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Two Interventions

Comparing Soviet and US-led state-building in Afghanistan

The present paper draws on a forthcoming doctoral thesis, which compares the Soviet and the US-led state-building efforts in Afghanistan in three sectors: the security sector, fiscal policy, and the field of state legitimation. Following the introduction in section 1, section 2 briefly reviews the specific contexts of both interventions. Section 3 explains the analytical focus of the comparison. Its core results are presented in section 4. Section 5 draws some tentative conclusions.

The paper exclusively reflects the author's personal view.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There seems to be a broad consensus that building a capable and legitimate state is key to success in Afghanistan – even if success is defined narrowly as 'to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al-Qaida'. It is therefore rather astonishing to see that so far no systematic comparison has been drawn between the current, US-led intervention and the previous external intervention that aimed at strengthening and transforming the Afghan state: the Soviet intervention between 1979 and 1989. Politically, this may be understandable and justifiable, as the current intervention is based on broad international and national legitimacy – a legitimacy that the Soviet intervention lacked. The western media in particular tend to portray the Soviet intervention as an 'occupation' and the US-led intervention as an (increasingly violent) 'stabilisation' or 'peace mission'. However, the core of both is – or has progressively become – state-building: to build or strengthen an Afghan state that features the main characteristics of modern statehood. Therefore, the denial of structural similarities between the two interventions is unsatisfactory, in both practical and academic terms: First, it triggers doubts as to how

far lessons of the past for the ongoing intervention – which a thorough comparison could identify – are learned. Second, the lack of systematic comparison between the Soviet and the US-led interventions in Afghanistan constitutes a missed opportunity for the general debate on state-building and the insights that could be gained.

The present paper brings together the core results of the author's research comparing the Soviet and the US-led state-building efforts in Afghanistan. The research focused on three sectors of state-building: the security sector, fiscal policy, and state legitimation. The comparison aimed at identifying how both 'ownership' and 'sequencing' problems – key concepts in the general debate on state-building – have influenced the outcomes of the intervening powers' state-building efforts. The respective analysis was based on the assumptions that there must be basic stability and territorial control in any particular area of state-building, and that the relevant Afghan and/or external actors must share coherent objectives for state-building to succeed. It examined first, how exactly these preconditions were met in areas of successful

state-building in Afghanistan, and second, how a lack of basic stability and control and the existence of incoherent objectives hampered progress in other areas.

The results of the comparison underscore that the Soviet-promoted state-building in Afghanistan was, from the very beginning, severely hampered by the rural mujahedin insurgency. This led the Soviets to adopt an 'enclave strategy', focussing their military forces as well as capacity- and institution-building efforts on the cities. The Soviets and their Afghan partners of the *People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan* (PDPA) were reasonably successful in urban areas, for instance in building up and strengthening a number of political and economic institutions. However, state-building in the cities suffered from factionalism within the PDPA, leading to conflicting objectives, which the Soviets were not able to mitigate until their withdrawal. In addition, the Afghan state could not reach fiscal sustainability due to the ongoing war and remained extremely dependent on continued Soviet assistance. The Soviets and their PDPA partners also adopted 'stopgap' measures to reduce the military pressure on the regime, for instance through the creation of militias and the conclusion of 'protocols' with mujahedin groups. These measures succeeded in stabilising the military situation in the short run, but the allegiance of the militias and 'protocol groups' to the PDPA regime remained questionable. The regime lost the ability to control them as soon as it no longer had the necessary resources to do so. This was a major factor in the regime's collapse after Soviet military and economic support was stopped at the end of 1991.

The US-led state-building in Afghanistan, in comparison, was badly sequenced; as the intervening coalition tried to construct national political institutions before establishing basic control of the countryside, and invested in the militias-turned-police without marginalising former warlords and commanders. The intervening coalition even jeopardised its state-building efforts to some extent by tolerating and collaborating with informal powerbrokers rivalling the state. This undermined institution-building, caused damage to the legitimacy of the new Afghan state, and finally eased the resurgence of the Taliban. The worsening security situation also risks jeopardising earlier state-building successes: First, it led to the adoption of 'stopgap' measures in the security

sector somewhat similar to those in the 1980s, in particular to the creation of militias – with considerable further risks for state legitimacy and longer-term stability. Second, the actual and planned build-up of Afghan security forces, led by military actors, to up to 400,000 soldiers and police officers is causing sky-rocketing budget burdens for the future. If external support is not maintained at adequate levels, earlier achievements in Afghan fiscal policy as well as the sustainability of the Afghan state itself will be compromised.

Lessons learned from the comparison – that have relevance also beyond state-building in Afghanistan – would be, first, not to ignore calls to sequence interventions effectively. This means seriously taking stock of the situation before the intervention and formulating a corresponding state-building strategy, including providing resources needed to create the minimal conditions for success, such as basic territorial control. Ignoring these needs tends to backfire later.

Second, as long as basic stability and control in the country is not achieved, the state-to-be-built will necessarily continue to struggle with fiscal sustainability. Therefore, fiscal sustainability is not a realistic objective in times of actual civil war. At the same time, intervening powers should not cherish the illusion that they can cut back their support as long as the fiscal sustainability of the state they are trying to build is not in sight.

Third, efforts to build state capacities and institutions should focus on areas where basic stability and control has been established. A territorial differentiation can identify locations where capacity- and institution-building make sense, while other areas are not ready yet – or not ready any more. The resulting 'islands of statehood' can coexist with areas out of state control and potentially even produce a positive dynamism in the latter. Efforts to build capacities or institutions constitute a waste of resources in areas where this condition is not met.

Fourth, more thinking is warranted on how to ensure coherent state-building objectives, on both the local and the external actors' sides. While a lot has been written on how to deal with local 'spoilers', more creativity with respect to strengthening local reformers and forging genuine partnerships with them could help to more successfully marginalise actors opposed to the state-building agenda.

1 INTRODUCTION

There seems to be a broad consensus that building a capable and legitimate state is key to success in Afghanistan. From the very beginning of the US-led intervention, a large part of the academia was sceptical of both the Bush administration's messianic nation-building rhetoric and its actual focus on 'fighting terrorism' and called on the intervening coalition to engage more thoroughly in state-building in Afghanistan.[1] This perspective has come to be shared by the US administration. While President Barack Obama has defined US objectives in Afghanistan narrowly as 'to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al-Qaida',[2] CentCom Commander General David Petraeus elaborates: 'Accomplishing this aim, though, requires not just killing or capturing terrorists, but also developing Afghan security forces, reducing the drug trade that finances the insurgency, fostering the growth of Afghan governance ... creating basic economic opportunity for Afghan citizens, and so forth.'[3] Obama's special envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan, Ambassador Richard Holbrooke, adds that the US strategy for Afghanistan entails 'building a viable government that can take care of itself, a government that can defend itself'.[4] In other words, state-building has come to be central to the agenda of the main intervening power.

State-building can broadly be defined as an external intervention with the objective of creating or strengthening the structures of modern statehood in a given territory, which include most importantly the monopoly on the use of force and the ultimate decision-making authority within a demarcated territory.[5] Such an intervention can have both civilian and military components. State-building as defined here differs from the term 'state-formation' on the one hand, which focuses on endogenous processes leading to the establishment of states, and 'nation-building' on the other hand, which usually entails more ambitious agendas, including democratisation or national identity. The lean definition of state-building employed here also avoids normative assumptions or prescriptions with respect to 'good' state-building, as enshrined in the respective definitions by the OECD Development Assistance Committee.[6] Nevertheless, strategies of state-building usually comprise efforts in a broad range of sectors, from security sector reform to strengthening economic policy and public service delivery. They generally include assistance for capacity-building, institution-building, and structural reforms to ensure the long-term sustainability of the state-to-be-built.

Considering the generally agreed focus on state-building in Afghanistan and the plethora of questions and problems a strategy of state-building brings about, it is rather astonishing that – until now – no systematic comparison has been drawn between the current, US-led intervention and the previous external intervention that aimed at strengthening and transforming the Afghan state: the Soviet intervention between 1979 and 1989.[7] Admittedly, there have been comparisons between specific aspects of the interventions, such as military tactics and the respective attempts to justify the intervention. Journalists have also repeatedly drawn parallels. This however cannot replace systematic in-depth comparison between the Soviet and the US-led interventions. Despite frequent calls from Soviet veterans not to ignore the lessons from their experiences in Afghanistan, the current intervening powers tend to brush similarities aside.[8]

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[1] See eg Christopher Cramer and Jonathan Goodhand, 'Try Again, Fail Again, Fail Better? War, the State, and the "Post-Conflict" Challenge in Afghanistan', *Development and Change* (2002) 33:5, 885; or Andreas Wimmer and Conrad Schetter, 'State-Formation First – Recommendations for Reconstruction and Peace-Making in Afghanistan', *ZEF-Discussion Papers on Development Policy*, No 45, April 2002 (Bonn: Center for Development Research).

[2] Quoted from PBS Newshour, 'Obama sets plan to boost Afghan stability, confront Taliban and Al-Qaida', Newshour interview with Barack Obama, Richard Holbrooke, and David Petraeus, 27 March 2009, http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/asia/jan-june09/afghanpak_03-27.html.

[3] Quoted from Fred W Baker, 'Petraeus Parallels Iraq, Afghanistan Strategies', American Forces Press Service, 28 April 2009, http://www.defenselink.mil/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=54107.

[4] Quoted from PBS Newshour (see FN 2).

[5] Another core element of modern statehood is international recognition (see Sonderforschungsbereich 700, *Grundbegriffe der Governanceforschung – Ein Beitrag aus dem Teilprojekt A1*, SFB-Governance Working Paper Series No 8, updated version, June 2009, Berlin: DFG-Sonderforschungsbereich 700, p 7), which however appears to be less directly relevant for state-building efforts 'on the ground'.

[6] See eg OECD DAC, *State Building in Situations of Fragility: Initial Findings – August 2008* (Paris: OECD).

[7] See Astri Suhrke, 'The Danger of a Tight Embrace: Externally Assisted Statebuilding in Afghanistan', in Roland Paris and Timothy D Sisk (eds), *The Dilemmas of Statebuilding – Confronting the Contradictions of Postwar Peace Operations* (London, Routledge 2009), p 228.

[8] Cf: 'There is no inherent reason why the NATO and U.S. war in Afghanistan must follow the pattern of the Soviet war. The differences between the two outweigh the similarities...' (Bruce Riedel, 'Comparing the U.S. and

Politically, this may be understandable and justifiable, as the current intervention is based on broad international and national legitimacy – a legitimacy that the Soviet intervention clearly lacked. However, the denial of structural similarities between the interventions is unsatisfactory, in both practical and academic terms: First, it triggers doubts as to how far lessons of the past for the ongoing intervention – which a thorough comparison could identify – are learned.[9] Second, the lack of systematic comparison between the Soviet and the US-led intervention in Afghanistan constitutes a missed opportunity for the general debate on state-building and any insights that could be gained.

2   SOVIET AND US-LED INTERVENTION IN AFGHANISTAN

While the western media tend to portray the Soviet intervention as an 'occupation' and the US-led intervention as an (increasingly violent) 'stabilisation' or 'peace mission', the core of both is – or has progressively become – state-building: to build or strengthen an Afghan state that features the main characteristics of statehood as defined above. During both interventions, the intervening powers have employed not only military force, but also substantial civilian aid, to strengthen state capacities and institutions. In both cases, the intervening powers have come to support a mainly city-based regime – one with a Soviet-like outlook, the other with a western-liberal appearance (both 'modern' in the Afghan context). Finally, both interventions have faced a rural-based insurgency with Islamist and nationalist motives that benefits from sanctuaries on Pakistani territory.

At the same time, however, there are a number of prima facie differences, not only in the condition of the Afghan state at the onset of each intervention, but also in the approaches taken by the intervening power:

First, the set of actors on both the Afghan regime's and the intervening power's side varies markedly. During the 1980s, the Soviet Union was the only truly relevant intervening power; other Eastern Bloc states provided no military forces and only limited amounts of civilian aid, political advice, and training for Afghans abroad. Today, although the USA is clearly the dominant external actor, the European Union, the United Nations, and others bring in their own weight and importance. On the Afghan side, the ruling 'communist' *People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan* (PDPA)[10] was the only relevant partner for the Soviet Union; while today, the Karzai administration's 'big tent' policy creates a heterogeneous set of 'partners' for the intervening powers to work with.

Second, the Soviet military and civilian resources employed to prop up the PDPA regime were substantial from the very beginning: 80,000 Soviet soldiers moved in during the first weeks of the intervention and already generous civilian aid was further increased.[11] The USA instead relied on its Air Force and a limited number of Special Forces to topple the Taliban regime in coalition with the Northern Alliance and other militias.[12] After an initial wave of humanitarian assistance, it was only after a delay of several years that civilian aid increased substantially.

Third, the depth of the intervening power's intrusion into Afghan domestic affairs appears to differ: While the PDPA regime was generally seen and stigmatised as a 'puppet' of the Soviet Union, the USA and the *United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan* (UNAMA) proclaimed to favour a 'light footprint' of international presence from the

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Soviet experiences in Afghanistan', *CTC Sentinel* 2009, 2:5, 1, p 4).

[9] As an illustration: a 'Post-War Reconstruction digest' on Afghanistan, published in 2005, contains not even a single entry on the Soviet experiences, despite a dedicated section on 'History and Background' (cf Melanie Kawano and Amy McGuire, 'State-building in Afghanistan', *Post-war Reconstruction* Digest, 2005, http://www.du.edu/korbel/hrhw/digest /reconstruction/afgstate.pdf). Anton Minkov and Gergory Smolynec have undertaken the first systematic attempt to distil 'lessons learned' from the Soviet state-building efforts in Afghanistan for the current intervention (Anton Minkov and Gregory Smolynec, *Social Development and State Building in Afghanistan during the Soviet Period, 1979–1989: Lessons Learned from the Soviet Experience in Afghanistan*, Defence R&D Canada Centre for Operational Research & Analysis 2009).

[10] While the PDPA adopted stereotypical Marxist-Leninist language and symbolism, urban-rural, ethnic, tribal, and personal divisions also had major influence on its politics and policies (see eg Henry S Bradsher, *Afghanistan's Two-Party Communism: Parcham and Khalq*, Stanford: Hoover Institution Press 1983).

[11] See eg Paul Robinson and Jay Dixon, 'Soviet Development Theory and Economic and Technical Assistance to Afghanistan, 1954–1991', *The Historian* (forthcoming).

[12] Until the mid-1980s, Soviet forces increased further to about 120,000. With a delay of several years after the 2001 intervention, the US-led coalition also increased force strengths in Afghanistan, which are supposed to reach 130,000 in mid-2010. These forces are further augmented by about 70,000 contractors (Antonio Giustozzi, personal communication).

onset of their intervention. The Bonn talks of November and December 2001 explicitly recognised the sovereignty of the new Afghan state, even before a functioning Afghan government was in place – however masking some of the external actors' actual influence.

Fourth, the ideological leitmotifs of the intervening powers obviously differ: a system of socialist orientation, on the one hand, and a liberal market democracy, on the other hand. While both presuppose a capable, modern state, the resulting approaches to state-building vary, for instance with respect to economic policies and the logic of political legitimation.

Fifth, there are large differences between the 'rest' of the Afghan state the intervening powers encountered and aimed to strengthen or to rebuild: While the spreading insurgency, large-scale desertions from the security forces, and persecution-induced emigration had substantially weakened the Afghan state at the end of 1979, it was still able to function, particularly in the cities. In 2001, the formal structures of the state remained, along with some staff, but it was unable to perform many, even basic tasks. The Soviets' efforts had much more to build upon in comparison to the current intervenors.

Sixth, the acceptance of the intervention by the Afghan population differs markedly: The arrival of the 1979 'atheist invaders' was greeted with hostile reactions by a large majority of Afghans,[13] while the defeat of the Taliban regime, thanks to the US-led intervention, was initially welcomed by a majority.

Finally, in addition to the specific initial conditions in Afghanistan in 1979 and 2001 and to the intervening powers' divergent approaches, the world political context had changed. The Cold War which fed the mujahedin insurgency in the 1980s gave way to the 'war against terrorism', in which a broad coalition of states stands in support of the Afghan state-to-be-built, as testified by repeated UN resolutions.

All of these differences in conditions, approaches, and context between the Soviet and the US-led interventions in Afghanistan are related to factors the academic debate on state-building has identified as keys for success or failure.[14] Together with the common state-building objectives of both the Soviet and the US-led efforts in Afghanistan,

these differences make a comparison between the two interventions particularly rewarding. They permit the exploration of general preconditions for successful state-building, possibly also beyond the Afghan case. Two of these preconditions are discussed in the following section.

3   TWO PRECONDITIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL STATE-BUILDING

The academic debate on state-building – although rather lively – has not travelled very far yet with respect to identifying preconditions and mechanisms for successful state-building. The main undisputed finding seems to be that the means or resources invested by the intervening powers must correspond to the ends they intend to achieve.[15] This applies to both military force and civilian assistance. In addition, quantitative multi-case studies have shown that state-building tends to be particularly challenging in least developed countries, compared to economically more advanced countries.[16]

At the same time, negative side effects of external interventions in general and civilian aid in particular are increasingly discussed in the literature. As a result, the debate has focussed more and more on the inherent problems of state-building interventions. The *Research Partnership on Postwar Statebuilding* (RPPS) – a leading international research project in that area, now replaced by the *Sustainable Peacebuilding Network* (SPN) – consequently focussed on identifying different sets of 'dilemmas' caused by unintended side-effects of state-building efforts. The RPPS distinguished between 'footprint dilemmas', 'duration dilemmas', 'participation dilemmas', and

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[13] See Boris V Gromov, *Ograničennyj kontingent* (Moscow: Isdatelskaja Gruppa 'Progress – Kultura' 1994), p 121.

[14] For references of key contributions to the debate, see section 3.

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[15] See Marina Ottaway, 'Rebuilding State Institutions in Collapsed States', *Development and Change* (2002) 33:5, 1001; Simon Chesterman, 'Transitional Administration, State-Building and the United Nations', in Simon Chesterman, Michael Ignatieff and Ramesh Thakur (eds), *Making States Work: State Failure and the Crisis of Governance* (New York: United Nations University Press 2005); James F Dobbins, Seth G Jones, Keith Crane, and Beth Cole DeGrasse, *The Beginner's Guide to Nation-Building – A Guidebook for Conducting Effective Nation-Building Operations* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation 2007).

[16] See Michael W Doyle and Nicholas Sambanis, 'International Peacebuilding: A Theoretical and Quantitative Analysis', *American Political Science Review* (2000) 94:4, 779, p 789; Christoph Zürcher, *Is More Better? Evaluating External-Led State Building after 1989*, CDDRL Working Papers (Stanford: Center on Democracy, Development, and the Rule of Law; Stanford Institute on International Studies 2006), p 17.

'coherence dilemmas'. As these dilemmas 'cannot be resolved in any definitive sense',[17] the only remedy for practitioners, it says, is to engage in 'dilemma analyses' in order to minimise the dilemmas' negative consequences.[18]

This remains unsatisfactory from both an academic and a practitioner's point of view, as the identification of 'dilemmas' highlights trade-offs between different state-building approaches, but tends to obscure ways to reduce them. The underlying tensions thus merit further examination. Two problems seem to be at the roots of many of the 'dilemmas' mentioned above: the ownership problem and the sequencing problem.

Local 'ownership' is one of the most used and misused buzzwords, not just in development assistance. It has also become a 'mantra across all fields of research on state-building',[19] evolving into a genuine 'statebuilding orthodoxy'.[20] Lack of ownership of reforms advocated by the intervening powers, ie lack of acceptance and promotion of these reforms by their local partners, is seen as a main reason for the failure of state-building efforts. While the consensus on the need for ownership seems to be well founded in practice, the use of the term frequently lacks consistency and substance.[21] In general, the emergence of ownership is thought of as a one-way process, in which local actors develop ownership with respect to the intervening powers' concepts and ideas for reforms. However, there is frequently no genuine interest in these reforms within the dominant local elite, even if they might benefit the broad majority of the population. In the end, the problem of 'stimulating' ownership thus comes down to the question 'whose ownership?'

This underscores the need for actor-centred analysis, which remains a weakness of state-building research. In order to gain a deeper understanding of the ownership problem, the key is to scrutinise how far the objectives of local and/or external actors are coherent or incoherent in specific areas of state-building. Only if the objectives of the relevant actors are genuinely coherent – beyond mere proclamations – does substantial success seem likely in an area of state-building. This perspective produces a more balanced account of 'ownership' and its absence as a tool for explaining successes and failures of state-building interventions.

'Sequencing' in turn refers to the order in time of different contributions within a state-building intervention. Issues of sequencing normally result from a demand to prioritise specific components of state-building over other components: 'Do Prioritise and Sequence'[22] has become a common call for (more) effective state-building strategies. Jim Dobbins and colleagues have developed a checklist of six state-building priorities, which can also be understood as a recipe for sequencing: first security, second humanitarian relief, third governance, fourth economic stabilisation, fifth democratisation, and sixth development.[23] However, serious doubts remain regarding the rather schematic nature of this kind of phase models. In addition, experience suggests that sequencing *within* specific areas of state-building is at least as crucial as sequencing *between* different areas.[24] Divergences also remain with respect to the adequate timing of democratising reforms in state-building processes.[25]

However, all authors tend to agree that establishing a basic degree of stability and control of the country's territory is a necessary 'first step' in all interventions. If insecurity prevails, all efforts in capacity-building, institution-building, and structural reforms will, at best, be unsustainable

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[17] Roland Paris and Timothy D Sisk, *Managing Contradictions: The Inherent Dilemmas of Postwar Statebuilding* (New York: International Peace Academy 2007), p 7.

[18] Roland Paris and Timothy D Sisk, 'Conclusion: Confronting the Contradictions', in Roland Paris and Timothy D Sisk (eds), *The Dilemmas of Statebuilding – Confronting the Contradictions of Postwar Peace Operations* (London: Routledge 2009), pp 310–11.

[19] Zoe Scott, *Literature Review on State-Building* (Birmingham: University of Birmingham International Development Department, Governance and Social Development Resource Centre 2007), p 8.

[20] Paris and Sisk, *Managing Contradictions* (see FN 17), p 4.

[21] See Simon Chesterman, 'Ownership in Theory and in Practice: Transfer of Authority in UN Statebuilding Operations', *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* (2007) 1:1, 3, p 3.

[22] Alan Whaites, *States in Development: Understanding State-Building*, A DFID Working Paper (London: Department for International Development, Policy and Research Division 2008), p 21.

[23] See Dobbins et al, *The Beginner's Guide to Nation-Building* (see FN 15).

[24] See Verena Fritz and Alina Rocha Menocal, *Understanding State-building from a Political Economy Perspective – An Analytical and Conceptual Paper on Processes, Embedded Tensions and Lessons for International Engagement*, report for DFID's Effective and Fragile States Teams (London: Overseas Development Institute 2007).

[25] See Thomas Carothers, 'The "sequencing" fallacy', *Journal of Democracy* (2007) 18:1, 12; Edward D Mansfield and Jack Snyder, 'The sequencing "fallacy"', *Journal of Democracy* (2007) 18:3, 5.

and, at worst, actually further destabilise. From this perspective, basic stability and control can be understood as another precondition for successful state-building, in addition to the coherence of objectives between the relevant actors in the area of interest.

Building upon these general reflections, the author's comparison of the Soviet and the US-led interventions in Afghanistan focused on identifying how both 'ownership' and sequencing problems have influenced the outcomes of the intervening powers' state-building efforts. The analysis was based on the assumptions that there must be basic stability and control in any particular area of state-building, and that the relevant Afghan and/or external actors must share coherent objectives for state-building to succeed. It examined first, how exactly these preconditions were met in areas of successful state-building, and second, how a lack of basic stability and control and how incoherent objectives hampered progress in other areas of state-building.

The comparison did not primarily look at the overall picture, since these kinds of general assessments leave too much room for interpretation and frequently do not reach an adequate depth of analysis. Instead, it examined more closely specific sectors of state-building – the security sector, fiscal policy, and the field of state legitimation – in order to better decipher the underlying causal mechanisms.[26] The following section brings together the main results of these sector case studies and puts them into broader perspective.

4 SUCCESSES AND FAILURES OF STATE-BUILDING IN AFGHANISTAN

4.1 ... during the Soviet intervention

The dominant understanding is that the Soviet state-building efforts in Afghanistan failed. Clearly the intervention was disastrous for the Soviet Union itself: The 1979 invasion led not only to a serious deterioration in the Soviet Union's relations with the West and the developing world; over time, the continuing Afghan war also became a substantial burden on its civilian and military resources and tarnished the Soviet leadership's domestic legitimacy. However, the picture inside

Afghanistan is much more complex: First, the Najibullah regime managed to stay in power for more than three years beyond the withdrawal of the Soviet Army in February 1989, even though western observers had predicted Najibullah's immediate fall. This alone indicates a certain degree of success in the Soviet state-building efforts. Second, a deeper analysis reveals that the state-building efforts of the 1980s were actually quite successful in building state capacities and institutions in those areas secured by Soviet and Afghan forces, ie mainly in the cities.

Following the invasion, the military situation stabilised around 1983 and remained relatively unchanged until the Soviet withdrawal: The PDPA regime controlled between one fifth and one quarter of the territory during the day, an area that shrunk to the 25 largest cities, the main transport routes, and industrial areas at night. One third of the territory remained disputed; the mujahedin controlled the rest.[27] Thus, by far the largest part of the territory stayed beyond control of the government.[28] Nevertheless, the areas under government control were relatively well protected and, as long as the Soviet troops were in the country, no major town or government installation was ever taken by the mujahedin.[29] Due to the government's control of the cities, five million out of an estimated 18 million Afghans lived under government control.[30] Another five million had fled the country to Pakistan and Iran.

This rather stable constellation of territorial control provided a sufficient basis for the Afghan cities to see a process which western and opposition observers labelled 'Sovietization'[31]:

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[26] The case studies will be published in full length in Martin Kipping, *State-building: Erfolg und Scheitern in Afghanistan*, dissertation (Free University Berlin).

[27] See Chantal Lobato and Gilles Dorronsoro, 'Les milices en Afghanistan', *Est & Ouest* (1989) 7:63, 23; Antonio Giustozzi, *War, Politics and Society in Afghanistan 1978–1992* (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press 2000), pp 282–84; Anton Minkov and Gregory Smolynec, *Social Development and State Building in Afghanistan* (see FN 9), pp 21–24.

[28] This being said, 'beyond control' does not equal 'beyond influence'. See the discussion on the ceasefire 'protocols' below.

[29] See Nikolay Spasibo, *Operational Lessons from Afghanistan* (Camberley: Conflict Studies Research Centre, Directorate General Development and Doctrine, Royal Military Academy Sandhurst 1997), p 9.

[30] See CPSU, 'Sekretnye dokumenty iz ocobyx papok: Afganistan', *Voprosy Istorii*, 3/1993, 3, p 25; Aleksandr Antonovich Lyakhovskiy, *Tragedija i doblest' afgana* (Jaroslavl': Nord 2004), p 496.

[31] A Rasul Amin, 'A General Reflection on the Stealthy Sovietisation of Afghanistan', *Central Asian Survey* (1984) 3:1, 47; Olivier Roy, 'The Sovietization of Afghanistan', in Milan Hauner and Robert L Canfield (eds), *Afghanistan and the Soviet Union – Collision and*

Existing 'revolutionary' political institutions were strengthened and new ones set up according to Soviet blueprints. The PDPA, which had shrunk to a meagre 2,000 to 3,000 members by the end of 1979,[32] expanded to 41,000 members by August 1980 and 205,000 members by March 1988.[33] The state-party apparatus also became more effective.[34] At the same time, Soviet-style mass organisations were founded. The two most important ones were the *Democratic Youth Organisation of Afghanistan* (DYOA) and the *Democratic Women Organisation of Afghanistan* (DWOA). Their membership had increased respectively to 220,000 and 130,000 by the end of the 1980s.[35] Even if the ideological commitment of parts of the party's and mass organisations' membership were questionable, '[t]he regime had undoubtedly won a constituency.'[36]

Thanks to sufficient stability and government control in urban and industrial areas, relatively successful institution- and capacity-building to expand the economic base of the Afghan state was also realised. Building upon earlier support, the Soviet Union provided massive assistance to develop state-owned industry and exploit natural resources. As a result, Afghan industrial production recovered significantly and steadily after a deep drop around 1980. The public sector created approximately 40,000 new jobs annually.[37] The contribution of state-run businesses to state revenues (excluding profits from natural gas) increased from 4 per cent in 1984–85 to 11 per cent in 1986–87,[38] while state domestic revenues

(again excluding profits from natural gas) increased by an average of 13 per cent annually.[39] Both in building Soviet-style political institutions and in pursuing state-led industrialisation, the PDPA government and the Soviets basically shared the same models and objectives – sometimes, the PDPA leadership even turned out to be more 'Soviet' than the intervening power wished it to be.

While 'islands' of Soviet-style statehood developed in the cities, most prominently in Kabul, the ongoing war severely limited the scope of these state-building successes. In particular, it made fiscal sustainability of the Afghan state unachievable. Both military and civilian spending sky-rocketed, especially towards the end of the 1980s. Defence expenditures increased from 15 to 18 per cent of the state budget in the mid-1980s – when it was already the biggest single expenditure category[40] – to 60 per cent in 1988–89.[41] In addition, the regime undertook substantial efforts to win over and maintain the support of the city population through generous social policies. Besides subsidised energy and water supply, health services, public transport, and public housing for government employees, a coupon system played a key role. The coupons provided access to subsidised food and consumer goods from state-run cooperatives. Though already in existence when the PDPA took power, these highly popular subsidies were systematically expanded in the course of the 1980s to benefit approximately 340,000 families towards the end of the decade.[42]

While these policies helped to stabilise the regime, they had problematic knock-on effects on the Afghan state's fiscal stance: The ratio of recurrent expenditure to investment expenditure rose from 56:44 in 1979–80 to 69:31 in 1982–83, to 74:26 in 1986–87 and to 84:16 in 1988–89.[43] In addition, the budget deficit ballooned, from 17 per cent in 1980–81 to 42 per cent in 1986–87 and to 70 per

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Transformation (Boulder: Westview Press 1989); Sayed Bahaouddin Majrooh and Sayed M Yusuf Elmi, *The Sovietization of Afghanistan* (Peshawar: Afghan Information Centre, Afghan Jehad Works Translation Centre, without year).

[32] Bradsher, *Afghanistan's Two-Party Communism* (see FN 10), p 100.

[33] Giustozzi, *War, Politics and Society* (see FN 27), p 253. Compatible numbers provided by Fred Halliday and Zahir Tanin, 'The Communist Regime in Afghanistan 1978–1992: Institutions and Conflicts', *Europe-Asia Studies* (1998) 50:8 , 1357, p 1363.

[34] Barnett R Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan* (New Haven: Yale University Press 1995), p 155.

[35] Interview with Dr Baktash, former functionary of the PDPA Central Committee, 22 September 2008.

[36] Anthony Hyman, *Afghanistan under Soviet Domination: 1964–91*, third edition (Basingstoke: Macmillan 1992), p 229.

[37] Vladimir Avakov, *Afghanistan auf dem Weg zum Frieden,* translation from Russian (Moscow: APN-Verlag 1998), p 7.

[38] A Bari and J Gurtz, 'Grundzüge des Finanzsystems der Demokratischen Republik Afghanistan unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des Staatshaushalts', in Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin (ed), *Die Volkswirtschaft*

Afghanistans – Beiträge zur Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft der Demokratischen Republik Afghanistan, Berichte (Berlin: Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin 1987), p 36.

[39] Anton Minkov and Gregory Smolynec, *Economic Development in Afghanistan during the Soviet Period, 1979–1989: Lessons Learned from the Soviet Experience in Afghanistan* (Defence R&D Canada Centre for Operational Research & Analysis 2007), p 9.

[40] Statistisches Bundesamt, *Länderbericht Afghanistan 1989* (Stuttgart: Metzler-Poeschel 1989), p 67.

[41] Avakov, *Afghanistan auf dem Weg zum Frieden* (see FN 37), p 7; Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan* (see FN 34), p 161; Minkov and Smolynec, *Economic Development in Afghanistan* (see FN 39), p 5.

[42] Giustozzi, *War, Politics and Society* (see FN 27), p 190.

[43] Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan* (see FN 34), p 113.

cent in 1988–89.[44] At the same time, the proportion of deficit financing by the central bank – ie by printing extra money – increased from zero at the beginning of the 1980s to 23 per cent in 1986–87 and to 44 per cent in 1988–89.[45] The effect was a disproportionate growth of currency in circulation from 59 billion Afghanis (Afs) in 1985 to Afs 71 billion in 1987 and Afs 152 billion in 1989.[46] Inflation accelerated at a rapid pace. Military hardware, fuel, much food, and consumer goods, however, had to be imported on credit from the Soviet Union, on which the PDPA regime depended for 70 per cent of its foreign aid, the reminder coming from other Eastern Bloc countries.[47]

The lack of basic stability and control in the largest part of the territory had consequences for security sector policies as well, particularly a reliance on 'stopgap' measures aimed at stabilisation. These included setting up various kinds of militias and signing 'protocols' with mujahedin groups. While party militias played a certain role in securing urban installations, 'tribal' or group-based militias also took part in offensive operations. The government expanded these group-based militias substantially in the second half of the 1980s. In contrast to the individual character of party militia membership, membership in the group-based militias was collective and mostly linked to a specific commander. Although the PDPA regime tried to formalise and regulate these militias, they remained primarily loyal to their specific commanders, the most famous being Abdul Rashid Dostum, who led a 40,000-strong Uzbek militia.[48] The militias grew to 170,000 fighters by 1989 and developed into an important pillar of the regime's security apparatus, the army and the paramilitary police adding a maximum of 150,000 and 155,000 respectively.[49] The militias did not necessarily

improve the regime's popularity in their areas of operation – Dostum's militia being particularly notorious for its abuses – but some proved to be effective fighting forces.

The conclusion of 'protocols' with mujahedin groups became a key component of Najibullah's 'Policy of National Reconciliation' launched in 1987. The protocols normally comprised a ceasefire agreement and a commitment by the respective mujahedin commanders to deny other mujahedin groups that were still fighting access to their territory. The government in turn provided cash and military hardware and granted de facto autonomy to the respective area. Although the state as a result abdicated territorial control in these protocol areas, this policy can be considered successful in weakening the military pressure on the regime in the short run: Commanders of 50,000 mujahedin fighters had signed protocols by June 1988, commanders of another 60,000 fighters were about to sign.[50] After the Soviet withdrawal, this policy met even bigger success: By the beginning of 1992, around three quarters of mujahedin commanders had signed protocols with the government.[51]

These policies, taken together, enabled the PDPA regime to stabilise, first during the course of the 1980s and again after the failure of major mujahedin offensives in 1989. Capacity- and institution-building in the cities combined with generous social policies and high military expenditures helped to consolidate the regime in the urban areas under its control; at the same time, 'stopgap' measures like militias and protocols reduced the military pressure from rural areas. From a general perspective, this approach can be described as an 'enclave strategy'[52]: Efforts in capacity- and institution-building focussed on the cities, while the regime left large parts of the country wide open to the mujahedin and renounced any state-building efforts there.[53]

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[44] Ibid.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan* (see FN 34), pp 161–62.

[47] Dieter Braun and Karlernst Ziem, *Afghanistan: Sowjetische Machtpolitik – Islamische Selbstbestimmung: Innerafghanische Prozesse, regionale Konfliktfolgen, internationale Verflechtungen, Aktuelle Materialien zur Internationalen Politik,* Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP), Vol 17 (Baden-Baden: Nomos 1988), p 124.

[48] Makhmut Akhmetovich Gareev, *Afghanistan nach dem Abzug der sowjetischen Truppen,* Strategische Studien, Vol 9 (Zürich: vdf, Hochschul-Verlag an der ETH 1996), p 224; Gilles Dorronsoro, *La révolution afghane – Des communistes aux tâlebân* (Paris: Éditions Karthala 2000), p 226.

[49] Giustozzi, *War, Politics and Society* (see FN 27), pp 285 and 266. See also M Hassan Kakar, *Afghanistan – The Soviet Invasion and the Afghan Response, 1979–*

1982 (Berkeley: University of California Press 1995), pp 172–74.

[50] Avakov, *Afghanistan auf dem Weg zum Frieden* (see FN 37), p 16.

[51] Minkov and Smolynec, *Social Development and State Building in Afghanistan* (see FN 9), p 20. Other sources indicate even higher figures (interview with Prof Kabir Ranjbar, former advisor to Najibullah, 22 September 2008; interview with Dr Eckart Schiewek, UNAMA, 8 October 2008).

[52] Kakar, *Afghanistan* (see FN 49), p 257.

[53] Amin Saikal and William Maley, *Regime Change in Afghanistan: Foreign Intervention and the Politics of Legitimacy* (Boulder: Westview Press 1991), p 55; interview with Said Mohammad Gulabzoy, former PDPA Minister of the Interior, 21 October 2008; see also Alex Marshall, 'Managing Withdrawal: Afghanistan as the

Similarly, the Soviet army only ever concentrated on twenty-five locations and on securing the transport corridors between them.[54] While it remains unclear in how far this 'enclave strategy' was a genuine strategy or rather the mere reflex of limited military and civilian resources,[55] this prioritisation seems to have been an adequate approach, considering the limitations of the regime and of its external supporter.

However, the strategy struggled with two major problems: factionalism within the PDPA and the extreme dependence of the Afghan state on continued Soviet aid. Soon after its foundation in 1965, the PDPA had split into two main factions: *Khalq* ('Masses') and *Parcham* ('Banner'). The factions had officially reunited in 1977, but after their successful *Saur* revolution of 1978, it took little time before *Khalq* monopolised power and exiled and persecuted *Parcham* leaders and activists. The Soviet intervention forced *Khalq* back into a de facto coalition government, this time under *Parcham* leader Babrak Karmal.

However, the factional infighting continued during the 1980s, and it did so most intensively in the security sector, where a faction's influence equalled control over means of violence. Due to *Khalq*'s strong position in the army and police, both Karmal and his *Parcham* successor Najibullah took care to build up an additional security force under *Parcham*'s exclusive control: the notorious secret service *KhAD* (*Khedamat-e ettela'at-e daulat* or 'State Information Service').[56] In addition, because of the strong presence of their factional rivals, both Karmal and Najibullah tended to obstruct Soviet efforts to decisively strengthen the Afghan army.[57] Due to the *Khalq-Parcham* conflict, attempts to create structures for coordinating the multitude of different security forces also did not

get off the ground.[58] Thus, the factional conflict – resulting in incoherent objectives pursued by key actors – hampered both the build-up of the Afghan army and any attempt to create an overall coordination structure. *KhAD*, however, was controlled by *Parcham* alone. Spared from internal factional infighting – and with substantial KGB assistance – it progressively grew to become the most effective and feared security force of the regime.[59] Maintaining a horrible human rights record, *KhAD* was in charge of controlling opposition in the areas under government control, but it also infiltrated mujahedin groups, provided military intelligence, and directly participated in fighting. Some mujahedin groups feared *KhAD* more than they feared the Soviet army.[60]

While the Soviets identified and lamented factionalism as a core weakness of the PDPA regime, they never managed to control it. Not later than 1980, the Afghanistan working group of the Soviet Communist Party's Politburo had defined the unity of the PDPA as a priority.[61] While the PDPA leaders permanently faced respective Soviet appeals and promised to do better, the factional conflict continued unabated.[62] As far as their core interests were concerned, the PDPA leaders turned out to be anything but the Soviet puppets both opposition groups and western analysts labelled them as.[63] This factionalism continued to weaken the regime until its very end.

Forgotten Example in Attempting Conflict Resolution and State Reconstruction', *Small Wars & Insurgencies* (2008) 18:1, 68, p 76.

[54] Spasibo, *Operational Lessons* (see FN 29), p 4.

[55] Interview with former Soviet advisor resp diplomat Talatbek Masadykov and Vadim Nazarov, 6 November 2008; interview with former Soviet diplomat Zamir N Kabulov, 24 November 2008.

[56] While *KhAD's* predecessors AGSA and KAM under President Taraki and President Amin were reporting to the *Khalq*-controlled Ministry of the Interior, *KhAD* was formerly part of the Prime Minister's office. In January 1986, *KhAD* was upgraded to a stand-alone 'Ministry for State Security' (*WAD* or *Wezarat-e amniat-e daulati*), but remained generally known as *KhAD.*

[57] Lyakhovskiy, *Tragedija i doblest' afgana* (see FN 30), p 365; see also Riaz M Khan, *Untying the Afghan Knot – Negotiating Soviet Withdrawal* (Durham: Duke University Press 1991), p 55.

[58] Gareev, *Afghanistan nach dem Abzug* (see FN 48), p 205; Giustozzi, *War, Politics and Society* (see FN 27), p 80; Marshal, 'Managing Withdrawal' (see FN 53), p 80.

[59] Joris Versteeg, 'Où en est le Parti communiste afghan?' *Est & Ouest* (1989) 7:63, 14, p 14; Halliday and Tanin, 'The Communist Regime' (see FN 33), p 1366; Ralph H Magnus and Eden Naby, *Afghanistan – Marx, Mullah, and Mujahid* (Boulder: Westview Press 2002), p 132.

[60] See J Bruce Amstutz, *Afghanistan – The First Five Years of Soviet Occupation* (Washington D.C.: National Defense University 1986), p 282.

[61] Lyakhovskiy, *Tragedija i doblest' afgana* (see FN 30), pp 341–44.

[62] See Vasiliy Mitrokhin, *The KGB in Afghanistan – English Edition*, Working Paper No 40, Cold War International History Project (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars 2002), p 128; Artemy Kalinovsky, *The Blind Leading the Blind: Soviet Advisors, Counter-Insurgency and Nation-Building in Afghanistan*, Working Paper No 60, Cold War International History Project (Washington D.C.: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars 2010), p 25.

[63] Cf: 'The greatest problem the Soviet advisers and officials had, however, with the Afghan regime, and in particular with the top officials of the PDPA, was the refusal of the latter to follow the advice which Moscow

The collapse of the regime in April 1992 revealed the second problem the Soviet state-building efforts encountered: the extreme dependence of the regime on permanent Soviet support, caused by the continuing lack of basic stability and control in the country. After the failed August coup in Moscow 1991, the Soviet Union and the USA agreed on so-called 'negative symmetry' with respect to future military assistance to the Afghan regime and the mujahedin,[64] resulting in the cessation of Soviet deliveries of weapons and ammunition towards the end of that year. Russia – after the disbandment of the Soviet Union on 21 December 1991 – also ended the supply of civilian aid, which, even before that, had become increasingly unreliable. In consequence, Najibullah became unable to control the militias the regime had set up[65] or to maintain the allegiance of the 'protocol' groups, which depended on the continued delivery of weapons and cash by the government.[66] Reacting to Najibullah's attempt to install a loyal commander at the regime's main storage hub in Hairatan on the Uzbek border, something that would have increased Kabul's direct control, Dostum and several other militia commanders switched sides. This was the 'catalytic moment'[67] for the following rapid collapse of the regime.[68]

4.2 ... during the US-led intervention

Compared to 1979, the security context appears to have been much more conducive to successful state-building at the end of 2001. Although the Afghan state had been reduced to very little in the course of the civil war of the 1990s and under the Taliban, the USA and their allies did not face a widespread insurgency as the Soviets did from the very beginning of their intervention. Instead, they benefited from a basic – while fragile – degree of stability in most of the country, after the Taliban regime had collapsed and its fighters had gone to Pakistan or returned to their home villages.

However, this basic and fragile stability was not subsequently transformed into genuine territorial control by the new Afghan government and its external supporters. The delayed expansion of the *International Security Assistance Force* (ISAF) to the provinces and the failed disbandment of the civil war militias were the main reasons. Due to an early shift of US resources to preparations for the Iraq war and to US scepticism vis-à-vis possible ISAF interference with the counter-terrorism activities of *Operation Enduring Freedom* (OEF), ISAF only started expanding beyond Kabul in summer 2003, eighteen months after the fall of the Taliban. Its expansion country-wide took until autumn 2006. In addition, ISAF presence in the provinces was mostly limited to small, so-called *Provincial Reconstruction Teams* (PRTs), which lacked resources to secure stability and control in the rural areas. Therefore, ISAF was not in the position to prevent the re-establishment of militia commanders – frequently linked to one of the main warlords – in their former strongholds. These commanders, whose predatory behaviour during the 1990s had originally made the Taliban popular with a substantial part of the population, reassumed and consolidated informal and formal positions of political, economic, and military power in the provinces. ISAF lacked the resources and, probably, the will to confront them.

While the need for demobilising and disarming the civil war militias was formally recognised from the very beginning of the transition process, the *Demobilisation, Disarmament and Reintegration* (DDR) programme and its successor the *Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups* (DIAG) programme were poorly implemented. Admittedly, DDR was quite successful in collecting heavy weapons.[69] It also created alternatives to a collective integration of militia fighters into the new *Afghan National Army* (ANA) by giving economic start-up aid for a civilian life. However, it did not prevent numerous militias migrating to the *Afghan National Police* (ANP) or simply turning into criminal groups, sometimes working under the

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was giving them. The overall picture given over the period from 1978 to 1989 is of constant disputes between Soviet and Afghan officials, and of persistent obstruction, overt and covert, by the latter of the policies that Moscow was advocating. The story of Afghan-Soviet relations throughout this period is therefore one of the inability of the Soviet leadership, despite Kabul's reliance on its economic and military support, successfully to impress its policies on the PDPA leadership' (Halliday and Tanin, 'The Communist Regime' [see FN 33], p 1373).

[64] Before signing the Geneva Accords in 1988, the Soviet Union and the USA had agreed on continuing their military assistance to both conflict parties – somehow euphemistically labelled 'positive symmetry'.

[65] Halliday and Tanin, 'The Communist Regime' (see FN 33), p 1370.

[66] Gareev, *Afghanistan nach dem Abzug* (see FN 48), p 271.

[67] Halliday and Tanin, 'The Communist Regime' (see FN 33), p 1370.

[68] Kakar, *Afghanistan* (see FN 49), p 274.

[69] Barbara Stapleton, *Disarming the Militias – DDR and DIAG and the Implications for Peace Building*, paper presented at the Conference 'Peace Building in Afghanistan', 26 February 2009, Stockholm, http://www.sak.se/arkiv/artiklar/artiklar/2009 /peace/, p 127.

label of private security companies.[70] Due to insufficient political will and enforcement by national and international security forces – control over the means of violence being a particularly sensitive field – the results of DIAG proved to be simply 'underwhelming'.[71] By mid-2009, only a fifth of all Afghan districts (the easiest ones) were considered DIAG-compliant.[72] Commanders were thereby allowed to re-establish and expand their influence and illegal businesses, reducing the actual control by the central government.

The commanders' renewed dominance in many provinces had severe effects on several areas of state-building: While the state was able to expand its control and, for example, progressively monopolise official custom duties along the main transport corridors,[73] its legitimacy suffered heavily from commanders' influence on state institutions in the rural areas. According to Ahmed Rashid, 'once the Taliban were overthrown, it was ridiculous to assume that the public would welcome the same warlords who had raped and pillaged and stolen from them in the 1990s.'[74] The vested interests of local strongmen further undermined already weak subnational administrations, most importantly through their influence on appointments. This meant that those state institutions the population interacts with most frequently became the most corrupt and least capable part of the state apparatus.[75] Local strongmen also managed to

influence the presidential, parliamentary, and provincial council elections of 2004 and 2005.[76] The same holds true for the presidential and provincial council elections of 2009: '[I]n the current elections local strongmen, whether campaigning for a presidential candidate or themselves running as candidates in the provincial council elections, have made it very clear to local populations that they will hold them responsible for a disappointing outcome.'[77] Therefore, the lack of state control in the provinces caused serious damage to the political institutions supposed to build the legitimacy of the new regime.

Due to the state's limited degree of control over the country, President Karzai had little choice but to opt for a sort of coalition government after the Bonn Conference. This became known as the 'big tent' approach.[78] Karzai's most powerful allies – and rivals – were the warlords of the Northern Alliance, mostly from its Panjshiri faction, *Shura-e-Nazar*. These warlords established control over the so-called power ministries, the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of the Interior (as well as over the *National Directorate of Security* or NDS), in 2001. While Karzai managed to progressively reduce the formal power of the warlords, their networks remained influential within both ministries. The intervening coalition's attempts to build professional and accountable Afghan security forces were fundamentally opposed to the vested interests of these networks, which focussed on integrating their client commanders and militias into the security forces and on maintaining personal control over them. As an illustration, among 38 generals promoted by Defence Minister Marshall Fahim at the beginning of 2002, 37 were Tajiks closely affiliated with *Shura-e-Nazar*. Despite Pashtuns being Afghanistan's largest ethnic group,

[70] Ali A Jalali, 'The Future of Security Institutions', in Alexander J Thier (ed), *The Future of Afghanistan* (Washington D.C.: United States Institute of Peace 2009), p 25.

[71] C Christine Fair and Seth G Jones, *Securing Afghanistan – Getting on Track*, USIP Working Paper (New York: United States Institute of Peace 2009), p 15.

[72] UNDP, *Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups (DIAG), 2009 Second Quarter Project Progress Report* (Kabul: United Nations Development Programme), p 27.

[73] World Bank, Afghanistan – Managing Public Finances for Development (in Five Volumes), *Volume III: Improving Public Financial Management: Key Cross-Cutting Issues* (Washington D.C.: World Bank 2005).

[74] Radio Liberty / Free Europe, 17 June 2009.

[75] See Seema Patel and Steven Ross, *Breaking Point – Measuring Progress in Afghanistan, A Report of the Post-Conflict Reconstruction Project*, Center for Strategic and International Studies (Washington D.C.: The CSIS Press 2007); Andrew Wilder and Sarah Lister, 'State-Building at the Subnational Level in Afghanistan: A Missed Opportunity', in Wolfgang Danspeckgruber and Robert P Finn (eds), *Building State and Security in Afghanistan* (Princeton: Princeton University, Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, Liechtenstein Institute on Self-Determination 2007); Hamish Nixon, *Subnational State-Building in Afghanistan*, AREU Synthesis Paper Series (Kabul: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit 2008); Dipali Mukhopadhyay, *Warlords*

as Bureaucrats: The Afghan Experience, Carnegie Papers No 101, August 2009, Middle East Program (Washington D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace).

[76] Thomas H Johnson, 'Afghanistan's Post-Taliban Transition: The State of State-building after War', *Central Asian Survey* (2006) 25:1–2, 1, p 11; Thomas Ruttig, *Afghanistan: Institutionen ohne Demokratie – Strukturelle Schwächen des Staatsaufbaus und Ansätze für eine politische Stabilisierung*, SWP-Studie 2008/S 17 (Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik), p 21; Antonio Giustozzi, *Afghanistan: Transition without End – An Analytical Narrative on State-Making*, Working Paper No 40 (London: London School of Economics Crisis States Research Centre 2008), pp 33–34.

[77] Martine van Bijlert, *How to Win an Afghan Election – Perceptions and Practices*, AAN Thematic Report 02/2009 (Kabul: Afghanistan Analysts Network), p 17.

[78] The term itself was introduced by US Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad (Thomas Ruttig, personal communication).

there was not one Pashtun among them.[79] In short, the objectives of the intervening coalition and those of key Afghan 'partners' in the security sector were largely conflicting.

These problems led the USA to adopt a unilateral approach in building up a new Afghan army – and to build it up from scratch.[80] Through the *Combined Security Transition Command – Afghanistan* (CSTC-A), the USA managed to largely monopolise the institution- and capacity-building tasks of the ANA, thus marginalising potential spoilers and making them basically irrelevant. Besides the substantial US investments, this might be the main reason why the ANA is a relative success story: 'The facts that the [ANA] reform process had been led and implemented by one donor (the US) and that the army was reconstituted from scratch were major factors in the success.'[81]

Success remains more limited in the case of the ANP, which is considered to be '[t]he weak link in security sector reform'.[82] The ANP is not only on average operationally weak, but also heavily influenced by local strongmen and former militia commanders, who frequently occupy positions as district or province heads of police. Warlord patronage and criminal networks that effectively blocked reforms hamper institution- and capacity-building of the ANP,[83] despite the dramatic increase in US support to the ANP since 2004. At the core of the problem, the incoherent objectives of external 'police-builders', on the one hand, and their Afghan 'partners', on the other hand, slowed down progress. As the police is the only security force with a permanent presence in the districts, its weakness substantially facilitated Taliban resurgence, augmenting the effects of poor local governance.

The security situation deteriorated most visibly after 2005–06. The number of security incidents grew steadily and movements of state actors became increasingly risky.[84] In June 2009, 11 out of approximately 400 Afghan districts were under Taliban control, largely excluding formal state presence; in a further 119 districts, state presence encountered serious problems.[85] Together with ISAF's raising casualties, this growing instability led to the adoption of 'stopgap' measures, somewhat similar to those of the 1980s. One of the first was the creation of the *Afghan National Auxiliary Police* (ANAP) – a 'quick-fix effort'[86] to counter the destabilisation of Southern Afghanistan.[87] The original plan of May 2006 proposed 11,000 additional police officers to be posted at short notice in 21 particularly insecure provinces. The officers were recruited from demobilised militiamen and provided with some very basic training. In practice, the ANAP officers were led by their former militia commanders, who continued to pursue their own particular, frequently criminal, agendas. As the ANAP simultaneously represented the government – the officers wore uniforms – their actions contributed to further damaging the legitimacy of the state. This tended to fuel grievances and support to the insurgency instead

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[79] See Sven Gunnar Simonsen, 'Ethnicising Afghanistan? Inclusion and Exclusion in Post-Bonn Institution Building', *Third World Quarterly* (2004) 25:4, 707, p 723. The ethnic composition of the ANA in general and of its officer corps in particular has been rebalanced since, although Tajiks remain over-represented.

[80] See Mark Sedra, *Security Sector Transformation in Afghanistan*, DCAF Working Paper No 143 (Geneva: Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces 2004), p 22; Antonio Giustozzi, 'Shadow Ownership and SSR in Afghanistan', in Timothy Donais (ed), *Local Ownership and Security Sector Reform* (Münster: LIT Verlag 2008), p 221; Suhrke, 'The danger of a tight embrace' (see FN 7), p 241.

[81] Sari Kouvo, *State-Building and the Rule of Law: Lessons from Afghanistan?* (Rome: Nato Defense College 2009), p 57; see also Mark Sedra and Geoffrey Hayes, 'Introduction', in Mark Sedra and Geoffrey Hayes (eds), *Afghanistan: Transition under Threat* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press 2007), p xix; Barnett R Rubin, 'Saving Afghanistan', *Foreign Affairs* (2007) 86:1, 57; Steve Bowman and Catherine Dale, *War in Afghanistan: Strategy, Military Operations, and Issues for Congress*, 3 December 2009 (Washington D.C.: Congressional Research Service), pp 38–39; Fair and Jones, *Securing Afghanistan* (see FN 71), p 10.

[82] Robert M Perito, *Afghanistan's Police – The Weak Link in Security Sector Reform*, USIP Special Report No 227, August 2009 (Washington D.C.: United States Institute of Peace); see also Jason H Campbell and Jeremy Shapiro, *Afghanistan Index – Tracking Variables of Reconstruction & Security in Post-9/11 Afghanistan* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution 2008), p 10; Anthony H Cordesman, *Afghan National Security Forces: Shaping the Path to Victory*, 27 July 2009 (Washington D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies), pp 45 and 48.

[83] Cordesman, *Afghan National Security Forces* (see FN 82), p 30.

[84] See Anthony H Cordesman, *The Afghan War at End 2009: A Crisis and New Realism,* 4 January 2010 (Washington D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies), pp 24–26.

[85] Thomas Ruttig, *Präsident Karzai vor zweiter Amtszeit? Sicherheitsprobleme und Legitimitätsdefizite bei den Präsidentschaftswahlen in Afghanistan,* SWP-Aktuell No 43, August 2009 (Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik), p 4.

[86] Perito, *Afghanistan's Police* (see FN 82), p 9.

[87] See Ronald E Neumann, *The Other War – Winning and Losing in Afghanistan* (Washington D.C.: Potomac Books 2009), pp 121–24.

of increasing stability and control.[88] Mostly thanks to pressure from European states, the ANAP was disbanded in October 2008.[89]

This failure has not prevented further attempts to stabilise the military situation by setting up irregular security forces. These include the creation of the *Afghan Public Protection Force* (APPF) in 2008. Encouraged by positive experiences in a different arena – the Sunni militia 'Sons of Iraq' [90] – US Special Forces started organising and training militias for protective tasks in a pilot province, Wardak, in central Afghanistan. The difficulties and problems of the APPF model soon became apparent. Similar to other irregular forces, it risks fuelling ethnic strife by arming communities in conflict with each other. It also weakens the state's claim to a monopoly on the use of force even further.[91] Despite these risks, additional initiatives to set up militias were started in 2009, such as the creation of the *Independent Directorate for the Protection of Highways and Public Property* and the Ministry of the Interior's *Civil Defence Initiative*.[92]

Besides affecting security sector policies, the worsening instability in the country increasingly threatens what progress was made in post-2001 state-building, for example in fiscal policy, where there were some impressive successes. Based on a strong partnership between the Ministry of Finance, on the one hand, and the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, on the other hand, the Afghan government has enacted and implemented an ambitious reform programme in that sector.[93] As a result, the Afghanistan *Public*

Expenditure and Financial Accountability (PEFA) assessments indicated substantial improvements in Afghan public finance management both in 2004 and in 2008.[94] Afghanistan now ranks far above the averages of its country group. Public revenues have also risen dramatically since 2001, from US$ 131 million in 2002–03 to US$ 426 million in 2005–06 and US$ 831 million in 2008–09.[95] The respective, internationally agreed benchmarks were regularly surpassed.[96] In addition, prudent fiscal management enabled the Afghan state to avoid growing debt and to cover an increasing share of its civilian recurrent expenditures. Altogether, fiscal discipline has been maintained, motivating unusual praise by the International Finance Institutions: 'These achievements are commendable compared to experience in other post-conflict countries.'[97]

However, these achievements in fiscal policy are increasingly jeopardised by the build-up of future fiscal burdens in the security sector. This is mainly due to the continuous growth of the ANA and the ANP – both actual and planned – which is motivated by the deteriorating security situation.[98] Starting from end targets of 50,000 soldiers and 62,000 police officers in 2001, these numbers grew to 134,000 and 86,000 respectively in 2008 and are supposed to grow further to 240,000 and 160,000, if the respective proposals of ISAF Commander General Stanley McChrystal are adopted.[99] In order to improve morale and to reduce attrition, payment levels have also increased significantly, most

[88] See International Crisis Group, *Reforming Afghanistan's Police,* ICG Asia Report No 138 (Kabul: International Crisis Group 2007), pp 13–14; Mark Sedra, 'Security Sector Reform and State Building in Afghanistan', in Hayes and Sedra, *Afghanistan: Transition under Threat* (see FN 81), pp 197–98.

[89] Ronja Kempin, 'Polizeiaufbau in Afghanistan', in Peter Schmidt (ed), *Das internationale Engagement in Afghanistan – Strategien, Perspektiven, Konsequenzen,* SWP-Studie 2008/S 23 (Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik), p 40.

[90] Baker, 'Petraeus parallels Iraq, Afghanistan strategies' (see FN 3).

[91] Wahidullah Mohammad, 'Can Afghanistan's New "Guardian" Militia Restore Security in the Provinces?' *TerrorismMonitor* (2009) VII:20, 5; Perito, Afghanistan's Police (see FN 82), pp 9–10.

[92] Anand Gopal and Yochi J Dreazen, 'Afghanistan Enlists Tribal Militia Forces', *Wall Street Journal* 11 August 2009; Thomas Ruttig, *Militias – The Sorcerer's Apprentice's Genies (2): A Look Forward*, Afghanistan Analysts Network blog, posted: 20 November 2009, http://aan-afghanistan.com/index.asp?id=467.

[93] See eg World Bank, *Afghanistan – Managing Public Finances for Development* (Washington D.C.: World Bank 2005), pp 117–23; interview with Yoichiro Ishihara,

World Bank senior economist, 23 January 2008; interview with Wahid Nosher, economic advisor to the Minister of Finance, 20 July 2008; interview with Justin Thyson, IMF fiscal policy expert, 29 September 2008.

[94] World Bank, Afghanistan – Managing Public Finances for Development (in Five Volumes), *Volume II: Improving Public Financial Management and Procurement* (Washington D.C.: World Bank 2005), pp 4–51; World Bank, *Afghanistan Public Financial Management Performance Assessment* (Washington D.C.: World Bank 2008).

[95] World Bank, *Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund – 1387 Annual Report (March 21, 2008 to March 20, 2009)* (Washington D.C.: World Bank), p 8.

[96] Yoichiro Ishihara and Khalid Payenda, *Recent Fiscal Developments in Afghanistan, 21 August 2007* (Kabul: World Bank Office).

[97] World Bank, Afghanistan – Managing Public Finances for Development (in Five Volumes), *Volume I: Main Report* (Washington D.C.: World Bank 2005), p vii.

[98] Neumann, *The Other War* (see FN 87), p 164.

[99] ComISAF, *Commander's Initial Assessment, 30 August 2009*, unclassified version (Kabul: International Security Assistance Force), http://media.washingtonpost.com /wp-srv/politics/documents/Assessment_Redacted _092109.pdf, sections G-5 – G-6.

recently at the end of 2009 by up to 100 per cent.[100] While these costs are mainly covered by the intervening coalition for the time being, they will need to shift to the government's coffers over time. However, '[a]s the estimated size of the security forces Afghanistan needs continues to rise, there is no realistic scenario under which the country would be able to finance even the recurrent costs of security.'[101] A security force of 400,000 will cost up to US$ 4–5 billion annually in recurrent costs alone, while the Afghan state collected no more than US$ 831 million in 2008–09.[102]

This has led to a somehow schizophrenic situation: On the one hand, the build-up of the Afghan security forces causes sky-rocketing budget burdens for the future – jeopardising long-term sustainability of the Afghan state if external support is not maintained at adequate levels. On the other hand, the moderation of recurrent public expenditure complicates stabilisation efforts in the civilian field. Due to its prudent fiscal policy, the Afghan state is not in a position to raise civil servants' salaries quickly and substantially or to introduce generous social policies like the coupon system of the 1980s. Both could however help increasing the state's legitimacy in the public perception, in particular with an urban population nostalgic for the 1980s.[103] The incoherence also results from a lack of reconciliation between the different objectives of civilian and military 'state-builders'. While the civilian actors involved in public finance management – both on the Afghan and on the international side – tend to apply criteria drawn from more 'ordinary' developing country settings to Afghanistan, the military actors appear to focus on desired force and capability

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[100] Anand Gopal, 'Kabul raises pay to bolster police', *Asia News* 26 November 2009.

[101] Barnett R Rubin, 'The Transformation of the Afghan State', in Thier, *The Future of Afghanistan* (see FN 70), pp 17–18; see also Bowman and Dale, *War in Afghanistan* (see FN 81), pp 62–63.

[102] According to NATO figures, an ANA strength of 134,000 would cost a minimum of US$ 1.8 billion in annual recurrent expenditure (see Frank Cook [General Rapporteur], *Afghanistan: A Turning Point?,* NATO Parliamentary Assembly, 2009 Annual Session, http://www.nato-pa.int/default.asp?SHORTCUT=1783, §73), which gives US$ 5.37 billion when extrapolating for a force strength of 400,000. As a police officer tends to be less costly than a soldier due to the officer's less expensive equipment, US$ 4–5 billion of annual recurrent expenditure for ComISAF's proposal of a 240,000-strong ANA and a 160,000-strong ANP appears to be a sound estimate.

[103] See Said Achmad Najib Machmoud, Mohammad Daoud Nuri, and Jhosi Hashimi, *Causes of Political Instability in Afghanistan* (Kabul: National Center for Policy Research 2007), p 2.

levels alone, disregarding long-term sustainability of the state-to-be-built.

5 CONCLUSION

Taken together, the Soviet-promoted state-building in Afghanistan was, from the very beginning, severely hampered by the rural mujahedin insurgency, which led the Soviets to adopt an 'enclave strategy', focussing their military forces as well as capacity- and institution-building efforts on the cities. The Soviets and their Afghan partners were reasonably successful in urban areas, for instance in building up and strengthening a number of political and economic institutions. However, state-building in the cities suffered from factionalism within the PDPA, which the Soviets were not able to reduce, and the state could not reach fiscal sustainability due to the ongoing war. In comparison, the US-led state-building was badly sequenced, as the intervening coalition tried to construct national political institutions before establishing basic control of the countryside, and invested in the militias-turned-police without marginalising former warlords and commanders. The intervening coalition even jeopardised its state-building efforts to some extent by tolerating and collaborating with informal powerbrokers rivalling the state. This undermined institution-building, caused damage to the legitimacy of the new Afghan state, and, finally, eased the resurgence of the Taliban. It remains to be seen if the renewed efforts of the intervening coalition can correct these earlier mistakes.

Turning back to the general debate on state-building, the suggested analytical framework appears to help in better understanding the results of state-building interventions. The case studies showed that the assumed preconditions for successful state-building – basic stability and control as well as coherent objectives of the relevant actors in the respective area – explain a significant part of the successes and failures in Afghan state-building both during the 1980s and since 2001.

Operational lessons learned – also for cases beyond Afghanistan – would be first, not to ignore the calls to sequence interventions effectively. This means seriously taking stock of the situation before the intervention and formulating a corresponding state-building strategy, including providing needed resources to create the minimal conditions for success. This can lead to resource requests that the intervening powers are not ready

to meet. However, ignoring these needs tends to backfire later.

Second, as long as basic stability and control in the country is not achieved, the state-to-be-built will necessarily continue to struggle with fiscal sustainability. Therefore, fiscal sustainability is not a realistic objective in times of actual civil war and should not be pursued in a way that jeopardises the stabilisation objectives. At the same time, intervening powers should not cherish the illusion that they can cut back their support as long as the fiscal sustainability of the state they are trying to build is not in sight. As we have seen, this proved fatal for the Afghan state in 1992, and the current Afghan state – most importantly, its growing security forces – depends as much on external assistance as it did 20 years ago. This underlines the need of maintaining long-term support in order to consolidate earlier achievements.

Third, efforts to build state capacities and institutions should focus on areas where basic stability and control has been established. A territorial differentiation can identify locations where capacity- and institution-building make sense, and locations which are not ready yet – or not ready any more. The resulting 'islands of statehood' can coexist with areas out of state control and potentially even produce a positive dynamism in the latter. Efforts to build capacities or institutions constitute a waste of resources in areas where this condition is not met.

Fourth, more thinking is warranted on how to ensure coherent state-building objectives, on both the local and the external actors' side. The 'whole of government' approach and respective coordination mechanisms have been proposed for improving coherence within the intervening powers' institutional set-up; yet, their effectiveness in practice remains to be proved. It might be even more difficult to ensure coherent objectives within a local 'big tent' coalition that also integrates actors whose interests are de facto opposed to successful state-building. While much has been written on how to deal with these potential 'spoilers', more creativity in strengthening local reformers and forging genuine partnerships with them could help to more successfully marginalise actors opposed to the state-building agenda.

Besides these operational considerations, the scholarly debate could also benefit from scrutinising basic stability and control and coherent objectives more systematically as preconditions of successful state-building. More specifically, they should be taken as starting points for investigating what specific causal mechanisms make them being met or not – some of which have been observed in Afghanistan.

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The Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN) is a non-profit, independent policy research organisation. It aims to bring together the knowledge and experience of a large number of experts to inform policy and increase the understanding of Afghan realities.

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The present paper exclusively reflects the author's personal view.