipeline. The Afghan resistance acquired a series of new weaponry including 120 mm rockets, mortars, anti-aircraft guns and most significantly SA-7, Blowpipe and Stinger anti-aircraft missiles (Goodson, 2001). A number of military experts cite the introduction of the advanced Stinger missiles as the weapon that won the Soviet-Afghan war. Between 1986 and 1987, the United States delivered 900 stinger anti-aircraft missiles to the Afghan resistance (Rashid, 2000). The Stinger missile transformed the battlefield by enabling the Mujahedeen to thwart Soviet air dominance and accompanying counter insurgency tactics. The resulting decline in Soviet air operations enhanced Mujahedeen logistics<sup>89</sup> and freedom of action culminating in a series of successful resistance offensives (Roy, 1991).

The Soviet Union's initial objective of securing Afghanistan through the imposition of a moderate regime clearly failed to materialize. Instead, Karmal's rule constituted a "crippling liability" to the Soviets (Newell, 1981: 129). The Karmal government was in a "state of siege", racked by internal division and functioning largely under Soviet control (Urban, 1988: 54; Goodson, 2001). The government, paralyzed by the growing conflict and the shattered economy, could not extend its reach beyond Kabul. Consequently, efforts by Karmal to institute moderate and accommodating reforms were ineffective or largely ignored by the Afghan masses. Moreover, the Karmal government was deemed illegitimate by the Afghan populace as its ascent to power and continued

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<sup>89</sup> By 1987, 90% of weapons and supplies were successfully transported from Pakistan to the Afghan resistance fighters (Roy, 1991).

existence relied solely on a “Godless and anti-Islamic” foreign power (Urban, 1988: 53). Finally, the Karmal government conducted nation-wide repression through “arrests, torture and executions” targeting both the general public and members of the rival Khalqis (Goodson, 2001: 63). In May 1986, the Soviets replaced Karmal with Mohammed Najibullah, the leader of KhAD, the Afghan secret service. Despite efforts by Najibullah to develop a policy of “national reconciliation” the Afghan government was “no more successful with the general population than was Karmal’s regime” (Goodson, 2001: 69).

Gorbachev became acutely aware that the Soviet Union could not achieve a military victory in Afghanistan without sustaining prohibitive costs. In February 1986, Gorbachev publicly characterized the Soviet-Afghan war as a “bleeding wound” (Goodson, 2002: 69). Towards the end of 1986, the Politburo had unofficially decided to withdraw Soviet troops from Afghanistan within two years (Rubin, 1995). In March 1988, the UN-negotiated Geneva Accords formalized a two-staged withdrawal of Soviet troops with the last soldiers departing Afghanistan on February 15 1989 (Tanner, 2002).

### **The Impact of the Soviet-Afghan War**

The impact of the Soviet-Afghan war on the people of Afghanistan and the socio-political development of the country was profound. The human costs were staggering. The Soviet-Afghan conflict resulted in the deaths of 1.5 million Afghans. Mujaheddin casualties are estimated at 90,000 fighters including 56,000 killed from 1980 to 1989 (Rashid, 2000: 13; Giustozzi, 2000). The war generated more than 5 million refugees to Pakistan and Iran as well as almost 3 million internally displaced persons (Rubin, 1995).

By 1990, the internal and external dispersion of Afghans accounted for 44 % of the total population and 42 per cent of all world refugees were Afghans (Goodson, 2001). Collectively, over half of the Afghan population has been “directly harmed by the war through death, injury, or displacement” (Goodson, 2001: 94).

The ten-year war resulted in the overall physical destruction of the Afghan countryside. The duration of the war, the use of modern weaponry, and the employment of Soviet scorched earth tactics all contributed to the wholesale devastation of the physical infrastructure in rural Afghanistan. By the end of the conflict over 50 percent of “Afghanistan’s twenty-four thousand villages” were demolished (Goodson, 2001: 92).

The human and material devastation of Afghanistan severely inhibited the socio-political and economic development of the country. The formal economy of the country ceased to exist. The destruction of the villages, transportation routes, and agricultural infrastructure shattered the rural agricultural economy. Moreover, the diffusion of land mines and unexploded ordinance throughout the country not only increased Afghan casualties, it also prohibited cultivation of much of the arable land without risk of death or injury<sup>90</sup>. The urban economy also collapsed. Industrial capacity was non-existent and growth was curtailed due to ongoing violence, the lack of key utilities such as water and hydro and the destruction of transportation networks (Goodson, 2001).

The socio-political development of the country was also immeasurably set back. Indeed, many of the advancements accrued during the 200 year effort towards modern statehood were shattered by the decade long conflict. The state lost its fragile claim as a legitimate institution in Afghan society due to its role in the war, the destruction inflicted

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<sup>90</sup> In the post-war period, up to 500 casualties per month were accrued to mines and unexploded ordinance (UXO). In 2003, approximately 700 square kilometers of land was considered unsafe due to mines and UXO (UNODC).

and its association with the Soviets. National government institutions either ceased to function or were limited in their effectiveness. The state and society divide was further widened as Afghans were forced to rely on local means for essential services. The loss of human capital directly arrested the socio-political growth of the country. An entire stratum of Afghanistan's educated political leadership had either left the country or were killed in PDPA purges.

The socio-political effect of the war extended beyond the national government. As Goodson writes, the conflict altered "the entire framework of Afghan society" (Goodson, 2001: 92). The destruction of rural Afghanistan transformed the structure of village communities by destroying traditional economic practices and altering local power hierarchies. Many of the traditional tribal leaders were killed in the war, usurped by emerging Mujahedeen fighters or discredited for their inability to protect their communities (Goodson, 2001). Thus, the political vacuum created by the Afghan war occurred in many rural communities as well as the national level.

Three key elements of modern Afghanistan emerged during the Soviet-Afghan war: the development of the opium economy, the rise of militant Islam and the introduction of weapons throughout Afghan society. The collapse of the traditional economy paralleled the rise of the illegal economy. Indeed, Afghanistan's position as the world's leading opium producer and exporter emerged during the Soviet-Afghan war. During the Soviet occupation, Russian criminal organizations established a trading network of illicit goods through Central Asia. As well, the resistance movement became immersed in the illegal drug trade to facilitate weapons purchases and other supplies. The

CIA and ISI pipeline of arms to the Mujahedeen also served as a “legitimizing” conduit to facilitate the profitable opium trade (Rashid, 2000: 120).

A logistical symmetry developed wherein weapons entered Afghanistan from Pakistan and the caravans returned to Pakistan with raw opium for the production of heroin. As Rashid notes the CIA “chose to ignore the growing collusion between the Mujahedeen, Pakistani drug traffickers and elements in the military” (2000: 120). It was only after the defeat of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan that the US applied pressure on Pakistan to curb the drug trade. In so doing, drug enforcement activities in Pakistan and other bordering countries drove drug syndicates into Afghanistan where the anarchic environment facilitated the growth of their criminal enterprise (UNODC, 2003). Thus, following the 1979 Soviet Invasion, both internal and external factors led to the establishment of Afghanistan as the world’s principle supplier of opiates. Indeed, from 1980 to 2000 Afghan opium cultivation increased an average of 15% per cent per year leading to a commensurate rise in Afghanistan’s share of global opium levels from 19% in 1980 to 79 % by 1999 (UNODC: 89).

The Soviet-Afghan war engendered the rise of militant Islam. Indeed, the Afghan jihad witnessed the growth of radical Islamic organizations, the establishment of global Islamic networks and the output of thousands of Islamic men trained and experienced in combat: “What Zia and the CIA and the ISI had done twenty years ago had been to transform an essentially nationalist struggle into a holy war” (Weaver, 2002: 251). Radical Islamic organizations also expanded materially through the accumulation of military weapons and the development of infrastructure such as training camps, supply depots and medical facilities (Rashid, 2000). As Huntington wrote, the Soviet-Afghan

war “left behind an uneasy coalition of Islamist organizations intent on promoting Islam against all non Muslim forces” (Rashid, 2000: 130).

The Afghan-Soviet war also resulted in the influx of prodigious amounts of weapons and military hardware. The Soviet Union alone provided the DRA with up to \$48 billion worth of military supplies (Goodson, 2001). After the Soviet withdrawal, over 2 million small and heavy weapons were distributed throughout the country (Giustozzi, 2000). The resulting “Kalishnikovization” of Afghan society heightened post war violence and lawlessness and contributed to the destabilization of the country. Moreover, the diffusion of weapons across Afghan society heightened ethnic tensions by empowering previously marginalized groups. Thus, as Matinuddin comments, “the Tajiks and Uzbeks, who so far had not had enough clout to demand a share in the running of the affairs of the state could now do so” (Matinuddin, 2002: 7).

The confluence of these three new elements in modern Afghanistan has shaped the course of contemporary Afghan politics. The highly lucrative opium trade provided the local power brokers with resources to fund weapon purchases and continue the tribal and ethnic violence. The rise of radical Islam created an ideological underpinning and organizational strength to forces in Afghan society resistant to the modernization of Afghanistan.

Finally, the Soviet-Afghan war reaffirmed two dominant themes in Afghan history. It reinforced traditional Afghan xenophobia and underlined the power of the Afghan countryside over central authority. First, historical mistrust of foreigners was validated among the Afghan populace due to the Soviet invasion. Distrust of external forces was heightened by the widespread destruction inflicted upon the Afghan

population as well as the forcible imposition of a non-Islamic ideology contrary to traditional Afghan beliefs.

Second, the Mujahedeen victory over the Soviet Union signified the downfall of a superpower by a peasant tribal population. Indeed, the collapse of the Soviet Union shortly after the withdrawal of their last troops from Afghanistan empowered the significance of the Mujahedeen victory. The Soviet defeat underscored the Afghan truism that occupation of the main centers in Afghanistan does not translate into control of the country<sup>91</sup>. Echoing the British defeat in the nineteenth century, the Soviet Union experienced first hand the difficulty of subduing a warlike populace in a harsh mountainous environment. In short, the Mujahedeen victory reflected the triumph of rural power over central authority further indicating the division between state and society in Afghanistan. It also signified the victory of Islamic jihad over the secular modernism of the Communist period<sup>92</sup>.

### **The Afghan Civil War**

The conflict between the Mujahedeen and the Afghan government continued for three years from the Soviet pullout until the defeat of Najibullah's forces in 1992. The continuous supply of Soviet aid<sup>93</sup> coupled with the fractious nature of the Afghan resistance sustained the Afghan government and prolonged the war (Goodson, 2001).

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<sup>91</sup> Molesworth in describing "the military aspects of Afghanistan" ties this phenomenon to Afghanistan's urban-rural divide: "Apart from Kandahar and Kabul and, perhaps, Jellalabad, the country has no towns of any consequence, nor are there any considerable industrial centers. Thus, although those mentioned may be occupied by an invader, their loss has little or no effect on the life of the country or the livelihood and morale of the tribesmen. Thus, after occupation the pacification of the country is not easy" (1962: 8).

<sup>92</sup>Rasanayagam comments: "The Soviet withdrawal was popularly seen in the Muslim world as a victory for jihad, for Islam (2003: 188).

<sup>93</sup> Soviet aid to the Afghan government during this period averaged from \$250 to \$300 million per month (Goodson, 2001).



However, by the end of 1991 the US and the Soviet Union agreed to suspend military aid to their proxies within Afghanistan. The resignation of Gorbachev in December 1991 and the subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union presaged a Mujahedeen victory and the downfall of the Najibullah government.

Following Najibullah's overthrow, the ties that linked the Mujahedeen shattered as the disparate factions turned their forces against each other in a bid to control Kabul. Indeed, the capture of Kabul by the Tajik forces of Massoud and Rabbani, Uzbek troops under General Rashid Dostum and the Shi'a Hizb-I- Wahdat alarmed the Pashtun Mujahedeen as Pashtuns had dominated the capital for over 300 years<sup>94</sup> (Rashid, 2000). The Tajik position strengthened in April 1992 when the Peshawar Agreement established a new interim government with Rabbani as President. Hekmatyar, nominal leader of the Pashtun faction, rejected offers to join the coalition government and his Pashtun soldiers began shelling Kabul in a drive to oust the Tajik, Uzbek and Shi'a forces.

The inability of the Mujaheddin to unite and form a viable state indicates the centrality of ethnic and tribal rivalry within Afghanistan (Roy, 1991). Moreover, Rubin highlights the regional nature of this conflict with his observation that the 1992 battle for Kabul was "also a clash between coalitions backed by Iran<sup>95</sup>, on the one hand, and

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<sup>94</sup> Rais illustrates the widespread nature of Pashtun discontent over the Tajik-Uzbek dominance of Kabul in this period: "Known Pashtun nationalists on the Pakistani side of the border...have objected to the composition of the transitional government, alleging that Pashtuns are being denied their legitimate share of power. The Pashtun nationalists in the army, bureaucracy, and police loathe the prospect of Uzbek or Tajik control over Kabul" (1997: 227).

<sup>95</sup> Iran played a more active role in Afghan affairs following the Soviet withdrawal. The end of the Iran-Iraq war in 1988 allowed the Iranians to assert a stronger position in Afghanistan. Moreover, concerns over the establishment of a Sunni Pashtun Afghan government motivated Iran to strengthen the Afghan Shi'a groups and increase their political leverage. Consequently, in 1990, the eight Shi'a factions merged into one party known as the Hizb-e-Wahadat. Iran acted as the de facto representative of the Shi'a Hazara minority arguing that the Hazaras should be guaranteed a quarter percentage inclusion in the new

Pakistan and Saudi Arabia on the other” (1995: 129). Tajik dominance of the new central administration recast the Afghan power structure and attenuated the fragile alliance with the Shi’a groups and the Uzbek militia. The cohesion of the alliance was also directly impacted by the sponsor states and their changing strategic relationships (Rubin, 1995). For instance, General Dostum’s shifting loyalties in this period can be directly correlated to the influence of foreign support.

Dostum had previously commanded a principally Uzbek division under the government forces of Najibullah. In late 1991, the Soviet Union suspended its provision of aid and military support to the Afghan government forcing Najibullah to limit payments to Dostum’s force. In January 1992, Dostum rebelled against the Najibullah government and formed an alliance with Massoud’s Tajiks. Dostum’s partnership with Massoud became strained due to growing friction between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan<sup>96</sup>. Dostum’s key benefactor, Uzbek President Islam Karimov, pressed Dostum to counter Massoud and his Tajik force. Moreover, Iran strengthened its ties with Dostum further alienating Massoud. In 1994, Dostum joined forces with Hekmatyar in an effort to overthrow the Rabbanii government and seize the capital. Rashid comments on the changing nature of Dostum’s allegiances and his many ties to foreign benefactors:

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Mujahedeen government. Pakistan and Saudi Arabia continued to alienate Iran by refusing to consider the Hazaras in the negotiations for the future Afghan government.

Following this rebuff, Iran extended its patronage to include the Persian speaking Tajiks in a bid to counter Pakistan and Saudi Arabian support of the Pashtun groups. Iran’s fears of a Pashtun dominated Afghan state prompted its support of the Najibullah regime after the Soviet departure in 1989 (Rashid, 2000). A growing alliance of states emerged in opposition to the diffusion of Pakistan and Saudi inspired Wahabbism into Afghanistan. Thus, Russia and the Central Asia States (CAS) joined Iran in a regional grouping opposed to Afghan Pashtun fundamentalism.

<sup>96</sup> Uzbekistan and Russia were sponsoring a Communist-Uzbek faction to gain power in Tajikistan. Massoud’s opposition to this faction directly imperiled his relationship with the Uzbek-backed Dostum (Rubin, 1995).

He had [Dostum], at one time or another allied himself with everyone –Masud, Hikmatyar, the Taliban, Masud again – and betrayed everyone with undisguised aplomb. He had also been on every country’s payroll receiving funds from Russia, Uzbekistan, Iran, Pakistan and lately Turkey. In 1995 he managed to be on the payroll of both Iran and Pakistan, then at daggers drawn over the Taliban. (2000: 56)

The countryside became fragmented into regional domains controlled by ethnic warlord commanders. The three prominent power brokers were Dostum who controlled six Afghan provinces with his headquarters located in Mazar-I-Sharif, Ismail Khan who controlled much of western Afghanistan from his center in Herat and Massoud who held a “corridor of government power from Kabul through the Panshir Valley to Konduz” (Rashid, 2000; Tanner, 2002: 279). Local Shuras (councils) established nominal rule in many parts of the country while certain areas, particularly southern Pashtun enclaves, experienced “complete anarchy” with tribal factions or competing warlords vying for local control (Rubin, 1995; Giustozzi, 2000: 250).

The changing strategic importance of Afghanistan also contributed to the country’s degeneration. Following the Soviet withdrawal, the level of US aid and financial support to Pakistan and the Afghan resistance dropped precipitously. Thus, the Mujahedeen leaders became increasingly reliant on regional support and internal sources of revenue. In the warlord fiefdoms, the Mujahedeen commanders derived considerable profits from the expanding opium trade, highway transit tolls, locally derived taxes, extortion fees, smuggling operations and income from custom duties (Rubin, 1995; Matinuddin, 1999). In other areas, lawlessness prevailed as Commanders often lost the means to pay their

soldiers. Consequently, armed “bandits” increasingly fostered widespread violence, crime and corruption (Matinuddin, 1999: 23).

Afghanistan became characterized as a ‘failed state’ as the country descended into a “state of virtual disintegration” (Rashid, 2000: 21). Conflict raged throughout the country, local warlords controlled their regional fiefdoms and the capital city was destroyed. During the years from 1992 to 1994, Kabul was reduced to rubble and 45,000 to 50,000 of its inhabitants were killed in the Mujahedeen civil conflict<sup>97</sup> (Matinuddin, 1999). The central government was effectively non-existent; most national institutions collapsed and shortfalls in revenue rendered the government insolvent<sup>98</sup>. The central government had little or no relations with external states, and it lacked internal legitimacy (Matinuddin, 1999; Rubin, 1995). A key offspring of this anarchic environment was the creation of a political vacuum. Indeed, the Communist leadership structure was dismantled, the civil war “discredited” the Mujahedeen leaders, Tajik control heightened Pashtun discontent and the traditional tribal rulers were emasculated after years of purges and war (Rashid, 2000: 97).

### **The Rise of the Taliban**

The political vacuum in Afghanistan fostered the creation of a group of Islamic radicals called the Taliban who sought to defeat the warring factions, bring stability to the country and establish an Islamic state. The Taliban movement originated from thousands of Madrassas (religious schools) located in Baluchistan and the North West Frontier

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<sup>97</sup> Kabul, like many of Afghan urban centers was largely unscathed during the Soviet-Afghan war.

<sup>98</sup> The collapse of both foreign and domestic sources of revenue compelled the Rabbani government to default on planned assistance to the regional councils and to import “freshly printed bank notes” from Russia in order to sustain the national army (Rubin, 1995: 135).

Province (NWFP) of Pakistan<sup>99</sup>. Indeed, the word Taliban is a Pashtun name derived from Talib, which is Arabic for religious student (Matinuddin, 1999).

The Madrassas drew its membership heavily from disenfranchised Afghan Pashtun refugees. These “orphans of war” were largely uneducated, untrained and “rootless” young men who were raised in refugee camps and knew little of Afghan tribal life and traditional customs (Rashid, 2000: 32). Consequently, they represented ideal candidates for religious indoctrination.

Taliban thought stems from the religious doctrine of the Deobandi tradition<sup>100</sup>, which articulates a “conservative orthodoxy” deemed to represent pure Islamic beliefs (Maley, 1998: 14; Matinuddin, 1999). The Taliban developed a more radical version of Deobandi teaching based on the more extreme Saudi Wahhabism and Pastunwali tribal customs<sup>101</sup> (Rasanayagam, 2003; Rashid, 2000). Training within the Madrassas emphasizes rote memory of the Koran “without encouragement to reason or dispute”, the study of Sharia law and the incorporation of fatwas<sup>102</sup> (religious edicts) issued by madrassa scholars (Dupree, 1998: 150; Matinuddin, 1999). The “barely literate” Madrassa teachers rejected traditional curriculums emphasizing science, math and history as too secular and western. The Taliban’s rigid theology also rendered the movement

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<sup>99</sup> The Madrassas along the tribal frontier supplied the Taliban force with 30,000 students (Matinuddin, 1999).

<sup>100</sup> As Maley notes the Deobandi school “originated in the Dar ul-Ulum Deoband, an institution established in the Indian town of Deobandi in 1867” (1998: 14). The Deobandi’s promulgated a pan Islamic ideology that sought to unite the Muslim community living under the subjugation of British colonialism. In many respects the Deobandis represented a “forward looking movement” that sought to improve Muslim society through Sharia education (Rashid, 2000: 88). The Taliban were influenced by the more limiting elements of Deobandi thought but perverted the original beliefs. Rashid comments: “The Deobandis took a restrictive view of the role of women, opposed all forms of hierarchy in the Muslim community and rejected the Shia – but the Taliban were to take these beliefs to an extreme which the original Deobandis would never have recognized (2000: 88).

<sup>101</sup> According to Rasanayagam: “these semi-educated teachers inculcate a singularly perverse interpretation of the Shari’a that has little to do with the original teachings of the Deobandi in India” (2003:187).

<sup>102</sup> As Matinuddin notes it is the fatwas “which have introduced extremism into the thought process of those Afghans who joined the Taliban movement” (1999: 19).

deeply intolerant of all other belief systems including differing interpretations or sects of Islam. The strict interpretation of Islam offered in the Madrassas consequently produced a radicalized group of “religious fanatics”<sup>103</sup> (Matinuddin, 1999: 24).

The ascendancy of the Taliban as the dominant political force in Afghanistan during this period can be credited to both internal and external dynamics. Internally, as discussed, a political vacuum existed due to the emasculation of traditional leaders and the widespread animosity directed against the Mujahedeen due to their continued infighting and ‘un-Islamic’ conduct. The people of Afghanistan were war weary after years of conflict and receptive to the Taliban’s pledge to end the civil war, stabilize the country and establish an Islamic state.

Externally, the Taliban’s rise is directly associated to its relationship with Pakistan. Indeed, the ties between Pakistan and the Taliban were multifaceted and “all-encompassing” (Rashid, 1998:72). Goodson characterizes the Taliban as Pakistan’s “Proxy army” in Afghanistan (2001: 110). It is necessary to overview the conditions that led to Pakistan’s sponsorship of the Taliban and the nature of their client-patron relationship.

The Soviet-Afghan war and the subsequent internal civil conflict created the key preconditions underlying Pakistan’s support of the Taliban. Continued Afghan instability raised a number of strategic and economic concerns for Pakistan. The scale of the civil war, the diffusion of weapons and widespread lawlessness concerned Pakistani power brokers over the spill over effect of Afghan violence. The large numbers of displaced

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<sup>103</sup> It is important to emphasize that the Taliban do not represent a monolithic entity as three distinct sub groupings can be identified: students who solely focus on their education and later become religious instructors; students who formed the militant wing; and Afghans from a number of political groupings including former Communists, Mujahedeen veterans and soldiers from the former Afghan national army (Matinuddin, 1999; Maley1998).

Afghans from the Afghan-Soviet conflict remained in Pakistan refugee camps due to the civil war. The Afghan refugees not only placed a financial burden on Pakistan<sup>104</sup>, they also represented a large and growing population of discontented, Islamic fundamentalists who posed a threat to Pakistan's internal security. As well, the burgeoning opium trade from Afghanistan elevated criminal activity within Pakistan, and spawned a growing population of Pakistani drug addicts<sup>105</sup> and the related transmission of HIV/AIDS<sup>106</sup> (UNODC, 2003).

Political instability in Afghanistan also threatened Pakistan's economic development. The ongoing civil war in Afghanistan rendered many land routes impassable and severely impeded bilateral trade between the two countries. Pressure from the powerful Pakistan trucking lobby<sup>107</sup> as well as the desire to foster trade with the newly independent Central Asian Republics, compelled the Pakistan government to interfere in Afghan affairs. A chief strategic-economic driver of Pakistani policy also related to the acquisition of energy resources from the rich oil deposits of Central Asia<sup>108</sup>. Indeed, the development of new oil and gas pipelines from the Caspian Basin fostered a geopolitical rivalry among the regional states and the great powers that became

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<sup>104</sup> Goodson identifies the costs incurred to the Pakistan government by the Afghan refugee population: "In 1987 the overall daily expenditure for the upkeep of 3 million Afghan refugees was \$1.13 million (\$367 million per year). Pakistan provided about 45 percent of this amount (2001: 151).

<sup>105</sup> Rashid states that "Pakistan which had no heroin addicts in 1979, had 650,000 addicts in 1986, three million by 1992 and an estimated five million by 1999" (2000: 122).

<sup>106</sup> Pakistan has the highest number and greatest per capita proportion of HIV cases among the countries contiguous to Afghanistan. The ascendant rate of HIV infections paralleled the growth of the opium traffic and the consequent rise of heroin injection use in Pakistan (UNODC, 2003).

<sup>107</sup> Multiple tariff stops with each extracting exorbitant fees severely impacted the economic viability of the Pakistan transport trade. Prior to entering the country, each truck was charged up to \$400 at a checkpoint at the Afghan border. As Matinuddin states, "there were seventy-one such check points between Chaman and Herat alone" (1999: 23).

<sup>108</sup> "Total oil reserves of the Caspian Sea region, estimated at above 200 BBL (billion barrels), exceeds that of Western Europe and/or the United States (110 BBL) and puts it in second place after the Middle East (700 BBL). Total production, currently at 1 million barrels/day, could reach 3.4 billion b/d by the year 2010" (Riaz, 2002: 6).

characterized as the “new Great Game”<sup>109</sup> (Rashid, 2000: 6). Pakistan played a central role in this new competition, as plans were developed to construct oil and a gas pipeline from Turkmenistan through Afghanistan into Pakistan. Pakistan was facing an energy crisis as its own oil and gas reserves were diminishing and increased domestic demands generated concerns over resource shortfalls and high import costs (Rashid, 2000). The successful development of the \$2.5 billion pipeline was contingent a stable internal environment in Afghanistan and the establishment of a “recognized government” (Rubin 1999; Rashid, 2000: 167). Both Pakistan and the US viewed the Taliban as the vehicle to establish Afghan stability thus enabling the development of the Turkmenistan – Afghanistan-Pakistan pipeline.

The Pakistan government required an Afghan sponsor to secure Pakistan’s strategic, political and economic goals. During the civil war, Hekmetyar and the HIG party represented Islamabad’s surrogate to establish a Pashtun, pro Pakistan Afghan government. Pakistan transferred its allegiance and considerable largesse from Hekmetyar to the Taliban. Like Hekmetyar’s force, the Taliban were largely a “Pashtun movement” (Goodson, 2001: 109). Thus, Pakistan’s sponsorship of the Taliban is directly tied to ethnicity, as the key Taliban leaders are Durranni Pashtuns principally from Kandahar. Similarly, Pashtuns represented a high percentage of Pakistan’s key decision-

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<sup>109</sup> The “new Great Game” reflected a competition for the Caspian energy resources that involved not just the regional players but also the US and Russia. The US strongly backed the Turkmenistan –Afghanistan-Pakistan proposal for two chief reasons; a US firm Unocal was a leading contender to build the pipeline and secondly, the Turkmenistan –Afghanistan-Pakistan pipeline facilitated access to Central Asian resources undermining both Russian and Iran. While Iran provided the “nearest and most accessible” land and sea route to export Turkmen energy reserves, a key US foreign policy objective was to “isolate Iran” and thus develop alternative pipeline routes that avoided Iran (Rashid, 2000: 151). Similarly, Russia and the US engaged in a geopolitical competition over Central Asian energy resources. Russia considered the Caspian region within its ‘sphere of influence’ and access to its energy deposits vital to Russia’s economic and strategic interests. In turn, western access to the Caspian basin would limit Russian power and expand western influence in the region.



makers in both the government and military (Roy, 1998). In 2000, Pakistan's President General Pervez Musharraf stated that Pakistan patronage of the Taliban was directly tied to its Pashtun heritage (Goodson, 2001).

However, aside from shared ethnic ties, other variables underscored the changing status of the Taliban within the Pakistan leadership. Concerns were developing in Pakistan over Hekmetyar's extreme political views, Hekmetyar's central role in the destruction of Kabul drew widespread condemnation and his failure to secure a military victory and establish a viable government diminished his credibility (Rashid, 2000; Rashid, 1998). As well, internal political changes within Pakistan prompted a shift of Pakistani support from Hekmetyar to the Taliban. Hekmetyar and his HIG party relied on the patronage of the powerful ISI and the Pakistan political party Jamiat-e-Islami. In 1993, Benazir Bhutto was elected Prime Minister and her Pakistan People's Party formed a coalition government that re-aligned Pakistani power relations. In order to consolidate its power base, Bhutto's government formed an alliance with the Jamiat-e Ulema-I Islam (JUI), a fundamentalist political party led by Maulana Fazlur Rahman. The JUI was the "main rival" of the Jamiat-e-Islami and shared multiple affinities with the Taliban<sup>110</sup> (Rashid, 1998: 74). Thus, the party that supported Hekmetyar declined in power while the party with associations with the Taliban elevated in prominence.

Through the JUI, the Taliban gained leverage with the executive branch of the Pakistan government, the Pakistan army and the ISI (Rashid, 1998). It was the institutional support from Pakistan that proved critical to the success of the Taliban in

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<sup>110</sup> The JUI shared an ideological, religious and tribal affinity with the Taliban. Like the Taliban, the JUI members are fundamentalist Islamists influenced by the Deobandi tradition and the membership of both parties is predominately Durrani Pashtun. The JUI also had great influence in the Afghan refugee camps in Baluchistan and the North West Frontier Province and it oversaw many of the Madrassas that trained the Taliban students (Rashid, 1998).

Afghanistan<sup>111</sup>. Indeed, through its government agencies, Pakistan supplied the Taliban with all requisite elements and assistance necessary for a modern military force. For example, Pakistan provided the Taliban with logistical support, intelligence and communications systems, military equipment ranging from artillery, air support, armored vehicles, small arms and ammunition, fuel, training, operational planning as well as manpower<sup>112</sup>, money<sup>113</sup> and food (Davis, 1998; Rashid, 2000). Collectively, this comprehensive level of support from the Pakistan security establishment transformed the Taliban into an effective indigenous military force not seen in modern Afghan history:

Indeed, it is a significant reflection on this campaign that in 17 years of war no Afghan force, either government or opposition had ever carried out such a swift and complex series of operations over such a wide operation area. This was mobile warfare at its most effective. To suggest that semi-literate Taliban commanders whose military experience had never extended beyond the hit-and-run attacks of guerilla warfare could have risen to this level of planning and execution defies belief. (Davis, 1998: 68)

A key feature characterizing Pakistan patronage to the Taliban related to the diverse nature of that support. Indeed, “semi-autonomous groups” in Pakistan’s government, society and business community constituted ‘Pakistan’s support’ to the Taliban (Rubin, 1999: 8). The Taliban’s Pakistan patrons included the national government, the Pakistan army, the ISI, the political party Jamiat-e Ulema-I Islam, the provincial governments in Baluchistan and the North West Frontier Province, the

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<sup>111</sup> As Gunaratna writes, “What is clear is that without the strategic advice, logistics and manpower of Pakistan, the Taliban could never have brought nearly 90 percent of Afghan territory under its control” (2002: 75).

<sup>112</sup> By 1999, over a quarter of all Taliban military force was comprised of Pakistani recruits (Goodson, 2001).

<sup>113</sup> For example, from 1997 to 1998, Pakistan supplied the Taliban government with \$ 30 million in assistance (Rashid, 2000).

Madrassa's in the border area, the "truck-transport smuggling mafia,"<sup>114</sup> as well as the Pashtun tribal population.

The Taliban benefited from this multi pronged Pakistani support as it broadened their patronage base and also facilitated greater autonomy, flexibility and freedom of action. Thus, if funds or other necessities were not available from one sector of the Pakistan community the Taliban could appeal to another group. The segmented nature of Pakistan's sponsorship also highlighted the complexity of Afghan politics.

A complete understanding of Afghanistan's key political variables not only necessitates a comprehension of regional state interests but also diverse lobbies within each contiguous state<sup>115</sup>. Pakistan's multifaceted support also underscores the inherent difficulty for any single Pakistani benefactor to exercise absolute control over the Taliban rendering them "less beholden to the government of Pakistan and less amenable to official Pakistani pressures" (Rasanayagam, 2003:181). The inability of the Pakistan government to control the Taliban led many observers to question the rationale underpinning their support of the Taliban<sup>116</sup>.

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<sup>114</sup> The Taliban secured the southern transportation route through Afghanistan facilitating the trade of goods from Turkmenistan to Quetta, Pakistan. Thus, instead of paying multiple road fees to the Afghan warlords and highway bandits, the 'transport mafia' paid the Taliban a lump sum fee for each truck entering Afghanistan. Rasanayagam comments: "After the Taliban occupation of Kabul in 1996, they levied a straight fee of 6000 rupees (\$150) on a truck traveling from Peshawar to Kabul; truckers previously had to pay five to eight times as much to the warlords on this route" (2003: 182). Money secured from the transport mafia constituted a key source of the Taliban's "official income" (Rashid, 1998: 77).

<sup>115</sup> Like Pakistan, Iran's policy towards Afghanistan was often varied due to the multiplicity of Iranian institutional, commercial and societal factions who sought to exert their influence on foreign policy. Rashid identifies the key disparate factions within Iran: "The Iranian military, the Revolutionary Guards, the intelligence agencies, the Shia clergy and the powerful Bonyads or Foundations which are run by the clergy and control much of the state sector economy and also finance foreign policy adventures with their large, unaccounted funds, were just some of the contending lobbies" (2000: 202).

<sup>116</sup> Pakistan's strategic rationale underpinning its support to the Taliban rested on assumptions that proved to be faulty. Numerous scholars question the validity of Pakistan's policy of strategic depth; as such a strategy is obsolete with Pakistan and India's nuclear capability. Moreover, the concept of Afghanistan providing strategic depth rests on the questionable premise that Pakistan could actually control an Afghan government. As Rais notes, it is "impossible" for Pakistan to control the Afghan Pashtuns because of the myriad of divisions within the Pashtun population itself and because Pashtun nationalism would preclude

## **The Taliban's Military Campaign**

The Taliban's drive to power began in October 1994 when Taliban fighters attacked Hekmatyar's stronghold at the Afghan border town of Spin Boldak and seized a large weapons and ammunition depot. In early November, Taliban forces captured Kandahar after a two-day battle with local warlords. Emboldened with these early victories and the acquisition of military hardware the Taliban force gained momentum and attracted the attention of the Pakistan military establishment. Reinforcements from the Pakistan Madrassas arrived after the capture of Kandahar, further strengthening the Taliban's efforts to conquer Afghanistan. By March 1995 the Taliban controlled 12 Afghan provinces and were on the perimeter of the key cities of Kabul and Herat. The Taliban suffered a setback with counterattacks from Masoud near Kabul and Ismail Khan's forces near Herat. The Taliban regrouped their forces over the summer gaining both strength in men and materials. In September 1995, the reinvigorated Taliban forces captured Herat and secured the western Afghan provinces.

Taliban commanders directed their attention to the nation's capital and began siege of Kabul in October 1995. Foreign countries redoubled efforts to supply their client groups within Afghanistan bolstering both the Rabbini government forces and the

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domination by Pakistan (1997:261). As well, Pakistan believed that the Taliban's Islamic radicalism would subordinate Pashtun nationalism leading to a Afghan acceptance of the Durand line and the cessation of Afghan claims to a portion of the NorthWest Frontier Province (NWFP). In fact, the Taliban failed to acknowledge the legitimacy of the Durand Line and refused to withdraw Afghan territorial demands in the NWFP. Finally, Pakistan believed the Taliban regime would render Afghanistan a locus of Islamic fundamentalism and draw the Islamic radicals out of Pakistan. As Rashid comments, the opposite occurred: "the Taliban gave sanctuary and armed the most violent Sunni extremist groups in Pakistan, who killed Pakistan Shias, wanted Pakistan declared a Sunni state and advocated the overthrow of the ruling elite through an Islamic revolution...In fact the backwash from Afghanistan was leading to the 'Talibanization' of Pakistan. The Taliban were not providing strategic depth to Pakistan, but Pakistan was providing strategic depth to the Taliban" (2000: 187).

Taliban and thus extending the battle for the capital. After an eleven-month siege that destroyed much of city, the Taliban captured Kabul in September 1996 (Rashid, 2000). In the spring of 1997, the Taliban initiated an offensive to gain control of northern Afghanistan. In their bid to capture the northern city of Mazar in May 1997, Taliban fighters were trapped and massacred by Hazara and Uzbek defenders. In the weeks that followed, Tajik, Hazara and Uzbek counterattacks resulted in a stunning setback for the Taliban. The battle for northern Afghanistan continued throughout the year without a breakthrough for either side. A stalemate also existed north of Kabul between the Taliban and Masoud's Tajiks (Rashid, 2000).

Re-supplied by Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, the Taliban began an assault in the north in the spring of 1998. By July, the Taliban overran Uzbek positions capturing Dostum's capital at Shiberghan. A month later the Taliban recaptured Mazar and initiated a bloody massacre of Hazara and Uzbek civilians in reprisal for the Taliban losses a year earlier. In September, the Hazara stronghold at Bamiyan fell to the Taliban "leaving the Taliban in control of 90% of the country" (Goodson, 2001: 79). At this point Massoud's forces represented the chief battlefield opposition to the Taliban. From 1999 to 2000 the Taliban made "gradual gains" against Massoud culminating in the control of 29 out of the 30 provinces or up to 97% of Afghanistan by 2001 (Goodson, 2001).

## **The Taliban Regime**

Governance under the Taliban centred on a 40 member Supreme Shura (Council) led by Mullah Mohammad Omar. Within the Supreme Shura an inner Shura was formed to serve as Mullah Omar's chief advisory council<sup>117</sup> (Goodson, 2001). Mullah Omar was a secretive man who lived like a "recluse" and conducted his leadership with little outside contact to Afghans or foreigners (Rashid, 2000: 24). He would meet with his inner Shura in his "administrative mansion" in Kandahar and issue written directives on "chits or scraps of paper" to the Shura members or other Taliban officials to execute government policy (Rashid, 2000: 24). Omar's decrees were conveyed to the "second rank" of the Taliban's "emirate system": the executive and administrative level of government (Goodson, 2001: 116). A 17 member Kabul based Shura oversaw the ministries of the central government and a military Shura oversaw national military affairs.

It is important to emphasize two features of the Taliban governance structure; it was highly centralized and profoundly inefficient. First, power was concentrated principally by Mullah Omar and the Supreme Shura. For instance, both the Military and Kabul Shuras were fundamentally restricted in decision-making power as Mullah Omar and the Kandahar Shura determined all key strategic matters. Even minor decisions were "frequently revoked" by the Kandahar Shura resulting in inordinate delays and ineffective administration (Rashid, 2000: 98).

Second, the Taliban government was profoundly inefficient as the "second rank" of the government was effectively dismantled under Taliban rule and Taliban

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<sup>117</sup> By 1996, the Kandahar Shura's advisory role diminished as Mullah Omar increased his autocratic authority (Rashid, 2000).

administrative bodies “existed on paper only” (Matinuddin, 1999: 42). Ministries were purged of experienced staff and the remaining officials were subject to little or no pay. According to Mullah Wakil, official Taliban policy dictated that, “the Sharia does not allow politics or political parties. That is why we give no salaries to officials or soldiers” (Rashid, 2000: 43). “Inexperienced and uneducated” Taliban officials that were wholly unsuited to effectively administer the country filled many of the new positions<sup>118</sup> (Goodson, 2001: 124). Moreover, the appointment of Kandahari Pashtuns to provincial and city administrative positions in non-Pashtun areas was problematic due to language and cultural differences resulting in an escalation of ethnic tensions (Rashid, 2000).

As well, egregious government inefficiencies developed due to the Taliban’s extreme gender policies. Taliban edicts banning women from the workforce engendered a crippling effect on health and education institutions, which had traditionally employed a large percentage of women<sup>119</sup> (Matinuddin, 1999). Compounding this problem, the Taliban had “virtually no program” overseeing such vital responsibilities as “public health, infrastructure reconstruction, and education (Goodson, 2001: 121). In sum, the Taliban represented a “group that claimed to be the government but could assume no government functions, had no administrative capacity, and appeared to have abdicated all responsibility for the ordinary welfare of Afghan communities” (Rasanayagam, 2003: 197).

The erosion of national governance structures under the Taliban was paralleled by the continued emaciation of the official economy and the growth of the pre existing black

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<sup>118</sup> Rashid comments: “The Taliban replaced all senior Tajik, Uzbek and Hazara bureaucrats with Pashtuns, whether qualified or not. As a result of this loss of expertise, the ministries by and large ceased to function” (2000: 101).

<sup>119</sup> According to a 1996 UN study, women numbered 7,793 out of 11, 208 teachers in Kabul schools (Dupree, 1998: 154).

market trade. Improved security along key transportation routes and the cessation of conflict in Taliban controlled areas facilitated the resurgence of overland trade. While certain areas of the formal economy initially underwent a modest improvement, particularly in the agricultural sector, drought and Taliban government “misrule” fostered an “economic recession” by 1998 (Fujimura, 2004:119). Central government revenues declined due to the weakening of the government’s infrastructure as well as traditional inability of the central government to penetrate the rural economy. While the official economy underwent a wholesale decline, the Taliban fostered the expansion and consolidation of the illicit goods industry (UNODC, 2003):

Thus the limited reconstruction which the Taliban has undertaken so far is entirely related to improving the efficiency of smuggling and drugs trafficking, such as repairing roads, setting up petrol pumps and inviting US businessmen to set up a mobile telephone network which will qualitatively speed up the movements of drugs and illicit trade. (Rashid, 2000: 213)

Two key activities dominated the illegal market providing the Taliban with their chief form of income: the opium trade and the resale of duty free Pakistan goods. Initially, the Taliban encouraged the growth of opium thus helping to foster a 70% upsurge of total poppy cultivation from 1995 to 1999 (UNODC, 2003: 38). The Taliban profited from the opium business through a 10% agricultural tax and a 20% Islamic tax (zakat)<sup>120</sup> applied to opium farmers, taxes applied to opium dealers and transporters and through direct involvement in the opium trade by Taliban officials. Based on the direct taxes to the farmers alone, a 2003 UN report estimates the Taliban generated \$27 million in revenues in 2000 (UNODC, 2003).

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<sup>120</sup> Rashid comments on the Taliban’s imposition of the zakat: “According to the Koran, Muslims should give 2.5 per cent of their disposable income as zakat to the poor, but the Taliban had no religious qualms in collecting 20 per cent of the value of a truckload of opium as zakat” (2000: 118).



The expansion of the opium trade under the Taliban drew severe international condemnation. Fears over increased economic sanctions against their regime coupled with concerns over their status as a global pariah prompted the Taliban to introduce measures to mitigate the opium traffic. In July 2000 the Taliban prohibited opium cultivation in Afghanistan resulting in a 94% fall in production from the previous year's cultivation (UNODC, 2003: 39). The net effect of the Taliban ban on world markets was profound as Afghanistan opium constituted 70% of the international supply. Accordingly, world opium stocks plummeted 65 % from approximately 4,700 metric tons in 2000 to about 1,600 metric tons in 2001 (UNODC, 2003: 32).

Given the extraordinary global demands for heroin, opium represented a commodity whose price is principally driven by supply. Consequently, the Taliban decree led to an almost twenty fold escalation in opium prices from \$40/kg in July 2000 to almost \$700/kg by September 2001 (UNODC, 2003: 57). While the Taliban banned the production of opium no decrees were issued prohibiting its trade "reflecting the fact that the traders constituted an important backbone for the regime" (UNODC, 2003: 128). Thus, although the quantity of opium exports diminished in 2001, the escalated prices ensured that the Taliban still benefited from the opium trade.

Second, the Taliban fostered the illicit trade of consumer goods. The background to this trade stems from a bilateral agreement signed by Afghanistan and Pakistan. Historically, Afghanistan's land locked status served as a chief impediment to trade opportunities and economic growth. In the 1950s Afghanistan and Pakistan signed the Afghanistan Transit Trade Agreement (ATTA) that allowed Afghanistan to import goods duty free arriving from the port city of Karachi, Pakistan. Beginning in the Soviet-Afghan

war, a black market trade emerged of “re-exports” wherein the duty free goods were smuggled out of Afghanistan bypassing stiff Pakistani import duties and sold illegally in Pakistani bazaars (UNODC, 2003: 26). The Taliban, having secured the key transportation networks and border facilities, benefited from this illicit trade and encouraged its expansion. As Rashid notes, under the Taliban “not only had the volume of smuggling expanded dramatically but also the area” (1998: 78). Goods arriving by aircraft or from Afghanistan’s other bordering countries subsequently joined the merchandise transported into Pakistan. The unlawful resale of legal goods constituted 90% of total Afghan exports in 2000 comprising some 1.1 billion dollars (UNODC, 2003). In 1997 this trade amounted to 2.5 billion dollars in total representing almost half of Afghanistan’s GDP and over twice the amount generated by the opium trade (UNODC, 2003). In 1997, the Taliban earned approximately \$75 million in taxes from the contraband trade (Rubin, 1999).

The Taliban used the money collected from the drug and illegal contraband trade to finance their “war economy” (Rashid, 2000:124). Indeed, profits from illicit trade constituted over two thirds of their income and enabled the Taliban to provide the “weapons, ammunition and fuel for the war” (Rubin, 1999; Rashid, 2000: 124). Thus, a vicious cycle emerged. Violence, repression and coercion empowered the Taliban to extract revenues from the drug and contraband traffickers and the newly acquired funds enabled the Taliban to foster more repression and violence. The paucity of governance improvement compared to the energies devoted to combat has led many to view the Taliban as “pre-eminently a military organization rather than a political movement” (Davis, 1998: 69). Goodson reaffirms this theme by characterizing the Taliban as

perpetually engaged in conflict: “As essentially a tribal militia engaged in a military struggle that now finds itself at the helm of government, the Taliban devote most of their attention to waging the war” (2001: 117).

The Taliban’s focus on war, the limited nature of the Afghan state apparatus and the unwillingness of the Taliban to strengthen state structures collectively limited the reach of the Taliban regime. As Maley writes, the weakened state machinery represents “an important factor in explaining the sporadic and inconsistent application of Taliban decrees” (1998:22). Thus, the Taliban contributed to the decline of national reconstruction in Afghanistan. State-building efforts were non-existent, physical infrastructure languished, the formal economy collapsed and was replaced by a burgeoning traffic in illicit goods, and the social well being of the Afghan populace continued its precipitous decline. A 2003 UN report concludes “as of late 2001 all available social and economic indicators pointed to Afghanistan being a country on the verge of complete collapse” (UNODC, 2003). In response, most Afghan communities continued to rely on local, informal structures and kinship groupings and foreign humanitarian aid to provide basic social needs<sup>121</sup> (Goodson, 2001). Consequently, the Taliban exacerbated the divided between state and society in Afghanistan. Afghan society did not derive social and economic services from the Taliban controlled state and the Taliban themselves relied on a “war economy” derived from foreign-based income and illicit goods (Rubin, 1999).

While the Taliban did not contribute to the growth and expansion of the state, they used the machinery of state and the control of national power to implement their

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<sup>121</sup> For example, during the Taliban period, Western humanitarian organizations provided fifty percent of Kabul’s population with food supplies (Rashid, 2000).

extreme theocratic ideology through force and repression. Indeed, as Rashid notes, upon taking power, the Taliban “immediately implemented the strictest interpretation of Shari’a law ever seen in the Muslim world” (Rashid, 2000: 29). Individual freedoms were severely curtailed and human rights abuses increased under the oppressive and authoritarian Taliban rule. The Taliban’s brand of Islamic fundamentalism was reflected in a series of decrees designed to control Afghan social behavior. For instance, restrictions were placed on most types of “secular entertainment” including bans on television, theatre, radio, music, dancing, art, photography, many types of sports and activities such as chess and kite flying (Goodson, 2001: 121). Conservative dress was mandated, Friday prayers were compulsory and men were required to grow beards.

The Taliban’s extreme vision of Islam was reflected most acutely in its policies towards Afghan women. Indeed, the Taliban coupled its radical Islamic ideology with traditional Afghan paternalism<sup>122</sup> that limited women’s freedoms in a manner unprecedented in Afghan history. For example women were banned from employment<sup>123</sup>, all girls’ schools were closed<sup>124</sup>, women were excluded from teaching or attending Kabul

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<sup>122</sup> Although the Taliban “denounce freedom for women as antithetical to Islamic morality” and are responsible for a level of state sanctioned repression against women unique to Afghan history it is axiomatic to note that male dominance in Afghan society also stems from traditional Afghan mores. Nancy Hatch Dupree comments: “For all Afghans, rural and urban, the family functions as the paramount social institution to which individuals look for rights and owe recognized obligations. For women, a primary obligation is to uphold family honor by conforming to accepted behavioral norms. Although rules governing female behavior vary from group to group, Afghan society is consistent in its innate belief in male superiority, giving to men the prerogative to determine the dos and don’ts for women. Few challenge this” (1998: 163). Nevertheless, while Afghan society is patriarchal, a distinction must be drawn between the rural and urban experiences of women within the last century. Since Amanullah’s time in the early 1920s, concerted efforts to improve gender equality in Afghanistan resulted in vast improvements for urban Afghan women. By the 1970s, Kabul women experienced unprecedented social and professional freedoms. Thus, the Taliban period represented a retrograde step in gender affairs whereby their harsh measures set back the advancements of the last eighty-five years for Afghan women (Fujimura, 2004).

<sup>123</sup> Estimates state that between 40,000 to 150,000 women were directly excluded from the workforce due to the Taliban’s ban of women employment (Dupree, 1998: 155).

<sup>124</sup> Education represents an example where the Taliban exacerbated the already dismal conditions for women. By closing all educational institutions to women, the Taliban ended all public opportunities for learning to a demographic desperately in need. Approximately, 70,000 female students were banned from

University, movement outside the home was restricted, the burqa or full-length veil was mandated and key services such as health care were denied (Dupree, 1998). Collectively, these prohibitions against women's freedoms led to a form of "gender apartheid" culminating in a deterioration of overall well being to an already beleaguered group (Dupree, 1998: 159).

The inability to work and the forced seclusion of Afghan women was devastating to many Afghan families many of whom were living in abject poverty and reliant on all forms of family income. Moreover, after two decades of war, Afghan widows constituted a new demographic and thus represented the primary breadwinner for many Afghan families<sup>125</sup>. The number of Afghan women forced into begging or prostitution rose dramatically in this period (Dupree, 1998).

As mentioned, all Afghans were deleteriously affected by the Taliban's gender policies given the high preponderance of women employed in the health and education sectors. As well, women experienced a significant health crisis, as they were prohibited from seeing male doctors in an environment where women were also prohibited from providing medical services (Goodson, 2001). Finally, failure to conform to the Taliban's social policy led to "vigorous" enforcement" that included the beatings and public humiliation of Afghan women (Dupree, 1998: 151). Human development statistics from this period indicate the appalling reality for women under the Taliban. Goodson highlights these grim figures:

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educational facilities (Rashid, 2000). At the time, female literacy rates averaged 3 to 4 percent of the Afghan population (Goodson, 2001: 129).

<sup>125</sup> A 1997 Red Cross report identified 50,000 widows in Kabul "each with an average of 7-9 children" (Dupree, 1998).

Life expectancy for women is only 43-44 years old, nearly twenty years less than the average for developing countries. It is also low because of maternal mortality rates (17 per 1000) and infant mortality rates (163 per 1000) that are the highest in the world, because less than 6 percent of births are attended by trained medical personnel and because 'only 29 percent of the population has access to health and 12 percent has access to safe water. (2001: 120)

The repression of women during this period represented a focal point of international condemnation against the Taliban regime. After the Taliban released their edicts affecting women an outcry occurred from key world figures and UN officials condemning the repressive decrees. The Taliban viewed such criticism as a further example of western interference into the cultural affairs of an Islamic country<sup>126</sup>. As Dupree notes, "pressures by Westerners are also viewed as aggressions against Islam, deepening Taliban convictions that the society is in danger by outsiders" (1998: 159). Indeed, the extension of women's rights had been considered in Afghanistan as a visible manifestation of western inspired modernism. Deep fissures existed within Afghan society between the traditionalists and the modernists who have contested each other for over a century regarding the issue of gender equality.

The Taliban, in their efforts to change the social behavior of Afghan society, developed an arm of government to implement their policies. Consequently, a Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Suppression of Vice<sup>127</sup> was established to enforce the Taliban's new repressive edicts. As Rasanayagam notes, this ministry was "the only well-manned and well-funded institution to function under the Taliban" (Rasanayagam, 2003:

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<sup>126</sup> For instance, the Taliban Acting Deputy Foreign Minister, Sher Mohammad Stanekzai stated that: "This is our country and we know better what to do with our women, do not interfere in our internal affairs" (Dupree, 1998: 159).

<sup>127</sup> The Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Suppression of Vice was based on a similar organization in Saudi Arabia and financed by special access to "Gulf funds" (Goodson, 2001: 117). Saudi Arabia exercised considerable influence in Afghanistan during this period through its financial and philosophical sponsorship of the Taliban.

197). Characterized as the “religious police” this new ministry was directed to monitor and punish “violations of public morality” (Goodson, 2001: 117). Punishments were based on the Islamic ‘hudud’ tradition, as stipulated in the Koran. Sentences were harsh and included such penalties as stoning for adultery and flogging or amputation for theft. Public executions and amputations were commonplace (Goodson, 2001; Rashid, 2000).

The increasing authoritarianism of Mullah Omar, his autonomy in decision-making, secrecy in administration and repression of all perceived political foes highlighted the Taliban’s overall concentration of power. The Taliban’s absolute authority took on an ethnic dimension, as the overwhelmingly Pashtun leadership reflected a governance body that was “totally unrepresentative” of the Afghan population (Rashid, 2000: 98). The Taliban “had resorted to one-man rule with no organizational mechanism to accommodate other ethnic groups or points of view” (Rashid, 2000:104). As Roy states, this is consistent with Afghan political history as ethnicity constitutes” the key factor of political alignment” (1998: 209).

The ascension to power of the Taliban has been characterized as the “revenge of the Pashtuns” (Roy, 1998: 208). In their initial drive to secure military support within Afghanistan, “most Pashtun commanders” rallied behind the Taliban (Roy, 1998: 208). Moreover, the Taliban policies fused their radical Islamic beliefs with traditional Pashtunwali customs (Pashtun social codes), which were deemed alien to non-Pashtun areas of the country. Rashid notes that the imposition of Pashtunwali-Sharia law on non-Pashtun groups “only deepened the ethnic divide in the country” (Rashid, 2000: 112).

Thus under the Taliban, Pashtun dominance coupled with an intolerant ideology and a repressive style of leadership led to open sectarian violence. Indeed, ethnic conflict

marked the Taliban rule. A series of massacres, forced migrations and other atrocities occurred between groups of different ethnicity and religions: “The Taliban had massacred Shia Hazara villagers and forced out Tajik farmers from the Shomali valley. The Uzbeks and Hazaras had massacred hundreds of Taliban prisoners and killed Pashtuns villagers in the north and around Kabul. The Shia Hazaras had also forced out Pashtuns on the basis of their Sunni beliefs” (Rashid, 2000: 64).

The Shia -Sunni divide worsened in this period due to the Taliban’s expressed policy to discriminate and marginalize Afghan Shias. Indeed, the Taliban viewed the Shia population as munafaqeen or hypocrites, and fundamentally unfaithful to Islam (Rashid, 2000: 69). The Shia Hazara minority, which had historically endured ethnic and religious discrimination, became the target of Taliban oppression. The Taliban invoked a policy of ethnic cleansing directed against the Hazaras that included village massacres, executions and mass starvation<sup>128</sup> (Rashid, 2000; Rasanayagam, 2003). For example, on August 8 1998, Taliban soldiers entered Mazar-e-Sharif and massacred Tajik and Hazara civilians over a two-day period (Rashid, 2000). The Taliban’s efforts to “cleanse the north” of rival Tajik and Hazara Shias resulted in the deaths of between 6000 and 8000 people (Rashid, 2000: 74). In short, ethnic, tribal and religious divisions heightened under Taliban rule reshaping the internal conflict in Afghanistan as a “power struggle” between ethno-religious factions (Goodson, 2001: 132).

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<sup>128</sup> The Taliban sought to exterminate the Hazara population through the blockade of food to the isolated Shia minority in their mountain villages. Rasanayagam comments on how these efforts resulted in mass starvation: “The Taliban response was to close all the roads leading into the Harajat from the south, west and east, and enforce a food blockade to compel the Hazaras to surrender. It was the first time in 20 years of conflict that food was used as a weapon of war...In the winter of 1997 3000,000 Hazaras in Bamyan and 700,000 others in the neighboring provinces of Ghor, Wardak and Ghazni were starving (Rasanayagam, 2003: 155).



Ethnic discord in the Taliban period continued to be fueled by outside players. The interrelationship between external states and their proxy groups within Afghanistan produced a multi casual dynamic wherein external involvement in Afghan affairs heightened internal ethnic discord and, correspondingly, internal clashes fueled regional tensions. Thus, conflict between ethno religious groups in Afghanistan was enabled by foreign players through the provision of supplies to each respective faction. In the Taliban period, a constellation of foreign countries supported the Afghan minority groups that comprise the Northern Alliance<sup>129</sup>: “Iran, Turkey, India, Russia and four of the five Central Asian Republics –Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan –have backed the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance with arms and money to try and halt the Taliban’s advance” (Rashid, 2000: 5). Each of these disparate countries shared the common goal of undermining the growth of “Afghan-Pashtun fundamentalism” in Afghanistan (Rashid, 2000: 200).

Equally, the Taliban’s existence was wholly contingent on the multifaceted support it received from Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. Since the Soviet-Afghan war, both nations sought to realize their interests in Afghanistan through the support of “the most radical Sunni Pashtun groups” in the country (Rashid, 2000: 197). They continued this policy through the provision of financial and military assistance to the Taliban regime. As well, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates were the only countries that officially acknowledged the legitimacy of the Taliban regime. Thus, both the duration and intensity of fighting that occurred between the Taliban Pashtuns and the

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<sup>129</sup> Ahady lists the groups that comprise the Northern Alliance” “the Northern Alliance was made up of the Uzbek force led by General Dostum, the Hazara force led by Mazari, the Ismaili Shiitee force led by Naderi, and the Tajik force led by Massoud” (1998: 124).

minority groups of the Northern Alliance was made possible due to the ongoing support from external parties (Goodson, 2001).

Conversely, discord between ethnic groups within Afghanistan heightened regional tensions between the contiguous states. The Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran nexus offers a clear example of this dynamic. Iran strongly opposed the Taliban regime and provided aid and weapons<sup>130</sup> to Shia anti-Taliban factions within Afghanistan. Iran viewed the Taliban as an “anti-Shia and anti-Iran force” that represented Pakistan’s and the US’s vehicle for regional control (Ahady, 1998: 126; Rashid, 2000).

The Taliban period thus heightened the regional tensions between Iran and the governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan. Indeed, formal ties were weakened in June 1997 between Afghanistan and Iran when the Taliban closed the Iranian Embassy in Kabul. Iranian officials condemned the Taliban for providing refuge and support to a Sunni Iranian radical group that sought to depose the Iranian Shia government. Afghan – Iranian tensions escalated with the Taliban’s drive to conquer the central and northern areas of Afghanistan, the atrocities perpetuated against the Afghan Shia’s and the destruction of the 2000 year old giant Buddha sculptures , “Afghanistan’s greatest archaeological heritage” located in the Shia Hazara stronghold of Bamiyan (Rashid, 2000:76).

Open hostilities between the two countries appeared imminent after Taliban soldiers stormed the Iranian Consulate in Mazar killing a number of Iranian diplomats<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Because the Taliban held the territory between Iran and the Northern Alliance areas, Iran was forced to transport military supplies through airlift or trains via Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgystan (Rashid, 2000).

<sup>131</sup> Rashid comments on how Iranian support of the anti-Taliban ethnic minorities preceded and prompted the Taliban raid on the Iranian Consulate: “The Taliban replied, correctly as it appeared, that the Iranians were not diplomats but intelligent agents involved in ferrying weapons to the anti-Taliban alliance” (2000: 205).

and intelligent agents. Collectively, these actions transformed public opinion within Iran towards war with Afghanistan. The Iranian government mobilized their armed forces on the Iranian-Afghanistan border area where over 270,000 Iranian Revolutionary Guards and regular forces participated in large-scale military exercises in October 1998. The Taliban dispatched 5000 soldiers to the border area to meet the anticipated attack. This crisis assumed a broader regional dimension as Iran held Pakistan responsible the actions of the Taliban and also because of Pakistan's failure to protect their diplomatic staff and the participation of Pakistan militants in the Consulate raid. A last minute intervention by UN delegates defused the crisis (Rashid, 2000). Thus, conflict within Afghanistan between the minority Shi'a groups and the Pashtun Taliban engendered a wider regional confrontation pitting Iran against Afghanistan and Pakistan.

External involvement in Afghan affairs not only facilitated the rise of the Taliban, it also engendered the fall of the Taliban. In order to understand the overthrow of the Taliban regime it is necessary to overview briefly Afghan-US affairs. As noted, the United State's policy towards Afghanistan constitutes a mercurial pattern of both active involvement and avowed disinterest driven by changing US strategic realities. For instance, Cold War imperatives rendered Afghanistan strategically important to the US prompting a period of US financial support from the 1950's to the 1970's. US involvement escalated dramatically when Afghanistan became a Cold War battleground from 1979 to 1989. US strategic interests in Afghan affairs ended abruptly with the withdrawal of Soviet forces resulting in a cessation of US aid and involvement with Afghanistan. The precipitous US disengagement prompted widespread animosity among many Afghans who believed the post-war period of anarchy and civil war was aggravated

by the US regional withdrawal (Rashid, 2000). Rashid characterizes the US Central Asian policy following the Soviet-Afghan war as “piecemeal,” “haphazard” and devoid of any “coherent strategic vision” (2000: 176).

The changeable nature of the United State’s Afghanistan policy is exemplified by the US’s approach to the Taliban. Initially, the US government supported the Taliban. The US did not deter its allies Saudi Arabia and Pakistan in their support of the Taliban and thus implicitly sanctioned the Taliban’s rise to power. US motives underlying this position relate to the one constant US Central Asian policy: the isolation of Iran. Indeed, US policy makers regarded the Taliban as an “anti-Iranian, anti-Shia and pro-Western” movement that fundamentally served US interests (Rashid, 2000: 176). Thus, in the triaged nature of US global policy considerations, the Taliban’s radical Islamic doctrine and extreme gender positions were regarded as secondary to the larger strategic imperative of containing Iran (Rasanayagam, 2003). Moreover, by 1995, the US government viewed the Taliban as a vehicle to facilitate the US company Unocal’s bid to develop an oil pipeline from Turkmenistan to Pakistan via Taliban-held Afghanistan (Rashid, 2000).

However, by 1997 a number of factors triggered a radical shift in the US policy toward the Taliban regime. As Rashid states, US policy towards Afghanistan “transformed from “unconditionally accepting the Taliban to unconditionally rejecting them” (2000: 182). Internally, US public awareness of the Taliban’s extreme gender policies and human rights abuses spawned a powerful domestic lobby within the US demanding a hard lined approach to the Taliban regime. A new hard lined approach emerged with the appointment of Madeleine Albright as the US Secretary of State who

lent a strong voice in the executive level of the US government against the Taliban (Rashid, 2000).

Larger security issues also drove the United State's transformation in its Taliban policy. First, US concerns arose over the export of radical Islam, opium and other criminal activities from Afghanistan that threatened both Pakistan's internal security and the region's overall stability. Second, US officials became increasingly alarmed over the growth of global terrorist networks within Afghanistan. Indeed, the Taliban government provided sanctuary to Osama Bin Laden and the principal leaders of the Al-Qaeda terrorist organization<sup>132</sup>. Al Qaeda's continued threats against the United States and growing organizational strength directly threatened US national security. In August 1998, Al-Qaeda's threats materialized into attacks when Al-Qaeda operatives bombed the US Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. The US responded with missile strikes on purported Al-Qaeda camps in Sudan and Afghanistan. In January 1999, US officials demanded the Taliban cease all aid to Al-Qaeda, and expel Bin Laden from Afghanistan. The US demand for the eviction and arrest of Bin Laden became formalized in a UN Security Resolution in October 1999. The Taliban refused to comply prompting the UN to impose economic sanctions against the Afghan regime (Rasanayagam, 2003). In 2000, Al-Qaeda operations against the US continued with a suicide attack on the USS Cole in Aden harbour, Yemen (Tanner, 2002). The Yemen attack prompted the UN Security Council to

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<sup>132</sup> Shahrani explains the sequence of events leading to bin Laden's association with the Taliban: "In 1995, Osama bin Laden, who had initially come to Afghanistan in 1981 to fight in the jihad against the Soviet invaders, returned to Afghanistan. Enraged by the Gulf War, bin Laden became a vocal opponent of the U.S-led coalition war with Saudi Arabia, organizing antiwar demonstrations resulting in his exile from Saudi Arabia to Sudan. In 1995, ISI, the Pakistani Intelligence Service, brokered a deal to move bin Laden and his entourage from Sudan to Pakistan and into Afghanistan, an act that laid the foundation for a Taliban-bin Laden alliance. Bin Laden financed the Taliban's war against their non-Pashtun enemies, with his al Qaeda militants fighting alongside Taliban forces, and supported the training of other disgruntled Muslim militant groups from virtually anywhere around the world" (2002:8).

issue a new slate of sanctions against the Taliban regime. Mullah Omar responded with the declaration that: “We will never hand Osama over to anyone and [will] protect him with our blood at any cost” (Rasanayagam, 2003: 204).

The September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001 Al-Qaeda attacks on the United States forecasted the downfall of the Taliban regime. The United States again demanded the expulsion of Bin Laden and the Al-Qaeda leadership from Afghanistan and Mullah Omar again refused to comply (Jane’s Information Group, 2005). On October 7<sup>th</sup> 2001, the US invasion of Afghanistan began when US military forces initiated Operation Enduring Freedom. CIA field operatives and US Special Forces worked alongside United Front (UF) [Northern Alliance] ground fighters and directed US air and sea firepower against Taliban positions. After an eight-week campaign, US-UF forces defeated the Taliban armed force and occupied Taliban-held territory signaling the collapse of the Taliban regime (Jane’s Information Group, 2005).

### **The Bonn Agreement**

Shortly after the fall of the Taliban, the international community sought a political solution for the war-torn country. On December 5, 2001, representatives of key Afghan political, ethnic and military factions<sup>133</sup> signed a UN sponsored accord in Bonn Germany that established a framework for the political reconstruction of Afghanistan. The objective of the Bonn Agreement was to formalize a process leading toward the establishment of a “modern democratic state in Afghanistan” (Riaz, 2002: 4). Indeed, the Bonn Agreement envisioned the rebuilding of the Afghan state through the creation of a

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<sup>133</sup> Leaders from the Northern Alliance, the Peshawar Group (Afghan refugees in Pakistan), the Rome Delegation (Afghan royal family), and the Cyprus Group (Afghan exiles in Iran) constituted the disparate factions that signed the Bonn Agreement (UN General Backgrounder, 2005).

strong central government formed from democratic institutions. The UN established the United Nations Assistance Mission for Afghanistan (UNAMA) in order to facilitate and aid in the implementation of the Bonn Agreement.

The Bonn Agreement inaugurated a process beginning with the creation of interim institutions that would precede and help facilitate the eventual establishment of a permanent government. First, the Afghan Interim Authority (AIA) was established on December 22, 2001 to oversee the administration of the country for a six-month period. Second, as part of its mandate, the AIA organized an Emergency Loya Jirga that met in June 2002. The Loya Jirga is a traditional Afghan institution, which resembles a national council derived from the key decision makers in the country. The Emergency Loya Jirga was charged with the task of determining the makeup of the Afghan Transitional Authority (ATA). The ATA replaced the AIA as the central administrating body in Afghanistan.

Third, in January 2004, a Constitutional Loya Jirga was convened to produce the Constitution of Afghanistan. The Constitution, drawing heavily on the form and structure of the 1964 Afghan Constitution, formalizes Afghanistan as an Islamic Republic and called for the creation of executive, legislative and judicial branches of government (Tremblay, 2005). The President and the government ministries represent the executive branch of government. A bicameral National Assembly formed from two houses, the 249-member Wolesi Jirga (House of People) and the 102-member Meshrano Jirga (House of Elders) represents the legislative branch of government. Members of the Wolesi Jirga are elected through a popular vote while members of the Meshrano Jirga are selected in three ways: one third are appointed by the President, one third are elected

from Provincial Councils and one third are elected from provincial District Councils (JEMB Final Report, 2005). The Supreme Court, High Courts and Primary Courts represent the judicial branch.

Fourth, consistent with its mandate to create democratic governance, the Bonn Agreement established a framework of nation wide elections for the executive, legislative and provincial levels of government. On October 9<sup>th</sup> 2004, Hamid Karzai was elected President of Afghanistan. President Karzai appointed Cabinet Ministers and formed a government that replaced the ATA as the central authority in the country. On September 18 2005, elections took place nationwide to elect members to the Wolesi Jirga and the Provincial Councils. The newly elected Provincial Council members subsequently elected two individuals from each council to serve in the Meshrano Jirga. On November 26 2005 the final Meshrano Jirga elections occurred “bringing the 2005 electoral process to a close” (JEMB Final Report, 2005: 7). The elections to the two houses of the National Assembly formally ended the transition period and constitute a “vital step in the establishment of a fully representative government in Afghanistan as envisioned by the Bonn Agreement” (JEMB Secretariat, 2005).



## CHAPTER FOUR

### EVALUATING IGNATIEFF'S THEORY IN THE CASE OF AFGHANISTAN: ECONOMICS, EDUCATION, CIVIL SOCIETY AND INSTITUTIONAL HISTORY

#### **Introduction**

The signatories to the Bonn Agreement put into motion the establishment of the very objectives that Ignatieff advanced to minimize ethnic discord. Indeed, the Bonn Agreement represents a formalized effort to create order and stability in an ethnically divided post-conflict society through the creation of democratic institutions. There are three key parallels between the Bonn Agreement process and Ignatieff's thesis. First, the Bonn process implicitly and tacitly identifies ethnicity as a key variable in Afghanistan's internal conflict and thus constructs a political solution designed to accommodate the competing groups. As Conrad Schetter notes, " deriving from the perception that ethnicity is the predominant argument in the Afghan War, the peace process that was initiated at the Petersberg Conference near Bonn end of November 2001 is based on an ethnic representative government" (2002: 1).

Consciousness of Afghanistan's ethnic divisions permeated all aspects of the planning and implementation of the peace accord. For instance, representatives of the chief ethnic and political factions in the country negotiated the Bonn Agreement. The Agreement itself explicitly identifies "the need to ensure broad representation in these interim arrangements of all segments of the Afghan population" (Bonn Agreement). Accordingly, the nation's key tribal leaders representing the differing ethnic communities participated in the 2002 Emergency Loya Jirga that established the ATA. Karzai, as the

leader of the ATA, selected thirty-five ministers from Afghanistan's diverse ethnic groups to administer the transitional government. In April 2003, Karzai "appointed an ethnically balanced thirty-three member commission" to draft the new constitution which was subsequently ratified by ethnically representative constitutional Loya Jirga (Tremblay, 2005: 212). As Tremblay states, the Bonn Agreement framework "was an exercise in introducing consociational practices and norms for an ethnically divided society" (2005: 199).

A second key feature of the Bonn Agreement structure that correlates to Ignatieff's thesis is the plan to establish a strong central government in Afghanistan as a means to provide security. According to Ignatieff, when states fail it is necessary to "create states strong enough to recover their monopoly over the means of violence, to impose order and create the rule of law" (2001: 35). The Bonn process reaffirms the need for a strong state as the 2004 Afghan Constitution calls for the formation of a "unitary, highly centralized presidential system of government" (Tremblay, 2005: 199). Moreover, while the Constitution provides for the development of provinces and municipalities, these local units lack any meaningful authority as they lack "any independent constitutional powers" (Tremblay, 2005: 199). Endemic to a 'strong state' is the establishment of a national armed force that represents the dominant military power in the country. The Bonn Agreement establishes a template for the Afghan state to secure a 'monopoly over the means of violence.' Specifically, Annex 1 of the Bonn Agreement mandates the allowance of an international security force to provide interim security to Kabul, and gradually to other Afghan urban communities and parts of the countryside. Annex 1 also calls for the withdrawal of the Afghan militias as the international force

secures each new area. Finally, Annex 1 directs the international force to work with the Afghan administration to establish and train “new Afghan security and armed forces” (Afghan Bonn Agreement). Thus, according to the Bonn protocol, while the international community secures Afghanistan, militia forces will be expelled and indigenous Afghan national forces will become the dominant military force in Afghanistan.

To enable the goal of centralizing the means of violence, the Afghan government plans to create a national security force formed from a “60,000-strong army, an 8,000-man air force, a 12,000-man border guard, and a 70,000-member police force” (Jalali, 2002:82). Furthermore, as the Bonn Agreement articulates, the objective of centralizing military power necessitates the derogation of regional militia strength. Pursuant to this goal, the Afghan government has embarked on a multi-pronged approach led by the policy of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) of the regional militias. The DDR effort seeks to disarm the militias of heavy weapons, demobilize the militias of their manpower and reintegrate the militia warriors into the formal economy. A further effort to derogate regional power includes attempts to diminish the authority of regional commanders principally through “negotiation and incentives” (Rubin, Hamidzada, Stoddard, 2005: 37). Thus, rather than direct confrontation, the Afghan government seeks to co-opt regional warlords through patronage appointments to government positions preferably “away from their places of origin, and hence their power base” (Rubin, Hamidzada, Stoddard, 2005: 37).

A third key feature of the Bonn Agreement structure that correlates to Ignatieff’s thesis is the template for the establishment of national institutions that are democratic and that guarantee equality of rights for its citizens. As Ignatieff comments,

“Constitutionalism and the civic state are the institutional sine qua non of effective human rights protection in multinational states” (2001: 32). As mentioned, the Bonn Agreement formalized a process that led to the creation of an interim administration, a new constitution, the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government, and a framework of nationwide elections. Furthermore, the Bonn Agreement also mandates the creation of other national institutions to expand the nation building process and to facilitate the protection of civil rights within Afghanistan. For instance, the Bonn process seeks legal reform through a judicial commission; it calls for the creation of a Civil Service Commission, a new central bank and the “establishment of an Independent Human Rights Commission to monitor violations and promote human rights education” (Rubin, Hamidzada, Stoddard, 2005: 54). As well, UNAMA is mandated by the accord to record human rights abuses.

In short, the Bonn Agreement activates Ignatieff’s prescription to resolve ethnic conflict through the establishment of democratic governance. Paralleling Ignatieff’s theory, the Bonn process implicitly recognizes the centrality of ethnicity in the Afghan conflict and constructs a political solution designed to accommodate the competing groups. The process initiated by the Bonn accord represents a framework of national reconstruction designed to rebuild the state of Afghanistan. The reconstructed state is envisioned by the accord to centralize the means of violence through the diminution of militia power and the creation of national Afghan security forces. The reconstructed state will also be based on democratic governance or as the Agreement states, a “broad-based, gender-sensitive, multi-ethnic and fully representative government” (Bonn Agreement). Thus, the Bonn Agreement forecasts the creation of a government represented and

elected by the Afghan people, the primacy of the rule of law, a host of national institutions to administer the country and adjudicate disputes and the development of an armed force to enforce the authority of the state. The Bonn Agreement, again echoing Ignatieff's thesis, considers that the ultimate purpose of these state-building measures is "to end the tragic conflict in Afghanistan and promote national reconciliation, lasting peace, stability and respect for human rights in the country" (Bonn Agreement: 1). Thus, the signatories to the Bonn Agreement implicitly sanction democratic state building as the key solution to mitigate internal conflict in Afghanistan.

This section critically assesses Ignatieff's thesis regarding the establishment of democratic institutions as a remedy for ethnic war by analyzing the viability of pluralistic governance in Afghanistan. The successful establishment of liberal democratic institutions in countries undergoing a democratic transition is contingent on a host of factors. The framework of analysis developed by Axel Hadenius emphasizes the necessity of a democratic citizenship derived through an active civil society and a strong economic base. The institutional history of a country also represents a key factor that influences the success of democratic state building. However, as White notes, there are several other key variables that directly affect the successful implementation of state institutions:

To a considerable extent institutions rest on and are moulded by profound structural factors – the specific character of the social and economic system, the dominant systems of cultural thought and behavior, the specific impact of the state-based and international constellations of power, and the constitution of civil and political societies. (1998: 43)

Consequently, in order to assess Ignatieff's theory by considering the viability of democratic governance in Afghanistan, it is necessary to consider the key factors which critically impact the successful implementation of democratic state institutions. Specifically, by incorporating White's analysis with the theoretical perspectives discussed in Chapter One, this section overviews the following factors as they apply to Afghanistan: the current socio-economic indicators, the nature of civil society, the institutional history of Afghanistan, security issues, as well as key cultural and geopolitical variables that affect state-building<sup>134</sup>.

## **Economics**

A strong and vibrant socio-economic base constitutes a key precondition that is essential for both the emergence and continuity of a durable democratic state. Indeed, as identified in Chapter One, the correlation between socio-economic success and stable democracy is well developed in political theory and supported by empirical data. As also identified, the presence of a healthy middle class and the nature of a state's revenue also represent key determinants affecting the prospects for a sustained democracy. In order to assess Afghanistan's compatibility for democracy it is thus essential to overview current socio-economic indicators, as well as the extent of the Afghan middle class and the nature of the Afghan state's revenue sources. First, it is necessary to briefly outline the major factors that have shaped Afghanistan's economic history.

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<sup>134</sup> It is important to emphasize that there is a clear interrelationship between several of these variables. For instance, as this chapter will further elucidate, economic factors intersect with geopolitical, security and cultural factors given Afghanistan's dependence on foreign aid, and the inability to draw internal revenue for cultural, geopolitical and security reasons.

As detailed in Chapters Two and Three, a key factor limiting the development of the Afghan state has been its historic inability to foster a strong economy and derive substantive internal revenues. A number of external and internal factors account for the Afghan state's poor economy and domestic revenue mobilization. First, a number of geopolitical factors have severely impaired Afghanistan's economic potential. Afghanistan's history of continual foreign invasions and internal warfare has been devastating both in human and material terms. Afghanistan's record of warfare represents a chief impediment to the socio-economic development of the country and has thus precluded efforts towards modernization and the consolidation of the Afghan state.

Afghanistan's landlocked status and its inability to directly conduct sea-borne trade have also hampered both the expansion of the Afghan economy and the commensurate development of the Afghan state. In turn, Afghanistan's reliance on overland trade heightened its economic dependence on neighboring countries and thus restricted its economic autonomy. For instance, during the nineteenth century, the Afghan economy suffered due to the imperial rivalry between the Russian and British Empires, which resulted in trade sanctions on overland goods passing through Afghanistan. As well, border closures and economic sanctions in the 1950s devastated the Afghan economy during the 'Pashtunistan' crisis with Pakistan in the 1950s.

Geopolitical factors also hindered the modernization of Afghanistan as successive Amirs refused to sanction foreign investment due to concerns of imperial conquest. Conversely, when the Afghan leadership accepted significant development support from external powers, geopolitical considerations led to the cessation of aid inflows. For instance, during the Cold War Afghanistan experienced the mercurial nature of foreign

support when the considerable Russian and American aid abruptly ended in the 1970s resulting in severe economic dislocation and political instability. In sum, the external political environment constituted a central factor limiting both Afghanistan's economic growth and its ability to develop a meaningful program of modernization.

In addition to external factors, a number of internal factors have impeded Afghanistan's economic prosperity. For instance, continuous tribal warfare, endemic poverty, a largely uneducated and illiterate population, a large un-taxable nomadic population and a harsh geographical environment with little or no infrastructure represented key internal variables hindering Afghanistan's economic development. Internally, a central paradox exists in Afghanistan wherein the central government has been unable to expand because of a weak economy and the economy has been unable to expand because of a weak government. Indeed, the Afghan government has traditionally been unable to provide the requisite environment for economic growth because it has lacked the means to do so. Thus, the provision of basic services and the development of necessary infrastructure, central features to a modern state, have just not occurred in Afghanistan.

The traditional inability and unwillingness of the central government to penetrate the tribal-feudal economy represents a critical factor explaining both the weakness of the Afghan state and the primitive nature of the economy. As discussed, the Afghan state has been unable to overturn the dominance of the Afghan tribes due to the cohesive nature of tribal bonds, the difficulty in suppressing tribal power because of the harsh physical environment as well as the historic distrust of central authority in Afghanistan. As a 2005 Asian Development Bank Institute (ADBI) Report states "corruption, deficient



administrative capacity, and occasional armed threats to tax collectors by local inhabitants, implied difficulties for levying taxes” (2005: 112).

Attempts by the central government to transform the tribal-feudal economy under Amanullah in the early 1900s and the PDPA regime in the late 1970s resulted in widespread revolution and the overthrow of the government. Thus, the central government has historically been unable to extract significant revenues from the agricultural economy, the country’s chief source of production. The lack of government control over the Afghan countryside is also reflected in the historic smuggling trade that has occurred along the country’s borders. As an example, in the 1970s, the trade in illicit goods constituted up to 30 percent of Afghanistan’s external trade figure (ADBI, 2005: 112).

Socio-economic development has been largely restricted to Afghanistan’s urban centers thus reflecting the country’s profound rural-urban divide. The inability to penetrate the rural economy forced the Afghan government to concentrate on the small sedentary population and the urban business elite in Kabul for tax revenue. This is important for three chief reasons. First this clearly displayed the modest level of the nationwide economic reform. Second it procured modest revenues to the government and third, through excessive taxation, the central government economically suppressed the merchant class whose growth was essential for a large-scale modernization program.

Government revenue has also traditionally relied on customs and duties on Afghanistan’s transit economy. Given the difficulty in penetrating the rural economy coupled with the state’s weak bureaucratic apparatus, customs revenue “with their simple administration” constituted a principle source of internal revenue (ADBI, 2005: 112).

Therefore, Afghanistan's chief source of internal income qualifies the country as an 'easy money' state reliant on 'unearned income'. As discussed in Chapter One, when governments depend on "unearned income", the level of interaction between state and society is limited, which, in turn confers profound political implications (Moore, 1998: 84). Consequently, Afghanistan has not forged the necessary state-society relationship where the government develops a strong tax base among its citizens in return for the provision of services and extensive political rights.

In sum, these external and internal factors collectively underlie Afghanistan's limited economic capacity and socioeconomic development, which in turn circumscribed the size and scope of the Afghan state. The historical factors that underwrote Afghanistan's poor socio-economic development continue to afflict the country. Indeed, Afghanistan is currently one of the poorest countries in the world. Afghanistan, to use Moore's term, is a "Fourth World" country. According to Moore, three key attributes characterize a "Fourth World" country: low levels in both per capita income and economic output; limited governance capability whereby the state cannot effectively "exercise authority, provide law and order or raise taxes" and a "high degree" of foreign aid dependence (1998: 88). These three variables accurately reflect Afghanistan's current economic and governance capability.

Based on macro-economic indicators, poverty is endemic throughout Afghanistan. Afghanistan rated 173 out of 178 countries on the Human Development Index (HDI) assessed by the UNDP global 2004 Human Development Report. The HDI calculates its ratings based on a number of human, social and economic indices such as literacy, school enrolment, per capita GDP and life expectancy. Afghanistan's literacy rate is 28.7

percent, its gross enrolment is 45 percent and the life expectancy is 44.5 years at birth (UNDP, 2005: 18). Afghanistan has one of the highest infant and child mortality rates in the world<sup>135</sup> and “over 80 per cent of these deaths are considered preventable” (UNDP, 2005: 16). Only 23 percent of the population has access to potable water, only 12 percent has access to basic sanitation and only 10 percent has access to public electricity (UNDP, 2005: 27; World Bank Report, 2005). In 2002/03, the GDP was estimated at \$4.05 billion, which translates to a per capita GDP of \$186 (ADB: 2004:21). Collectively, these indices can be viewed as indicators of poverty<sup>136</sup>. Based upon the Human Development Index, Afghanistan is the fifth poorest country in the world. On accepted international standards of poverty assessment and estimates of Afghanistan’s economic indicators, the ADBI 2004 Report stated that the “majority of the population falls into poverty” (2004:24). Malnourishment is pervasive and currently stands at 60 percent of the population (UNDP, 2005: 27). The 2003 National Rural Vulnerability Assessment (NRVA) indicates that 20 percent of the rural population is chronically malnourished while an additional 60 per cent are “living in poverty” and face serious health issues (UNDP, 2005: 36).

Given the widespread nature of Afghan poverty, the presence of a vibrant middle class is virtually non-existent in Afghanistan. As stated in Chapter One, the existence of a strong middle class constitutes a necessary condition that has historically underwritten the development and sustainability of democracy. A middle class generates wealth,

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<sup>135</sup> Infant mortality in Afghanistan is 115 per 1000 while the child mortality (up to age 5) is 257 per 1000 (UNDP, 2005:27).

<sup>136</sup> The 2005 UNDP Report discusses the interrelationship between low human, social and economic indicators and poverty: “Low incomes and low levels of living standards for the poor are manifested in their poor health, nutrition and education, which in turn can lower their economic productivity, and thereby lead directly and indirectly to a slower growing economy” (2005: 35).

fosters the development of social capital and serves as an essential counterweight to state autocracy. Given its economic clout the middle class represents an entity that has traditionally demanded political inclusion and the expansion of rights throughout society. Afghanistan lacks the presence of such a vital societal group that not only fosters democracy but contributes to its longevity.

As well, Afghanistan's widespread poverty is reflected in a per capita income (PCI) of \$252 US (Asian Development Bank, 2005). As the democratic development studies have indicated, countries with a per capital income of less than \$1000 have historically been unable to sustain democratic governance. Afghanistan resides at the low end of this category. Even if Afghan incomes were to rise to a per capita of \$1500, countries in this second category were only able to maintain democratic rule for less than twenty years. Even this figure seems unattainable as even the most optimistic forecasts indicate the potential of achieving a PCI of \$500 by 2015 (UN News Centre, 2006).

The official Afghan economy is centred on agricultural production, which represents over half of the Afghan GDP and employs 80 percent of the working population (ADBI: 2004:22). A great proportion of Afghanistan's farming production is largely subsistence oriented wherein "much of the product is either not exchanged or not exchanged for money" (ADBI, 2005: 123). Currently, agricultural production is unable to sustain the daily food needs of Afghans, who are reliant on external aid for survival (Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment, 2005). Unemployment figures are not available, however, Fujimura, citing a 2003 NRVA study, estimates unemployment to be 20 percent of the labour force (Fujimura, 2004: 11). This figure is expected to swell due to the large number of refugees returning to Afghanistan.

The unofficial or black market economy constitutes almost half of Afghanistan's total economic activity. The unofficial economy is formed from the illicit trade of opium, the re-export of goods to Pakistan as well as the smuggling of "gems, lumber and archaeological artifacts" (UNDP, 2005: 20). As discussed in Chapter Three, while the trade in illegal goods generated from Afghanistan dates back through Afghan history, the resale of "ATTA"<sup>137</sup> goods to Pakistan<sup>138</sup> as well as the trade in opium is a modern phenomenon. Indeed, re-export to Pakistan and the narcotics trade became well established during the Soviet-Afghan War and its total value heightened under the Taliban. Currently, the trade of illegal goods accounts for 90% of Afghanistan's estimated total exports (Fujimura, 2004: 6).

The magnitude and scale of the Afghan opium trade constitutes a "multidimensional" problem and represents "the single most challenging factor to the long-term security and the development of the country" (Jalali, 2006: 7). Indeed, the opium industry illustrates the complexity of nation building in Afghanistan as the success of the narcotics trade is founded on the intersection of multiple geopolitical, economic governance, security, and social factors.

From a geopolitical perspective, Afghanistan's ascendancy as the world's leading opium producer emerged during the Soviet-Afghan war. The war fostered the necessary environment for the both the cultivation and distribution of opium<sup>139</sup>. From an economic

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<sup>137</sup> In the 1950s Afghanistan and Pakistan signed the Afghanistan Transit Trade Agreement (ATTA) that allowed Afghanistan to import goods duty free arriving from the port city of Karachi, Pakistan. Beginning in the Soviet-Afghan war, a black market trade emerged of "re-exports" wherein the duty free goods were smuggled out of Afghanistan bypassing stiff Pakistani import duties and sold illegally in Pakistani bazaars (UNODC, 2003: 26).

<sup>138</sup> Fujimura states "re-exports consists of electronics, cosmetics, toiletries, crockery, auto parts, etc." (2004: 7).

<sup>139</sup> As discussed in Chapter Three, Russian criminal networks as well as the Afghan resistance initiated a thriving opium trade, which formed a vital component of Afghanistan's war economy.

perspective, widespread poverty increases the appeal of poppy cultivation given the high monetary yields of opium in comparison to traditional crops. For instance, Afghan farmers earn ten times as much per hectare from opium (\$5,400) as from wheat (\$550)<sup>140</sup> (UNODC, 2005). Moreover, after a quarter century of war, Afghanistan's rural infrastructure has been destroyed. The production of traditional licit crops is contingent on irrigation, terracing, storage facilities and transportation networks (UNODC, 2003). Opium production, however, does not require the same support structure as legal crops as it is "durable, easy to store and carry to the market" (UNODC, 2003:10). As well, drug consortiums capitalized on the lack of rural credit systems enabling them to provide payments to Afghan farmers in return for an agreed amount of the opium harvest (salaam) (UNODC, 2003:10).

Weak governance also provided the enabling conditions for a prosperous illegal trade as the state lacked the resources and capability to enforce the legal economy. Thus, overall insecurity facilitated drug trafficking, which in turn sponsored the rise of warlord and drug networks. Indeed, regional commanders and an array of smaller warlords became directly immersed in the drug trade, forcing local farmers to plant opium, applying taxes to farmers and traders of opium who operate in their territory and in some cases, through direct participation in heroin production<sup>141</sup> (UNODC, 2003).

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<sup>140</sup> Based on an analysis of production figures, prices and profit breakdown, a UNODC report stated that from 1994-2000, the average yearly gross income for opium farmers was \$750 per farmer. An opium farmer earned double the amount in comparison to an unskilled Afghan whose annual income is estimated at \$360 (2003: 62).

<sup>141</sup> Heroin trafficking is a less risky enterprise than the trade in opium and yields higher profits per weight. Given the benefits accrued to the manufacture of heroin Afghan regional commanders have increasingly established their own heroin production facilities throughout Afghanistan. Given the capital costs of such operations and the resultant profits, warlords make great efforts to ensure that federal authorities do not interfere in their local affairs (UNODC, 2003).

Increased yearly profits from the illicit trade strengthen the power of regional commanders and further entrenches their local authority. Specifically, through money captured in the narcotics trade, warlords are able to finance their local militias and maintain their positions through military strength. Thus, the opium industry intersects with national security in two profound ways. First, it serves as a major source of revenue for reconstruction ‘spoilers’ such as warlords, crime syndicates and insurgent groups. Second, the expansive illicit trade represents an un-taxable black economy that precludes the expansion of the central government and its ability to provide security and the rule of law.

The scale of the Afghan opium industry is overwhelming. In 2005 the opium trade generated \$2.7 billion, which represents 52 percent of the country’s official GDP and almost 30 percent of the total GDP. In 2005, Afghanistan produced 4,100 tons of opium, which accounted for almost 90 percent of the world’s supply (UNODC, 2005). Consequently, efforts to destroy the Afghan narcotics syndicate and supplant the illicit trade with a healthy legal economy demand a multivariate approach. Indeed, as Jalali notes the current counter-narcotics strategy is centred on an “eight pillar” plan that includes “law enforcement, eradication, promoting alternative livelihoods, criminal justice, and regional cooperation” (2006: 7). Efforts to curb the opium trade contributed to a 21 percent reduction of opium production in 2005, however, a UNODC annual survey indicates that an overall increase in opium quantities is expected for 2006 (Irin News. Org, 29 March 2006). As Jalali comments, “destroying one third of Afghanistan’s economy without undermining stability requires enormous resources, administrative

capability, and time” (2006). According to Jane’s Information Group, the UK-led counter narcotics plan to promote alternative legal crops “appears to have failed”<sup>142</sup> (2006).

Given the failure to transform the opium economy through incentives such as alternative crops, UN experts consider “interdiction” as the only viable remaining option (UNODC, 2003). However, Afghanistan’s overall strategy to eliminate the drug trade is hindered not only by an inadequate eradication program but also fundamentally by profound security limitations. As the 2003 UNODC Report states “warlords and local commanders, involved in the drug trade, can be expected to defend their lucrative business operations by all means” (2003: 143). International security organizations are unwilling to risk an internal civil war by committing troops to counter forcibly drug lords and domestic forces lack the effective capability to do so. As will be further discussed, the national government’s inability to confront and destroy warlord power ensures the continuity of the narcotics trade. As Jane’s Information Group concludes, “The drug crisis will not abate to a marked degree until a practical, well-funded, militarily backed eradication programme can be implemented. This appears unlikely” (2006).

In sum, the narcotics industry constitutes another chief obstacle to nation building in Afghanistan. As the 2003 UNODC Report states, “unless the drug problem is solved, there will be no sustainable development for Afghanistan” (2003). However, the nexus between the trade of illicit goods which funds warlordism, the criminal narcotics syndicate and the insurgency indicates the complexity of reconstruction efforts due to interrelationship between multiple issues and dynamics. Thus, in order to cease the drug

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<sup>142</sup> Jane’s Information Group indicates that the UK eradication program was not only limited in the proportion of overall acreage converted away from opium production, but overstated even the small amount of land eradicated: “province governors who participated claimed they destroyed 37,000 acres of poppy, but a verification team found that only 13,000 acres had actually been eradicated” (2006).



trade, the Afghan government will have to challenge warlord power, which will in turn require a formidable security sector to enforce its authority. The establishment of an effective security sector is therefore contingent on the revenue of the state. It is thus necessary to consider the internal and external sources of the Afghanistan government's revenue.

Edmund Burke wrote, "the revenue of the state is the state" (Hadenius, 2001: 136). Throughout Afghanistan's history, limited state domestic revenues have constricted the Afghan government's capability resulting in a weak central authority. This phenomenon continues today. In the post Taliban period the revenue of the state has expanded from \$129 million per annum in 2002/03 to a projected \$333 million for the 2005/06 fiscal year. However, despite these increases, the revenue of the state constitutes a marginal sum of overall expenditures and is quantifiably below the income necessary to establish a functioning liberal, democratic state. Indeed, indigenous revenue represents only 4.5 percent of GDP, which is "well below half the level in other very poor countries"<sup>143</sup> (World Bank Report, 2005: viii). This figure accounts for a number of variables including the lack of government control outside Kabul, and the inability of the state to tax either the large illicit, underground economy or the extensive foreign aid economy.

Finally, it is difficult to establish an extensive tax collection system in a country that has no tradition or experience with widespread government penetration of the economy (Rubin, Hamidzada & Stoddard: 2005; World Bank Report, 2005). As

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<sup>143</sup> The 2005 World Bank Report compares Afghanistan's revenue to GDP ratio with other countries: "While in industrialized countries the revenue to GDP ratio is typically around 45-55%, for the least developed countries it is closer to 20%. With revenue at 4.5% of GDP in 2004/05, Afghanistan is an outlier even in this group (2005: 32).

mentioned, agriculture represents over 50 percent of the legal economy. In Chapter three it is noted that past Amirs have imposed an agricultural tax collected through the tribal structures and based on the state-tribal system of patronage. While the Taliban made a modest attempt to collect a 10 percent agricultural tax such a practice has “fallen into disuse” and “any attempt to reinstate it is likely to be severely hampered by the security situation” (World Bank, 2005: 34).

The Afghan Government’s poor penetration of the country is not only reflected by modest revenues but also by the limited nature of tax collection and a weak administrative framework. Because the national government lacks an extensive bureaucratic tax collection system, the state focuses on “easy” sources of income. Afghanistan can be categorized as an “easy money” state not only due to its reliance on external capital but also because its internal revenue sources are limited to a small number of taxes. Specifically, customs taxes account for 50% of the Afghan Government’s domestic revenue “because they are easy to monitor and collect” (World Bank Report, 2005: 7). It is also important to note that while customs revenue represents the principle source of domestic revenue, the central government’s earnings represent less than one fifth of all collected customs revenue. The 2005 UNDP report states that “the central Government received only about US\$80 million of an estimated US\$500 million collected in customs duties in 2002, despite considerable efforts aiming at the collection of tax revenues from various provinces” (2005: 140). Local officials and regional commanders keep the majority of this revenue.

The failure of the central government to capture tariffs and taxes from Afghanistan’s lucrative transit economy exemplifies the weakness of the Afghan state.

Moreover, it represents a core feature of the vicious cycle prohibiting the expansion of the central government. Thus, the inability to draw these revenues impedes the government from establishing and financing a national army to offset warlord power and allow the central authority to control key transit hubs and collection facilities. As Starr notes, the current government's failure to collect customs revenue and form a "reliable army" constitutes "the core of Karzai's weakness" (2003: 3).

Afghanistan's inability to derive sufficient levels of domestic revenue renders the state wholly dependent on external sources of financing. Indeed, the functioning of the current Afghan state is contingent on foreign assistance both in terms of material and security resources (Rubin, Hamidzada & Stoddard: 2005). Foreign assistance accounts for over 90% of all public spending and represents between 40 and 55% of GDP. In 2003; there were only seven countries internationally (including Afghanistan) with "an aid to GDP ratio above 30%" (World Bank Report, 2005: 9). The vast proportion of foreign aid is directed through an "External Budget" which is separate and distinct from the "Government-controlled Core Budget" (World Bank Report 2005: vi). In the fiscal year 2002/2003 of \$ 1.84 billion of the total foreign income delivered to Afghanistan "only \$ 296 million or 16 percent" was channeled directly through the Afghan government and the Core Budget (ADB, 2004: 8). This trend has continued as noted in the 2004/2005 fiscal year where the External Budget accounted for 75 percent of all public spending<sup>144</sup>. As Jalali states, "this off-budget assistance hinders state-building and undermines government legitimacy" (2006: 10).

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<sup>144</sup> As a 2005 World Bank Report indicates, "unlike in most countries, the development budget (\$2.8 billion in 2004/05) dwarfs the operating budget (\$0.6 billion) (2005: 15). The development budget "comprises most of the projects financed by donors" with one-third directed toward infrastructure, one-third on "health, social protection and humanitarian assistance and 14 percent on education" (ADB, 2004: 35).

A central paradox exists wherein national reconstruction in Afghanistan requires foreign assistance, however; long-term dependency on such aid will establish Afghanistan as a rentier state. As a UNDP Report states, under conditions of aid dependency, the Afghan government would not foster an interactive relationship with Afghan society: “The historical legacy is that of the creation of a rentier elite and a state that failed to develop a social contract with its citizens” (2005: 30). In turn, the Karzai government’s lack of revenue precludes the central function of government; the redistribution of national wealth and the provision of government services. The failure to meet these central functions diminishes the credibility and the legitimacy of the central government.

This is currently the case in Afghanistan as weak domestic revenues fundamentally restrict the Afghan government’s ability to provide state services. For instance, the amount of government services supplied based solely on domestic revenue accounts to only \$11 per person annually (Rubin, Hamidzada & Stoddard: 2005). Currently, the provision of government services in almost all areas is marginal which is contributing to widespread “frustrations” and thus “weakening the credibility of the government” (World Bank Report, 2005: 84). Public service delivery is currently “grossly inadequate” and generating “widespread public complaints” (World Bank Report, 2005: 8). A 2004 National Rural Vulnerability Assessment (NRVA) study concluded that the Afghan state is unable to deliver basic services. Specifically, the report concluded, “access to public services such as drinking water, transportation, schools, clinics and hospitals was extremely low among almost all households” (UNDP, 2005: 36).

A critical issue related to Afghanistan's dependence on foreign aid relates to the unpredictable nature of external support. Simply put, foreign sources of revenue are unreliable and are subject to diminished levels of supply or discontinuation. A World Bank Report stated, "International experience indicates that aid can be more volatile than domestic revenues" rendering such sources problematic in terms of future budget planning but also critically compromising the sustainability of large projects and government programs (2005: 9). The effects of lessening assistance are profound. As the World Bank Report states the creation of a social service system and large infrastructure development results in "substantial expenditure liabilities for the future- roads will need to be maintained, teachers paid, and the sustaining costs of the Afghan National Army (ANA) and other security services covered" (2005: 8).

As a general rule, "every dollar of public investment" results in a ten percent annual expenditure to sustain the initial investment. Thus, according to this calculus, the 2004/05 public expenditures will require annual government commitments of over \$100 million (World Bank, 2005: 22). Since foreign support cannot be sustained over the long term, over even the medium term as many analysts forecast, the "expenditures will sooner or later become a charge on the Government's core fiscal resources" (World Bank, 2005: 23). The implications are profound for the prospects of a future Afghan Government shouldering these "recurrent costs" are minimal as they even pose an "unmanageable fiscal risk over the medium term" (World Bank, 2005: 23). As Jalali states "a decline in foreign funding could lead to extraordinary political security and social crises" (2006: 6).

Rubin, Hamidzada and Stoddard comment that Afghanistan “will not be able to sustain the current configuration of institutions built with foreign assistance in the foreseeable future” (2005: 2). Specifically, they identify how the financial commitments to sustain the Afghan National Army and future costs associated with nationwide elections will overwhelm the national government. First, current projections based on anticipated force size indicate that the Afghan National Army will generate an annual expense of \$1 billion. Rubin, Hamidzada and Stoddard project that for the government to meet this expenditure, the legal economy would have to “quintuple” (2005: 2). A 2005 World Bank Report concurs with this analysis: “It is extremely doubtful whether the sustaining costs of Afghanistan’s security sector at planned force levels can be absorbed by Afghanistan’s national budget” (2005: 25). Starr notes that “if Karzai had a 100,000 man army today he would still have to depend on Washington to finance it” (2003: 3).

Second, commitments established by the Afghan Constitution establish a timetable of between “8 and 10 nationwide elections every ten years” (Rubin, Hamidzada & Stoddard: 2005:2). Recent elections in Afghanistan generated costs over \$100 million per election; a figure which represents “40 percent of the government’s current yearly domestic revenue” (Rubin, Hamidzada & Stoddard: 2005: 2). Thus, costs to maintain the ANA and for national elections, only two of the essential pillars of the total reconstruction effort,<sup>145</sup> are effectively prohibitive for the Afghan government based on internal revenue projections. Specifically, the International Monetary Fund predicts that

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<sup>145</sup> Even the size of government is problematic. For instance, the Civil Service currently employs between 240, 000 to 330,000 individuals. While the per capita size of the state bureaucracy is small relative to international standards (between 0.8 and 1.4 percent of the population) it represents a significant burden on Afghanistan’s meager state revenues or as the ADBI Report declares the state payroll represents a “fiscally unsustainable bill” (ADBI, 2004: 192).

domestic revenues in Afghanistan “will average less than \$400 million per year through 2008” (GAO, 2005: 36).

In 2003, an International Forum in Brussels estimated that Afghanistan required \$15 billion over five years to meet its total reconstruction needs (ADBI, 2004: 46). In order to achieve the “minimal stabilization” of the country, the Afghan government in 2004 assessed total reconstruction costs at \$27.5 billion over seven years (Jalali, 2006: 9). In January 2002 international donors at the Tokyo Conference committed over US\$4.5 billion to Afghanistan over five years. In March 2004, an International Conference in Berlin resulted in a total commitment of \$8.3 billion by donor countries (Jane’s Security Sentinel Assessment, 2006). Collectively, these international pledges constitute less than half of expenditures estimated for nation building in Afghanistan. As Inderfurth, Starr and Weinbaum note, only \$4 billion of the \$13 billion committed at the two conferences have been disbursed for “rebuilding projects” (International Herald Tribune, 2006). At the 2006 London Conference, the United States maintained the same level of funding for reconstruction as it did in 2005 (Robichaud, 2006). Moreover, the international financial commitment to Afghanistan is among the lowest on a per capita basis in comparison to nation building endeavors in other post-conflict countries. For instance, a 2005 RAND study stated that Afghanistan received \$57 per capita compared to funding in the first years of reconstruction in Bosnia (\$679 per capita), Kosovo (\$526) and East Timor (\$233) (2005). Consequently, in the face of overwhelming reconstruction needs, the international community has offered relatively modest financial support to Afghanistan and has already fallen short of promised commitments. Indeed, past history

“indicates that most of the pledged financial assistance packages will not be honoured” (Jane’s Sentinel Security Assessment, 2006).

In sum, according to established democratic theory, a strong economic base represents a principal factor underscoring the foundation and continuity of a healthy democratic state. Afghanistan’s economic situation reflects a reality that is counter to the required conditions for democratic development. Historic internal and external variables continue to hinder economic development resulting in the categorization of Afghanistan as one of the poorest countries in the world. Widespread poverty and limited opportunities have precluded the development of a strong middle class that is essential for democratic development. According to empirical studies, Afghanistan’s marginal per capita income places the country well below the threshold category of those democracies that form sustainable governance.

Intersecting security, cultural and geopolitical dynamics contribute to a weak Afghan state and the existence of a warlord phenomenon whereby regional commanders capture and dominant the Afghan economy at the expense of the state. Moreover, after over two decades of war, a thriving and ingrained black market economy in narcotics and illegal goods further emboldens regional powerbrokers and insurgent forces. Collectively these factors contribute to overall instability and inhibit the expansion of the national government and the consolidation of the Afghan state. Indeed, internal state revenues are marginal in relation to the necessary capital required to sustain a modern government. As a result the Afghan state is reliant on foreign revenues for its existence. This is problematic for two chief reasons. First, reliance on external sources of income precludes the requisite state-society interaction that is essential for democracy. Indeed,



Afghanistan's dependency on both foreign incomes as well internal custom's revenue qualifies the Afghan government as an 'easy money' state. State government's that are reliant on unearned income have historically developed non democratic forms of governance. Second, external funding is highly fickle and subject to termination or severe reductions. The cessation of foreign funds would render the Afghan state insolvent and subject to complete dissolution. In short, the overall economic environment in Afghanistan represents the antithesis of what is required for sustainable democratic governance.

## **Education**

Education is vital to democracy and the success of a democratic state. Indeed, as highlighted in Chapter One, the expansion of educational facilities and improved public access to schools constitute vital factors underpinning democratic citizenship. The diffusion of knowledge throughout society creates greater political awareness and fosters democratic attitudes such as tolerance, trust, and openness. Moreover, education elevates skill levels essential for both self-advocacy and public service. In short, education contributes to the very attitudes and abilities among the populace necessary for democratic citizenship. Following the acquisition of these resources and skills, these educated civilians begin to demand greater inclusion into the political system (Hadenius, 2001). Thus, given the importance of education to democracy, it is necessary to consider Afghanistan's current state of education.

Afghanistan has been characterized as having "the worst educational system in the world" (Rubin, Hamidzada & Stoddard, 2005:15). Twenty-five years of war has

conferred a profound impact on Afghanistan's education system both in material and human terms. In the face of overwhelming need, the education system is in disarray with 80 percent of all education facilities "damaged or destroyed" (ADBI, 2004: 176).

In human terms, the war has dramatically and deleteriously affected the education capital of Afghanistan. The social costs are profound for almost a whole generation of approximately 8-9 million people has experienced little or no schooling. Only those over the age of forty have experienced any sustained levels of education (ADBI, 2004: 176). Currently Afghanistan's literacy rate of 28.7 percent is one of the lowest in the world<sup>146</sup>. With such a large proportion of the country's eligible workforce effectively uneducated the prospects of acquiring skills for reintegration into the official economy are limited. Incentives to partake in criminal activity, especially among former soldiers are particularly high. The 2004 ADBI Report comments that "without educational and job training programs and economic opportunities, former combatants are highly likely to return to warlord armies –or turn to banditry" (ADBI, 2004: 176).

The ability to transform Afghanistan's education system is limited as the needs for educational reconstruction are overwhelming. In addition to infrastructure deprivations, the country faces a severe shortage in qualified teachers. To fulfill an attendance rate of 85 percent in primary schooling, it is estimated that almost 14,000 schools will be required and close to 45,000 teachers will need to be trained and hired. Both these figures will almost double if efforts are undertaken to educate the "lost generation" of people aged 12 to 30 years (ADBI, 2004: 177). Costs associated with such

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<sup>146</sup> This rate is assessed for individuals over the age of 15. Internationally, only Burundi, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger and Sierra Leone have a lower literacy rate than Afghanistan (UNDP, 2005: 11)..

an expansion are prodigious and require continued levels of high expenditures to sustain minimal education standards.

Other factors that continue to plague the development of Afghan education include the quality of overall teaching, curriculum challenges, rural and urban discrepancies in educational services and security threats. The latter factor is particularly disturbing given the targeting of teachers and schools by insurgent groups. The centrality of education to reconstruction and the perceived association with western values underscores the spate of violent attacks directed to halt the development of education.

In sum, high education standards are fundamental for the development and the continuity of a durable democratic state. A well developed education system and an educated populace represent key preconditions that presage the likelihood of a successful democratic transition. Afghanistan's current state of education constitutes the antithesis of the basic levels necessary to complement democratic development. Moreover, given crippling fiscal constraints and the widespread shortcomings of the Afghan education system, it will take generations to develop systemic and fundamental reform. Consequently, it will require several decades of ideal conditions to foster a generational change of an educated, and literate populace imbued with the necessary social capital for an active democracy.

## **Civil Society**

As discussed in Chapter One, the presence of an active civil society constitutes an essential precondition for the establishment of a successful democracy. However, in order to serve as a facilitator of democracy, civil society organizations must be pervasive and “dense” (Diamond, 1999: 233). That is, heightened numbers of civil society organizations are essential to maximize the democratic potential of a given society. The existence of multiple civil society groups enhances democracy by providing more options and opportunities to participate in organizations that advance democratic attitudes, values and skills and that serve as a counterweight to oppressive government. In short, a vibrant civil society is essential for democracy. Thus, given the importance of civil society to democracy, it is also necessary to consider the nature of civic organizations in Afghanistan.

The breadth and scale of associational life that Tocqueville and other democratic theorists identified as central to democracy in the United States does not exist in Afghanistan. The 2005 UNDP report characterized Afghanistan’s civil society as “a far cry from the ideal” and comments that many academics and analysts consider Afghan civil society “if not non-existent, at least very weak” (2005: 159). Indeed, twenty-five years of war have critically impaired Afghanistan’s nascent civil society. Nevertheless, since the fall of the Taliban, a number of civil society groupings have been established in Afghanistan. As the UNDP report indicates these “voluntary associations” include “women’s, professional, youth, student, social and cultural groups” (2005: 157). As an example, the Professional shura of Herat was established in 2002, formed from the “local intelligentsia (doctors, lawyers, engineers, professors, etc.) (UNDP, 2005: 157). As well,

in 2002, the Afghan Civil Society Forum was established to promote the development of civil society organizations in Afghanistan. However, it is important to note that these civil groups are small in number and are principally confined to urban centers (UNDP, 2005). Again, Afghanistan's civil society does not have the size or pattern of dispersion to enhance effectively the development of democracy in Afghanistan.

As discussed in Chapter One, the nature of the civil organizations is equally important as its numbers and distribution. A 2005 UNDP report forms a distinction between Western concepts of civil society with its culturally specific organizational bodies and those that exist in "an Islamic and traditional country like Afghanistan" (2005: 157). The UNDP considers that Afghanistan's civil society is largely formed from a "complex web of informal, norm-based networks based on blood, kinship, and tribal, religious, cultural and ethnicities" (UNDP, 2005:157). It is manifested specifically through locally organized bodies known as shuras as well as the larger councils known as Jirgas.

However, traditional Afghan shuras and Jirgas are fundamentally different from the ideal civil organizations described in the democratic theory literature. The UNDP report states that Afghan councils "do not function exactly along the same goals and principals of civil society, as the basic perspective of a shura is reactive rather than proactive" (2005: 157). As well, Afghan shuras are restricted to male members of the community, thus denying access on a gender basis to over 50 percent of the population. Moreover, the shuras represent traditional structures derived from members of a single familial, tribal or ethnic group. Thus, these kinship organizations represent "closed groups" that derives its membership based solely on a shared identity such as ethnicity

and thus only emphasizes their particularistic grouping (Hadenius, 2001: 44). As discussed more extensively in the sub section regarding Afghanistan's institutional history, traditional Afghan councils are principally autonomous from the state and they forge few interactive ties with the state or other entities in society. Consequently, while such factions may generate internal cohesion they can also foster external intolerance and distrust towards other groups or the state itself. As Diamond states "such totalistic parties or movements weaken democracy and, I would argue, are fundamentally uncivil, while pluralistic organizations strengthen democracy" (1999: 223).

Finally, the UNDP report also excludes the more than 2,000 registered NGOs in Afghanistan as "genuine" civil society groups (2005: 158). Most of these organizations do not qualify as true civil society associations as they principally dispense emergency relief and do not foster "popular participation and social organization" or represent or lobby on behalf of local Afghans (UNDP, 2005: 158).

### **Afghanistan's Institutional History**

The institutional history of a country represents a vital factor that shapes the political culture of a state. Indeed, after a society lives for decades under a particular institutional setting, a political culture develops that is forged from particular institutional rules and behavior (Colomer, 2001). The nature of a country's institutional structure can also impart a political culture wherein a society formulates certain expectations and develops strongly held views toward the state. Thus, a nation's history of governance constitutes a key precondition that can either support or detract from the success of states undergoing a democratic transition. As underlined in Chapter One, Hadenius developed a

framework of analysis that delineates the types of state systems into four distinct models; the interactive state, the Leviathan state, the predatory state and the marginal state. As discussed, the interactive state represents the abstract model that presages democracy or serves as the institutional prerequisite for the development of a democratic state. Conversely, the Leviathan state, the predatory state and the marginal state represent governance models that are antithetical for democratic state formation. Under each of these three constructs, the state has a limited sense of legitimacy among the populace for reasons intrinsic to each model. For democracy to function successfully, it is essential that the political culture of the given state deem the state itself as a legitimate body.

In assessing the success of the current efforts to create a liberal democratic state in Afghanistan, it is necessary to review the institutional history of the country. More specifically, Hadenius's frameworks regarding the types of states provide a means to understand Afghanistan's governance history and its impact on present day democratic state building. In utilizing this framework, it is important to note, as Hadenius states himself, that there are often hybrid forms that encompass many aspects of each state type. For instance, a type of state can reflect elements of both the Leviathan and the predatory state. In Afghanistan's history, such a hybrid form of governance was often the case.

Prior to applying the Hadenius state-type construct it is necessary to briefly review the chronological development of the Afghan state. Afghanistan's status as an independent territorial entity dates back to 1749 with the rise of Ahmed Shah and the establishment of the Durrani Empire. Afghanistan became more politically cohesive under Abdur Rahman Khan (1880-1901) and became formalized as a modern nation-state in 1919 after the Third Anglo-Afghan War when Amanullah secured Afghan

independence with the British. Goodson provides a useful framework that delineates Afghanistan's political history into "six historical periods" between 1919 and 1978. From 1919 to 1929 Afghanistan experienced the "early independence period" under Amanullah; in 1929 the "civil war" period; from 1929 to 1933, the "Nadir Shah interlude" under Nadir Shah; from 1933 to 1963, the "Constitutional monarchy" under Zahir Shah, and from 1973 to 1978, the "Daoud republic" under Mohammad Daoud (Goodson, 2001: 46). The PDPA regime and the Soviet Invasion represented the following period from 1978 to 1992. From 1992 to 1996 the country disintegrated into Civil war between the Mujahadeen factions and the period between 1996 and 2001 represents the Taliban era. Since 2001 Afghanistan has been undergoing a democratic transition process with the support of the international community.

Hadenius's construct of the types of states is directly applicable to the historical evolution of the Afghan state beginning with the rule of Ahmed Shah Durrani. While Ahmed Shah's kingdom has been characterized as a confederacy of tribes, or Empire rather than a nation state, general features of his rule would continue to reflect the nature of Afghan governance throughout its historical development. Again, many of these core features resemble key characteristics identifiable in the Hadenius model of states. For instance, under Ahmed Shah's rule, the central authority constituted a weak governance body noted for its limited bureaucratic structure and marked inability to develop a comprehensive tax system. Throughout Afghan history, and evident today, the central government in Afghanistan has struggled to expand its institutional capability due to a host of economic, security and cultural factors. In this regard, the Durrani Empire and subsequent Afghan governments paralleled the key traits of Hadenius's 'marginal state'



where the government's incapacity to penetrate rural society engendered a weak governance structure and the continuity of strong and independent local communities. Moreover, following the contours of Hadenius's marginal state, Afghan society has been and currently is fragmented into autonomous units that are "sharply divided and separate" and that fundamentally lack meaningful "coordination capacity" (Hadenius, 2001: 253).

While elements of the marginal state model are present throughout Afghan history, its full expression was evident in certain periods. For instance, during the Soviet-Afghan war, the Russian-backed PDPA government was a widely discredited administration that lacked any meaningful governing capacity or authority. In the post-Soviet-war period, the central authority completely collapsed creating a polity marked by overall anarchy and a civil war between competing Mujahadeen factions. This was the Afghan marginal state at its apogee. In this stateless political vacuum, the warlord variant of the marginal state model expressed Afghanistan's political reality. The marginal state continued under the Taliban. In this period, even though the Afghan state was highly centralized it was also an emasculated structure marked by a limited bureaucratic apparatus and weak administrative infrastructure. Currently, despite a considerable expansion of the central administration and the infusion of international financial support, the Afghan state continues to resemble aspects of the marginal state construct due to its inability to exercise significant influence beyond Kabul.

The predatory model, wherein the state becomes dependent on a particular segment in society, also serves as a useful construct to understand and describe Afghanistan's political tradition. Again, the predatory construct initially found expression in Ahmed Shah's period. Indeed, due to the power of the Afghan countryside, Ahmed

Shah became reliant on the tribal leadership in order to sustain his rule. Specifically, Ahmed Shah depended on the tribal ethnic allegiance of the Duranni Pashtuns and in return, the Durrani Pashtuns exacted patronage benefits of territory and administrative positions, lower tax obligations and fewer military commitments than the other ethnic tribal associations in Afghanistan. The ascendancy of the Mohammadzai Durrani Pashtuns in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century further consolidated power to an elite tribal group within the Pashtun tribe. Indeed, Mohammadzai rule, strengthened under Dost Mohammad and solidified under Abdur Rahman Khan, established a dynasty that endured until the Saur Revolution in 1978. As a result, the practice of rewarding the Pashtun leadership and elite members within that population with the largesse of the government represents a constant phenomenon that has marked successive Afghan administrations throughout most of the 19<sup>th</sup> and twentieth century.

Executive positions in past Afghanistan governments have been almost the exclusive domain of the Pashtuns. Emadi states that non- Pashtun intellectuals in government services did not advance “beyond the rank of colonel in the army or director in a civil service department” (1990:21). State programs of economic renewal were directed to Pashtun areas of the country and prime lands and water resources and rights were ceded to Pashtuns (Emadi, 1990). According to several academics, Pashtun dominance of Afghan political affairs has led paradoxically to the “tribalization of the institutions” of the Afghan state” (Shahrani, 1998:230). This phenomenon accords precisely with Hadenius’s description of the predatory state wherein a “feudalization of the state” occurs as the government’s ability to act is increasingly dependent on the approval of the local leadership (2001: 250). As Hadenius writes, the “state which seeks

to rule by capturing elite actors in society becomes itself captured by these actors” (2001: 250).

Finally, the Leviathan model, wherein the state government centralizes authority and leads through coercive and repressive methods, is also form of governance that has marked Afghanistan’s institutional history. The rule of Abdur Rahman Khan (1880-1901) epitomizes the Leviathan model. Following the basic precepts of the Leviathan construct, Abdur Rahman consolidated his absolute rule through the centralization of the national authority and the employment of coercive power and repression. Again, echoing the Leviathan model, Abdur Rahman justified his absolutism on the basis of Islam and he enforced his despotic reign through the use of armed forces and a spy network. As discussed in Chapter Two, the cruelty and tyrannical nature of his leadership was “without parallel in Afghan history” and his reign became known to future Afghans as a “symbol of terror” (Kakar, 1979: 232).

It is important to note that elements of the marginal, predatory and Leviathan models were all present under Abdur Rahman. Thus, while he expanded the bureaucratic apparatus of the state, the marginal state construct was evident as the level of economic penetration of the countryside by the central authority was limited. Abdur Rahman’s support of the Mohammadzai Pashtuns evokes the predatory construct, however, in combination with the Leviathan proclivities of his rule, Mohammadzai favoritism degenerated into a policy of tribal purges of other groups. Indeed, state directed violence under Abdur Rahman was underwritten by tribal and ethnic considerations as non-Mohammadzai groupings endured torture, death and internal deportation.

Features of the Leviathan state were also evident up until the 2001 overthrow of the Taliban. In the early 1930s, Nadir Shah used the organs of state to suppress key dissent through violence and imprisonment. In the 1940s, the Royalist Musahiban oligarchy instituted modernization reforms, quickly reversed them and quelled all organized opposition. In the 1950s, Sardar Daoud Khan Daoud led an authoritarian regime with power concentrated in the oligarchic Monarchy. From 1973 to 1978, Daoud's authoritarianism continued in his role of President of the Republic of Afghanistan where he used force to contain all active resistance to his rule. Executions, imprisonment, the demotion of potential rivals and the targeted repression of all organized political opposition were the hallmarks of Daoud's absolute authority. Between 1978 and 1979, the PDPA government embodied the Leviathan state as mass arrests, imprisonment, torture and executions were widespread culminating in the disappearance of between 50,000 and 100,000 people under PDPA rule (Roy, 1985). During the Soviet-Afghan war, the national government was deemed a proxy of the Soviet Union. Soviet forces in concert with Afghan government troops waged a ten year war against the Mujahadeen resistance that resulted in the deaths of 1.5 million Afghans and the overall physical destruction of the Afghan countryside.

Taliban rule from 1996-2001 also reflects a confluence of the Leviathan, marginal, and predatory state constructs. As mentioned, Taliban governance reflects aspects of the marginal state given the formal dismantling of the government bureaucracy during this period. The Leviathan construct featuring an emphasis towards coercive rule rather than an entrenched bureaucratic structure is the model that parallels the Taliban administration. Indeed, the Taliban was an archetypal coercive Leviathan state. Taliban

rule was marked by a strict and brutal authoritarianism wherein they used the machinery of state and the control of national power to implement their extreme theocratic ideology through force and repression. Individual freedoms were severely curtailed and human rights abuses dramatically increased under the oppressive Taliban regime. Rubin recognizes how the Taliban's rule reinforced negative perceptions of the state by Afghan society:

The Taliban attitude toward the state reflects both the negative experience of the past 20 years, during much of which a central state dominated by a foreign ideology destroyed much of the country, and the longer-standing popular view of the state as a predator that takes from the people and gives little or nothing in return. (1999: 6-7)

Taliban rule resembles the predatory construct given the concentration of power by one ethnic faction, specifically the Kandahar Pashtuns<sup>147</sup>. Again, when the predatory and Leviathan constructs intersect, state oppression becomes principally directed to specific groups within society. Under the Taliban, while repression was widespread, non-Pashtuns were deliberately targeted. For instance, the Taliban invoked a policy of ethnic cleansing directed against the Hazaras that included village massacres, executions and mass starvation. The Taliban's efforts to "cleanse the north" of rival Tajik and Hazara Shias resulted in the deaths of between 6000 and 8000 people (Rashid, 2000: 74). In short, ethnic, tribal and religious divisions heightened under Taliban rule reshaping the internal conflict in Afghanistan as a "power struggle" between the ethno-religious factions (Goodson, 2001: 132).

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<sup>147</sup> Allan comments on the Pashtun dominance of the Taliban movement: "Twenty-six out of twenty-seven members of the Taliban government's leadership were Pashtuns; many of them were determined to bring the various ethnic groups of Afghanistan under traditional Pashtun conservative rural culture" (2003: 195).

The cumulative effect of Afghanistan's institutional history of marginal, predatory and Leviathan state constructs has been profound. Each of these types of states has helped to shape the expectations of the Afghan people towards each other and towards the state fostering a political culture unique to Afghanistan. Collectively, Afghanistan's governance, reflecting these three types of state models, has contributed to a political culture in Afghanistan that is antithetical for the creation of a durable and healthy democracy. It is necessary to briefly overview how the marginal, predatory and Leviathan types of states in Afghanistan have impacted the Afghan political culture.

First, the Afghan state's historic parallel with the marginal state construct has helped to yield a political culture marked by low expectations regarding the delivery of services from the central government. The marginal state implies marginal governance and throughout Afghanistan's history the central authority has often exercised a limited role in the well-being and development of Afghan citizens and communities. In certain periods, the Afghan state was effectively non-existent. In short, the widespread benefits of an involved and effective central government have not been experienced or realized in Afghanistan's history. In this regard, the marginal state in Afghanistan has contributed to the belief that the central government provides little positive benefit to its citizens and thereby lacks any functional legitimacy.

The marginal state in Afghanistan has also contributed to the strength of localized governance. Indeed, the collective effect of a government that oscillates between the limited provision of services to none at all strengthens the necessity for self sufficiency at a local level in both political and economic terms. In fact, Afghanistan's governance history conforms to a high level of regional and local autonomy wherein the reciprocal

cycle of “rights and obligations” occurs within kinship and tribal communities rather than between the general populace and the state (Dupree, 1973:4). Legitimacy of rule therefore is conferred to local tribal and kinship structures rather than the nation-state.

Second, the Afghan state’s proclivity with the predatory state model has equally contributed to a political culture that is deleterious for democratic rule. Afghanistan’s history of the ‘predatory state’ has engendered a number of effects. Chief among them is the hierarchical ordering of power along ethnic and tribal lines. Indeed, the allocation of patronage from the central government and the attainment of positions of power based on ethnic affiliation resulted in the establishment of tribal hierarchies with the Pashtuns positioned at the top. The words, *Afghan* and *Afghanistan* are traced to a Persian designation for Pashtun and ‘land of the Pashtuns’ (Rubin 1995: 23). The Pashtun tribes are delineated into two prominent sub groups, the Durrani and the Ghilzai. The Durrani Pashtuns have dominated Afghan political affairs with the Muhammadzai Durrani positioned at the top as the “royal clan.” Indeed, since the first quarter of the nineteenth century until 1978, “all Afghan rulers came from the Muhammadzai clan of the Barakzai tribe of Durrani Pushtuns” (Roy, 1985: 20). Stationed below in the second tier were the rest of the Durrani clans followed by the remaining Pashtun sub tribes. Sunni ethnic groups constitute the next layer in the Afghan hierarchy; the most prominent of which are the Persian-speaking Tajiks. Also positioned in the mid grouping are the Turki speaking peoples, principally Uzbeks. Shia Muslims, mostly Hazaras of central Afghanistan represent the lowest position in traditional Afghan social order.

The stratification of Afghanistan’s social hierarchy along ethnic groupings constitutes a fundamental challenge from a democratic standpoint. As a Canadian

Diplomat in Afghanistan recently stated, “Setting up collective decision making in a hierarchical society is no small feat” (Globe & Mail, May 8, 2006). Indeed it is axiomatic that a successful democracy requires an enlightened and competent citizenry. Attitudes of trust among the populace towards fellow citizens and the governing body are essential preconditions for democratic rule. Such attitudes facilitate the peaceful exchange of authority following elections and enable the requisite feature of power sharing among disparate groups and factions within society. Moreover, effective democratic governance requires a competent citizenry as well as able and efficient bureaucrats and politicians to administer the government.

The predatory model of governance also fosters a political culture that threatens these basic prerequisites of democratic rule. Indeed, instead of a culture of power sharing, the predatory state in Afghanistan has contributed to the view among many Pashtuns that they represent the natural rulers of the Afghan state. It has fostered a ‘winner takes all’ culture of governance where the spoils of government are ceded to the ruling tribe. Government positions become determined by ethnic and tribal association rather than competence and ability<sup>148</sup> and the distribution of government services are disproportionately allocated to the dominant Pashtuns. As Shahrani states, the “constitutive principles of paternalism, nepotism, tribalism, and ethnic-regional favoritism suffused all aspects of state and society relations” (1998: 226).

The minority groups in Afghanistan equally consider the state as an entity that overwhelmingly favors the Pashtun population. Thus, the belief that the state constitutes

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<sup>148</sup> According to a 2004 ADBI report the Karzai government continues to face the problem of unqualified bureaucrats whose positions were attained for reasons of ethnicity: “the current administration inherited a situation where a large number of civil servants have been hired on the basis of their ethnicities and loyalties to political factions rather than merits” (2004: 92).



an entity that serves and represents all members of society is anathema to the Afghan experience. Instead, due to a history of Pashtun hegemony, the Afghan state is considered an illegitimate body that runs counter to the interests of the majority of the Afghan populace. As Shahrani writes, “the creation and perpetuation of feelings of mistrust towards government, and distrust of politics in general, amongst the great majority of non-Mohammadzai, especially non-Pashtun *aqwam*, has been a crucial legacy of this century-long experience” (Shahrani, 1998: 228).

Current efforts to establish a viable democracy in Afghanistan are fundamentally challenged by the country’s history of predatory rule. The Pashtun leadership are threatened and distressed by the Tajik dominance of the current administration and many analysts believe they desire to reassert Pashtun control over the central government. As well, dissatisfaction exists among the larger Pashtun population regarding the Tajik ascent to power. Jane’s comments: “Tajik over-representation will provoke animosity and tension both within the government and in Afghan society at large. Strong ethnic ties mean any perceived favouritism in the actions of the government will prove divisive among Afghan citizens” (Jane’s Sentinel Security Assessment, 2006).

Third, Afghanistan’s experience with the Leviathan model of governance has also impacted adversely on the creation of a democratic political culture in Afghanistan. Historically repressive, authoritarian and brutal governance has fostered a political culture marked by profound mistrust and suspicion of central power. For many Afghans, the state represents a principal source of violence that constitutes a fundamental threat to their survival. Even if the actions of the Kabul government were altruistic in nature and designed for the overall improvement of general conditions the reaction of the

countryside has been cautious at best and hostile at worst. Poullada comments: “The fact that the allegedly beneficent moves of the central government were usually supported by military force reinforced the tribesman’s paranoiac conviction that no good was intended toward him, else why the need for force or threat of force” (1973: 34).

Given the intersection of the Leviathan and predatory models of governance in Afghanistan, oppression by the state has often been directed towards specific ethnic groups. Thus, the confluence of the Leviathan and predatory constructs has exacerbated ethnic tensions in the country and furthered the notion that the state represents an entity that serves those who control power and punishes those that don’t. Therefore, control of the central government by ones ethnic or tribal faction can be reduced to a matter of life or death. The impact of the Leviathan dynamic on the Afghan political culture is profound and from a democratic perspective it represents an overwhelming challenge. Indeed, it is a challenge for a population socialized by continued repressive governments to accept the concept and reality of democratic power sharing. Fear of state-directed oppression by differing factions precludes the necessary trust required for the functioning of a democratic state. Hadenius comments:

An autocratic context, we may conclude, inhibits the development among citizens of both the desire and the capacity to take part in the form of conflict resolution required for democracy. In such a setting, autonomous organization is counteracted, and no arenas exist for interaction or for conflict resolution. The tendency among actors to pursue their political objectives by uncompromising and heavy-handed methods is encouraged instead. (2001: 86)

In sum, the Afghan state has historically shared affinities or represented the abstract models of the marginal, predatory and the Leviathan state. Consequently,

Afghanistan has developed a political culture shaped by the three models of governance that are antithetical to the development of democratic political capital. Moreover, the Afghan state has not exemplified the key features of the democratic state's precursor, the interactive state, and therefore the country has not benefited from an institutional model that forwards the development of a democratic political culture. To fully explore this latter dynamic it is necessary to illustrate the discrepancy between the key features of the interactive state and Afghanistan's socio-political experience.

As highlighted in Chapter One, the interactive state represents a governance model based on a distinct relationship between state and society. State and society relations under the interactive construct are marked by autonomy and inclusion. First, states under this model adhere to a system of rules and an institutional separation of powers. Society and state are both independent from one another, and share a "reciprocal autonomy" (Hadenius, 2001: 251). The state ensures the autonomy of society and maintains its own independence of action. In turn, society is granted the independence to develop its own "social and economic activities" creating the requisite environment for thriving "civic networks" and economic growth (Hadenius, 2001: 252).

Autonomy for both society and the state is granted on the basis of a distinctive inclusive relationship based on reciprocal rights and obligations. Indeed, under the interactive construct, society and state are intermeshed in their affairs with a durable, cooperative and interactive relationship. The state governs based on societal "consent" and an institutionally developed "power-sharing" structure whereby society attains political representation. (Hadenius, 2001:263). In return, society is conferred a host of rights and freedoms underwritten by the power of the state. For instance, through national

institutions like the military and the judiciary, the state regulates and controls societal violence. As well in the economic sphere, society is accorded autonomy to achieve robust economic growth. In turn, it accepts the role of government as one that draws tax revenues and provides services. Access to a reliable and thriving revenue base, facilitates the expansion of government and the survival of the state.

Afghanistan's socio-political history indicates a state-society relationship that does not accord to the tenets of the interactive construct. Despite attempts throughout the last century to modernize the Afghan state through institutional and societal reforms the interactive state construct has failed to materialize in Afghanistan. Instead, society is autonomous from the state, and unlike the interactive model, the state and society in Afghanistan do not share a complex, cooperative and interactive relationship. Goodson provides a useful framework that identifies five key factors that have historically undermined state-society relations in Afghanistan and that continue to challenge current reconstruction efforts today. These include a fragmented society, the tribal system, the Islamic religion, Afghanistan's formidable geography and the involvement of foreign powers into the internal affairs of Afghanistan.

First, Afghan society is fractured with internal divisions along ethnic, linguistic and tribal lines. Afghanistan's unique geographical position between multiple civilizations and countries has resulted in the influx of disparate racial and ethnic groups through invasion, trade and settlement. This historic and ongoing migration underscores Afghanistan's current ethnic and religious diversity. As Allan notes, "Afghanistan has 55 ethnic groups who speak 45 languages" (2003: 195). The impact of this diverse population mix on Afghan politics has been profound. Afghan history is replete with

inter-tribal and ethnic conflict and violence as the competing groups fought over territory, resources and political control. The cumulative effect of this heritage of internecine conflict is the formation of a society marked more by division than unity. The establishment of national boundaries by foreign powers exacerbated Afghanistan's internal divisiveness. Indeed, the configuration of Afghanistan reflects the political and strategic imperatives of foreign powers as opposed to the internal ethnic, political or economic interests of Afghans and thus creating what is termed as an 'artificial state'. Consequently, rather than a cohesive nation that is united under one state, Afghanistan's fragmented society has precluded the type of societal cooperation envisioned in the interactive model. More specifically, societal cooperation has been episodic and only confined to periods when the tribes united to offset an external threat. Goodson comments:

Only outside threats seem to unite the Afghans, and those alliances are temporary and limited. When the threat is eliminated or sufficiently reduced, people return to regular patterns of traditional warfare. (2001, 17)

These historic patterns of continual disunity by a fragmented population thus represent a key obstacle to the current democratic state building process. As a number of theorists argue, internal cohesion and the development of national unity constitute a key prerequisite for the creation of the democratic state. As March and Olsen write, "democratic governance depends on solidarity" (1995: 53). In Afghanistan, "there is no such thing as an Afghan national type" and it is this disunion, this traditional unwillingness to share power with rival groupings that underscores a central impediment to the consolidation of the Afghan state (Urban, 1988). Poullada comments:

Afghanistan is not yet a full national entity. She has not that homogeneity, for example, which is possessed by Persia or present-day Turkey, and it is precisely this want of homogeneity which is one of the most serious causes and features of the present troubles. (1973: 158)

A second key variable that underscores state-society division and that has precluded the development of the interactive state is the centrality of the tribal system in Afghanistan. In Afghanistan, local networks of tribal-kinship associations dominate rural Afghan social life. These networks, known as the *qawm*, are hierarchically ordered and are governed by local tribal mores and institutions. Indeed, local tribal structures dictate and reinforce community values, provide the legal framework and the forum to determine tribal law and enforce and adjudicate its edicts, and serve as the key determinant of the community's collective action (Shahrani, 2002). For instance, in Pashtun communities, *Pashtunwali*, termed "primitive law" by the British, invokes "injunctions" that designate personal codes of behavior such as revenge, hospitality, bravery and asylum (Anderson, 1984: 275). Members of the Pashtun community are "expected to adhere strictly to *Pashtunwali*" and failure to comply can result in tribal castigation (Poullada, 1973: 22).

*Pashtunwali* also underwrites the establishment of tribal institutions such as the *jirga* or *shura* (council) (Anderson, 1984: 275). All major legal and political tribal decisions are determined through the *shura* meetings. *Shuras* vary in size, depending on the part of the country or the issue under examination. Generally, these assemblies are open to all males in a given community and involve a consensus driven process. However, certain assemblies are often under the control of the tribal Khan or other leading members of the *qawm* (Newell, 1972). In sum, the tribal institutions and codes of

behavior, underwritten by the Pashtunwali tradition emphasize values and practices contrary to the requirements of a modern nation-state.

A feature common to many tribal societies relates to the durability of their basic framework and their overall resistance to change. In addition to the long-standing tradition of customary law and tribal councils, Dupree identifies three key factors that underpin the longevity of tribal societies: literacy, economics and social mobility. First, high illiteracy rates in tribal communities perpetuate social norms by excluding most of the populace from independent learning. Consequently, cultural knowledge is transmitted to society by literate religious and secular tribal elites who maintain their power through status quo structures and the control of ideas (Dupree, 1973).

Second, tribal societies are resistant to change due to the pervasive levels of poverty. In Afghanistan, subsistence farming predominates the economic activity of most rural Afghans and thus the majority of the rural population directs most of their time and energy to “basic food production” (Dupree, 1973: 248). Widespread levels of poverty, coupled with limited economic choice and the concentration of effort devoted to one activity fundamentally circumscribes educational development or exposure to different ideas or opportunities.

Third, in addition to limited economic opportunities, traditional customs dictate ones position in society thus constricting social mobility. As Dupree notes, limited mobility affects multiple “social, political and economic” variables than includes arranged marriages, positions within the community<sup>149</sup> and type of occupation (1974: 7).

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<sup>149</sup> The top positions within the tribal hierarchy are an exception to the trait of limited social mobility. Indeed, key tribal leadership positions such as the Khan are not hereditarily ordained. It is formed naturally by the recognized abilities of capable individuals. Leadership is premised on a number of factors including the capacity to effectively maintain the state-society cleavage. As Shahrani notes, “Local leaders often do

Limited social mobility reinforces the continuity of economic and territorial patterns of existence for both the individual and the community in the tribal society.

Anderson shares Dupree's analysis regarding the unchanging nature of tribal society and its application to Afghanistan as the "structure of the avghan [Afghan] tribes is remarkably continuous over time" (1984: 272). Collectively, the above stated factors ensure the static nature of the tribal system and its limited worldview. Indeed, local institutions, traditional values, parochialism, paternalism and the belief in fate (Inshallah) foster the characterization of the tribal system as the "inward-looking society" (Dupree, 1973: 9).

This 'inward-looking society' poses a fundamental challenge to central governments that seek to unite the country. Indeed, local tribal systems represent structures that stand in direct competition with the state and serve as a counterweight to state expansion throughout society. Modern nation-states form a reciprocal relationship with society based on a complex structure of rights and obligations. It is in this sense that local tribal structures are in competition or opposition to the state. As Dupree notes, "kinship replaces government in the peasant-tribal society, particularly in relation to the functioning sets of social, political, and economic rights and obligations" (1974: 7). Through this process, legitimacy is conferred to local tribal authorities rather than the state. As well, identity and loyalty are directed to local kinship groups thus compromising the national solidarity required for the modern nation-state. As Newell states, "The parochialisms of the family, clan, tribe linguistic or ethnic group, or of a valley or region

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not have official connections, and they emerge by gaining the support of individuals in their communities. They maintain their legitimacy by mediating among disputants within a community, safeguarding local interests against outside interference (including that of the local government), and defending such interests militarily when required" (1984: 51).



stand in the way of closer identity with the symbols and needs of a nation” (1972). In Afghanistan, therefore, there is an inherent tension or conflict of interest between the localized tribal authority and the state’s system of governance.

This tension between state and society has been aggravated by state efforts to penetrate rural society. As discussed, the institutional history of Afghanistan has contributed to a political culture imbued with anti-state sentiments. For the Afghan village, the state is perceived as an entity that solely “extracts” without a return benefit (Dupree, 1973). Indeed, the benefits of a reciprocal exchange between state and society have not reflected Afghanistan’s political history: “Items extracted include rent, taxes, conscripts for armies, women for the rich and powerful. The process, therefore, has been one way, away from the village” (Dupree, 1973: 249).

During several periods in the twentieth century, the Afghan state attempted to transform Afghan society through a process of modernization. Indeed, the Afghan reform movement, inspired by Tarsi, initiated by Habibullah and expanded by Amanullah represented efforts to “reshape and reintegrate civil society” (Roy, 1985). However, these efforts failed to address successfully conditions in the countryside and remained largely confined to urban centers. Thus, within Afghan society a small urban, educated elite was established which sought modernization through the growth of the state and the reformation of society. This elite, which grew throughout the twentieth century, is represented today by leaders like President Karzai who seek the transformation of Afghan political and social life through the establishment of democratic institutions. Thus, the historic development of a modernizing elite, created a “new political space” resulting in the existence of “two Afghanistans” (Roy, 1985: 10).

Roy argues that Afghanistan is bifurcated into rural and urban communities where the state is intrinsically linked to the affairs of the urban populace, while in the countryside, “the state is alien” (1985: 10). Rasanayagam argues that two forms of nationalism exist in Afghanistan; the first, held by the “backward, unlettered, rural masses” conflated nationalism with the preservation of the traditional Afghan lifestyle while the urban elite equated nationalism with the pursuit of “Afghan independence through modernization” (2003:10). This gulf is “rooted in everyday experience” for the state officials differ from rural Afghans in language, dress, customs, habits, perspective and outlook (Roy, 1985: 20). Government administrative buildings are positioned aside in the villages at a specific location known as *hukamat* (Roy, 1985: 20). Moreover, their differences are not benign as they hold each other in “mutual contempt” with traditional society representing “the pole of opposition to the state” (Roy, 1985:10, 16/ Barfield, 1984).

The extension of the central government into the Afghan countryside was considered by the tribal society as a challenge to both their traditional values and their economic independence (Poullada, 1973). As Roy comments: “On every occasion, even when the state is acting with the best intentions, its edicts are seen as tyrannical, because they remove from the peasant overall responsibility for the conduct of his affairs” (1986: 29). In response, the Afghan tribal societies have historically resisted state incursions into local affairs. Resistance to the state by the rural society comes in many forms that vary in scale. Subtle forms of opposition include traditional tribal practices to discourage outside intervention. For instance, a mediator known as a *malik* or *arbab* is selected in order to facilitate relations between the village communities and the state. When strangers enter

the village, the true leaders of the community withdraw behind protective walls while the *arbab* meets and assess the purpose of the visit. This tactic precludes outsiders from discerning the true power base of the community. Dupree comments: "If the central government identifies the village or tribal elite, control becomes easier as the zones of relative inaccessibility evaporate with the creation of an effective infrastructure" (1973: 250). The appointment of an intermediary to conduct affairs with outsiders illustrates the tenuous nature of state society relations. Indeed, the interface between tribal society and the state is officially limited to a few *maliks* per *qawm* (Roy, 1986). Barfield characterizes the contact between the central authority and the village communities as the "weakest link in the government chain of command" (1984: 175). Thus, while the interactive model of governance stipulates the necessity of a durable and broad interactive relationship between state and society, the reality in Afghan rural life is far from the ideal. Indeed, unlike the ideal in the interactive model, the tribal structures are autonomous entities that do not facilitate a co-operative and well-developed exchange with the central authority.

Resistance to the state also includes economic measures such as corruption whereby the state agent is rendered "powerless" (Roy, 1985: 21). The rural underground economy and an active smuggling network bypass government collection structures thereby denying the state revenues and economic power. Finally, open rebellion and revolt constitute the most active and serious form of tribal opposition to the state. The overthrow of Amanullah in 1929 and the widespread revolt against the PDPA government in 1978 constitute two overt examples of open tribal rebellion against the Afghan state.

Today, the cohesive, and autonomous tribal communities continue to represent a central obstacle to the political unification of Afghanistan. Centuries of entrenched tribal rule have fostered a political culture that is anathema to the principles of democratic governance. As Janes concludes, “It is unlikely that in the foreseeable future, the age-old system of regional groupings (*qaums*) based on linkages between families, clans and tribes, could be replaced by Western-style democratic practices” (2006).

Society and state is also fragmented by the existence of a third entity: the practice and centrality of Islam. While there is a body of literature devoted to the question of Islam’s compatibility with democracy such a discussion is beyond the purview of this analysis. As well, the complexity and the multifaceted nature of Islam in Afghanistan is equally too broad in scope to merit inclusion in significant detail. Instead, it is useful to overview only the general characteristics of Islamic practices in Afghanistan as it relates to the state and the development of democracy.

Islam is central to the lives of almost all Afghans. Thus, Islam constitutes an agent of unity in a country rife with division. Indeed, in parallel to the centrality of *qawm* and kinship origin, Islam represents the locus of identity for most Afghans (Anderson, 1984: 275). Despite the shared adherence to Islam among the Afghan populace, its practice and meaning diverges within different groups and settings within Afghan society. 84% of the country is Hanafi Sunni while the rest of the population adheres to the two sects of Shia Islam. More generally, three broad conceptions of Islam can be identified within Afghan culture, which bare direct relation to the process of democratization. These three groups are the traditionalists, the fundamentalists and the modernists.

The traditionalist approach to Islam reflects an aspiration to embrace the customs, values and lifestyles inherited from one's forbearers. It is a nostalgic and conservative framework whose goal is to "freeze society" rather than promulgate a new or progressive vision (Roy, 1986: 3). In Afghanistan, the traditionalist construct of Islam conflates general practices of Islam with local customary law or tribal traditions. As Dupree notes, "the Islam practiced in Afghan villages, nomad camps, and most urban areas (the ninety to ninety-five percent non-literates) would be almost unrecognizable to a sophisticated Muslim scholar. Aside from faith in Allah and in Mohammad as the Messenger of Allah, most beliefs relate to localized, pre-Muslim customs" (1973: 104). Indeed, the traditionalists champion the importance of Afghan tribal conventions such as the Pustunwali code and the Jirga and their approach "embraces social customs: the veiling of women, filial obedience, and respect for hierarchies" (Roy, 1986: 3). For the proponents of traditional Islam, even though local tribal codes subordinate many of the central tenets of Sharia law, it is the more conservative customary law which prevails. For instance, the Pashtunwali code's severe restrictions on women's rights usurp the more moderate tenets expressed in Islamic law on issues relating to marriage and inheritance<sup>150</sup>.

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<sup>150</sup> Roy illustrates how the orthodoxy of customary law subordinates the more progressive tenets of Islam: "The tribal code and Muslim law are in opposition. Adultery (*zina*) should, according to the shari'at, require four witnesses if it is to be proven; for the *pashtunwali*, hearsay (*peghor*) is sufficient... Women in the tribes are not allowed to inherit property, for that would contradict the principle of strict patrilineage, which is the very basis of the tribal system; while the Qur'an grants to women half the share of the male... It would be possible to provide many more examples to illustrate that it is not a question of reinterpreting the *shari'at* to satisfy particular interests, but of two positive systems which are quite frankly opposed to each other, because they present a different image of the social order. The *pashtunwali* has as its goal the maintaining within the tribe of an equilibrium which is always under threat – as to the definition of the tribe, this is arrived at by a consensus of opinion. A Pashtun defines himself in opposition to anything that is not Pashtun. The *shari'at*, on the other hand, attempts to transcend specific groups such as tribes, *qawm* and other *asabiyya* in the universality of the *umma*" (1986: 36).

Traditional Islam is practiced throughout the country and particularly in rural Afghanistan where it permeates the life of the tribal communities. Indeed, Islam represents a “way of life” as its customs and formal procedures shape the daily existence of most Afghans (Barfield, 2004: 15). Traditional Islam seeks to maintain existing local practices and relationships and it reinforces the myopic proclivities of the tribal ‘inward-looking society’. In this sense, traditional Islam strengthens the autonomy of local communities and further bridges the gulf between state and society in Afghanistan. Indeed, traditional Islam represents a powerful force as it eschews changes or reforms to local institutions from the central authority. As Rashid notes: “Traditional Islam in Afghanistan believed in minimum government, where state interference was as little and as far away as possible” (2000: 83). Collectively, these features of traditional Islam have been strengthened by the presence and authority of the village mullah.

The village mullah oversees most religious ceremonies and serves as the community’s “religious leader” or educator (Dupree, 1973: 107). The mullah is marginally more educated than most Afghans and is reliant on the tribal community for his livelihood. The Mullah’s dependency on the tribal village reinforces the confluence of Islam with local tribal customs and ensures that his interests remain locally based. Historically, the mullah has been a mobilizing figure who has coalesced tribal opposition to the government through appeals to Islam and the call of jihad. As Griffiths notes: “The mullahs are still the mainstay of the conservative opposition to reform, indeed to change of any kind. Often ignorant and bigoted men, they are at least shrewd enough to realize that reform can only mean the end of their almost exclusive authority and a decline in their status” (1967: 85).

Tribal mullahs played a prominent role in generating widespread opposition to the rule of Amanullah as the Amir's reforms threatened the power of the both the tribal and religious leadership. Specifically, his modernization program involving multiple social, political and economic reforms challenged the very basis of the tribe's autonomy. Given that the vested interests of the mullahs were intrinsically tied to the independence of tribal society, they employed Islam as a tool to unite the tribes in the overthrow of Amanullah. Again, the village mullahs actively supported the countrywide revolt against the PDPA government in 1978. As Goodson concludes, "Thus, both the Pushtunwali and Islam as understood in Afghanistan provide substantial normative justification for the existence of violence" (2001: 18).

Pushtunwali codes and tribal Islam not only stand in opposition to the basic edicts of Sharia law they also contravene the central tenets of liberal democratic principles of equality and individual rights. Conjoined with a propensity to eschew state directives and to employ violence or the threat of jihad when faced with overreaching reforms, traditional Islam constitutes a principle obstacle to the establishment of a functioning rights-based democracy in Afghanistan.

Fundamentalism in Afghanistan is expressed in two principle forms. First, the fundamentalism of the 'ulama' (religious scholars) and second, the fundamentalism of the Islamists. The ulama are the formal body of trained religious scholars that represent the highest level of the Afghan religious establishment. The fundamentalism of the ulama is rooted in the desire to adhere to the original text of the Qur'an and to reinstate the shari'at as the principle legal doctrine in the country. The ulama fundamentalists have had a mercurial relationship with the Afghan state. In the nineteenth century Abdur Rahman,

threatened by the power of the clergy, restricted their economic and political independence by nationalizing their source of income (waqf or land possessions) and incorporated them into the state bureaucracy. Successive Afghan leaders throughout the twentieth century further entrenched the ulama into the federal bureaucracy, ultimately weakening their authority (Roy, 1986).

It is the focus on shari'a law, according to Roy, which distinguishes the ulama's relationship to the state. From Roy's perspective the fundamentalist ulama will "rely on any de facto power to implement shari'a" (1998: 199). Nevertheless, while the ulama have not traditionally sought political control over the state, they have opposed the national administration over issues of public policy. For instance, King Amanullah's program of "westernization" and reform were bitterly rejected by the ulama that believed that "all forms of westernization were a defeat" (Roy, 1986:64). Consequently, "it was the 'ulama', in alliance with the tribes, which caused the downfall of King Amanullah in 1929" (Roy, 1986: 46). As such, there were limits to the ulama's accommodation with the state.

The ulama could be co-opted by an authoritarian and Monarchical power that it believed subscribed to the fundamental tenets of Islam. However, if it betrayed those principles by advocating a western model of governance that sought societal reform, the ulama would rebel. It is in this regard, that the ulama represent an entity in Afghan society that could undermine the current democratization process. If the ulama view the current reforms as too far-reaching, their respect and influence throughout society could generate continued opposition to reconstruction efforts.



A new variant of fundamentalism emerged in the twentieth century, which represented a clear departure from traditional Afghan Islamic thought. The Islamicists, or political Islam, in contrast to the fundamentalist ulama, sought the propagation of their Islamic ideology through the control of the state. Again, in contrast to traditional Islam, the Islamicists viewed the tribal system as a backward entity that ran counter to their vision of pure Islam and the construct of an Islamic state (Rashid, 2000).

The roots of political Islam derive from the Muslim Brotherhood an extremist Islamic Movement based in Egypt in the early twentieth century. Political Islam in Afghanistan developed in the 1960's and found expression in a number of political parties that sought the overthrow of the infidel Marxist government. As discussed in Chapter three, the power and influence of the Islamic parties grew precipitously during the Soviet-Afghan war due to their vital role in the resistance movement. However, their participation in the destructive civil war and their inability to unite and form a viable Islamic government diminished their credibility among Afghans. It was in this void where political Islam re-emerged in another new variant with the rise of the Taliban and their control of the Afghan state.

As Rashid notes, "the Taliban and their supporters present the Muslim world and the West with a new style of Islamic extremism, which rejects all accommodation with Muslim moderation and the West (2000: 93). The Taliban's forceful imposition of their extreme and radical interpretation of shari'a law ran counter to the widely held belief and practice of traditional Islam in Afghanistan. The Taliban's directives represent another attempt by the central government to alter the entrenched and deeply knit tribal society with a foreign ideology that ran counter to their own belief system. Barfield comments:

Although the Taliban cloaked themselves in the garb of Islam, they had not won over the Afghan people to their ideology any more than the PDPA had won them over to Marxism. Paradoxically it was the strength of Afghanistan's historic Islamic religiosity that inoculated it against the Taliban's radical interpretation. Already viewing themselves as superior Muslims they saw no need to adopt a new and alien interpretation of their own faith. (2004: 17)

Nonetheless, radical Islamic organizations such as the Taliban continue to thrive as active political-religious force in Afghanistan. Their appeal stems from a combination of factors that include their 'pure' form of Islam, their anti-Western ideology, their ethnic cohesion and their active participation as jihadist insurgent groups willing to use violence to achieve their goals. They continue to attract disenfranchised and radicalized Afghan and Pakistani youth, as well as foreign Islamic jihadists. As will be discussed in more detail, the radical Islamic groups constitute a fundamental threat to the implementation of democracy in Afghanistan due to their role as total spoilers who seek to disrupt the reconstruction process through an ongoing campaign of violence.

The third conception of Islam that is present in Afghanistan is one that advances the unity between modernism and Islam. It is a vision that interprets Islam as a moderate, tolerant, and progressive faith that is premised on equal rights, individual freedom and the universality of the human condition. Accordingly, the shared nature of these core beliefs underpins the compatibility of Islam with democracy. In Afghanistan, the modernist Islamic approach gained traction through the writing and influence of Mahmud Tarzi and through the leadership of Habibullah and King Amanullah during the early decades of the twentieth century. Throughout the twentieth century, the modernist Islamic approach maintained its continuity through an elite educated membership based

principally in Kabul. It is represented today by President Karzai and his vision to democratize the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

In sum, two of the three principle conceptions of Islam in Afghanistan are fundamentally antithetical to the creation of a democratic state. Traditional Islam eschews the expansion of the state throughout the countryside and instead propagates a philosophy and lifestyle that advances the traditional independence of tribal society. The fundamentalism of the ulama represents an orthodoxy that is resistant to the western conception of democratic reform. The fundamentalism of political Islam reflected in groups like the Taliban exemplifies the acts of 'total spoilers' who seek to disrupt the democratic process through violence and instability and establish their own Islamic state premised on an extreme and radical theology.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### EVALUATING IGNATIEFF'S THEORY IN THE CASE OF AFGHANISTAN:

#### SECURITY AND GEOPOLITICS

##### **Security**

Central to Ignatieff's thesis is the necessity for the state, following in the tradition of Weber, to "exert a monopoly over the legitimate means of violence in a given territory" (Ignatieff, 2003: 84). Indeed, according to Ignatieff, state control over all armed forces in a country constitutes a necessary condition for the cessation of ethnic conflict and the return to peaceful internal relations. Moreover, it is well established in political theory that the successful establishment of liberal democratic institutions necessitates an environment of national security wherein the state is the ultimate arbiter over the use of violence.

Currently in Afghanistan, the state does not exercise a monopoly over the use of force in the country. Instead, security is threatened by two chief groupings; first, warlord or regional commanders, and second, three chief insurgent groups led by Taliban, al Qaeda and Hiz-b-islami (HIG). Failure to contain warlord and insurgent violence threatens all aspects of national reconstruction in Afghanistan. As Jalali notes, "security continues to be a prerequisite for political development and economic growth" (2006: 3). This section will discuss the key security issues that impact on current nation building efforts in Afghanistan. Specifically, it is important to overview the threats to national consolidation posed by the regional commanders and the insurgent groups. Second, it is necessary to consider the development of the Afghan security sector, and the role played

by international security forces. Finally, this section will compare the development of the national security sector in relation to the threats faced by the national government.

Numerous scholars, policy-makers and analysts have identified the consolidation of warlord power as the chief obstacle precluding the success of democratic governance in Afghanistan (Ignatieff, 2003: 80). President Karzai commented in 2004 that “the warlords and the private militia pose the greatest threat to Afghanistan’s security, even more than the Taliban” (Jane’s Sentinel Security, 2006). As a 2005 UNDP report states: “In Afghanistan, the co-existence of competing power structures, warlords and drug lords remains a major counter constraint to the realization of citizen’s rights (2005: 132).

Throughout Afghanistan’s history, powerful regional factions and tribal associations have fundamentally limited the power of the state. Tribal authority has not only deterred the expansion and the growth of the central government, but has on several occasions orchestrated the overthrow of the national regime. The threat of rebellion thus constitutes a central factor constricting the power of the state. For instance, following the 1929 overthrow of Amanullah, successive Afghan leaders avoided introducing dramatic national reforms that would threaten the tribal and religious power base. The current breakdown of the country into warlord kingdoms and territories therefore represents a new variant on an older tradition of regional power and autonomy in Afghanistan. As Sedra states, “the culture of warlordism” is “deeply ingrained in Afghan society” (2002: 5).

Many of the existing key regional commanders emerged as powerbrokers and consolidated their fiefdoms during the Soviet-Afghan War. When the Taliban gained power, their national administration achieved nominal control over 90 percent of the

country and was thus able to contain warlord supremacy through brutality and oppression. In post-Taliban Afghanistan, regional commanders have both regained previously held areas and conquered new territories throughout the country. In this sense, President Karzai's government falls within a tradition in Afghan politics of a weak central government that is subordinated to a strong and autonomous society. It is essential to overview the nature of Afghan warlordism to understand the component features of their authority and to consider how the regional chiefdoms foster instability and diminish national authority.

A common theme developed throughout this paper relates to the integral relationship between political, economic and military power. A warlord can be defined as an individual "who exercises a combination of military, political and economic power outside a constitutional or legal framework" (USIP, 2003:3). Giustozzi defines warlords as a "particular type of ruler, whose basic characteristics are his independence of any higher authority, and his control of a 'private army', which responds to him personally" (2002: 2). Ignatieff ascribes the presence of warlords to the political vacuum "where the Afghan state ought to be" (2003: 80). Sedra defines Afghan warlords as "regional power brokers, most often tribal chieftains or militia commanders, who control militias and assert political sovereignty over areas of varying size (2003: 5).

In Afghanistan the countryside yields great power. In today's warlord fiefdoms, regional commanders attain political clout through private militias and their control of the informal economy; the mainstay of Afghanistan's economic prosperity. The warlord's authority stems from securing economic resources through the domination of the opium

trade, tariff duties, transit fares, natural resources<sup>151</sup> such as minerals, oil and gas and many local “unofficial” taxes<sup>152</sup> (AREU&The World Bank, 2004). While the confluence of warlordism and opium has been discussed, it is important to consider the prodigious revenues garnered locally through custom tariffs.

Afghanistan’s key geo-strategic position within Central Asia has historically rendered the country as a key conduit for overland trade. Indeed, Afghanistan’s legacy as the ‘crossroad of civilizations’ established the country as a central transit corridor linking Eastern and Western cultures. The continuity of Afghanistan as a trading nation persists today. The burgeoning traffic of smuggled goods such as automobiles and other “consumer durables” imported from the Persian Gulf constitutes a lucrative enterprise and a significant proportion of Afghanistan’s GNP (USIP, 2003: 2). The regional commanders’ dominance of the Afghan countryside has enabled them to capture the wealth generated through the transit of these commercial goods. Specifically, warlord control of the customs houses in Afghan cities such as Herat, Kandahar, Jalalabad and Balhk provides much of the revenue to sustain their power (USIP, 2003: 2). For instance, the UN estimates that the custom’s house near Herat generates an income of between \$250,000 and \$1.5 million daily based on customs duties. In 2003, most of the estimated \$100 million in annual revenues was collected by powerful regional commander Ismail Khan. Only \$10 million was sent to Kabul in the same year (Kaufman, 2003). In 2002,

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<sup>151</sup> According to a 2004 AREU & The World Bank report “ revenues from the Daulatabad salt mines in Faryab and the lapis lazulimines in Badakhshan were all captured by commanders and not remitted to the government” (2004:42) .

<sup>152</sup> For instance, warlords such as Abdul Rashid Dostum derive income through an informal “capitation fee (head tax)” collected locally (often in Mosques) in the areas under their authority (Rubin, Hamidzada & Stoddard: 2005: 12).

Khan's income from the transit trade was more than the total domestic revenues of \$80 million collected by the central government (Kaufman, 2003).

The control of customs revenue by regional leaders is emblematic of the powerlessness of the central government to secure income which legally "belongs to the central government" (Kaufman, 2003). Indeed, according to established law, provincial finance administrators are required to deposit customs revenue into a central government bank account whereupon the national finance ministry is to direct local officials in the manner of its disbursement. Once local expenditures are met, remaining funds are to be transferred to Kabul. However, official protocol rarely is followed as the central government receives a small fraction of the monies collected and has little say in how they are locally distributed. As Rubin and Malikyar note, provincial governors "commit a gross procedural violation when they assume the role of the finance ministry in deciding on the disbursement of these funds" (2003: 15).

Regional chieftains also maintain their authority through financial support from external sources. The warlord's receive support from their ethnic counterparts in contiguous states, highlighting the regional dimension of Afghanistan's political situation. As well, in the current 'war on terror,' US authorities secure warlord support in their efforts to rout Taliban, al-Qaeda and HIG insurgents through financial and political support. The US has supported Fahim, Dostum, Ismail Khan, and in the south Hajji Abdul Qadir and Gul Agha Shirzai (Rubin & Malikyar, 2003). Finally, warlords in Afghanistan serve as a conduit for aid agencies in the dispensation of humanitarian supplies. Dietl comments: "By positioning themselves as guarantors of relief (primarily



food aid), the warlords have elevated their popularity, maintained their clientelistic network and channeled resources to their war capacities” (2004: 63).

The capture of significant economic resources enables the warlords to develop military strength through the development of a loyal militia army and the purchase of weapons and other military supplies. In turn, armed strength fortifies warlord power facilitating the enforcement of their authority, the protection of their territory and the further extraction of economic resources. For instance, Ismail Khan maintained his Herat-based fiefdom through the development of a cohesive and loyal army: “Ismail Khan commands the loyalty of an estimated 15,000-strong army trained and armed mainly by the Iranian military. His forces are reportedly far better-trained, equipped and disciplined than those of the ANA” (Jane’s Sentinel Security, 2006).

Warlord authority in Afghanistan is structured along a feudal basis of organization. Powerful regional warlords like Ismail Khan or Rashid Dostum gain the allegiance of multiple “client warlords and vassals” who in turn “control tens or hundreds of villages” (Giustozzi, 2003: 4). It is through this hierarchical system of warlord allegiance that the regional commanders are able to dominate multiple Afghan provinces. As mentioned, the “dominant warlords” maintain these feudal networks through charismatic leadership, foreign sponsorship, an independent revenue base, and coercive force via their private militia armies (Giustozzi, 2003: 4).

Warlords seek to attain legitimacy in a number of ways. First, they emphasize common kinship and ethnic bonds to solidify their territory. Warlords garner legitimacy therefore by offering protection to the ethnic and tribal populations under their control: “As criminal activity increases, with banditry (including kidnapping of foreigners)

becoming more attractive, the only security guarantee in most provinces is that of the local warlord and his private army” (Jane’s Sentinel Security Assessment, 2006). In more advanced fiefdoms, the “dominant” warlords can expand their legitimacy among the local population by supplying a modicum of services such as “education, policing, electricity and other supplies, public transport, etc.” (Giustozzi, 2003: 2).

In these ‘proto states’ the establishment of a nascent bureaucratic order further deepens and consolidates the power of the warlord. In this regard, regional chieftains who establish ‘proto states’ can be identified as agents of stability by replicating the functions of a national order in their local fiefdoms. For instance, in several of the western Afghan provinces, Ismail Khan "has provided a degree of security, education, and food supplied unrivaled in the rest of the country" (Kleveman, 2003: 202). However, even in the more established warlord kingdoms, the extent of these local services supplied by the dominant warlord are minimal by international standards as military expenses consume most resources (Giustozzi, 2003). Nevertheless, warlords have been able to coalesce local support to their rule through a combination of multiple economic, security, cultural and ethnic inducements.

Conversely, the central government’s inability to develop these profound ties with local Afghan communities strengthens the power of the warlords in relation to the central government: “Through the intertwining of security and business interests, local networks of dependence, influence and allegiance developed, bound together by loyalties to family and tribe. In an area where the concept of the state as provider traditionally has been absent, allegiance and dependence have been given to local leaders rather than to the abstract nation state” (Peake, 2003: 184).

While regional commanders can provide a certain degree of security to their territory, they also threaten the stability of Afghanistan in a number of ways. Afghan warlords maintain their position through coercion and conflict. Battles to garner resources, maintain regional hegemony or expand their territory are commonplace and involve “virtually all warlords” (Giustozzi, 2003: 4). Sedra argues that warlords by their inherent nature and desire for self-preservation foster a climate of insecurity as they “rely on war, violence and general instability to generate resources and consolidate their power” (2003:6). According to this argument, a climate of overall instability serves their political and strategic objectives. Warlord power is premised on their position as the provider of regional security and tribal protection. Continual local strife reinforces the need to offer security to the local population. In addition, their status as charismatic leaders whose achievements have been gained through battlefield victories is reinforced through continued military conquests. As well, conflict occurs not only between competing warlord structures and organizations but also within a dominant warlord’s domain. Indeed, the “feudal” basis of warlord organization constitutes an innately weak and fragile structure wherein the lead commander is subject to perpetual internal challenges.

Moreover, as organizations like Human Rights Watch have documented, Afghan warlords have perpetuated considerable human rights violations. These abuses have occurred in a number of ways. Commanders often use extreme methods to enforce discipline among their own militia, or to subdue the population within their fiefdom. Atrocities have occurred against opposing militias and against citizens under the control of rival warlords. Janes comments that “warlords continue to act with impunity,

imprisoning members of the public on fabricated charges in an effort to settle personal scores and extort money from wealthy residents” (2006). As well, ethnic divisions are fostered by Afghan warlordism. Since most militia armies are formed locally, most units share a common ethno-linguistic heritage. Consequently, conflict between competing warlord factions often degenerates into a larger clash between differing ethnic communities. The division of Afghanistan into rival ethnic factions, fueled by a history of shared mistrust constitutes a chief threat to the internal stability of the country.

Finally, warlords threaten the stability of Afghanistan because they represent the chief obstacle mitigating the expansion of the central government. Indeed, attempts to unify the country through the establishment of a strong central government, improvements in national infrastructure and the creation of a stable and legal economy, run counter the interests and self-preservation of the Afghan warlords. From an economic standpoint, warlords enhance their own revenue base at the expense of the central government. Thus, the capacity for the central authority to draw revenue, provide services and to foster the economic and political reconstruction of the country is fundamentally restricted by warlord power.

Abdul Rashid Dostum represents an empirical example of one of Afghanistan’s most powerful and well-known regional commanders. Dostum’s power stems from his history a successful Afghan military commander. During the Soviet-Afghan war, Dostum lead an army division for the PDPA government formed from militia soldiers in Northern Afghanistan. Despite its status as a government force, Dostum’s division effectively became his own “personal property” and he commanded the loyalty of his Uzbek, Turkmen and Tajik troops (Giustozzi, 2003: 5). As discussed in Chapter Three,

once Dostum consolidated his own private force, he gained a reputation as a leader noted for his fierce independence and opportunism. A cycle of alliance and betrayal characterized Dostum's leadership as a regional commander. Indeed, after his defection from the PDPA government Dostum was allied to, and fought against most of the prominent Mujahadeen factions in his bid to consolidate his fiefdom and to ensure a national presence. In 1992, Dostum formed the political party Jumbesh-i-Melli Islami in a bid to consolidate his position in Afghanistan's national polity.

Dostum had access to a force of up to 70, 000 men, however, in practice he only employed a maximum of 20,000 soldiers with a core contingent of 5000 men (Giustozzi, 2003). In Dostum's example, his militia is formed principally from Uzbek, Tajik and Turkmen forces. He attains unity not by emphasizing common ethnicity but by stressing the need to unite the disparate Afghan minorities against Pashtun dominance. In this regard, ethnicity or rather fears of ethnic coercion plays a vital role underwriting the cohesion of Dostum's Northern army.

Like many regional commanders, Dostum has used his military strength to garner significant economic capital. Again, in a common pattern Dostum has generated income through two chief means: foreign support and through control of transit fees. First, Dostum exemplifies how Afghanistan's regional commanders base their power on foreign support. During different periods, Dostum relied on the assistance from Russia, Iran, Turkey and his ethnic counterparts in Uzbekistan. In the campaign to overthrow the Taliban, Dostum's Northern Army was a key force in the Northern Alliance, which received considerable funding and military support by the United States.

Second, as in other parts of the country, customs revenue constitutes a chief source of revenue for the warlords of Northern Afghanistan. Consequently, competition for control of the custom houses has generated warlord discord and conflict. In 2003, a loose agreement between the Northern commanders resulted in the following apportionment of customs revenue: “50 percent for General Atta Muhammad of Jamiat, 37 percent for Dostum, 12 percent for Muhaqqiq and Hizb-i-Wadat and the remaining one percent perhaps used for the cost of transactions” (Rubin & Malikyar, 2003: 15).

In Dostum’s Northern provinces, the central government exercises little power or control. Dostum represents a ‘dominant’ commander, whose power is built on alliances with smaller warlords and village leaders (Giustozzi, 2003). Dostum’s warlord network and competing regional chiefs dominate the economic and security sector in the region. Basic service provisions such as schools, hospitals and local infrastructure are financed either through regional chiefs or foreign aid organizations rather than the central government (Peake, 2003). The centrally appointed provincial officials such as the Governor have nominal authority and represent powerless figureheads: “In Faryab Province, for example, the governor only dealt with day-to-day civil affairs. Major issues, particularly ones related to security, were referred first to General Dostum or his representatives rather than directly to Kabul” (AREU and World Bank , 2004: 37).

Dostum has fostered instability through ongoing clashes with the rival commander Atta Mohammad for control of the Northern provinces. Continued skirmishes between Dostum and Atta have precluded the expansion of foreign and developmental aid to the Northern region. Dostum and Atta formed a truce and reached a political accommodation in order to consolidate their position as the two principle leaders

of the north. However, Dostum is also facing an ongoing challenge from the militia commander General Abdul Malik. Malik and Dostum have shared a contentious history due to two chief events. Malik holds Dostum accountable for the murder of his brother Rasul Pahlawan; and second, Malik united with the Taliban and drove Dostum out of the country in 1997. Currently, Dostum holds power in five provinces in Northern Afghanistan and is engaged in a continuous rivalry with Malik over the control of Faryab. In February 2006, President Karzai met with Dostum in an appeal for the Uzbek General to lesson continued feuding and to establish a greater sense of security in the Northern provinces (Synovitz, 2006).

Dostum's reputation as a brutal and ruthless leader stems from his harsh treatment of his own troops, as well as atrocities committed against rival combatants. For instance, Dostum is credited for numerous war crimes such as the deaths of over 1000 Taliban and al-Qaeda captive fighters who suffocated in "airless shipping containers" while on route to a prison at Shibarghan in November 2001 (Burns, 2002). Numerous human rights organizations have catalogued Dostum's 'crimes against humanity' and have called for his incarceration as a war criminal. Based on his violent history, Dostum is "deeply unpopular among the non-Uzbek sections of the Afghan intelligentsia and perhaps as important, among the international community of journalists, NGOs, activists and officials of international organizations" (Giustozzi, 2003: 9).

The enmity directed towards Dostum by groups of differing ethnicities highlights a central problem for the unification of Afghanistan. The regional commanders constitute the dominant leadership in Afghanistan. However, their legacy of internal violence and

their involvement in ethnic factional conflict ensures that these leaders cannot secure a truly national constituency.

Warlordism in Afghanistan poses a unique challenge to nation building efforts in Afghanistan. In order to counter the problem of warlordism, policymakers first have to identify the nature of the threat. The theoretical underpinnings of threat assessment are well developed in international relations theory. In post-conflict resolution literature, security threats to reconstruction efforts are termed as “spoilers”. Specifically, Stedman states that spoilers are “leaders and parties who believe that peace emerging from negotiations threatens their power, worldview and interests, and use violence to undermine attempts to achieve it” (1997: 5). Stedman further delineates spoilers into three categories: limited, greedy and total. Limited spoilers are those with “limited goals” such as minority recognition, or power sharing guarantees (1997: 10). Greedy spoilers are those with goals that are subject to a cost benefit analysis; if the risk is high the goal is limited, and conversely, if the risk is low the goal is total. Total spoilers are those who are uncompromising in their goal to attain absolute power and transform society with their “radical” ideology (Stedman, 1997: 11). Stedman argues that since each spoiler type pursues differing goals, the government’s policy response necessitates divergent strategies for each type. Thus, given the total spoiler’s immutable approach and inability to bargain “they must be defeated or so marginalized that they can do little damage” (1997: 14). Conversely, greedy and limited spoilers act according to circumstance and can thus be possibly accommodated through a peace process premised by coercion and inducements.



If one applies Stedman's typology to Afghanistan, most of the regional commanders are either limited or greedy spoilers. Most of the conflict generated by warlords are either within their fiefdoms or located on the periphery of their territory in ongoing turf battles. Most warlords either lack the capability or the intent to capture the Afghan state. In this regard warlords do not initiate military action against national security forces as their interest resides principally in their regional base. Moreover, most warlords do not promulgate a radical fundamentalist ideology common to the definition of total spoilers. As Sedra states, the "majority" of Afghan warlords are "partial spoiler, individuals who could conceivably be integrated into a central state system with the right combination of incentives and disincentives" (2003: 2).

However, despite their categorization as 'limited spoilers', the existence of warlords entrenched in their powerful fiefdoms is seemingly an intractable problem faced by the central government of Afghanistan. In short, the policy options available to the national government are limited. Again, echoing Stedman's prescription for limited spoilers, the chief national strategy has been to co-opt the warlords into the reconstruction process through appointments to government positions<sup>153</sup>. This approach is designed to achieve a number of objectives. First, it seeks to position the regional commanders away from their local centers of power. Second, it is hoped that the prestige of national positions will encourage regional commanders to yield local power in an effort to strengthen the national government and the reconstruction process.

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<sup>153</sup> Peake illustrates the rise of warlords to positions in the National government: "The Bonn Agreement included many of the most powerful regional commanders in the government. Cabinet posts were given to some, and senior regional positions to others...In the absence of viable alternatives, a deal was made with regional leaders, who were slated to be the base to begin the hewing of a civilian form of politics. For a country shattered by decades of war it was a momentous task for the nascent administration, largely because a major part of the deal's success was dependent on leaders undergoing the profound transition from warlord to peacelord" (2003: 186).

However, as Jalali notes, efforts to co-opt warlords into the nation-building efforts have been largely unsuccessful. Warlords who have secured positions with the national government have still successfully maintained their local networks of authority. As Jane's comments: "It is extremely unlikely that regional figures will surrender any part of their local primacy to a central government, even when awarded posts of some significance" (2006).

Again, Dostum's case illustrates this phenomenon. In an effort to co-opt Dostum, the national government has appointed him to several prominent positions including deputy defence minister. In March 2005, Dostum became chief of staff of the armed forces. While such appointments have augmented his national prestige, Dostum's national standing does not equate with the absolute control he commands in the north. As a senior Afghan political analyst stated, Dostum's most recent federal appointment reflects "a high position but no authority" (Ibrahimi, 2006). Shortly after his most recent appointment Dostum left Kabul and returned to Shiberghan and his northern base, in frustration over his limited political role (Ibrahimi, 2006).

As well, national appointments only strengthen warlord power as they are formally enabled to "influence national programs and the reform agenda" (Jalali, 2006: 2). In addition, the efficacy of government has diminished as the commanders "have loaded their offices with their unqualified supporters and corrupt cronies" (Jalali, 2006: 2). Finally, the policy of granting local commanders with government positions rewards actors who have engaged in illegal activity and thus fails to "hold them accountable" for their actions (Jalali, 2006: 2). These actions thus "undermine the establishment of the rule of law" and diminishes the "legitimacy of the national government" (Jalali, 2006: 2). One

district governor, who is not a warlord, commented on the current strategy to legitimate warlord authority through government positions: “There is currently a paradoxical situation where the international community and the government of Afghanistan want to bring security to Afghanistan through those people who don’t want security and have been the greatest cause of insecurity. How can the government be successful with this strategy?” (AREU&The World Bank, 2004:37).

Paralleling the ‘incentive’ of national appointments the Afghan government also employs the ‘disincentive’ of reducing warlord power through the demobilization of warlord militias and the confiscation of weapons. Indeed, the existence of regional militia armies under the control of local warlords contravenes the tenets of the Bonn Agreement, which states, “all mujahidin, Afghan armed forces and armed groups in the country shall come under the command and control of the Interim Authority” (Bonn Agreement, 2001). As discussed in Chapter Three, the disarming of the Afghan militias is formalized through the UN sponsored Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration program (DDR) and the Afghanistan’s New Beginnings Programme (ANBP). In June 2005, the Government of Afghanistan initiated the Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups (DIAG). Collectively, these programs have resulted in the disarmament of over 63,000 former combatants and over 60,000 have undergone “ANBP reintegration assistance” such as vocational training<sup>154</sup> (Asian Development Bank, 2005). Over 36,000 assorted small weapons have been collected, over 12,000 heavy weapons have been cantoned and several million boxed and unboxed ammunitions have been collected and/or identified by ANDP collection teams (UNDP, 2006).

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<sup>154</sup> A 2005 GOA report states that the eight vocational centers in Afghanistan can collectively train only 2,000 students annually. Given the limited resources, opportunities for re-training are not possible for the vast majority of the former combatants (2005).

Despite the official numbers of men demobilized and arms collected, the scale of the problem overshadows the efforts undertaken. There are a number of obstacles mitigating the success of the DDR program. First, the problem of armed regional militias is formidable given the entrenched nature of warlord power and the widespread diffusion of weapons throughout Afghan society. Afghans have traditionally maintained high numbers of individual weaponry for personal and communal protection. The Soviet-Afghan war and the civil war period exacerbated this trend resulting in the ‘Kalishnikovization’ of the Afghan countryside. Currently, weapons are still pervasive throughout the country. In spite of efforts to collect weaponry, there is a marked unwillingness for individuals and militia groups to surrender their armaments.

As discussed, militia groups and military hardware constitutes the basis of warlord power. Given the weakness of the central government relative to the strength of the regional commanders there is little incentive for the warlords to dispense unilaterally with their soldiers and weapons. Indeed, the confluence of warlordism, the drug trade, control of local transit trade framed against the weakness of the central authority ensures the continuance of militia groups and an armed populace: “Irrespective of whatever action may be taken to secure illicit weapons by the UN or security forces there will be no appreciable alteration to the state of crime, the influence of warlords, or any aspect of internal security” (Jane’s Sentinel Security Assessment, 2006).

In addition to the unwillingness of Afghan individuals and groups to surrender arms, the DDR program is plagued by its limited reach as it is undertaken in only certain areas of the country. As well, the success of the DDR program has been overstated at “official media briefings” and the number of militia stated to be demobilized “appears

optimistic” (Jane’s Sentinel Security Assessment, 2006). Instead, ‘disarmed’ groups either quickly re-arm through the ongoing weapons trade or they only surrender “old, unserviceable or surplus weapons” (Jane’s Sentinel Security Assessment, 2006). As well, evidence exists that warlords are disarming and demobilizing rival combatants in order to augment their own power (Jalali, 2002).

Efforts to reintegrate former combatants into the formal economy have proved equally ineffective due to limited employment opportunities (Rubin, Hamidzada & Stoddard: 2005). A UNDP report stated that the “DDR programme” has “proved to be little more than an idealistic goal, with the numbers of combatants actually disarmed, demobilized and reintegrated having little impact on the overall-distribution of power” (2005: 131). Janes concludes with an equally grim forecast regarding any improvement in the DDR process: “There remain few grounds for optimism for the success of the programme or for the full co-operation of warlords... It is most unlikely, given increasing tensions between armed factions throughout the country, continuing US military operations, and overall insecurity, that there will be significant progress in DDR” (2006).

The employment of national military forces to enforce central rule and diminish warlord power represents the most forceful approach available to the Afghan government. However, this is currently not an option given the asymmetrical power imbalances between central government and regional commanders. The regional militias collectively represent a larger, better trained, and more cohesive force than the nascent Afghan National Army (ANA). According to Janes, the ANA is inferior to warlord militias in all aspects of “discipline, loyalty and military capabilities” (2006). For instance, the warlord and tribal militias maintain an overwhelming numerical supremacy

over the ANA. In March 2006, a member of the UN Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups (DIAG) program estimated that between 1,800 and 2,000 illegal armed groups exist in Afghanistan (Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment, 2006). The UN estimated that the after the overthrow of the Taliban warlord militias collectively numbered 750,000 fighters (Giustozzi, 2003: 3). In 2004, the Afghan Defence Ministry documented 170,000 members of numerous warlord forces and tribal militias while an Asian Development Bank report stated that in 2005 militia forces "may include up to 180,000 men" (Jane's Security Sentinel Assessment, 2006; ADBI, 2005).

In February 2006, the Afghan Department of Defence claimed the ANA stood at 35,000 soldiers. The ANA in 2006 represents a force that lacks the size, materials and capability to either challenge warlord power or fight a counterinsurgency campaign. Both requirements are necessary to stabilize Afghanistan. The goal of the Afghan government and the international community is to establish a 70,000 ethnically balanced and trained force by late 2009 that is both "effective and politically reliable" (Securing Afghanistan's Future, 2004; GOA, 2005).

Given Afghanistan's overwhelming security challenges, coupled with the multidimensional problems associated with building the current force, it is highly unlikely that the ANA will meet its principle objectives. Indeed, the ANA is experiencing a multifaceted array of short-term and long-term challenges. Short-term challenges include a high proportion of uneducated and illiterate recruits (60%), which fundamentally impairs effective training (Securing Afghanistan's Future, 2004). Rapid training cycles, poor equipment quality, the poor health of recruits, low salaries (\$70 monthly for a private), and cultural differences between the new recruits and the foreign

trainers also diminish effective training (GAO, 2005). As well, experience in conflict has shaped Afghan fighters towards independent action and guerrilla tactics. Consequently, it is difficult for many new recruits to transition into a military culture governed by a “professional ethos and regulated by conventional military norms” (Jalali, 2002:73).

The central long-term problem for the ANA relates to central government’s inability to finance and sustain a viable force. As discussed, current projections discount any prospect that the national government will be able to afford the ANA at the proposed capability. Indeed, the salaries of the troops alone would overextend the financial means of the Afghan state. For instance, the proposed force of 60,000, budgeted on a salary of \$US150 per month entails a cost of well over \$200 million annually (Securing Afghanistan’s Future, 2004). As identified this figure alone constitutes over half of the projected income for the Afghan state. Estimates for the sustaining expenditures of the Afghan security forces range from \$600<sup>155</sup> million per year to \$1billion ((Rubin, Hamidzada & Stoddard: 2005:2; GOA, 2005:7). Currently, the United States is providing most of the funds to finance the Afghan security sector, including over 90% of costs for the ANA. However, as a United States Government Accountability Office (GAO) report states the “United States has not committed to pay for creating and sustaining the army and police” (2005: 32). The 2006 London Conference on Afghanistan reiterated the objective of creating a 70,000 multi-ethnic and effective force by 2010, however, there were no proposed financial commitments undertaken to support the Afghan security sector for either the immediate or long-term (Jane’s Security Sentinel Assessment, 2006).

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<sup>155</sup> A 2005 GAO report estimates that the annual costs of the ANA around \$420 million (2005 dollars) while the ANP is estimated at \$180 million annually (2005:32).

The United States recently informed the Afghan government that responsibility for the payment of military salaries will be transferred to Afghanistan in 2006-2007 (Rubin, 2006). As Rubin states, “The United States, not Afghanistan, determined the salary levels of the ANA, and now the United States is insisting that this impoverished, insecure country, just embarking on a major development strategy, take on this fiscal burden” (2006: 22). Consequently, with uncertain foreign commitments and annual sustaining costs well above the projected earnings of the Afghan government, the viability of the future security sector in Afghanistan remains dubious.

High rates of desertion of ANA soldiers represent both a short-term and a long-term issue. Desertion is a problem that has traditionally afflicted the national army in Afghanistan. During the Soviet-Afghan war, mass desertions of individual units were commonplace. Border Troops experienced higher rates due to the intensity of the fighting and heightened escape opportunities near the border. Ethnicity and tribal membership represent a key causal factor explaining desertion. For instance, the propensity to desert was highest among Pashtun soldiers belonging to the same tribe as the rebel forces. Conversely, desertion rates lessened when soldiers fought in areas populated by different ethnic groups than their own (Giustozzi, 2000). Currently, desertion continues to plague the effectiveness of the ANA. In 2003, after experiencing joint combat operations in southern Afghanistan with US forces, the desertion rate escalated dramatically reaching “10% a month, which would correspond to 72% on a yearly base” (Securing Afghanistan’s Future, 2004). Low pay, harsh conditions, lack of unit cohesiveness, ethnic division, independent fighting spirit among combatants and the need for soldiers to



physically deliver much needed pay to their family<sup>156</sup> collectively underwrite high rates of desertion.

Long-term challenges for the ANA also include the difficulty of creating a cohesive national force from an ethnically fractured society that has undergone over two decades of conflict. Concerns exist that the soldier's ethnic loyalties will subordinate their national commitments. These concerns raise questions of whether soldiers will effectively enforce central rule in areas of their own ethnic heritage or, conversely, whether they will act too aggressively in areas populated by different ethnic communities.

Afghans form their principle identity through local kinship and tribal associations rather than through a national sense of belonging. Consequently, the national administration will have to create an army imbued with a sense of national consciousness that overrides local affiliations. This is contrary to the cultural and historical experience in Afghanistan. As Jalali writes, the central challenge to the nascent ANA is to "create a military loyal to the state" (2002: 79). It is also important to note that the ANA constitutes a largely untested force. While many units have trained and fought alongside Coalition forces, few have acted independently. It remains highly uncertain whether the government will employ the army in an objective and appropriate fashion or whether soldiers will act in the field according to professional standards.

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<sup>156</sup> Jane's comments on how the antiquated payment structure fosters regular troop departures from active units: "The pay system, alone, is complicated by the requirement for soldiers to remit money regularly to their families in remote areas without any form of banking or other transfer infrastructure. The culturally acceptable form of conveyance is by granting leave for extended periods and/or by arranging for hand-carried stipends, but such archaic but effective methods do not appear to have been implemented by foreign administrators" (2006).

It is not only a challenge to create unified force, it is also difficult for the Afghan populace to envision the newly created force as an unbiased, professional and ethnically neutral entity that represents and serves all Afghans. Since the establishment of the Durrani Empire, the national armed forces have served the specific ethnic and tribal interests of the Afghan leadership. Given the many examples of state-directed violence perpetuated by the national army, the Afghan populace is socialized by historical experience to remain highly suspect of the Afghan military. Consequently, the ethnic makeup of the Afghan security forces remains a highly divisive issue. Currently, there are already widespread charges that the Tajik dominated central government is creating a “Tajik-dominated military” (Jane’s Security Sentinel Assessment, 2006; Jalali, 2002). For instance, 90 of the first 100 generals appointed by the 2002 administration were Panshiri Tajiks and the perception exists that that the regular forces are equally balanced towards Tajik dominance (O’Brien & Barker, 2003: 4; Jane’s Security Sentinel Assessment, 2006).

Given the historical distrust of the military, the current ethnic makeup of the ANA, coupled with widespread suspicions over its intent it will be a long term challenge for the military to generate the necessary legitimacy and trust from all Afghans. The establishment of a successful democracy in Afghanistan hinges on the notion that the state institutions are formed from individuals from all segments of society and that such bodies serve the larger interests of society as a whole. It is unlikely that the ANA will be able to accomplish this formidable task.

The second chief pillar of the Afghan security sector is the Afghan National Police (ANP). The ANP represents a force of over 55,000 officers. The ANP is an

integral security organization in Afghanistan as it represents an indigenous force tasked to combat insurgents, organized crime and warlord networks, prevent “border incursions” and the trade of illicit goods, and safeguard infrastructure projects. The breadth of these activities, the magnitude of the security problem coupled with the ANP’s paucity of human and material resources have overwhelmed the capacity of the ANP. Indeed, the problems faced by the ANP echo the challenges encountered by the ANA. As Rubin, Hamidzada and Stoddard note, “the number of police trained overstates the thoroughness of reform” (2005: 40). Jalali comments that the ANP is “ill-trained, poorly paid, underequipped, and inadequately armed” (2006: 5). Janes states that the ANP does not constitute a “united, professional and disciplined law enforcement entity” and is only effective in Kabul where it relies considerably on foreign support (2006). As well, like the ANA, ethnic and tribal loyalties eclipse the allegiance of many ANP officers to the state. Moreover, the ANP has suffered disproportionately more casualties than any other domestic or international security organization in Afghanistan (Jalali, 2006: 5). High casualty rates have deleteriously affected recruitment and it has contributed to increased desertion rates. As well, given the climate of insecurity and the power of drug lords and regional commanders, the ANP is subject to a high degree of bribery and corruption.

In sum, the indigenous Afghan security sector currently lacks the capability, resources, experience and professionalism to overcome Afghanistan’s overwhelming security needs. Attempts to subvert the authority of the warlords through armed force and to combat insurgent forces simultaneously are currently vastly beyond the capability of the Afghan government forces. It is important to note that even in the unlikely scenario that the Afghan state is able to develop a large and capable force, attempts to overturn

physically warlord supremacy through active force could propel the country into an active civil war. Traditional patterns of the countryside combating 'intrusive' state forces could re-emerge and thus degenerate Afghanistan into a war zone. This dynamic creates a central paradox as the disarming of warlords and their proto state fiefdoms is necessary for the state to consolidate its authority throughout the country. It is also what Ignatieff has predicated as the necessary action to enable the establishment of democratic state organs and the suppression of ethnic conflict. However, given, the geopolitical realities of the Afghan situation such a course of action could result in the worst case scenario of anarchy and internal or possibly regional warfare.

Nevertheless, in the short to medium term, such a scenario is unlikely as Afghan forces are not in a position to exercise such an option. Currently, foreign military forces are filling Afghanistan's security void. Given the primacy of foreign forces in Afghanistan it is necessary to briefly overview the nature of the external military presence in the country and the multitude of security challenges they encounter.

### **International Security Forces and the Afghan Insurgency**

International security forces in Afghanistan are organized under two central command structures: US-led Coalition forces deployed under Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and the UN mandated, NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). The two groupings differ in size, area of operations and function. As of March 2006, 18,000 US forces are principally involved in "counter-terrorist and counter-insurgency" operations near the Pakistan border in the east and southeastern part of Afghanistan (Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment, 2006). 10,000 ISAF forces from 37

countries are involved in peacekeeping and stability operations in the north and west of Afghanistan with a large contingent in Kabul (USIP, 2006). ISAF is authorized to “assist the Government of Afghanistan and the International Community in maintaining security within its area of operation. ISAF supports the Government of Afghanistan in expanding its authority to the rest of the country, and in providing a safe and secure environment conducive to free and fair elections, the spread of the rule of law, and the reconstruction of the country” (Jane’s Sentinel Security Assessment, 2006).

Both commands have established their own Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) with each comprised of up to 300 joint military and developmental assistance workers and are tasked with providing security and reconstruction work in rural centers throughout Afghanistan. Neither ISAF nor the US Coalition forces are mandated to combat the opium cartel, or to direct force against the warlord militias (Jane’s Sentinel Security Assessment, 2006).

The two force structures are currently undergoing a transformation in their respective missions. The United States is reducing its force size by 2,500 soldiers and is transferring control of the southern provinces to NATO. The NATO force is increasing its complement of troops to a total of 15,000 in preparation for its increased mandate. While NATO is debating a more aggressive rules of engagement posture it is yet to be determined whether the force will be tasked to engage in forceful counterinsurgency actions (USIP, 2006). According to a USIP briefing, NATO forces “lacks the capacity and the will to aggressively root out insurgent forces” (USIP, 2006: 2). Prior to discussing the issues associated with the international military presence in Afghanistan, it is necessary to briefly overview the chief insurgent groups, their size and tactics.

The three chief insurgent groups active in Afghanistan are the Taliban, al Qaeda and Hizb-i-Islami (HIG). These militant Islamist groups represent total spoilers against the current nation building efforts in Afghanistan. These factions are inspired by a radical ideology and seek the creation of a fundamentalist Islamic state. They are committed to the overthrow of the current democratically elected government, the destruction of the legitimate security forces in the country and the disruption of the reconstruction of Afghanistan. Distinguishing between the three groups is difficult due to the shared goals and tactics and the clandestine nature of their operations. As well, precise numbers of their active combat forces are difficult to ascertain. Prior to the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, the Taliban constituted a force of between 40,000-45,000 fighters (Jane's Security Sentinel Assessment, 2006). Current estimates, however, indicate that up to 4000 individuals are actively involved in the insurgency (European Defence, 2006).

In support of their objectives, the insurgent groups have conducted a series of continued and increasingly, escalated, attacks against Coalition forces, the indigenous security forces of Afghanistan, international and domestic aid workers, government employees and Afghan civilians involved in all aspects of reconstruction such as education staff or election workers. Insurgents employ classic guerilla tactics that reflect the asymmetrical military capabilities of the opposing forces. Thus, instead of direct pitched battles with the superior armed Coalition forces, the insurgent fighters employ ambushes, small hit and run assaults, kidnapping, assassinations and the use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and other roadside bombs.

The tempo and scale of insurgent attacks has escalated dramatically since the overthrow of the Taliban in late 2001. In 2005, the insurgency campaign resulted in 1,500

killed, the highest numbers of deaths since the 2001 overthrow. In 2005, US forces experienced their highest numbers of casualties with 100 combat losses. These losses are comparable to the casualty rates in Iraq based on a per soldier deployed ratio.<sup>157</sup> The Senlis Council report comments on the upsurge of attacks against Coalition forces: “In Afghanistan, general attacks, surged from a monthly average of 5 in 2002 to 25 in 2006. This is a five-fold increase in over less than 4 years. In the South of Afghanistan reports suggest that there has been a 600% increase in violent attacks in the last six months” (2006: 30). Janes has reported a continuation of this trend with a “marked increase” of insurgent strikes against Coalition forces in 2006 (2006).

Humanitarian workers have also experienced increased violence from the dissident factions. For instance, in 2004 insurgent attacks resulted in the deaths of 40 foreign aid employees prompting foreign aid providers to cease development activity in Southern Afghanistan (Jane’s Security Sentinel Assessment, 2006). A February 2006 report stated that the “NGO casualty rate in Afghanistan is estimated to be greater than that of almost any conflict or post-conflict setting, surpassing those of Angola, Somalia, and Liberia” (USIP, 2006: 1).

In addition to heightened assaults, the insurgent factions are employing more sophisticated and deadly tactics that indicate the influence of foreign insurgency methods. According to a European Defence report, US military leaders believe “that the insurgents are beginning to be reinforced by battle-hardened foreign militants with experience of the Iraqi insurgency campaign” (2006: 10). For instance, the use of techniques such as suicide attacks employed by the Iraqi uprising has led to the claim that Afghan

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<sup>157</sup> A 2006 USIP report states that: “In the spring of 2005, U.S. troop casualties reached 1.6 per 1000 soldiers in Afghanistan, compared with a casualty rate of 0.9 per 1000 in Iraq (2006: 1).

insurgency is undergoing an “Iraqization” (USIP, 2006: 2). Indeed, suicide bombing, a practice contrary to Afghan tradition, is on the ascendancy with an increased pattern of attacks. For instance, five suicide attacks occurred between 2001 and 2003 while in 2005 there were over 20 suicide bombings (USIP, 2006).

These new insurgent combat tactics indicate the internationalization of the Afghan insurgency. The call for jihad against the ‘Western occupying forces’ in Afghanistan has garnered the involvement of radical Islamist groups from “Pakistan, Uzbekistan and Chechnya” and fighters from throughout the Muslim world (European Defence, 2006: 10). The Afghan insurgency is also internationalized due to the importance of Pakistan to the dissident factions. Indeed, a central problem faced by the Coalition forces parallels the obstacle faced by the Russian troops during the Soviet Afghan War: the insurgents are supplied and seek refuge in the geographically harsh Pakistan-Afghan border region. Indeed, the Taliban, al Qaeda and Hizb-i-Islami (HIG) all operate from the porous border region with Pakistan and in the tribal areas of North West Frontier Province in Pakistan. Jalali indicates the continued importance of Pakistan to the Taliban militants: “The Taliban have training camps, staging areas, recruiting centers, madrassas and safe havens in Pakistan” (2006: 4).

The problems associated with a Pakistan-based insurgency are multiple. First, given the formidable terrain, the difficulties faced by Coalition forces in sealing the border area and containing the insurgency campaign renders such an enterprise effectively prohibitive. Second, counterinsurgency operations conducted by large



numbers of Western troops in Pakistan territory would not be politically viable<sup>158</sup>. As a European Defence report states: “Such a deployment could be viewed within Pakistan as an American invasion, which could lead to an internal attempt to remove Pakistan's President Pervez Musharraf from power” (2006:10). Third, the insurgency is strengthened by the tribal culture in the border region. For instance, Pashtun tribal codes ensure hospitality toward insurgent fighters and prohibit interaction with foreigners (European Defence, 2006). Fourth, the Pakistan-based insurgency highlights the regional and international basis of the conflict. Involvement in the Afghan insurgency by regional ethnic compatriots and by global jihadists indicates the breadth, scale and complexity of securing Afghanistan and fostering reconstruction efforts. Finally, the defeat of the Soviet Union principally by a Pakistani-based resistance force offers a historical precedent that can only embolden the current insurgent movement.

In addition to external support, the insurgency is also gaining strength from internal sources. Given the tribal and ethnic basis of allegiance in Afghanistan, the largely Pashtun insurgent factions generate both sympathy and support from the Pashtun dominated areas in the south and east of Afghanistan. As mentioned, the Pashtunwali tribal custom assures hospitality toward their fellow Pashtun insurgent fighters and discourages interaction with foreigners, especially security forces. Currently, according to Janes, insurgent groups are gaining growing support and recruits from the Southern and Eastern Afghan tribes (2006). The insurgents also benefit from a long tradition of xenophobia in Afghanistan and a deep distrust of foreign occupying forces. Indeed, it is axiomatic to state that the disparate Afghan tribes only coalesce and unite when faced

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<sup>158</sup> As a European Defence report states: “analysts believe that the US would have to deploy at least 10,000-15,000 troops in the NWFP to be able to successfully find Bin Laden and destroy the rest of Al-Qaeda and the Taliban” (2006:10).

with an external threat, and following the expulsion of the foreign presence, the country fragments along ethnic and tribal lines: “The culture of the country is to defend territory against foreigners, and many attacks on US forces, the Afghan army, and other intruders may have nothing to do with the Taliban or Al-Qaeda, although every incident of violence is ascribed to their activity” (Jane’s Security Sentinel Assessment, 2006).

The notion of traditional Afghan xenophobia raises a central paradox that impacts on the foreign security forces. Afghans have a historical distrust of foreign troops within their country yet it is only foreign security forces that have the capability to provide widespread security. Moreover, given the cultural animosity towards foreigners and despite the current security needs within the country, it is argued that a continued Western presence in Afghanistan can itself generate a climate of insecurity. Janes comments: “The threat to stability posed by foreign troops themselves is increasing, and revelations of ill-treatment of captives, combined with heavy-handed tactics and mistaken attacks involving the civilian population, have fuelled resentment and provided a powerful propaganda tool for insurgents of all persuasions” (2006). As well, given the centrality of the US in the current security and reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan, actions by the world’s superpower internationally deemed unpopular to Islam, can foster outrage and opposition within Afghanistan. According to Janes, events such as the invasion of Iraq, the indeterminacy of prisoners at Guantánamo Bay and the Abu Ghraib scandal collectively “have provided much propaganda material for insurgents and possibly encouraged recruiting” (Jane’s Sentinel Security Assessment, 2006).

While the insurgency currently does not possess the capability, the international resources or the widespread Afghan appeal to overturn the Karzai Government, it does

represent a central form of instability that is difficult to suppress, that is on the ascendancy and continues to hinder reconstruction. Moreover, since the Taliban defeat, the insurgency has widened its local support and intensified the number and scale of violent attacks against all entities involved in the reconstruction of Afghanistan. A 2006 report on Helmand province indicates how the growing insurgency and new attack methods are threatening the viability of the Karzai administration: “As insurgent tactics change, government control over the province dwindles; entire villages and towns fall under insurgent control. As the insurgent’s hold grows in size and duration the local population’s perception of who are the real power holders shifts. Disillusionment towards the Karzai administration turns into disbelief that the Afghan state can exist” (The Senlis Council, 2006: 9).

Of great concern to analysts relates to the inability of indigenous forces to quell insurgent elements thus rendering external forces as the only security option. However, in the short term the Coalition plan is to reduce US forces and augment the NATO presence is viewed as a negative development that can only “embolden” the resistance (Jalali, 2006: 6). US troop withdrawal sends a message of uncertain resolve and it creates a “psychological concern” over the future US commitment to Afghanistan (Jalali, 2006: 6). In addition, uncertainty over NATO’s commitment to counterinsurgency operations could create a security void in the country. As a USIP report states “The expansion of NATO forces is not a substitute for the current U.S. counterinsurgency campaign...The current mission statement of NATO as a peacekeeping force is inadequate to meet present demands in Afghanistan” (2006:3).

Over the medium and long term, US plans to remain as the chief security force in Afghanistan are highly uncertain. Given the profound limitations of the domestic Afghan security sector, a premature US withdrawal could prove disastrous. Security constitutes a necessary precondition for political and economic development and therefore the future reconstruction of Afghanistan is contingent on a long and sustained US military presence. US national interests and domestic pressure may preclude such a long-term commitment, which in turn raises key doubts regarding Afghanistan's ability to foster a stable environment for continued nation-building.

Finally, it is important to note that international security forces in Afghanistan are unwilling to direct actions against the regional commanders. As previously stated, warlords constitute an obstacle to the expansion of the central government throughout the Afghan countryside. While the Afghan government seeks to diminish their power, foreign security forces, particularly the United States, support the warlords in return for assistance such as "intelligence and manpower" in operations against the insurgency (Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment, 2006). As Jalali states, "the United States has long hesitated to support the removal of defiant warlords" (2006: 2). ISAF forces are also reliant on warlords for local support and intelligence information and they currently do not have the "remit" to challenge warlord authority (Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment, 2006). Consequently, the only capable security forces in Afghanistan are unwilling to counter and overturn the key factions that limit the expansion of the central government. This illustrates how the national interests of the external powers not only differ substantially from the interests of the Afghan Government but also subordinate the key

objectives of the Karzai administration. Dietl argues that it is in US interests to maintain warlord power in order to foster a continued dependency by Karzai on US power:

At a more fundamental level, the US does not seem too averse to local centers of power. In fact, it needs the warlords. They maintain law and order and run the administration in the outlying areas; they help nab the Taliban/al-Qaeda, who are beyond the American reach; and they sustain an illusion of a plural socio-political order. Additionally, empowerment of the warlords helps dis-empower Karzai just enough to make him amenable to American policies and preferences. (2004: 63)

In sum, security problems faced by the Karzai administration appear intractable given the entrenched nature of warlord power and an ascendant insurgent campaign. Indeed, warlords challenge the consolidation of the Afghan state, heighten instability and foster the expansion of a vibrant opium industry and the trade of other illegal goods. They threaten reconstruction by capturing and controlling the economic productivity of the country thus denying the central government of vital resources. While warlords represent partial spoilers, insurgent groups are total spoilers whose campaign of violence precludes the effective reconstruction of the country. Since, the overthrow of the Taliban the insurgency has enlarged in strength and effectiveness with no clear sign of abatement. Efforts to minimize warlord authority and to contain the insurgency have failed.

While Afghan national security forces have expanded considerably since 2001, they are currently insufficient in size and effectiveness to counter the expansive stability threats in the country. Future projections indicate that the ANA and the ANP will possess a limited capability given the prodigious costs of maintain such forces and the lack of income to sustain them. Given the shortcomings in domestic capability, the Karzai government is principally reliant on foreign forces for the provision of internal security.

There are considerable problems associated with a dependency on external sources for security. First, foreign forces are presently unwilling to counter or attempt to overturn warlord authority. Instead, external forces continue to bolster warlord control by relying on their continued support against the insurgency. Second, the ongoing presence of foreign soldiers heightens traditional Afghan xenophobia given Afghanistan's history of foreign invasion. This dynamic lends weight to the insurgency and weakens the legitimacy of the Karzai government which is perceived as reliant on western military support. Third, while foreign troops are necessary for security despite many adverse consequences, the prospects of maintaining current troop levels are unlikely. Currently, most western governments that are contributing forces are under considerable domestic pressure for troop withdrawals given the human and material costs involved. The United States represents the dominant foreign military force in Afghanistan and has already instigated a process of reducing troop levels. Foreign troop withdrawals will ultimately compel a weak indigenous force to attend to an entrenched warlord presence and a rising insurgency. The combination of these factors has contributed to a security sector problem that constitutes a principal challenge to the Afghan state. Janes concludes with a similar assessment:

The Afghan government is in danger of becoming irrelevant. A deteriorating security situation, which the government and coalition forces are unable to curb or even contain, has severely damaged the credibility and the legitimacy of the Kabul administration, halted the progress of long-overdue development and aid projects, and provided an additional reason for warlords to maintain their regional autonomy. (2006)

## **Geopolitics**

Geopolitics is generally defined as the relationship between geography and politics. As O Tuathail and Agnew state, it is “the natural environment and the geographical setting of a state which exercised the greatest influence on its destiny” (1998: 79). More specifically, geopolitics is an international relations field that seeks to understand how the physical setting shapes relations between states and fosters power struggles for local, regional and international hegemony (O Tuathail & Agnew, 1998). Geopolitics, conventionally perceived, thus constitutes a central dynamic that has underscored the political development of Afghanistan. Accordingly, Rashid identifies the centrality of geopolitics to Afghanistan: “For few countries in the world is it more true that geography determines history, politics and the nature of a people” (2000: 7). Consequently, in order to assess the current reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan, it is important to overview how geopolitics has both historically and currently undermines the development of the Afghan state. More specifically, geopolitical factors constitute a central variable that precludes the successful establishment of democratic governance.

Afghanistan’s physical environment has exercised a central role in its political history due to two chief factors: a unique internal geography as well as its position relative to other nations and empires. First, Afghanistan is a country comprised of inhospitable terrain. It is a country of mountains and desert punctuated by few arable river valleys and plains. Afghanistan is also split in half by a 700-mile offshoot of the Himalayas called the Hindu Kush. The range not only bisects the country, it also accounts for over 50% of Afghan territory (Newell, 1972). High elevations coupled with winter snow conditions render transit through this range both difficult and seasonal. As Goodson

writes, “many remote valleys exist that are virtually inaccessible to the outside world” (2001: 20). The eastern Sulaiman Range marks much of the border with Pakistan and it consists of “extensive areas of unpopulated wilderness” (Newell, 1972: 4). Much of southern Afghanistan is covered by a vast track of desert rendering it largely unproductive for agriculture and habitation. The hot and dry summer are offset by cold winters that cover the mountains in snow. The climate is thus a central variable shaping a landscape that can not accommodate large numbers of people and that severely restricts agriculture production.

Afghanistan’s harsh geographical features represent a key factor that has underscored many of the central variables affecting Afghan politics. For instance, the division of the Afghan populace into multiple fragmented groups is enabled and compounded by a physical environment that precludes easy movement and augments the isolation of disparate groups. Isolation precludes an easy exchange between peoples and fosters insular thinking thereby aggravating mistrust between factions. Thus, the national unity required for the development of a democratic nation state is fundamentally hindered by geographic barriers between peoples.

Geographical conditions also reinforce the division between state and society in Afghanistan by limiting the opportunities for the government to interact with its citizens. Thus, Afghanistan is physically configured in a manner that is difficult to control, administer and establish a strong central rule. Instead, its features naturally lend itself to local rule. As well, given the ties between territory and ethnicity, Afghanistan’s rugged terrain has complemented the development of predatory governance by physically preventing other groups from challenging Pashtun dominance and participating in



national governance: “Major and minor ethnic groups have been shut out of representation in this government, largely because they lived in remote regions of Afghanistan, far from Kabul. This spatial inequality enabled the Pashtun monarchy, backed by their kinfolk, to exert hegemonic control over the military, clergy, judiciary, commercial and civil authorities in Kabul throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century” (Allan, 2003: 195).

Geography has also limited economic development in Afghanistan due to the vast acreage of land that is not arable and the country’s few resources. Its landlocked nature has further restricted trading opportunities and global commerce. As Newell writes, “physical resources offer the country at least modest opportunities for industrial and other forms of modern development” (1972: 1).

Finally, Afghanistan’s geographic features have contributed to Afghanistan’s warrior culture. Afghanistan’s harsh terrain facilitates invasion through its multiple mountain passes and southern desert expanse but restricts or prevents the country from outright control or subjugation. Indeed, it is a landscape that favors guerilla war tactics of hit and run expertly employed by the tribal Afghans against foreign armies throughout centuries of invasions as Caroe recognized:

The instinctive tactical reaction of the Pathan tribesman, fighting in his own hills, has been remarked by every commander who has engaged against them. This coupled with the difficulty of the country and the tribal passion for liberty, is one of the main reasons why so large a portion of the tribal belt has never been subjected to a lasting administration by any of the empires whose armies have traversed the main routes leading through these mountains. (1957: 321)

Second, geopolitics has shaped Afghanistan's history due to its position relative to other states and its importance to great civilizations. Indeed, Afghanistan's location in central Asia marking the crossroad between Eastern and Western civilizations established the country as an important trade route and has yielded a history of continuous invasion. Indeed, Afghanistan is characterized as the "fulcrum of Empires" (Griffiths, 1981), the "crossroad of Empire" (Tanner, 2002) and the "highway of conquest" (Gregorian, 1969: 10). As Dupree wrote, "the simple geographic location of Afghanistan made it important for the control of the Indian subcontinent, defensively as well as offensively" (1973:343).

This background of continued foreign incursion has cast an indelible imprint upon the nature and development of Afghanistan's people and society. It has contributed to Afghanistan's racial, ethnic and religious diversity through the exposure and settlement of new peoples. In addition to creating a heterogeneous population, the pattern of invasion had a deleterious impact on the socio-economic development of Afghanistan. Foreign involvement in Afghan affairs represents a critical factor that has shaped the history of Afghanistan. It can be argued that external interventions have precluded the development of state building and modernization in Afghanistan. In the modern era, contiguous states and external powers have fueled internal conflict in Afghanistan through the support of proxy groups based on ethnicity and other key geopolitical factors. In the post-Taliban period, external powers continue their influence as a key determinant of Afghan affairs. It is necessary to briefly overview Afghanistan's history of foreign intervention and its affect on the development of the Afghan state and its people.

Throughout the history of Afghanistan, invading armies inflicted massive casualties, dispersed local populations and often destroyed settlements, and existing

infrastructure<sup>159</sup>. For instance, invading forces such as the Hephtalite Huns, Genghis Khan's Mongols and later Turko-Mongols under Tamerlane inflicted widespread human and physical destruction resulting in the permanent loss of entire communities (Gregorian, 1969, Tanner, 2003). The successive nature of these attacks coupled with the overwhelming scale of destruction impaired the conditions necessary for the development of an advanced, modern society such as economic development, the growth of urban centres, the expansion of infrastructure and advancements in governance.

During the nineteenth century, the geopolitical rivalry between Britain and Russia affected Afghanistan in a number of profound ways. First, Britain's two invasions of Afghanistan were conducted as a means to ensure British regional supremacy over Russia. The two British invasions served to deepen profoundly a pre-existing Afghan disregard and distrust of foreigners (Griffiths, 1967). This nationwide xenophobia coupled with the Amir's distrust of foreign takeover precluded the necessary external investment and development in Afghanistan for sustained nation-building.

Second, British strategic interests dictated a policy to keep Afghanistan 'divided and weak'. Such a stratagem underscored the delineation of Afghanistan's borders by Britain and Russia which served imperial designs rather than the interests of Afghans. The Durand Line rendered Pashtun lands into two separate spheres thus enabling

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<sup>159</sup> In particular, the destruction of established irrigation systems severely hindered efforts to re-vitalize Afghanistan's settled towns and cities. Agriculture underpinned the economic survival of these static communities and in arid Afghanistan, crop production hinged on man-made irrigation. As Gregorian points out Afghanistan's average precipitation rate is only 10 inches per annum thus necessitating the establishment of man-made systems to guarantee a reliable water source (1969:11). In some cases the loss of irrigation altered the physical environment rendering it unfit for agricultural production. After the armies of Tamer lane destroyed the irrigation network in the Helmond River valley, "nearly all of Sistan Province" converted to desert (Gregorian, 1969:19). Indeed, as Gregorian notes, the conversion of Afghanistan into a undeveloped hinterland suited the Mongols strategic purpose: "By destroying most of the sedentary populations and turning the bulk of arable land into barren stubble or untended pasturage, the Mongols created a strategic artificial steppe, a no-mans-land that served to protect their empire" (1969:19). Genghis Khans "artificial steppe" endured long after the death of the Mongol leader.

Britain's policy to keep Afghanistan divided and weak. Thus, as Afghanistan approached the twentieth century, its ability to develop and modernize was severely compromised due to the interference of foreign powers.

During the twentieth century, the Cold War between the Soviet Union and the US dramatically impacted Afghanistan. The great power rivalry resulted in significant economic investment into Afghanistan as the two superpowers sought to heighten their influence. The cessation of aid in the early 1970's curtailed the expansion of the central government and contributed to widespread discontent and the radicalization of the student population. It also illustrated the variability of external commitment to aid and development and further augmented Afghan distrust towards foreigners.

The Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan is the premier example of the how foreign players adversely impact Afghan affairs. The Soviet invasion initiated a ten year war that devastated Afghanistan both in human and material terms. The socio-political development of the country was immeasurably impaired; rural infrastructure was destroyed, and the formal economy collapsed. The Soviet-Afghan war engendered the rise of militant Islam, the development of the opium economy, and the introduction of weapons throughout Afghan society. The withdrawal of Russian troops presaged a civil war that continued the sociopolitical and economic devastation of the country.

The civil war was fractured along ethnic lines with competing Mujahedeen factions that were based on tribal and ethnic allegiances. The devastation of both the Soviet-Afghan war and the following civil war was heightened and prolonged due to the internationalization of the conflict. Multiple countries channeled arms, finances and fighters to support factions based on their own national interest. The end of the Cold War

reactivated regional interest in Afghan affairs whereby contiguous states assiduously supported proxy groups within the country. Again, shared ethnicity often formed the basis of these alliances thus illustrating the regional nature of Afghanistan's ethnic conflict. Goodson comments: "Because all of Afghanistan's major ethnic groups either straddle the border with neighbouring countries, or have ethnolinguistic-religious ties all of those countries have built in incentives for meddling in Afghanistan's internal affairs" (2001: 17).

Pakistan's multidimensional support of the Taliban again serves as an illustration of the devastating affect of foreign interference in Afghan affairs. The Taliban were effectively a Pakistan proxy force that was created to serve Pakistan's regional and strategic interests. Taliban rule introduced a level of oppression and ethnic cleansing unseen in Afghanistan's history.

In the post Taliban era, geopolitical considerations continue to fundamentally shape Afghanistan's political environment. First, its internal geography is a constant variable that continues to exercise a central role in maintaining divisions between tribal groups and between state and society. The prospect for economic growth and development, a central prerequisite for democracy, are also fundamentally restricted by geographic realities. Finally, efforts to provide a secure environment to facilitate reconstruction are challenged by a landscape that benefits an insurgent force.

Second, external geopolitical considerations persist as a central variable that challenges democratic state building efforts. Ethnic and religious factionalism in Afghanistan endures in a large measure due to continued support from external players: "Russia is arming one warlord, Iran another. Wealthy Saudis have resumed funding

Islamic extremists and some Central Asian Republics are backing their ethnic allies. India and Pakistan are playing out an intense rivalry as they secretly back opposing forces. The playing field is Afghanistan, and the interference threatens to revive a multifaceted power struggle that in the early 1990s eventually gave way to a near-ruinous rule by the Taliban” (Rashid, 2003).

Bordering countries like Pakistan and Iran seek to advance their regional power through assistance to their own proxy groups in Afghanistan. Iran strives to heighten its influence and to offset Pakistan dominance in Afghan affairs through its continued support to Shi’a groups and other ethnic minority groups in the north. Iran also supports a number of warlords to maintain an allied armed force within Afghanistan: “Iran is spending large sums out of its windfall oil income in buying support among disaffected and disillusioned Afghan warlords. The day America or Israel attacks Iran to destroy its nuclear programme, these Afghans will be unleashed on American and NATO forces in Afghanistan, opening a new front quite separate from the Afghan insurgency” (Rashid, 2006a).

Pakistan continues to exercise a central role in Afghan internal affairs. While the Pakistan government is officially allied to the US in the ‘war on terrorism’ multiple elements within Pakistan’s government and society continue aid Pashtun insurgent groups. For instance, the Taliban’s growing resurgence is enabled by Pakistan’s ongoing and multifaceted assistance:

After being routed in 2001 the Taliban found a safe sanctuary in Balochistan and the North West Frontier province of Pakistan. They have been able to set up a major logistics hub, training camps, carry out fund raising and have been free to recruit fighters from madrassas and refugee camps. The Taliban have received help from Pakistan's two provincial governments, the MMA, Islamic extremist groups, the drugs mafia and criminal gangs – while the military regime has looked the other way. (Rashid, 2006b)

The general perception among key Afghanistan scholars is that the Taliban insurgency “could not operate from Pakistan without official support” (Rubin, 2006: 11).

The difficulty of fostering regional cooperation due to conflicting strategic interests of key players is manifest in the relationship between Afghanistan, Iran and the United States. The US-Iran rivalry fundamentally restrains Iran-Afghan cooperation. Iran sought to establish an agreement with Afghanistan prohibiting “intelligence operations by third countries against the other” and premised improved bilateral relations upon its agreement (Rubin, 2006: 16). The United States actively resisted such an agreement and also interfered in Iranian-Afghan initiatives to establish bilateral economic accords (Rubin, 2006). Thus improved Afghan-Iranian relations, necessary for Afghanistan's future development, are overshadowed or precluded by the larger strategic US-Iranian rivalry.

The regional nature of Afghanistan's ethnic conflict highlights the difficulty in establishing peaceful relations within Afghanistan. It also illustrates the shortcomings of Ignatieff's theory that governance alone can resolve ethnic conflict. Indeed, the establishment of democratic state institutions in Afghanistan is not sufficient to eradicate discord between conflicting ethnic groups when external players continue to support each faction and foster continued disunion. Thus, rather than an internal security dilemma that can be resolved through domestic measures, Afghanistan's civil conflict is part of a larger

regional contest that requires regional solutions. In short, it is a regional security dilemma that plays a chief role in Afghanistan's conflict rather than an internal security dilemma:

The main lesson is that resolution of conflicts in states that have failed by the international community requires a sustained cooperative effort by that community. But the region around Afghanistan is itself going through the turmoil of revolution and state building. Iran, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan –all are to different degrees insecure states, warily eyeing each other. Any power shift in Afghanistan disquiets some and pleases others. The resulting security dilemmas render extraordinarily difficult the construction of a demarcated domestic political arena in Afghanistan, let alone a stable one. (Rubin, 1995: 145)

The success of Afghanistan's post conflict reconstruction is also contingent on the involvement of external players outside the region. Again, even for western countries involved in post-war renewal, geopolitical factors shape the nature of their commitment. Indeed, foreign involvement is first premised on the interests of the participating countries that often subordinate Afghan national state building objectives. US foreign policy offers a clear example of this dynamic.

Official United States' policy towards Afghanistan identifies two chief goals. First, a commitment to the nation building efforts initiated by the Bonn process and second, to destroy the remaining elements of the Taliban and al Qa'ida as part of the 'War on Terrorism' (US Department of State, 2006). However, a growing body of experts not only questions the level of the US commitment to nation building but also argue that the US efforts to fight the terrorist cells runs counter to the reconstruction process (Ignatieff, 2003; Sedra, 2002; Gannon, 2004). Indeed, there is a marked discrepancy between the political rhetoric of nation building in Afghanistan and the current commitment of human and material resources towards reconstruction efforts. In



September 2003 the US Congress directed US\$87 billion for military and reconstruction expenditures in Iraq and Afghanistan. However, only a fraction of this sum is directed to Afghanistan. As Jane's notes, "Of this amount, USD1.2 billion to USD1.8 billion was earmarked for Afghanistan's reconstruction" (2006). As well, the US actively supports Afghan warlords and utilizes their assistance in support of US military operations against insurgent forces. Warlordism is identified as a chief impediment to national reconstruction in Afghanistan, yet the continuity of warlord power is augmented by US activities.

Consequently, there is a marked discrepancy between the political rhetoric of nation building in Afghanistan and the current commitment of human and material resources towards reconstruction efforts. The implications of a limited US engagement in Afghan nation building would suggest that US policy makers perceive reconstruction efforts as secondary to other vital interests. Indeed, such an argument is well established among many theorists and academics. According to this perspective, US national security interests prescribe a limited role in Afghan reconstruction due the prodigious expenses in human and material resources required for such an endeavor. Given the finite nature of such capabilities, even for a superpower, decisions regarding military deployment and the commitment of development assistance are triaged based on a determination of vital interests.

US national security interests are directed principally towards the current war in Iraq, containing belligerent countries like Iran and North Korea and maintaining hegemony over emerging great powers such as India and China. Russia occupies US interests as a former superpower rival that still possesses great military capabilities. Thus,

in the larger strategic calculus, Afghanistan's reconstruction constitutes a tertiary concern at best. Instead, US strategic imperatives for Afghanistan dictate the necessity of an allied regime in Kabul to preclude the establishment of an Islamic fundamentalist state inclined to support terrorist networks. As well, the ability to access or control Afghan airfields serves larger US strategic interests by providing land bases within central Asia and near countries such as Iran, China, Russia and India<sup>160</sup>. The importance of these airfields to the United States is reflected by the US financial commitment devoted to establishing such infrastructure. Indeed, the construction of the Kabul-Kandahar road and the establishment of four "major military bases" constitute the principal US reconstruction projects in the country. As a senior US commander stated in 2005 the "massive" Bagram airfield<sup>161</sup>, north of Kabul, "is a place where we see a long-term presence of coalition and, frankly, US capabilities"(Jane's Security Sentinel Assessment, 2006). The US achieved its strategic objective of securing "permanent bases" with a recent bilateral agreement, entitled the Declaration of Strategic Partnership, with the Afghan Government (Rubin, 2006: 16).

Viewed through the narrow prism of US national security interests it can be argued that the current state of Afghan affairs satisfies the needs of US policy makers. A weak yet pro-Western national administration that is agreeable to a US military presence within its territory constitutes the requisite level of political development from a US

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<sup>160</sup> Rashid comments on the vital significance to the US of maintaining forward bases in Central Asia: "In Central Asia, the Western alliance is floundering. America lost its major military base in Central Asia after Uzbekistan kicked American forces out last year. Emboldened, tiny Kyrgyzstan is now demanding that Washington pay it 100 times more for the base it provides for American forces. Russia and China are working on making sure that America and NATO surrender all their toeholds in Central Asia" (2006a).

<sup>161</sup> As Jane's notes, the US government has recently expanded the Bagram air field: "The US has allocated USD52 million in FY2005 for upgrading Bagram, including building a new control tower and an operations centre" (2006).

perspective. Wholesale reconstruction throughout the country and the development of a durable and sustainable democracy while beneficial to US, is not considered vital for its national interests.

In sum, geopolitics has exercised a central role in the political history of Afghanistan. Both internally and externally, geopolitical factors have undermined the consolidation of the Afghan state and continue to deleteriously affect current democratic nation-building efforts.

## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUSION

This thesis considered Michael Ignatieff's theory regarding ethnic conflict and applied Afghanistan as a case study to assess and analyze the theory's applicability and its viability. It is necessary to briefly outline Ignatieff's theory and to overview the key results of the Afghanistan study. Ignatieff correlates the outbreak of ethnic violence to the breakdown of state government. The collapse of national institutions creates societal anarchy as the state structures can no longer provide the necessary mechanisms that secure social order. Local warlords capitalize on this climate of fear and promote ethnic belonging as an alternative form of protection to meet basic security needs. This retrenchment to polarized camps heightens competition and fosters discord between ethnic groups, thus creating an internal security dilemma. This dynamic triggers a spiraling cycle of group mobilization and increased tensions which lead ultimately to open conflict.

Ignatieff's thesis argues that an anarchical domestic structure creates the permissive environment which predicates the outbreak of war. The corollary to his theory is that ethnic relations can improve through the creation of a stable political order. Under such circumstances, security from violence is provided by the state instead of ethnic factions. Thus, in failed states, the reconstruction of democratic national institutions will stabilize internal relations by creating the requisite political machinery to arbitrate disputes through peaceful means.

The strength of Ignatieff's thesis relates to its normative appeal for outside parties to engage actively in a reconstruction effort designed to mitigate ethnic conflict. Ignatieff's argument stands in sharp relief to primordialists such as Samuel Huntington who argue that ethnic difference explains the outbreak of ethnic conflict. According to this perspective, the combatants have historically fought along ethnic lines and will continue to clash due to innate cultural difference.

While ethnicity in and of itself is a necessary factor underpinning ethnic conflict, it is not a sufficient cause determining the outbreak of group aggression. Ethnic difference is a static variable requiring the presence of contributing factors in order to activate violence. There are multiple examples of inter-ethnic accommodation and peaceful co-habitation within nation-states, which demonstrates that ethnicity alone is not responsible for conflict. Rather, this phenomenon suggests the need to include other factors regarding the causes of ethnic war. The strength of Ignatieff's thesis rests in its explanatory capacity to encompass the profound complexities of ethnic conflict. His comprehensive understanding of ethnic strife underwrites a policy of liberal universalism whose chief goal is to prevent and mitigate future conflicts.<sup>162</sup> Indeed, to embrace the idea of predestined clashes of civilization is to abandon the exercise of theoretical and practical solutions to suppress ethnic violence. Moreover, when inter-ethnic conflict does break out, *The Clash of Civilizations* (Huntington) encourages a form of moral disillusionment that stereotypes the antagonists as uncivilized brutes. Rather than international engagement, Huntington calls for a retreat to civilization camps where

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<sup>162</sup> For an in depth discussion regarding prevention measures for ethnic conflict refer to John Stremlau's "Antidote to Anarchy." Stremlau offers six "prevention principles" to mitigate internal conflict: 1) promote civic nationalism; 2) develop early warning mechanisms; 3) forge collective actions; 4) promote economic well-being; 5) make process a priority; 6) when necessary apply force majeure (pp. 404-408).

security is maintained through a new form of balance of power. Ignatieff terms this phenomenon “the seductiveness of moral disgust” (Ignatieff, 1998: 92):

We are ending the search for explanation just when it should begin if we assert that local ethnic hatreds were so rooted in history that they were bound to explode into nationalistic violence. On the contrary, these people had to be transformed from neighbors into enemies. (Ignatieff, 1993: 23)

Afghanistan represents a model empirical case study to explore the central tenets of the Ignatieff thesis; civil war in the face of institutional collapse followed by efforts to create order by instating central democratic institutions. Afghanistan is a multi-ethnic state with a history marked by war and ethnic violence. For over two decades Afghanistan has experienced an internal war resulting in the collapse of the state structure. Following the overthrow of the Taliban regime the international community established a framework for the political reconstruction of Afghanistan with the December 2001 Bonn Agreement. The Bonn Agreement envisions the creation of a strong central government formed from democratic institutions necessary to rebuild Afghanistan and create civil society. Thus, the signatories to the Bonn Accord put into motion the establishment of the very objectives that Ignatieff has advanced to minimize ethnic discord.

In order to assess the viability of transplanting democratic institutions into another country it is first necessary to overview democratic development literature which assesses the key factors that underlie the foundation of durable democratic state. A body of political theory argues that the creation of an institutional framework is a necessary but not sufficient precondition to create a functioning democracy. Instead, stable democracies require a political culture marked by citizens who possess social capital. Social capital

reflects a democratic citizenship expressed in terms of the requisite attitudes and resources to sustain democracy. In turn, democratic citizenship derives from the presence of an active civil society and a strong economic base replete with a vibrant, educated and independent middle class. Moreover, an active civil society and middle class also serve as a check on government power and thus provides a medium to ensure the formation and continuity of democracy.

In addition to the existence of a strong economy and widespread civil organizations it is advantageous for a country undergoing a democratic transition to have experienced an institutional history that complements pluralistic governance. As well, the establishment of a successful democracy necessitates a peaceful environment to facilitate reconstruction efforts. Thus, when assessing the likelihood of successful nation-building it is therefore important to consider security and geopolitical factors as violence and outside interference can overturn democratic reform efforts. In sum, the development of a successful democracy requires a strong economy, a vibrant civil society, an advantageous institutional history and a positive security and geopolitical environment.

When considering Afghanistan's potential to establish a successful democracy based on these five key variables it is reasonable to conclude that the country is not predisposed to pluralistic governance. First, from an economic perspective, Afghanistan is one of the poorest countries in the world, it lacks a strong middle class and forecasts for domestic state revenue indicate a continuity of weak governance capacity. It is economically dependent on foreign support which has fallen short of both expectations and requirements and which is subject to dissipate in the medium term. Second, Afghanistan's nascent civil society does not have the size or pattern of dispersion to

enhance effectively the development of democracy. Third, Afghanistan's institutional history is marked by the three models of governance that are antithetical to the development of democratic political capital. Fourth, Afghanistan is plagued by a security sector crisis marked by an entrenched warlord system which dominates the socio-economic affairs of the countryside as well as an escalating insurgency that seeks to overthrow the Afghan state. The ability of the Afghan state to combat these dual threats is undermined by a limited security sector whose current capability is funded principally by foreign support. Fifth, external and internal geopolitical factors fundamentally imperil the consolidation of the Afghan state.

Afghanistan's geographical position has populated the country with diverse groups who remained separated by an inhospitable landscape. The fragmentation of the Afghan populace into distinct and competing groups undermines the national solidarity essential to a modern state. As well, Afghanistan's location in Central Asia has contributed to a history of ongoing foreign invasions that has precluded state building efforts. Foreign interference in Afghan affairs has fueled Afghanistan's ethnic conflict as external groups seek to maximize their interests through support of competing ethnic factions within Afghanistan. Finally, geopolitical realities fundamentally constrain the willingness or ability of foreign powers to finance and sustain the reconstruction of Afghanistan. Collectively, these five factors underscore the difficulty, if not impossibility, of establishing a democratic state in Afghanistan. Ignatieff draws a similar conclusion in a recent manuscript:



Afghanistan would qualify as one of those juridical sovereigns that throughout the twentieth century has rarely been a real and effective sovereign. Its political traditions are tribal and clannish, and though these traditions include valuable forms of popular consultation such as the Loya Jirga, which eager foreigners have seized upon as an indigenous form of democracy, it is not obvious that there is either an institutional structure of state power throughout the territory of Afghanistan or any very deep tradition of political accountability, collective deliberation or local self-rule. Warlords are a problem in Afghanistan, not just because they use violent means, also because they capitalize on the enduring weaknesses in the Afghan political tradition. They are not so much excrescences on this tradition as its fullest expression, providing protection while extorting and bullying their people in return. Making a state – with coverage of service and coercion throughout the territory and not just in Kabul – may simply be impossible. (2005: 70)

The formidable and multiple obstacles that threaten Afghanistan's transition to democracy raise fundamental theoretical and practical implications to Ignatieff's thesis. Indeed, the unlikely prospects of establishing a durable democratic state in Afghanistan highlights the limitations of Ignatieff's thesis that democratic governance represents the prescription for ethnic conflict. The building of successful and durable national democratic institutions has been characterized in the democratic development literature as "getting to Denmark" with Denmark representing a model stable democracy "with well-functioning state institutions" (Fukuyama, 2004: 22). As Fukuyama argues, a central problem in contemporary international relations relates to the fundamental difficulty for external parties to enable countries undergoing reconstruction to 'get to Denmark:'

We know what "Denmark" looks like, and something about how the actual Denmark came to be historically. But to what extent is that knowledge transferable to countries as far away historically and culturally from Denmark as Somalia or Moldova? To what extent is there and can there be a theory of institutions that can be generalized and that will provide the basis for policy guidance to poor countries. (Fukuyama, 2004: 22)

Given the challenges of establishing a democratic state, Ignatieff's theory is only relevant to those post-conflict societies that possess the requisite preconditions for democracy. As Ignatieff acknowledges, "we do not actually know how to make states work in societies that are, divided on religious or ethnic lines or lacked a substantial state tradition in the first place" (Ignatieff, 2005: 73). The inability of the international community to reconstitute failed states into functioning governing bodies is borne out by the few credible examples of marked success as Fukuyama notes: "If nation-building means the creation of self sustaining state capacity that can survive once foreign advice and support are withdrawn, then the number of historical cases where this has happened drops to a depressingly small handful<sup>163</sup>" (Fukuyama, 2004: 38). The problem that ensues thus relates to the high correlation between countries that have endured ethnic conflicts and their innate features that preclude democratic state building. In other words, the characteristics that give rise to ethnic conflict represent the same dynamics that suppress democracy. This applies to many of the conflict-prone and post-conflict societies throughout Africa and clearly includes failed states like Afghanistan.

Thus, while Ignatieff's prescription for ethnic conflict must be credited for advancing a form of global engagement that seeks to address a chief source of contemporary violence, the prescription must also be scrutinized as an undertaking that has no credible precedence and its complexity and costs render it highly prohibitive as a viable solution. Consequently, for the international community, the debate regarding

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<sup>163</sup> Fukuyama specifically identifies US failed attempts at nation building: "The United States has intervened and/or acted as an occupation authority in many other countries, including Cuba, the Philippines, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Mexico, Panama, Nicaragua, South Korea, and South Vietnam (Boat 2003). In each of these countries it pursued what amounted to nation-building activities – holding elections, trying to stamp out warlords and corruption, and promoting economic development. South Korea was the only country to achieve long-term economic growth, which came about more through the Korean's own efforts than those of the United States. Lasting institutions were few and far between." (Fukuyama, 2004: 39)

rebuilding efforts in post conflict societies can devolve to the twin options of doing nothing or attempting to forge the highly dubious undertaking of trying to create a successful democratic regime. The complex nature of this decision necessitates a case by case analysis based on a multiplicity of variables. A more nuanced analysis raises questions regarding how one defines success and from what or whose perspective such a measurement is taken. Thus, when nation building efforts are principally driven by outside players it is necessary to analyze the interests and motives underlying their actions and objectives. Ignatieff addresses the subtleties of this debate with the following statement: “So the question of how you make states work turns out to pose a prior question: Who do you want to make then work for? Local elites? International civil servants? Or the political leaders in large Western capitals?” (Ignatieff, 2005: 72). More concretely, given the limited understanding of how to transform societies into successful liberal democratic states coupled with the inherent risks in performing such a complex task, the concern exists that nation building efforts could exacerbate conditions by fomenting even greater levels of violence internally or instigating a larger regional conflict.

In the case of Afghanistan, the outcome of the process initiated at Bonn will unlikely produce a healthy and durable democracy. Ignatieff has drawn a similar conclusion with his comments that “western nation-building exercises in Afghanistan” have “been driven by the utopia of this [the] liberal democratic model. The more relevant issue is whether in working towards such a utopia, the results will be any thing other than delusive” (2005: 70). Moreover, efforts to accelerate nation building forcefully challenge warlord power and prematurely advance a program of ‘secular western rights’ throughout

the country could dramatically worsen the current situation. Indeed, Amanullah's failed program of reform and his ultimate overthrow represents a clear historical reminder regarding the tolerance for dramatic societal change in Afghanistan. As well, given the interests of contiguous states in the political affairs of Afghanistan, an overambitious modernization program could foster an internal war that could degenerate into a larger regional conflict.

Nonetheless, while the full expression of the liberal democratic state may never be achieved, it can be argued that the current situation represents a vast improvement over prior conditions. Thus, while the central government faces innumerable challenges related to warlord control over the countryside, a low to modest level insurgency campaign, and a thriving trade in illegal goods, government reconstruction efforts nevertheless continue in many parts of the country. For many Afghans, especially women, their quality of life has fundamentally improved in socio-economic terms. In other words, it can be argued that the current rentier state, while weak and largely confined to Kabul, represents a nascent democratic order that far surpasses the marginal, predatory and leviathan state models that have marked Afghan history. It is on this basis that Ignatieff continues to sanction carefully scrutinized nation building efforts as a means to address internal violence in post conflict societies: "Any evaluation of intervention on human rights grounds has to reckon with what would have happened had nothing been done. By this standard, there remains grounds to say that we did the right thing, even if we did so for the wrong reasons and even if what we have put in its place is only marginally better" (Ignatieff, 2005: 74). It is unclear at this stage whether the attempt to forge a liberal democratic state in Afghanistan will continue to provide

Afghans with an environment that is 'marginally better' or whether such reconstruction efforts will foster a declining security situation that culminates into a wholesale civil conflict or a larger regional war.

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