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The Folly of Double Government

Lessons from the First Anglo-Afghan War for the 21st Century

The double government, which had been established, was becoming a curse to the whole nation. The Shah and his officers ostensibly controlled all the departments of civil administration; but everywhere our English officers were at their elbow, to counsel and suggest... It could hardly be said that the King possessed a government of his own, when the control of the army and the exchequer was in the hands of others.¹

During and in the years after the first British debacle in Afghanistan, the Anglo-Afghan War of 1839-1842, British participants and observers focused a great deal upon what military historian and former army officer Sir John William Kaye, writing a decade after the war, described as “double government.” It was ‘double’ because, side-by-side, there existed not only an Afghan regime that the British East India Company had brought to power, but also a large-scale British political and military administration that remained in the country and governed alongside the Afghan state.

The role of double government in the failure of British state-building has generally fallen from view. In subsequent histories as well as in today’s popular press, the revolt that erupted in late 1841, less than three years into the British intervention, is explained in two ways: in terms of either individual tactical blunders or the innate resistance of Afghans to foreign occupation. In this paper I want to take double government seriously. I examine the first

British state-building project in Afghanistan in terms of relations between an imperial power and its local collaborators and ask why the project broke down as rapidly as it did. I also ask how thinking about double government can help us analyse 21st century state-building interventions in Afghanistan and elsewhere.

This paper does not reveal new *facts*, either about the first Anglo-Afghan War or 21st century Afghanistan. Rather, the purpose is to show how seemingly discrete problems that might otherwise be explained with reference to, for example, particular clashing personalities, personal incompetence, xenophobia or secret nefarious agendas are actually driven by a specific and overarching structural problem.

Historical overview

In the post-Napoleonic era, Asia was the scene of the so-called Great Game, a veritable cold war between the British and Russian empires. Britain was consolidating its power over the Indian subcontinent, and Russia was expanding southward through Central Asia. Apprehensive that Kabul’s ruler, Amir Dost Muhammad Khan, was falling under the sway of rival Russia, the British East India Company’s army²

¹ John William Kaye, *History of the War in Afghanistan*, Vol. II, London, W. H. Allen and Company 1890, 16.

² The United Company of Merchants of England Trading to the East Indies, or East India Company, was originally a private entity with a legal trade monopoly but accountable only to its shareholders. Over the century preceding the First Anglo-Afghan War, the company had conquered most of the Indian subcontinent with a private army and expanded its revenue stream from trade to taxation, ‘taxation’ being in many cases a euphemism for plundering whatever treasures came to hand. A series of reforms,

invaded Afghanistan in early 1839 to restore the former monarch of the Sadozai dynasty, Shah Shuja al-Mulk³ to the throne. After successfully installing their man in Kabul in June 1839, the British, led on the civilian side by the Indian Governor-General's Envoy, Sir William Hay MacNaghten, embarked upon an experiment in state-building designed—they insisted—to shore up popular support for Shah Shuja and set his government on its feet.

The British considered Afghanistan's value to be geostrategic rather than intrinsic: Russophobe British strategists had become worried that the mountain passes to India through Afghanistan constituted a critical vulnerability to their empire.⁴ It seems the British genuinely intended to establish a friendly buffer state in Afghanistan and then withdraw their army; they were not merely using the pretext of royal restoration to gain a toehold and eventually turn Afghanistan into a directly administered colony. For example, MacNaghten's original secret marching orders read, "The British government has no objects of territorial conquest or aggrandizement...as soon as Afghan independence shall be established, this Army will retreat."⁵

Establishing "Afghan independence" here in fact meant not only defeating Dost Muhammad and his Barakzai faction, but also encouraging the new king to reform the state and economy:

... the British Government has no stronger wish than for the Peace and Prosperity of the surrounding Nations, and for the freedom and independence of Commerce, and if amongst the present institutions of Afghanistan there should be any inimical to these

starting in the 1770s, had, however, brought the company under greater control of the British parliament, and after 1833 the East India Company served essentially as a managing agency for the British government in India. See William Dalrymple, 'The East India Company: The Original Corporate Raiders', *The Guardian*, 4 March 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/mar/04/east-india-company-original-corporate-raiders>; *Encyclopædia Britannica*, "East India Company," 2015; <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/176643/East-India-Company>.

³ Shuja was a member of the Sadozai subtribe of the Popalzai tribe of the Pashtun Durrani tribal confederation and the grandson of Ahmad Shah Durrani, who in 1747 founded an empire, which is viewed as the antecedent of modern Afghanistan. Shuja had been deposed in 1809 and subsequently lived as a guest of the British in the Punjabi city of Ludhiana.

⁴ The British hoped to benefit from the transit of their goods through Afghanistan, Kabul being a small but important hub of regional commerce at the time. However, this economic interest was secondary to geopolitical concerns. See Christine Noelle, *State and Tribe*, Richmond, UK, Curzon 1997, 23-24; and Peter Hopkirk, *The Great Game: On Secret Service in High Asia*, London, John Murray 2006, 97-98.

⁵ As in a correspondence by Sir Herbert Maddock, Governor-General Lord Auckland's secretary at Fort William, to MacNaghten, dated 12 September 1838. Some writers have cited such correspondence as *Auckland to MacNaghten*.

*objects, you will consider whether the Shah may not with advantage promise their amendment... [O]ffer such advice in the commencement of the new order of things as may tend to gain the affections of the Afghan people, and to secure the stability of the Suddozye Empire.*⁶

In these orders, the tension between the mandates for Afghan independence and for good governance is already evident. It is resolved on paper through the instruction to merely "offer advice" to the sovereign; in practice, as will be illustrated, convincing Shah Shuja to behave as the British desired was not so straightforward. The British experiment in state-building collapsed after just two and a half years in the face of uprisings to the north and east of the capital and in Kabul itself. With MacNaghten and his deputy, Sir Alexander Burnes, killed, the British army of occupation withdrew from Kabul in the first days of 1841, only to be massacred wholesale in the mountain passes en route to Jalalabad.

Alternative explanations for British failure

After the revolt broke out, many British officers blamed the Afghans' implacable religious fanaticism and xenophobia.⁷ This claim that Afghan hostility to foreign non-Muslims was inherent is, however, contradicted by the fact that the general population did not initially treat the British with hostility. Shah Shuja, for his part, was initially accepted as holding the hereditary qualifications for legitimacy as a direct descendent of Ahmad Shah Durrani, on the condition that he also provide the expected political patronage to his followers.⁸ Political and religious leaders (generally referred to as "chiefs" and "mullahs" by contemporary British writers)⁹ in both Kabul and the

⁶ Maddock to MacNaghten, 12 September 1838 [see FN 5].

⁷ Mackeson to Maddock, Date of letter unknown, The British Library, London, India Office Records, L/PS/5/162, No 109, 418-18.

⁸ Even Dost Muhammad implicitly recognised the legitimacy of Sadozai kingship when he took on the title of *amir* rather than *shah* in 1826. See Thomas Barfield, *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010, 111.

⁹ I make use of 19th century terms such as 'chief', 'tribe' and 'native' throughout this paper. Neologisms such as 'local power brokers' or 'subnational kinship-based political groups' or 'autochthonous populations' in academic usage today have the advantage of not being associated with the assumption that non-Western 'natives' are inherently different from Westerners in their social relations and are organised into primordial kinship groups as their only political orientation or with the assumption that it is 'natural' that those tribal natives be under the direction of a hereditary chief with inherent traditional authority. Chiefs and tribes do not just exist unchangingly, but are created and transformed by patronage and other forms of relationships with others; indeed writers on empire have argued that, in many cases, the position of a singular powerful tribal chief has not been the traditional norm, but rather created out of a system of indirect

surrounding country, some plied with British bribes and promises of future subsidies, likewise initially defected en masse from Dost Muhammad's camp, forcing the latter to flee Kabul without a fight.¹⁰ Indeed, some of the very clerics who later would encourage insurrection against the British and who would be characterised in British sources as fanatical and xenophobic were, at first, key to securing support for Shuja north of Kabul, as he approached the capital at the head of a foreign and predominantly non-Muslim army in 1839.¹¹

A more sophisticated alternative argument than citing simple xenophobia would be that the behaviour of minor Afghan leaders is best understood simply as siding *against* whichever ruler appeared at the time most capable of centralising authority at their expense, which was first Dost Muhammad and then the Anglo-Saddozai regime. Nonetheless, the outbreak of a widespread uprising in which the city joined the rebellious countryside¹² after fewer than two and a half years of rule was in many ways the first of its kind. The rebellion was the first in which both the Kabul aristocracy and Afghans outside the political elite, the latter of whom had in previous civil conflicts left the game of palace politics and coups to the leadership of the Durrani tribe, played a decisive role.¹³ Double government united chiefs, courtiers, clerics and merchants in opposition to an unusual degree.

The structure of double government

Studies of imperial government¹⁴ have made a distinction between *indirect* and *direct*.¹⁵ Under direct

rule. See Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*, Princeton, Princeton University Press 1996. All that said, to avoid confusion about who is being described when, I avoid using two different sets of jargon (one when in the voice of British and Afghan primary sources, both of whom refer to chiefs, tribes, etc, and another using today's politically-correct jargon) to refer to the same social actors. Instead, I simply use the same terminology as my primary sources.

¹⁰ Barfield, *Afghanistan*, 115-118 [see FN 8].

¹¹ Fayz Muhammad, *Sirāj al-Tavārīkh*. Translated by Robert D. McClesney, Kabul, Matba'ah-i Hurufi Dar al-Saltanah 1912 – 1914, 151.

¹² The distinction between city and countryside is in this case a bit misleading, particularly when it comes to the aristocracy. Many of the chiefs—eg Aminullah Khan Logari—who resided in Kabul and played roles in the 1841 rebellion derived their status from their standing in tribes of the surrounding region. Noelle, *State and Tribe*, 49-50 [see FN 4].

¹³ Barfield, *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History*, 271-275 [see FN 8]; Malcolm E. Yapp, 'The Revolutions of 1841-2 in Afghanistan,' *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 27/2 (1964), 338.

¹⁴ See Michael Hechter and Nika Kabiri, 'Attaining Social Order in Iraq,' Revised version of a paper presented at the Conference on Order, Conflict and Violence at Yale University, 30 April – 1 May

rule, the coloniser's model of government and civilisation is transposed onto the colony, which the coloniser administers directly, recruiting 'natives' (as they were called in the day—see footnote 7) as bureaucratic administrators. Directly ruled colonial states are expensive to run, but also better able to collect taxes and otherwise extract revenue. Direct rule is also meant to reform state and society: historically, its architects saw it as their duty to break existing feudal institutions and establish modern ones instead.¹⁶

Under indirect rule, 'traditional authorities' are co-opted to rule over constituencies within the colony. They do not act according to laws and rules imported from the imperial home country but according to local custom.¹⁷ A much smaller presence of administrators from the empire and bureaucratic infrastructure is required to manage those traditional authorities and ensure that in broad strokes they act in the empire's interest.¹⁸ Local rulers are given incentives to cooperate with the imperial system because the system allows them autonomy within their territories in exchange for external deference to colonial authority and policies. Furthermore, being the sole recipient and local conduit for political patronage from the empire allows those rulers to consolidate their local power.

2004. Posted online 27 October 2004, <http://faculty.washington.edu/hechter/AttainingSocialOrderInIraq.pdf>; Matthew Lange, *Lineages of Despotism and Development: British Colonialism and State Power*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2009; Matthew Lange, *Lineages of Despotism and Development: British Colonialism and State Power*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2009; Benjamin N. Lawrance, Emily Lynn Osborn, and Richard L. Roberts (eds), *Intermediaries, Interpreters, and Clerks: African Employees in the Making of Colonial Africa*, London, University of Wisconsin Press 2006; Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject* [see FN 9]; Karuna Mantena, *Alibis of Empire: Henry Maine and the Ends of Liberal Imperialism*, Princeton, Princeton University Press 2010; Yanna Yannakakis, *The Art of Being In-Between: Native Intermediaries, Indian Identity, and Local Rule in Colonial Oaxaca*, Durham, Duke University Press 2008.

¹⁵ Direct and indirect rule are *ideal types*: that is, in reality all colonies have their own particularities and some combination of characteristics of more than one type. Ideal types do not fully describe messy historical realities, but rather are useful concepts with which to think about patterns that exist across different historical cases. See Max Weber, 'Objectivity' in *Social Science and Social Policy*, in *The Methodology of Social Sciences*, Edward Shils and Henry Finch (ed). Glencoe, IL, Free Press 1949, 49-112.

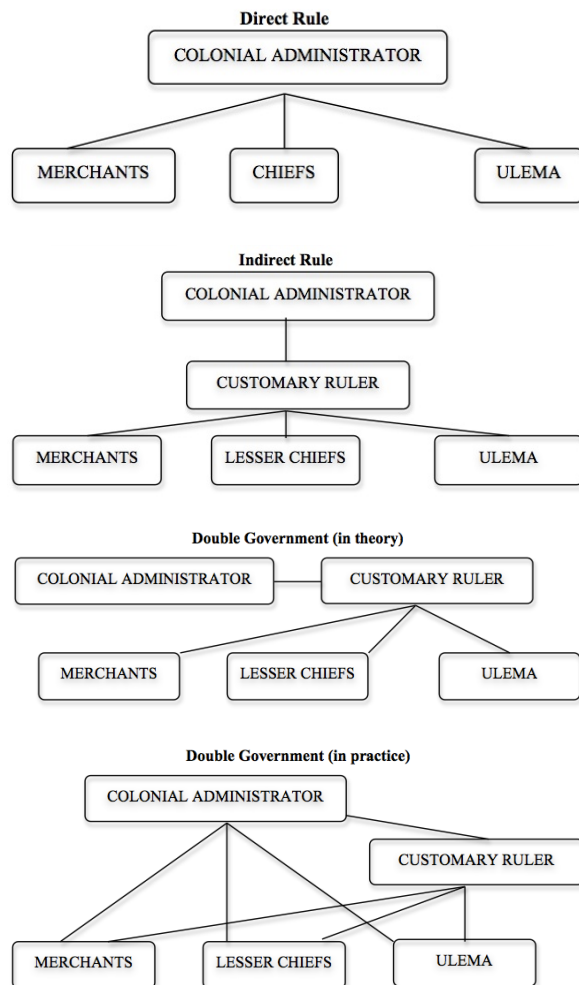
¹⁶ Robert Delavignette, *Freedom and Authority in French West Africa*, London 1940. Excerpted in 'The French Argument for Direct Rule,' *American Historical Association Teaching and Learning in the Digital Age*, <http://www.historians.org/tl/lessonplans/nc/trask/frendirect.htm>.

¹⁷ In practice, the label of 'local custom' was often used to legitimise whatever political violence the local ruler inflicted on the population, regardless of its actual precedent in local history. See Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject* [see FN 9].

¹⁸ Mantena, *Alibis of Empire*, 4-10 [see FN 14]; Yannakakis, *The Art of Being In-Between* [see FN 14].

Double government is an uneasy mix of indirect and direct rule. Like indirect rule, it seeks to work through rulers who hold local legitimacy; however, double government also features a colonial administration working in parallel to the local ruler. The colonial administration directly intervenes in local politics with the aim of reshaping the state headed by that local ruler.

Paths through which authority and patronage flow down and local information flows up under direct rule, indirect rule and double government are represented graphically as follows:



A key difference between direct rule, indirect rule and double government lies in the coloniser's management of the locals working for him. In the direct rule model, the autonomy of locals working for the colonial state is curtailed by the fact that local collaborators are bureaucrats who do not have bases of authority independent of their position in the bureaucracy. Indirect rule is different: it aligns the interests of the imperial power and the local ruler, yet allows the local ruler autonomy to act in dissonance with the coloniser's own rules of behaviour and ideology. This autonomy is possible because, under indirect rule, the coloniser's local

knowledge comes from the local ruler himself.^{19,20} As Mahmood Mamdani writes of indirect rule in Africa:

*Every moment of power—legislative, executive, judicial, and administrative—is combined in [the chief]... The chief is answerable only to a higher administrative authority. An unwritten norm of indirect rule was that the lower authority must never be short-circuited. To entertain any complaints behind the chief's back would be to humiliate him...*²¹

The local ruler can tell the colonial administrator what the administrator needs to hear and write into reports to the governor-general and colonial capital. Because the administrator's dependency on the local ruler for information prevents him from checking the local ruler's stories, the local ruler may in practice rule and consolidate power by methods that the colonial administrator or his home country might find repugnant (or prefer to outsource to avoid direct connection to those methods). The local ruler's local audience does not hear his rhetoric to the colonial administrator about good governance and loyalty to the colony. The local ruler can thus avoid internal challenges to his authenticity (as a foreign stooge) and present himself within his community as being on the community's side *against* the colonial power. Furthermore he can present himself as an essential interlocutor for the community because of his ability to strike a deal that prevents foreign encroachment in exchange for nominal fealty. The principal does not hear this local rhetoric. This kind of strategy—saying contradictory things to different people—is referred to in sociology as *audience segregation* and is a common strategy adopted when confronted with

¹⁹ Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*, 54 [see FN 9]; Larkin, *Signal and Noise*, 29 [see FN 14].

²⁰ A more familiar analogous case would be a board of stockholders who are content not to pry into how exactly a corporation's managing officers are turning profits, as long as the profits keep coming. Also when it comes to corporate crime, usually only those officers directly involved in malfeasance take the fall, and those complacent in and profiting from the system, but not directly involved in the crime, survive rich and legally unscathed. Similarly, if word of a local ruler's abuses does get out, he can always be replaced with the colonial administrator's own reputation unscathed. This insulation of the colonial administrator from direct moral implication in the local ruler's abuses might be termed *outsourcing* in more familiar corporate lingo.

²¹ Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*, 54 [see FN 9]. The protocols of indirect rule reinforced the dependency of the coloniser on the local ruler for information: not only did colonial officers avoid receiving complaints and petitions that circumvented the local ruler, but the local ruler also mediated any contact between those colonial officers and locals. In northern Nigeria under indirect rule, for example, when a British district officer went on tour he had to be accompanied by a representative of the Emir. He was not to speak directly to local officials under the Emir's authority, but to address them only through said representative. Larkin, *Signal and Noise*, 29 [see FN 14].

contradictory expectations from different groups.²² The less one's separate audiences can independently talk to one another, the greater one's ability to get away with telling them different things.

Double government's central contradiction in Afghanistan was that Shah Shuja was to be the sovereign king, but the British were present in Kabul to ensure that he acted as the right kind of king.²³ And so the British found themselves intervening - even feeling *forced* to intervene - and interacting with local political actors. The proximity of the colonial administrator under double government robs him of his alibi when the local ruler acts in dissonance with the administrator's ideals or adopts anti-colonial rhetoric.²⁴ In a sense the British had their hands tied by their own ideology and notions of what a state *should* look like. In other words, the local ruler was less able to segregate British and local audiences because of the extensive contact between the British and the Afghan population.²⁵ By contrast, under

indirect rule the local ruler can more flexibly divide and conquer, punish or make deals to co-opt rivals in ad hoc fashion without the rational consistency that the colonial administrator demands in the name of good governance and rule of law.²⁶

Also unlike indirect rule, the double government in Afghanistan required the proximity of a colonial administration to oversee the reform of its nominally sovereign client state. Yet unlike direct rule, the coloniser was not extracting revenue or resources sufficient to pay for the mission. The maintenance of this infrastructure thus had to be paid for by the British themselves.

The commencement of double government

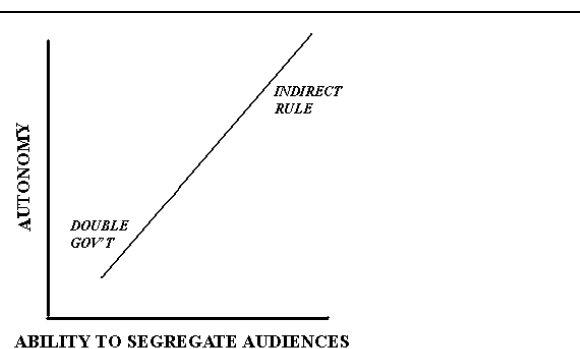
Although the British seemed initially to envisage a form of indirect rule, this plan quickly collapsed, as they felt compelled to intervene to ensure that Shuja fought and governed according to their rules. In June 1839, during the initial campaign to oust Dost Muhammad, Shah Shuja ordered the execution of dozens of prisoners after a skirmish. With a British captain on the scene, Shuja did nothing to control his patrons' knowledge of his actions.²⁷ This mass execution clashed with British ideas of just war and claims to be bearers of civilisation. From Calcutta,

²² Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, New York, Doubleday 1959, 138-140; Robert K. Merton, *Sociological Ambivalence and Other Essays*, New York: The Free Press 1976, 6-7.

²³ In addition to the issue of proximity in explaining why the British were not content to rule through indirect means, it is important to situate the First Anglo-Afghan War in the heyday of liberal optimism about Britain's ability to bring 'civilisation' and 'good governance' to Asia—an optimism that the 1857 rebellion in India would shock the British into rethinking. Mantena, *Alibis of Empire* [see FN 14].

²⁴ In discussing rules and ideology, I do not mean to take at face value British colonial rhetoric on being civilised and restrained as opposed to Asiatic despots and savages. The British were not inherently constrained by their liberal ideology: they condemned Shah Shuja and others for their uncivilised behaviour, yet there is a long historical record of extreme violence on the part of the British in Asia in the 19th century. When I write of British 'rules', rules should be understood not as describing rigid limitations to social action that are actually adhered to, but rather as tools or frames that people use to make sense of the actions of others. See Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* [see FN22]. When the British themselves acted in dissonance with their rules, side justifications could always be produced: they had acted under extraordinary circumstances, brutality was a necessary element of native pedagogy, the normal rules of war did not apply because of Afghans' barbarous natures, etc; Dalrymple, *Return of a King*, 686-690, 728-730 [see FN 2]. But when their Afghan proxies acted in dissonance with their rules, the British understood those proxies' actions as reflecting the latter's true natures and so as unacceptable and requiring British intervention.

²⁵ On a continuum from double government to indirect rule, the local ruler's ability to act in dissonance with the colonial ideology and hence his autonomy has a direct relationship with his ability to monopolise the flow of information between—that is, segregate—colonial and native audiences:



²⁶ Even MacNaghten, the most active intervener into Shuja's governing, in fact, recognised this advantage of indirect rule quite clearly, writing in July 1840:

Were we not here, [Shah Shuja] would adopt Afghan means of suppressing disturbances such as we could not be a party to. To break faith with a rebel is not deemed a sin by the most moral Afghan; and assassination was [sic] an every day occurrence. By the encouragement of blood-feuds, it is notorious that Dost Majomed [sic] propped up the little power he had beyond the gates of Caubul.

Kaye, *History of the War...*, 62-63 [see FN 1].

²⁷ Mohan Lal, *Life of the Amir Dost Mohammed Khan, of Kabul*, Vol. II, London, Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans 1846, 238-240.

Governor General Lord Auckland sharply reproached MacNaghten and demanded an explanation.²⁸

Here was jarring evidence that the East India Company had been wrong to assume that Shuja would perform his role as the Company saw fit without greater oversight. And so several weeks later, Shuja was prevailed upon to sign an agreement that provided for the permanent appointment of a British Resident (MacNaghten) to his court and for the creation of a new military contingent for the Shah commanded by British officers.²⁹ A British officer sympathetic to MacNaghten described the latter's expanded mandate bluntly: "The Envoy...was bound to interpose to prevent every exercise on [Shuja's] part of despotic authority. Hence was imposed on the Envoy the hopeless task of...controlling a savage and lawless community on the principles of modern and civilized government."³⁰

Kabul was taken without a fight in August 1939, and as in the ensuing month it became clear that the Saddozai state was not functioning the way the British wanted it to, British oversight expanded to lower levels of the government. In November, MacNaghten wrote to Burnes:

*His Majesty has been compelled for the present to make use of the services of many of the officers of the former Government - who it is to be feared have been educated in a bad school and accustomed to practices of oppression... [T]he location of a British officer in each large division of the country for the first year or two of His Majesty's reign would be a salutary measure.*³¹

This solution of closer monitoring and selective intervention to steer Shuja in the proper direction, together with the continued proximity within Afghanistan of the Company's administration and army that said solution required, yielded disastrous unforeseen consequences.

Parallel administrations

The British presence in Kabul comprised many thousands of soldiers, support personnel and animals and would soon be augmented by the families and

servants of British officers who came from India once the country was deemed pacified. The occupation was hugely expensive to the British, and the economic demands of this new population were socially and politically destabilising. The British distorted the economy by buying up commodities at far higher prices than they fetched on the local market, leading to hoarding by merchants and an artificial famine,³² as well as rampant inflation that disproportionately affected the urban poor, tribal chiefs and clerics who ordinarily lived on fixed incomes.³³ Furthermore, British sexual demands far outstripped the existing local supply of mostly Indian prostitutes. As Afghan women increasingly joined their ranks, general resentment that foreigners were morally corrupting local women was augmented by more specific outrage among the aristocracy that the prostitutes were confusing the social order, because they could afford to dress and act like noblewomen.

According to Shah Shuja's personal historian and to early 20th century Afghan historian Fayz Muhammad, Shah Shuja complained to MacNaghten about prostitution but was told there was nothing MacNaghten could do about it. This display of powerlessness undermined Shuja's local legitimacy and gave fuel to his opponents, who, Muhammad writes, "Dangerously flirting with the fire of sedition...even said, 'Your women do not belong to you.'"³⁴

The failure to address the issue of prostitution followed a pattern of double government in which the administrative presence of the British in Kabul not only had unintended negative consequences, but also made the management of those consequences more difficult.

³² Mohan Lal, an Indian political assistant for the British, recounts this famine's origin:

The purchase made by our Commissariat officers of grain from the various parts of the country raised the price too high and placed it utterly beyond the means of the population in general. The landlords, knowing the advantage of the sale at such a price, keeping only as much as would meet their own immediate demand, used to send all their produce to our camp, without selling the smallest quantity to the poor in the country or in the towns. Grass for cattle, meat and vegetables, and in short all the necessaries of life, rose to a considerable price, and the cry of starvation was universal, and there were very many hardly able to procure a piece of bread even by begging in the streets, while every thing would have been in abundance but for our purchase.

Lal, *Life of the Amir*, 319 [see FN 27].

³³ Lal, *Life of the Amir*, 319-321 [see FN 27]; Yapp, 'The Revolutions of 1841-2...', 338-341 [see FN 13]; Barfield, *Afghanistan*, 120 [see FN 8].

³⁴ William Dalrymple, *Return of a King: The Battle for Afghanistan*, New York, Bloomsbury 2013, 224-225; Muhammad, *Sirāj al-Tavārikh*, 155-156 [see FN 11].

²⁸ Maddock to MacNaghten, Letter dated 16 September 1839, National Archive of India, Delhi, Foreign Department, Secret, 20 November 1839, No 32.

²⁹ Noelle, *State and Tribe*, 47 [see FN 4].

³⁰ George Lawrence, *Reminiscences of Forty-Three Years in India: Including the Cabul Disasters, Captivities in Affghanistan and the Punjab, and a Narrative of the Mutinies in Rajputana*, London, John Murray 1875, 60-61.

³¹ MacNaghten to Burnes, Letter dated November 1839, National Archive of India, Delhi, Foreign Department, Secret, 20 April 1840, No 21-22.

Mohan Lal, a Kashmiri Brahmin who served as Persian secretary and political assistant to Deputy Envoy Sir Alexander Burnes, wrote:

*Political assistants to the Envoy were everywhere watching [Shuja's administrators'] conduct, and interfering in the jurisdiction of the country...We neither took the reins of power in our own hands, nor did we give them in full powers into the hands of Shah Shuja ul-Mulk. Inwardly or secretly we interfered in all transactions, contrary to the terms of our engagement with the Shah; yet outwardly we wore the mask of neutrality.*³⁵

In other words, British oversight prevented Shuja from ruling *his* way, while the British abstained from ruling *their own* way in the name of Shuja's sovereignty. The paralysis of the parallel and sometimes contradictory authorities of the double government system was perhaps most evident when it came to economic policy.³⁶ The responses of Shuja's chief of staff,³⁷ Mullah Abd al-Shakur Ishaqzai, and of the British to the aforementioned inflation crisis, is illustrative. Mullah Shakur simply had some grain sellers seized and the rest forced to sell their goods at a reasonable price. The traders, however, appealed to the British, who intervened to secure the release of arrested merchants and stop Shakur from executing his policy, because they viewed it as arbitrary rule and inimical to free trade. Yet even as they prevented Shakur from implementing crude yet effective price controls, the British refrained, in the name of non-intervention in domestic affairs, from stepping in with their own counter-inflationary policies.³⁸

³⁵ Lal, *Life of the Amir*, 312-313 [see FN 27].

³⁶ In cases where the hierarchy between British and Afghan officials was clear, governing was less paralysed but all the more farcical in its nominal deference to Sadozai sovereignty. For example, Frederick Mackeson, the British political officer in charge of the strategic Khyber region, nominally served Shah Shuja and had the official duty of acting as an intermediary among the British, the Afghan and Lahore-based Sikh governments and Khyber tribes. In practice Mackeson governed the region: he raised two military units, contracted his cousin to build a road, paid 'allowances' to tribal leaders and formed an inter-tribal consortium called the Maymana League to address robberies along the Khyber Pass. The official whom Shah Shuja dispatched to the region, Abd al-Rahim Khan Malazai, served essentially as Mackeson's assistant and his negotiator in dealings with the tribes. Malcolm E. Yapp, 'Tribes and States in the Khyber, 1838-1842', in *Tribes and State in Iran and Afghanistan*, Richard Tapper (ed), New York, Routledge 1983, 150-191.

³⁷ British sources generally refer to Mullah Shakur as minister or *vazir*. Mullah Shakur had long served as Shuja's chief of staff (*mukhtar-e kar*) and, according to Fayz Muhammad, was appointed to the honorific post of governor of Kabul in 1839. Muhammad, *Sirāj al-Tavārikh*, 216 [see FN 11]; Lal, *Life of the Amir*, 314 [see FN 27]; Dalrymple, *Return of a King*, 208, 266 [see FN 24].

³⁸ Lal, *Life of the Amir*, 319-321 [see FN 27].

The grain merchants were in this instance able to take advantage of the British being blinded by their own ideology. However, double government did not, as evident in subsequent discussion of customs reform, consistently serve their interests nor did it win the British a sturdy alliance with the merchant class.

The purpose of double government was to stabilise the Sadozai state. The British, however, drew no distinction between stabilising central rule and centralising government. The two were indeed different, as the success of rulers in Kabul depended more on deal making with the periphery than on projecting coercive power over the periphery. Shuja and especially his chief of staff, Mullah Shakur, recognised this, and so centralising policies devised by the British in practice both undermined and ran into opposition from the central state itself.

For instance, Sir Alexander Burnes attempted to create a system of regularised duties on commerce to replace one in which merchants paid off multiple local chiefs along trade routes. Burnes's intention was to strengthen the position of the central state relative to those chiefs. When merchants complained to the British that local chiefs continued to extort payments, the British provided them with notes to Mullah Shakur requesting that he redress their grievances. Mullah Shakur, however, simply had those merchants beaten and imprisoned for complaining to the British against Shah Shuja's authority.³⁹ The British were attempting transformation along the lines of direct rule, but then, in the manner of indirect rule, left enforcement to the Afghan state, which opposed the transformation. The contradictory actions of the two arms of the double government infuriated both those who stood to lose (here, the chiefs) and those who stood to gain from the reform (here, the merchants).⁴⁰

Military reform and the cost of double government

As part of their plan to set up a friendly and capable buffer state that could function in Afghanistan once the British military had withdrawn, the British sought to phase out irregular cavalry levees and replace them with a professional army recruited independent

³⁹ Lal, *Life of the Amir*, 315 [see FN 27].

⁴⁰ In 1841 MacNaghten attempted, together with Mullah Shakur's successor as Shuja's right-hand man, Chief Minister (*Nizam al-Dawlah*) Usman Khan, again to reform taxes along trade routes to establish a uniform standard tax with revenues going to the central state. It is unclear to what extent this system was actually implemented and successful. MacNaghten to Maddock, Letter dated 24 June 1841, National Archive of India, Delhi, Foreign Department, Secret, 2 August 1841, No 61-63.

of local chiefs.⁴¹ The primary purpose of the irregular cavalry they sought to replace was in fact not military but political. Before the Anglo-Saddozai invasion, the irregular levees' main function was collecting by force the taxes needed to pay their salaries. This revenue never actually reached the state but rather was a form of political patronage⁴² that ensured the loyalty of tribal chiefs.⁴³

The British understood that the loyalty of the nobility had to be purchased, at least temporarily, and provided cash 'stipends' to chiefs, particularly those who might threaten British supply lines back to India. However, the ultimate goal of the British was to break the power of the chiefs and centralise state control. Thus, as pressure mounted from the Governor General in Calcutta to reduce expenditure on the enormously expensive Afghan mission, they chose cuts to the budget of the irregular cavalry and then to chiefs' stipends while pressing forward with the training and equipment of the Shuja's new British-officered army. Shah Shuja, aware that tribal chiefs' loyalties were slipping away from the Anglo-Saddozai regime, staunchly opposed the military reforms⁴⁴, arguing bitterly with MacNaghten even as he signed off on the creation of the new units under heavy pressure.⁴⁵

⁴¹ MacNaghten to Maddock, Letter dated 6 January 1840, National Archive of India, Delhi, Foreign Department, Secret, 8 February 1841, No 74-75. Barfield, *Afghanistan*, 119 [see FN 8].

⁴² Barfield, *Afghanistan*, 100-119 [see FN 8]; Yapp, 'The Revolutions of 1841-2...', 338 [see FN 13].

⁴³ Not all among the British were oblivious to this patronage function of the irregular cavalry. Captain R S Trevor, who commanded one of the new professional military units, perceptively wrote in an August 1840 report:

We must not look on the Irregular Cavalry merely as a military body, in that light 3 Regiments [sic] might annihilate it tomorrow, but as an instrument which enables [His Majesty's] principal subjects to appropriate the greater part of his revenues without making any return, and which has continued so long that its destruction would certainly be considered an invasion of private property.

Yapp, 'The Revolutions of 1841-2...', 339 [see FN 13].

⁴⁴ Yapp, 'The Revolutions of 1841-2...', 340 [see FN 13].

⁴⁵ The clerical class also resisted military reforms. An Islamic judge sentenced to death the father of a trooper of one of the newly created units for blasphemy in what, according to MacNaghten, was a political ploy to discourage enlistment in the corps, and the Shah refused to intervene to reverse the decision. MacNaghten, himself a legal scholar and author of *Principles and Precedents of Mohammudan Law*, jumped into the fray and proudly reported to Calcutta the next week "I have gained a complete victory over the Moollas who have since freely admitted that my knowledge of the Mahomedan Law is superior to their own." The clerics in fact deeply resented such interference in the legal system, particularly coming from a non-Muslim. Instead of, as under indirect rule, delegating contact with lower local authorities to a local ruler who better understood how to manage them and could do so as a member of their culture, the principal was butting heads with and overruling them. Katherine Prior, 'Macnaghten, Sir William Hay,

While military reform did much to alienate the nobility, this investment did little to help the British as many soldiers of the new army deserted or switched sides when ordered to fight against their compatriots, mutinying when the Kabul uprising broke out.⁴⁶

Running a parallel political administration to Shah Shuja's regime, raising a new Afghan army and paying off the tribes was hugely expensive. And as described above, British attempts at customs and tax reform failed to generate the revenue needed to pay for those expenses.⁴⁷ They adopted the direct rule-style approach of trying to forcefully reshape Afghan society, but could not find the money to pay for this transformation.

By 1841, the East India Company was spending more in Afghanistan than its profits in India could support.⁴⁸ MacNaghten and Shuja's chief minister Usman Khan⁴⁹ responded by making ever-greater cuts to chiefs' stipends, and Usman Khan also antagonised the clergy by confiscating religious endowments.⁵⁰ It was the reduction of stipends to Ghilzai chiefs to the east of Kabul⁵¹ from 80,000 to 40,000 rupees that sparked the chiefs to declare jihad and close the

baronet (1793-1841)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press 2004,

<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/17705>; MacNaghten to Maddock, 30 June 1841, The British Library, London, India Office Records, L/PS/5/162, No 109, 538; MacNaghten to Maddock, 4 July 1841, The British Library, London, India Office Records, L/PS/5/162, No 109; Yapp, 'The Revolutions of 1841-2...', 342-343 [see FN 13].

⁴⁶ Kaye, *History of the War...*, 124-125 [see FN 1]; Yapp, 'The Revolutions of 1841-2...', 363 [see FN 13]. Lal, *Life of the Amir*, 416 [see FN 27].

⁴⁷ According to Thomas Barfield, the British succeeded in making taxation more efficient, increasing tax receipts from areas around Kabul from 225,000 to 900,000 rupees, though this was still far less than the British themselves were spending in the country. Barfield, *Afghanistan*, 121 [see FN 8].

⁴⁸ In March 1841, Auckland, having been warned by his accounts department "that 'ere six months elapse, the treasures of India will be completely exhausted," wrote to his envoy in Kabul, "Money, money, money is our first, our second and our last want...How long we can continue to feed you at your present rate of expenditure I cannot tell. To add to the weight would break us utterly." In August 1841, Auckland wrote to MacNaghten informing him that the East India Company was forced to take out a high-interest loan of £5 million from Indian merchants to be able to continue to pay salaries and ordering MacNaghten to make drastic and immediate cuts to his mission's expenditure. Dalrymple, *Return of a King*, 266, 275 [see FN 34].

⁴⁹ See footnote 40 on Mullah Shakur's replacement by Usman Khan.

⁵⁰ Dalrymple, *Return of a King*, 274-275 [see FN 34]; Noelle, *State and Tribe*, 48 [see FN 4].

⁵¹ Most prominent among those chiefs was Muhammad Shah Khan of the Babakrkhel Ghilzais of Laghman, the father-in-law and close ally of Dost Muhammad's son Muhammad Akbar Khan, the latter of whom would emerge as the most powerful leader in Kabul after the British evacuation. Dalrymple, *Return of a King*, 270-271 [see FN 34]; Noelle, *State and Tribe*, 198-200 [see FN 4].

mountain passes to Jalalabad to the British in September 1841, preceding the Kabul uprising.⁵²

Shah Shuja's perspective

The increasingly firm interventions of the British, in violation of their original treaty with Shuja,⁵³ made the latter less and less willing to play his designated role. Under indirect rule, the chief is willing to trade external subservience to the empire for a local monopoly on authority and status as the sole arbiter of petition. Double government robbed Shuja of this local monopoly. Mohan Lal complained that Shuja "began to become jealous of our power...and to suspect that all the people looked upon us as the sovereigns of the land. We did indeed give a kind of reception to some of the heads of the tribes, but this was merely temporary, to ensure the stability of the Shah's kingdom..."⁵⁴ Circumventing Shuja by independently meeting with and buying the loyalty of lesser chiefs made the former resent encroachment on his fiefdom and in reality made him less powerful as those chiefs did not need to rely solely on him for political patronage. An appreciation for the irony that such measures meant to 'stabilise' the kingdom in fact undermined the king's position seems to be missing in frustrated British accounts, both contemporary and subsequent.

Meanwhile, British willingness to strike side deals with various chiefs failed to win the chiefs' enduring loyalties. Like the merchants in the aforementioned case of commercial duties, tribal chiefs and Kabul courtier aristocrats⁵⁵ had to navigate a confusing and contradictory process when they wished to petition the double government. Petitioners were directed back and forth between Shuja, his new minister, Usman Khan, and British political officers, with both Shuja and the British often claiming that the other had authority on a particular matter and Usman Khan intervening only when he saw opportunity for commercial predation or to settle old scores.⁵⁶ The

parallelism of British and Sadozai administrations effectively paralysed the day-to-day functioning of government and undermined Shuja's legitimacy as the supposed sovereign.

Economic and social problems inherent in the occupation reduced the local popularity of the British and put Shah Shuja in the position of having to satisfy the incompatible expectations of locals (that he oppose the occupiers) with those of the British (that he remain loyal in exchange for their continued support). Shuja and Mullah Shakur (before his replacement by Usman Khan) attempted to manage these competing expectations through an indirect rule-style strategy that relied upon their ability to keep local and British audiences segregated: presenting Shuja as an adversary of the British to an Afghan audience, while continuing to profess solidarity in meetings with MacNaghten. Of Mullah Shakur, Mohan Lal wrote:

Instead of telling the people that the Shah was an independent sovereign, and, being an ally of the British, was protected by the British troops, which will retire on the settlement of the country, he said to the people that the Shah looks upon us as the violators of the treaty by keeping the force in the country; interfering with the business thereof, and inducing the people to go to us for favour. He added that, as soon as the family of the Shah had arrived in Kabul from [British-controlled] Lodianah, His Majesty will be quite fearless of our injury, and then, by the assistance of his faithful subjects, the followers of 'Islam,' he will take the reins of government into his own hands, will reward his friends and punish his enemies.⁵⁷

The British were outraged by Mullah Shakur's rhetoric, which, due to their proximity within Kabul, they could not help but hear about. Shuja could not present himself as an adversary of his foreign patron in order to gain the sympathy of a local audience without suffering blowback when that patron found

faced by Shuja. Whereas Mullah Shakur and Shuja directed much energy at meeting local expectations while trying to keep the British appeased to a minimal level, Usman Khan attached himself closely to the British with little regard for increasing local animosity. Zealously confiscating religious endowments and cutting chiefs' stipends were among policies of his that earned him praise from MacNaghten for raising revenue but stoked insurrection. By paying off local informants on whom the British relied for intelligence, Usman Khan was also better able to manage his image with the British than were Shuja and Shakur. MacNaghten in particular viewed 'Usman Khan as "the most—perhaps the only—able and honest man in the Kingdom" and increasingly circumvented Shah Shuja in favour of dealing with and empowering Usman Khan. Dalrymple, *Return of a King*, 274-275 [see FN 34]; Noelle, *State and Tribe*, 48 [see FN 4]; Lal, *Life of the Amir*, 368, 382-383 [see FN 27]; MacNaghten to Maddock, 27 October 1841, The British Library, London, India Office Records, L/PS/5/162, No 109, 537.

⁵⁷ Lal, *Life of the Amir Dost Mohammed Khan*, 316-317 [see FN 27].

⁵² Barfield, *Afghanistan*, 121 [see FN 8]. Dalrymple, *Return of a King*, 270-280 [see FN 34]; Kaye, *History of the War...*, 152-153 [see FN 1]; Lal, *Life of the Amir*, 380 [see FN 27].

⁵³ I refer here to the Tripartite Treaty signed by the Lord Auckland, Shah Shuja and the Sikh ruler of the Punjab, Ranjit Singh, in June 1838. Lal wrote of the clashes between the British and Shuja's chief of staff, Mullah Shakur, that "he had perfectly understood the real meaning of our treaty with the king, and by it knew that we had no right in the administration of the country, and therefore our position was not favourably looked on by him nor by the Shah." Lal, *Life of the Amir*, 315 [see FN 27].

⁵⁴ Lal, *Life of the Amir*, 313-314 [see FN 27].

⁵⁵ These groups overlapped—see FN 12.

⁵⁶ The British engineered Mullah Shakur's replacement by the locally unpopular Usman Khan Sadozai, who received the title Nizam al-Dawla, in late 1840. Usman Khan adopted a different strategy in response to the same sociological ambivalence as that

out. This rhetoric also failed on the local front, as it provided fodder for Shuja's opponents to paint him as a British slave and a king in name only.⁵⁸

Double government then and now

The war, including an 1842 British campaign to avenge the massacre of the Kabul garrison, cost the British an estimated eight million pounds (equivalent to more than 25 billion pounds in today's currency)⁵⁹, as compared to a total income equivalent to about 200,000 pounds for Dost Muhammad's state before the war.⁶⁰ Left behind in the citadel by his patrons when they withdrew in January 1842, Shah Shuja did manage to hang on to power for three months before being assassinated. In fact, in those final months of his rule, the British evacuation having freed his hand for pragmatic action, Shuja did fairly well in cobbling together alliances in Kabul, including with leaders of the anti-British revolt that would allow him to remain head of state. He was assassinated for reasons that had less to do with his affiliation with the British than with his taking sides in a factional struggle between erstwhile leaders of the Kabul revolt.⁶¹

The British administration that operated parallel to and closely oversaw the fledgling Afghan state contained the seeds of its own failure. Double government led to a breakdown of relations between Shah Shuja, whose local legitimacy and power was undermined by the high-spending and nannyish

foreign presence in Kabul, and the British, who, despite their own initial intentions, felt compelled to intervene into local governance. Shuja could not control the flow of information to the British, essential under indirect rule to the local ruler's ability to rule pragmatically in dissonance with colonial ideology and to send strategically contradictory messages to colonial and local audiences.

Furthermore, the British failure should not be dismissed simply as an example of an attempt to impose centralisation and bureaucratisation on a country that has rejected it throughout history. After all, restored to the throne by the British in 1843 and granted a generous subsidy to rule Afghanistan as a friendly buffer state, Dost Muhammad Khan succeeded in creating a national bureaucracy and regular army over the subsequent two decades according to his own methods. Amir Abdul Rahman Khan would later masterfully maintain audience segregation, brutally transforming Afghanistan into an autocracy with British subsidies exchanged for obedience in foreign policy, even as he portrayed himself as a champion of a xenophobic brand of Sunni Islam.⁶² The second reign of Dost Muhammad and reign of Abdul Rahman Khan may thus be pointed to as examples of successful indirect rule—so indirect that Afghanistan in this period would be better described as a *client state* than a colonial state.⁶³ Both emirs sacrificed subservience in foreign policy to the British for foreign support (without direct foreign intervention) that allowed them to consolidate power within Afghanistan.

The state-building interventions of the past two decades in Afghanistan, Iraq, East Timor, the former Yugoslavia and Haiti are, as the Anglo-Saddozai double government was, intended to be temporary processes that set up local rulers governing in a way that foreign interveners see fit. They share many of the characteristics of the 1839-1841 double government: enormous expenses to the interveners, foreign actors intermittently circumventing or overruling the very government that they purport to be 'capacity-building' and leaders like Hamid Karzai⁶⁴

⁵⁸ Shuja also attempted to segregate himself physically from the British, with similarly desultory effects on his relationship with his patrons. After the conquest of Kabul, a number of British officers took up residence in Shuja's palace-citadel, the Bala Hissar. Days after he was restored in Kabul, Shuja's herald—according to an American adventurer in the city at the time—had made a proclamation from the ramparts of his citadel "addressed alike to the king's English friends and native subjects" reading, "Everyone is commanded not to ascend the heights in the vicinity of the Royal harem under pain of being [disembowelled] alive. May the king live for ever." See *The Man Who Would Be King*, New York, Farrar, Straus, and Giroux 2004, 248. The British presence thus very concretely undermined Shuja's aura as unapproachable monarch and made his closeness to the British apparent to his Afghan audience. When Shuja demanded they leave the Bala Hissar for the British cantonment, the British officers in question viewed this as the height of ingratitude. Mohan Lal quotes Sir Willoughby Cotton, commander of British forces at the time, as exclaiming, "Shah Shuja declares he will resign his throne if he be so insulted by the contamination of those men who bled for him, and placed him where he is!" Lal, *Life of the Amir*, 324-325 [see FN 27].

⁵⁹ This measure of the relative value of the 1842 pound is based on the percentage of the total estimated output of the British economy that was spent on the war. 25 billion pounds would be an equivalent percentage of 2013 British GDP. See Lawrence H. Officer and Samuel H. Williamson, 'Six Ways to Compute the Relative Value of a U.K. Dollar Amount, 1270 to present', MeasuringWorth, 2014. <http://www.measuringworth.com/ukcompare/>.

⁶⁰ Barfield, *Afghanistan*, 120 [see FN 8].

⁶¹ Dalrymple, *Return of a King*, 370-394 [see FN 34].

⁶² Barfield, *Afghanistan*, 110, 150-154 [see FN 8].

⁶³ Writers on 'neo-imperialism' or 'neo-colonialism' have argued that the dominant form of imperialism in the late 20th and early 21st century has involved powerful states and even corporations exercising control over the policies of subordinate client states without claiming sovereignty or occupying countries militarily, a form of foreign rule at the far end of the spectrum from direct to indirect rule. See Calhoun, Cooper and Moore's introduction and Cooper's chapter 'Modernizing Colonialism and the Limits of Empire' in Craig Calhoun, Fredrick Cooper and Kevin W. Moore (eds), *Lessons of Empire: Imperial Histories and American Power*, New York, The New Press 2006.

⁶⁴ Indeed, Karzai (a Popalzai, the tribe to which Shuja's Saddozai sub-tribe belongs) was dogged by derogatory comparisons to Shah Shuja in political punditry and cartoons in Afghanistan during his decade as president of the country.

facing the dual challenge of reassuring their foreign patrons of their commitment to ideals of good governance while also convincing their domestic constituents of their local authenticity and independence from those patrons. I would argue that double government has in fact become more common in the post-Cold War era because 1) direct colonisation is rarely acceptable, 2) developmentalism, often folded into national security arguments about the global dangers of 'failed states', has taken over from liberal civilising imperialism as a discourse justifying interventions in the name of promoting good governance and 3) media coverage makes audience segregation and turning a blind eye to client state violence more difficult.⁶⁵

Of course, much has changed since the First Anglo-Afghan War in the circumstances of Afghanistan and its foreign state builders. The opium economy and the rise in prominence of non-governmental organisations and private-public contracting have all meant not just a doubling, but a multiplicity of organisations acting in ways we generally think of as the preserve of the state: waging war and policing, building infrastructure and providing social welfare.^{66,67} Multiple foreign states and the United Nations have been involved in state-building and often have clashed with one another in terms of priorities and the patronage of 'difficult' local officer-holders and demands to remove them.⁶⁸ Similar to,

but in a manner more complex, than double government, this shatters the client state's monopoly on the flow of political patronage and creates confusion, contradiction and redundancy in day-to-day governing, as well as opportunities for local actors to strategically play one organisation against another.⁶⁹ These various governing organisations' interests sometimes, but not always or necessarily, align, and a patchwork of shifting alliances of convenience emerges. For example, an alliance develops between Karzai and certain NGOs where civilian casualties caused by the foreign military are concerned, between women's rights advocates and the Supreme Court against United Nations efforts to devolve judicial authority to local councils or between the US military and narco-mafias when it comes to hunting down enemies.⁷⁰

Unlike the British in the First Anglo-Afghan War who were chiefly concerned with creating a friendly buffer state against the Russian Empire, the US in Afghanistan have had dual and sometimes contradictory priorities: building the highly centralised state created on paper in the 2004 Afghan constitution and waging a 'war on terror'.⁷¹ The war on terror prompted deal-making between the United States military and local Afghan power holders. The latter killed or captured 'terrorists' and Taleban (in reality, often rivals of those local power holders who were neither of those things) in exchange for US political support and money. In this way, the US

⁶⁵ This is not to say that audience segregation strategies characteristic of indirect rule are now impossible. The media spotlight of western countries tends to focus on countries under occupation; for instance, coverage of corruption and human rights violations in Iraq fell dramatically after the US withdrawal and only peaked again with the ISIS crisis. Coverage of Afghanistan has likewise declined together with the relative drawdown of US and NATO forces. US-backed regimes not subject to actual military occupations are, I would conjecture, better able to act in dissonance with purported American ideals without losing US government support.

⁶⁶ Astri Suhrke, *When More Is Less: The International Project in Afghanistan*, New York, Columbia University Press 2012, 119-123; Matthieu Aikins, 'Afghanistan: The Making of a Narco-State', *Rolling Stone*, 4 December 2014, <http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/afghanistan-the-making-of-a-narco-state-20141204>.

⁶⁷ One additional problem of parallelism of multiple administrations not evident in the First Anglo-Afghan War is an internal 'brain drain' of skilled personnel to organisations that offer higher pay and other benefits (such as prospects for expatriation) than the Afghan state. Mohammad Ashraf, "'Nation-Building' and Democratization in Afghanistan: The Need to Rethink the 'Democratic Reconstruction Model,'" in *From Mediation to Nation-Building: Third Parties and the Management of Communal Conflict*, Joseph R. Rudolph Jr. and William J. Lahneman (eds), Lanham, MD, Lexington Books 2013, 377-378.

⁶⁸ Another set of new actors comprises an elite of modernist Afghan migrants (derogatively referred to by political rivals as *sag shuyan*—dog washers) who returned from abroad with their own aspirations to transform the country and interpretations of local realities coloured by their experiences and educations abroad. The prominence of these actors in both Afghan and international

organisations blurs the line that was clearer (despite Shuja's lengthy stay in British India) in the first Anglo-Afghan war between foreign and local perspectives. Elizabeth Rubin, 'Karzai in His Labyrinth', *The New York Times*, 9 August 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/09/magazine/09Karzai-t.html?pagewanted=all>; Thomas Ruttig, 'Flash to the Past: Power Play before the 2002 Emergency Loya Jirga', *The Afghanistan Analysts Network*, AAN Blog, 27 April 2012, <https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/flash-to-the-past-power-play-before-the-2002-emergency-loya-jirga/>; Suhrke, *When More Is Less*, 224-225 [see FN 66].

⁶⁹ Such strategic behaviour is reminiscent of the grain merchants who were able to appeal to British fondness for free markets to get away with hoarding and starving the poor.

⁷⁰ Suhrke, *When More Is Less*, 212-215 [see FN 66]; *Human Rights Watch*, "'Troops in Contact': Airstrikes and Civilian Deaths in Afghanistan', September 2008, <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2008/afghanistan0908/afghanistan0908web.pdf>.

⁷¹ War on terror priorities to kill and capture enemies were also the driving force behind the most significant early example of double-government-style intervention into Karzai's statecraft. In December 2001, the US derailed then-Interim President Karzai's attempts to pragmatically offer amnesty to the defeated Taleban and incorporate them into the political process. Bette Dam, 'The Misunderstanding of Hamid Karzai', *Foreign Policy*, 3 October 2014, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/10/03/the-misunderstanding-of-hamid-karzai/>.

empowered those local power holders and in so doing undermined the central Afghan state.⁷²⁷³

Local elites have figured out—with greater ingenuity than the 19th century chiefs who only knew how to bring their irregular cavalry to the parade ground—how to profit off the opportunities created by the intervention, many becoming construction entrepreneurs, security contractors and the like, and so have been happy to continue cooperating with the political system as long as military contracts or aid money continued to flow.⁷⁴ Those unable to benefit from the intervention because of tribal affiliation or Taleban past, were often preyed upon by those who were empowered by the intervention. Often, they joined the ranks of the insurgency.⁷⁵ This division between winners and losers from intervention has

⁷² Anand Gopal, *No Good Men Among the Living: America, the Taliban, and the War Through Afghan Eyes*, New York, Metropolitan Books 2014; Suhrke, *When More Is Less*, 142-148 [see FN 66].

⁷³ This parallels, but far exceeds in scope, the practical necessity for the British of paying off chiefs for ‘protecting’ their supply lines back to India and so empowering the latter relative to Kabul. Of course, the opportunity to gain wealth and power independent of the central state through playing a role in resupplying interveners has also played a role in 21st century Afghanistan’s politico-economic landscape because the US intervention shares double governments characteristic of massive expenses in maintaining an administrative and military presence and tenuous supply lines.

⁷⁴ Case studies of Badakhshan, Kunduz and Istalif have argued that the promise of continuing aid money and threat of foreign military force have, at least temporarily, had the effect of tamping down large-scale political violence among those sub-national leaders who benefit from the intervention. The maintenance of this relative peace may depend, however, upon the continued influx of foreign money, and by making political deals with and providing aid to leaders at provincial and local levels, foreign interveners are strengthening their ability to challenge the central state in the future. Noah Coburn, *Bazaar Politics: Power and Pottery in an Afghan Market Town*, Stanford, Stanford University Press 2011, 204-223; Philipp Münch ‘Local Afghan Power Structures and the International Military Intervention: A Review of Developments in Badakhshan and Kunduz Provinces’, *Afghanistan Analysts Network*, Thematic Report 03/2013, 12 November 2013, http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/20131110_PMunch_Kunduz-final.pdf; Philipp Münch, ‘Resolute Support Light: NATO’s New Mission Versus the Political Economy of the Afghan National Security Forces’, *Afghanistan Analysts Network*, Discussion Paper 1/2015, 12 January 2015, 8, https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/20150112-PMuench-Resolute_Support_Light.pdf; Suhrke, *When More Is Less*, 147-154 [see FN 66].

⁷⁵ In Uruzgan, for instance, many leaders who aligned themselves with the Taleban in the latter’s resurgence in the mid-2000s were locally described as either 1) *majbur* (forced), because they were actively targeted by international forces and the Popalzai faction led by Jan Muhammad Khan that dominated the province’s government with American backing or as 2) *naraz* (dissatisfied) because they were shut out from the prestige and benefits of government office and consultation. Martine van Bijlert, ‘Unruly Commanders and Violent Power Struggles: Taliban Networks in Uruzgan’, in *Decoding the New Taliban: Insights from the Afghan Field*, Antonio Giustozzi (ed), London, Hurst 2009, 155-177.

led to a sustained civil war rather than a broad-based revolt as in 1841.

Nonetheless, certain patterns in the relationship between intervener and local ruler are strikingly similar to those described above. Like Shah Shuja, President Karzai was unable to separately address different discourses to foreign and local audiences. In 2009 and 2010 Karzai threatened in closed-doors meetings with Afghan politicians to join the insurgency himself out of frustration with foreign interference in domestic politics.⁷⁶ In 2012, Karzai called NATO soldiers’ burning of Qurans to dispose of them “Satanic acts that will never be forgiven through apologies.” He also referred to the US and the Taleban in the same breath as “the two demons in our country” when meeting with the families of victims of the Panjwai massacre committed by an American soldier.⁷⁷ Each of such statements, intended to send a message to a specific local audience, made its way into the international news and contributed to a view in the US and Europe that Karzai was ungrateful and unreliable, if not mentally ill.⁷⁸ Even if diplomats in Kabul came to view “Mr. Karzai’s outbursts as playing to the galleries, meant for consumption by his own people only, not as serious statements of policy,” as a 2012 *New York Times* article suggested, NATO military commanders viewed such statements as increasing the likelihood of ‘insider’ and other attacks on their troops, and the reporting of those statements shaped public opinion and views among legislators in intervening countries that the Afghan president was undeserving of support.⁷⁹

In the 19th century, repeated British interventions foiled the designs of the British themselves that the Sadozai state appeal to local sources of legitimacy. Similarly, foreign powers in 21st century Afghanistan have been eager to use appeals to Islam to provide state legitimacy, but then feel compelled to intervene when they disapprove of how Islam is actually being

⁷⁶ Rubin, ‘Karzai in His Labyrinth’ [see FN 68]; Martine van Bijlert, ‘Separating the Government, the Taleban, and the People (1): Karzai and the Confusion in Kabul’, *The Afghanistan Analysts Network*, AAN Blog, 7 April 2010, <https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/separating-the-government-the-taliban-and-the-people-1-karzai-and-the-confusion-in-kabul/>

⁷⁷ Dam, ‘The Misunderstanding of Hamid Karzai’, [see FN 71]; Rod Nordland, Alissa J. Rubin, and Matthew Rosenberg, ‘Gulf Widens Between U.S. and a More Volatile Karzai’, *The New York Times*, 17 March 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/18/world/asia/gulf-widens-between-us-and-an-increasingly-hostile-karzai.html?_r=0

⁷⁸ Rubin, ‘Karzai in His Labyrinth’ [see FN 68]; Dam, ‘The Misunderstanding of Hamid Karzai’, [see FN 71]; *The New York Times*, ‘Over the Line’, Editorial, 15 March 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/16/opinion/the-duplicity-of-afghanistans-president.html>

⁷⁹ Nordland et al, ‘Gulf Widens Between U.S. and a More Volatile Karzai’, [see FN 77]; *New York Times*, ‘Over the Line’ [see FN 78].

used in governing.⁸⁰ This has particularly been the case when it has come to the legal status of women and the prosecution of blasphemy and apostasy cases.⁸¹

President Ashraf Ghani's current push for foreign aid to be delivered to the central state for disbursement rather than directly to sub-national organisations and actors is an attempt, in effect, to erase the lines that distinguish double government from indirect rule as illustrated on Page 4. Ghani is trying to strengthen the national state by making it the sole conduit of foreign patronage within its territory as under indirect rule. Yet foreign countries (and editorial boards)⁸² are resistant to Ghani's demands because of concerns about good governance and money going astray into private pockets, and their proposed solution is continued intervention, following the model of double government.

⁸⁰ During the drafting of the 2004 Constitution, international representatives, whose approval Afghan participants' understood to be crucial, allowed the declaration that Afghanistan was an Islamic Republic and the vague stipulation that 'no law shall contravene the tenets and provisions of the holy religion of Islam in Afghanistan', although they informally vetoed the inclusion of any specific reference to *sharia law*. Barnett Rubin, 'Crafting a Constitution for Afghanistan', *Journal of Democracy* 15/3, July 2004, 5-19; Thomas Ruttig, 'Flash to the Past: Long Live Consensus – A Look Back at the 2003 Constitutional Loya Jirga', *The Afghanistan Analysts Network*, AAN Dispatch, 28 January 2014, <http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/wp-content/uploads/wp-post-to-pdf-cache/1/flash-to-the-past-long-live-consensus-a-look-back-at-the-2003-constitutional-loya-jirga.pdf>.

As another example of foreign interest in harnessing local religious legitimacy, over the past decade the US Agency for International Development has made a point of recruiting mullahs into development programmes to do everything from advocate contraception use and women's rights to manage irrigation projects. Miho Sato, 'Challenges and Successes in Family Planning in Afghanistan', *Management Sciences for Health*, Occasional Papers No 6 (2007), <http://www.msh.org/sites/msh.org/files/Challenges-and-Successes-in-Family-Planning-in-Afghanistan.pdf>; USAID, 'Religious Leaders Promote Healthcare for Families', 10 December 2009, <http://www.usaid.gov/results-data/success-stories/religious-leaders-promote-healthcare-families>; USAID, 'Growing with the Flow', 23 September 2010, <http://www.usaid.gov/results-data/success-stories/growing-flow>; USAID Afghanistan, 'Rule of Law Stabilization – Formal Sector Component Program Evaluation,' August 2012, http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PDACU496.pdf.

⁸¹ Suhrke, *When More Is Less*, 153, 196-198, 203-211 [see FN 66].

⁸² *The New York Times*, 'The Afghan President's Overreach,' Editorial, 3 January 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/04/opinion/sunday/the-afghan-presidents-overreach.html?_r=0..

Conclusion

This paper has highlighted the dysfunction that was created by the existence of British administration parallel to the Afghan state it set out to build in 1839. The proximity of the British administration not only lent itself to contradictory or paralysed policy making, but also soured relations between the British and their ally Shah Shuja al-Mulk. None of the actors participating in the system of double government actually wanted it, yet attempts at securing Shuja's autonomy collapsed back into double government again and again because the proximity of the British *compelled* them to intervene.

My argument questions conventional assumptions that 1) the larger the international intervention, the more capable it is of achieving its goals, and 2) the state being built will be more effective the more closely it is overseen. The relatively large size of the British mission inherently created destabilising social and economic effects, and British oversight prevented the Afghan state from engaging in the pragmatic tactics and deal-making necessary to counter those effects or more generally to remain in power.

In pointing out the problems of double government, I by no means want to prescribe either direct or indirect colonial rule as an antidote (the other obvious alternative not discussed is 'non-colonial native rule'). My paper says nothing about what is good and bad for local populations under those alternatives to double government. Instead, it sticks to more limited comparisons of the costs of rule and of the ability of client/colonial states to survive for more than a few years.

Furthermore, I do not mean to dismiss the reformist goals of double government as mere foreign impositions that should not be forced on the 'natives'. The protection of human rights, the even application of the law to both the strong and the weak and protection from arbitrary seizure of property by whomever possesses the means of violence may all be worthy goals (even if the intervening states do not put those goals into practice themselves). My point is rather that a system of double government does not create a state capable of effectively pursuing those goals.

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