We Think, Therefore We Do

How the assumptions held by statebuilders determine the statebuilding effort in Afghanistan

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Abstract

In this work, I analyze two different statebuilding attempts in rural Afghanistan that work at the village level. Their approaches to the Afghan village institution differ profoundly. These enterprises represent the split in the current statebuilding debate. In the current intervention, divergent assumptions and strategic interests are merged under a common ideological rhetoric. In practice however, they have disparaging results. This research concentrates on how the assumptions of the intervening party affect its project design and process, and form the interaction with Afghan counterparts. These assumptions, I argue, are a determining factor in the success of these enterprises. The most determining assumptions relate to the causes of state fragility and the statebuilding process: the questions about how to achieve such ambiguous goals as good governance, statebuilding, and development. Moreover, assumptions about the Afghan cultural and socio-political landscape are decisive. I show how these shape the project design and execution, the interaction with the local powerholders and all together, the success of the intervention. I maintain that the assumptions of the external actors that determine the outcome of the interactive institution building process. I herewith expand the statebuilding research from its focus on weak governance in Afghanistan to the approaches of the external actors.

Acknowledgements

This thesis is the product of a thought process that was inspired by a heated discussion in one of our very first classes of the Masters in Conflict Studies and Human Rights. Then, my fellow students and I found ourselves discussing whether it is possible to build a strong, functioning and responsive state via a large-scale, external intervention, or whether a locally based approach of hybrid statebuilding is the more viable option. Amongst other aspects, we touched on the philosophical underpinnings of these different approaches. Since, I had the chance to take these initial, vague ideas and delve into the complexity of what I consider today's most vital questions in statebuilding. I could apply it to the most recent statebuilding attempt, and reflect on the progress of some of the more experimental approaches. I was privileged to explore the subject matter in depth, and test my assumptions and initial hunches through rigorous research during the months that followed. This thesis is the product of this discovery process.

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Chapter I: Introduction

"The high failure rate [of state-building exercises] strongly supports the basic intuition that we do not know what we are doing— and one of the critical elements of any argument for autonomy is that people tend to know best for themselves, better than others how they ought best to live their lives"[1]

In one of the most intrusive, ambitious, and well-funded missions ever, the international community has attempted to transform Afghanistan into a prosperous democratic country where the rule of law prevails.[2] However, even with the help of about 30,000 troops and annual aid of around $2.5 billion, constructing a new polity is an enormous enterprise.[3] International donors finance 90 percent of Afghanistan's state budget.[4] Yet, to date, statebuilding in Afghanistan has failed to achieve its objectives.[5] Despite the impressive progress of the creation of new government bodies, their operational capability remains limited— the state's authority is rudimental in political and territorial terms. The massive monetary investments and international effort notwithstanding, much of the Afghan population continues to feel removed from the central state and the danger exists that Afghans progressively compare the presence of the international community to an occupying force that keeps a corrupt government in power. In short, the current Afghan policy is in crisis.[6]

This state of affairs inspired a vibrant debate on its implications on state- and peacebuilding in Afghanistan. Analysts are divided into two competing camps: one, which dominates the intervention, argues for the necessity of a powerful central government spanning the Afghan territory. The second contends that Afghanistan is, and historically has been, "a quintessentially decentralized society, making it necessary to build local institutions to create security and stability."[7] The latter represents a rising trend across a disciplinary spectrum from development, statebuilding, or security studies: a new emphasis on the local socio-political structures is emerging. Here, the need to tie the periphery to the central state in Kabul is defined as the most pressing issue facing the statebuilders.[8] These critics are further divided between those, who call for a disengagement of central statebuilding in favor of statebuilding through local initiative; and revisionists, who argue that

[1] Noah Feldman (2004) *What we owe Iraq: War and the Ethics of Nation Building.* (Princeton: Princeton University Press): 69.

[2] George Gavrilis, (2009) "The Tajik Solution A Model for Fixing Afghanistan" *Foreign Affairs* (November) http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/65690/george-gavrilis/the-tajik-solution

[3] Michael Barnett and Christoph Zürcher (2009), "The Peacebuilder's contract How external statebuilding reinforces weak statehood" in *Dilemmas of Statebuilding* ed. Roland Paris, Timothy Sisk (New York: Routledge): 26.

[4] Citha D. Maaß (2008) "Paradigmenwechsel in Afghanistan" *SWP-Aktuell Briefing* http://www.swp-berlin.org/produkte/swp_aktuell_detail.php?id=9139 .

[5] Barnett Rubin (2006), 'Peace Building and State-Building in Afghanistan: constructing sovereignty for whose security?', *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 27, No. 1, pp 175-185, (London): 184.

[6] Isaac Kfir, (December 2009) "The Role of the Pashtuns in Understanding the Afghan Crisis" *Perspectives on Terrorism* Volume III, Issue 4.

[7] Seth G. Jones (May/ June 2010) "It Takes the Villages Bringing Change From Below in Afghanistan " *Foreign Affairs* (Council on Foreign Relations) http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/66350/seth-g-jones/it-takes-the-villages

[8] Christine Noelle-Karimi (2006) "Village Institutions in the Perception of National and International Actors in Afghanistan" *Amu Darya Series Paper No 1*(Center for Development Research ZEF, Bonn).

current statebuilding policies can be adjusted, based on a better understanding of the processes through which locals and statebuilders interact at the local level, in order to encourage, rather than undermine bottom-up statebuilding.[9] Despite these intellectual differences, practitioners use a shared rhetoric of statebuilding, governance and development.

With social reengineering attempts targeting the smallest level of local organization—the Afghan village— the Afghan intervention exceeds the standard military engagement and central statebuilding. It affects Afghans' most intimate communities.[10] The increasing emphasis on these customary institutions notwithstanding, there remains a lack of knowledge on the feasibility of these institutions as building blocks in hybrid statebuilding. Afghanistan is marked by institutional and political heterogeneity between villages and amongst ethnic groups and regional terrain. The different statebuilding enterprises together with this diversity within the country necessitate research to gauge the effects of this new interaction between statebuilders and the local population.

Research Focus

I analyze two different interventions in rural Afghanistan that work at the most local level. Their approaches to the Afghan village institution differ profoundly. They represent the split in the current statebuilding debate. Divergent assumptions and strategic interests are merged under a common ideological rhetoric. In practice however, they have disparaging results. This research concentrates on how the assumptions of the intervening party affect its project design and process, and form the interaction with Afghan counterparts. These assumptions, I argue, are a determining factor in the success of the organization.

The two organizations analyzed represent very different approaches. One is an example of the dominant, centralist statebuilding agenda: The National Solidarity Program (NSP) is designed to fortify the reach of the Afghan state across its territory, and combat state fragility through the delivery of services and good governance. These are assumed to address grievances of villagers, cultivate a loyalty to the central state and insulate villagers' from the influence of the Taliban. The second approach of note, the Tribal Liaison Office (TLO) also strives to improve local governance, stability and security in Afghanistan. However, the TLO is situated in the hybrid statebuilding approach. The designers highlight that power and sovereignty in Afghanistan is fragmented. Tribal institutions deliver key services such as security, justice and governance. The organization's aim is to influence the current intervention so as to promote systematic and institutionalized engagement with traditional tribal structures and civil society groups.[11] It is assumed that formal integration of communities and their traditional governance structures within Afghanistan's newly emerging state will situate the latter in the realities on the ground, improve delivery of services, and contribute to conflict resolution.

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[9] Miles Kahler (2009)"Statebuilding after Afghanistan and Iraq" Understanding the contradictions of postwar statebuilding" in *Dilemmas of Statebuilding* ed. Roland Paris, Timothy Sisk (New York: Routledge):287 -299.
[10] Noelle-Karimi: 1.
[11] Tribal Liaison Office Website (accessed 08.12.2010) http://www.tlo-afghanistan.org/

The comparison of the TLO and NSP redirects the statebuilding research from its sole emphasis on weak governance of the Afghan state to the working assumptions, policies and adaptability of "those doing the judging, labeling and intervening."[12] I examine how the assumptions of the intervening party affect their program design and process, including the interaction with the local socio-political order. Hence, I analyze stated and hidden assumptions. These, I maintain, determine the success in achieving the organization's stated objectives. The most decisive assumptions relate to the causes of state fragility and the statebuilding process: the questions about how to achieve such ambiguous goals as good governance, statebuilding and development. Moreover, assumptions with regards to the Afghan cultural and socio-political landscape impact how external actors interact with locals. I show how these shape the project design and execution, the interaction with the local powerholders and ultimately, the success of the intervention.

This work sheds light on the interplay between the interveners' working assumptions and Afghanistan's heterogeneous local political context. It highlights that perceptions of state failure are influenced by policy aims of statebuilders. Interveners' divergent assumptions of what causes weak statehood in turn affects their preferences, resource allocation, and strategies of statebuilding, as well as their adaptability to the local context. The lessons highlighted will facilitate the design and implementation of a more nuanced involvement. Both the centralist and hybrid statebuilding approaches show some important successes. The developmental state-focused approach succeeded in bringing development, yet falls short of bringing governance, security, or social cohesion. Unfortunately, in its worst moments, it aggravated tensions. The hybrid statebuilding approach is successful in achieving such objectives as governance and peacebuilding, but it does so gradually. Furthermore, tribal engagement can only work where tribal institutions remain effective and legitimate. Unfortunately, across Afghanistan the tribal systems are under the pressure of the changes brought by war, migration and a new generational divide. Tribal institutions cannot address Afghanistan's woes. The hybrid statebuilding approach is too gradual and piecemeal to tackle the crisis across Afghanistan. Still, it contains important lessons: an understanding of the local context is crucial in successful engagement. Only through an understanding of the local situation can peacebuilders make political choices regarding powerholders, and devise effective strategies on how to negotiate the expansion of state services.

Organizational Overview

I first present an overview of the current statebuilding debate to further contextualize these two different approaches. These are situated in a fierce debate about statebuilding. The political and ideological choices made by the external actors influence the design, process and success of their intervention. Subsequently, I introduce the complex context in which intervening actors in Afghanistan work. Afghanistan has undergone massive changes in the last century, especially in the recent conflict-ridden decades. It is ethnically, religiously and culturally diverse, and power structures change from village to village. The effects of war, migration and generational changes vary across

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[12] Susan Woodward (2009) "A Case for Shifting the Focus: Some Lessons from the Balkans" *Building Peace in the Absence of States: Challenging the Discourse on State Failure* (Berghof Handbook Dialogue No. 8): 54.

Afghanistan. This renders any general conclusion or approach impractical: local context matters greatly in any state- and peacebuilding intervention.

After the contextual chapters, I proceed with analyses of the two interventions. I assess how the organizations' assumptions affect their program design and execution as well as their interaction with the local sociopolitical landscape. I specifically look at the assumptions regarding the causes of state fragility, the nature of Afghanistan's rural culture and the strategies needed to achieve peace and stability. Firstly, I show that causal assumptions about state failure impact the proposed solutions. Secondly, assumptions about the process of building a strong state influence the project design. Thirdly, the external parties approach Afghanistan with their view of the local population, and these assumptions impact how they interact with the local order. These preconceived notions, often unspoken, determine the process and success of interventions. In the conclusion, I summarize the three important assumptions that impact the progress of the program and highlight the importance of the external actor's ideological approaches.

Methodology

In order to compare the stated objectives with the success of the intervention, I rely on secondary source information. My goal is to examine both the assumptions and ideological framework of the organization, and compare how these affected their success in achieving the objectives they stated. To gain an understanding of the stated assumptions, I analyzed the policy papers and statements of the organization. Additionally, to identify hidden assumptions, I evaluated the program design. The design and process reflect causal assumptions about state fragility, economic development, state- and peacebuilding, and best practice. I coupled this research with a literature review regarding the academic debate surrounding statebuilding. These political trends affect the political choices of the intervening actors, forming their ideological framework. Anthropological accounts and current reports by the US military intelligence units and by practitioners in the field informed my analyses of the current cultural and sociopolitical landscape in rural Afghanistan. To gauge how objectives matched the outcomes, I relied on research measuring the effectiveness of the two programs. As both of these programs are path-breaking, there were many firsthand analyses of their progress. There are inherent limitations in second-source, literature review (amongst them a different focus of studies and at times conflicting research conclusions.) In order to avoid these limiting the depth of my research, I took care to diversify my research and fact-check my data with other sources.

Chapter II: Analytical Frames and Theoretical Framework: Statebuilding, Hybrid Statebuilding, and Discourse Theory

"Is it possible to establish the conditions for legitimate and sustainable national governance through a period of benevolent foreign autocracy?"[13]

In this thesis, I take a critical look at the effects of the assumptions that the interveners hold for the outcomes of the intervention: frames of analyses, causal narratives, and the set of values held by intervening party shape their project design and determine their flexibility to adjust to local political realities. I include the local politics that are often ignored in the political discourse but fundamentally shape the developments. Perceptions of Afghanistan's socio-political order held by external actors affect how they interact with local powerholders. Local elites, in turn, are not neutral subjects, but actors pursuing their distinct agendas. The result is akin to a negotiation process. Assumptions regarding statebuilding, its process and the local context determine the outcome of the engagement.

These assumptions reflect the divisions in a heated academic debate on statebuilding intervention. The dominant statebuilding approach is situated in a securitization of the development and humanitarian agenda: with weak states defined as security threats to the developed world, statebuilding became a military in addition to a developmental and humanitarian concern. This merger of divergent agendas permits greater resource allocation and the creation of a statebuilding industry. However, this blurring of diplomacy, defense, and development agendas in a militarization of aid negatively affects the success of the stabilization effort: blending responsibilities limits effectiveness and deprives humanitarian and development workers of their neutral status.[14] With current centralist statebuilding showing weak results, a strong counter discourse emerged. Critical analysts propagate a more locally situated statebuilding. The interventions analyzed in this thesis illustrate these ideological rifts, and their success in turn test the validity of causal assumptions underlying these statebuilding approaches.

Statebuilding as the New Development and Security Paradigm

Current statebuilding efforts in Afghanistan reflect the dominant vision of statebuilding. A central, democratic state, imposed by intervention, if necessary, is thought to ensure international order, stability and predictability and promote national and human security.[15] Statebuilding reflects the evolution of peacebuilding interventions. The skepticism towards international intervention during the 1990s changed and statebuilding became a strategic necessity.[16] While the early interventions in post-conflict countries focused on rapid elections and economic restructuring, their underlying

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[13] Simon Chesterman (2004) quoted in Roland Paris, Timothy Sisk (2009) "Understanding the contradictions of postwar statebuilding" in *Dilemmas of Statebuilding* ed. Roland Paris, Timothy Sisk (New York: Routledge): 8
[14] Michael Young, (2010) "Development at Gunpoint? Why Civilians Must Reclaim Stabilization Aid" *Foreign Affairs* http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/67052/michael-young/development-at-gunpoint (accessed 28.12.2010).
[15] S. Chesterman, M. Ignatieff, and R. Thakur (2005) 'Conclusion: The future of state-building', in: Chesterman, S., Ignatieff, M. and R. Thakur (eds.) *Making states work: State failure and the crisis of governance.* 359-387.Tokyo: United Nations University Press: 359.
[16] Miles Kahler (2009) "Statebuilding after Afghanistan and Iraq" Understanding the contradictions of postwar statebuilding" in *Dilemmas of Statebuilding* ed. Roland Paris, Timothy Sisk (New York: Routledge): 287.

assumption that political and economic liberalization can be achieved without functioning, legitimate institutions are increasingly deemed faulty. Practitioners concluded that weak governments contributed to a range of social ills, which necessitated the construction of effective institutions in transitional states. Thus, statebuilding became a foundation of peacebuilding.[17]

In the past decade, the international community has responded to the challenge of weak, fragile, or failed states with a securitization of the issue. The underlying thought process is influenced by Hobbes' state of nature hypothesis that without the presence and enforcement of positive law, anarchy reigns.[18]The solution has been a reinvigoration of the statebuilding agenda. This is often described as a concerted effort of statebuilding but in practice is characterized by a range of competing interventions.

Statebuilding: an Elusive Concept

The irony of the statebuilding debate is that experts do not agree on a single definition of a state, and per consequence, of a failing, weak, or fragile state. Among theorists as well as practitioners, differences persist. Some theorists draw on John Locke's definition of the state as a vehicle to fulfill a social contract: they define a failing state as one incapable of providing basic public goods. In Max Weber's definition, the state is a corporate group with a monopoly over the legitimate use of force in a territory. In this definition, a breakdown of these authority structures causes state failure. Furthermore, in the juridical definition, the state is constituted by its legal capacity and state failure by its inability to exercise such power.[19] However, failed states exhibit various combinations of these symptoms and such definitional problems may be misleading.[20] They may reflect a simplistic analysis of a complex problem.

Additionally, practitioners conceptualize fragile states differently according to their concerns and goals. Amongst these actors, there are three over-arching categories: those that define weak states in terms of their functionality, output, and relationship with donors. Amongst the first group, the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) provides the most utilitarian definition: "States are fragile where state structures lack political will and/or capacity to provide the basic functions needed for poverty reduction, development and to safeguard the security and human rights of their populations."[21] Secondly, some donors define fragile states in terms of their outputs, listing those states that are likely to "generate poverty, conflict, terrorism, global security threats, refugees, organized crime, epidemic diseases and/or environmental degradation." Thirdly, some governments concentrate on

[17] Roland Paris, Timothy Sisk (2009) "Understanding the contradictions of postwar statebuilding" in *Dilemmas of Statebuilding* ed. Roland Paris, Timothy Sisk (New York: Routledge): 6-9.

[18] Thomas Hobbes (1651), "Leviathan" in *Theories of Social Order A Reader* ed Michael Hechter; Christine Horne (Stanford University Press: Stanford, CA USA): 166-178.

[19] S. Chesterman, M. Ignatieff, and R. Thakur (2005): 361.

[20] V. Boege; M. Brown; K. Clements & A. Nolan Boege, (2009). "On Hybrid Political Orders and Emerging States: What is Failing – States in the Global South or Research and Politics in the West?" in: Martina Fischer and Beatrix Schmelzle (eds.). *Building Peace in the Absence of States: Challenging the Discourse on State Failure.* (Berghof Handbook Dialogue No. 8.) Berlin: Berghof Research Center, 15-35. Available at http://www.berghof-handbook.net/documents/publications/dialogue8_boegeetal_lead.pdf: 3.

[21] OECD (2007) *Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States and Situations*: 2.

the interstate relationship and define difficult partners in international security as fragile states. [22] In sum, there is no common definition of state failure. These diverse understandings impact the response.

Statebuilding refers to the effort to counteract weak statehood. The OECD describes statebuilding as the "purposeful action to develop the capacity, institutions, and legitimacy of the state in relation to an effective political process for negotiating the mutual demands between state and societal groups;" whereby they acknowledge that the state is comprised of dynamic interaction between a multiplicity of formal institutions.[23] Statebuilders attempt to strengthen state institutions, in order to enhance "the capacities of state actors for control, regulation, and implementation, particularly in the core fields of statehood; namely, internal security, basic social services, the rule of law, and legitimacy of government."[24] Such statebuilding is seen to counter-act the weak functionally of states, limit the risks they produce and improve international relations with these states.

The Counter Debate: Hybrid Statebuilding

Statebuilding interventions have rarely been successful. This fact inspired analysts to question the normative prioritization of the Weberian state in peacebuilding. Researchers contest the assumption that the state is the sole provider of crucial services, its lack leading to chaos and terrorism: "'The state' is only one actor among others, and 'state order' is only one of a number of orders claiming to provide security, frameworks for conflict regulation and social services."[25] Unlike the prevailing assumption, state failure does not result in a vacuum and peacebuilders do not work in a state of tabula rasa. Rather, their programs become part of an intricate set of political calculations on the part of existing elites and their rivals.[26] The interaction of culturally embedded institutions with the weak state results in 'hybrid statebuilding', 'shadow states' or 'twilight institutions.' Questioning the state-centric approach, these analysts suggest that a better path would be to recognize that statebuilding is a complex and non-linear enterprise, with numerous institutions providing public service.[27] They challenge the statebuilding industry to embrace this hybrid reality and use these customary institutions as building blocks to achieve human security without necessarily building a modern Weberian state. Proponents for the inclusion of local institutions in the formal state stress that instead of the Hobbesian anarchy in the absence of a central state, local communities in Afghanistan exhibit rich and complex modes of institutions, especially in resource management and conflict resolution.[28]

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[22] Diana Cammack, Dinah McLeod, Alina Rocha Menocal, Karin Christiansen (2006) *Donors and the 'Fragile State Agenda: A Survey of Current Thinking and Practice* (Overseas Development Institute; March): 16-17.
[23] OECD (2008) *Concepts and Dilemmas of Statebuilding in Fragile Situations*: 14.
[24] Volker Boege, Anne M. Brown, and Kevin P. Clements, (2009): 'Hybrid Political Orders, Not Fragile States', *Peace Review*: 3.
[25] V. Boege et al (2009): 6.
[26] Kahler: 297.
[27] Hollander: 5.
[28] Hafiz Boboyorov, Henrik Poos, Conrad Schetter (2009) *Beyond the State-- Local Politics in Afghanistan Symposium Report* (Bonn: Center for Development Research): 6.

Across academic disciplines, specialists increasingly pay attention to local realities and institutions. Decades of succeeding regimes, coups and civil war have forced Afghans to rely on local modes of organization for conventionally state-centric duties such as the provision of justice, security, and other services. Local peacebuilders argue that an integration of these customary institutions will situate statebuilding in the realities on the ground, increasing its sustainability. Development analysts highlight the local context, drawing attention to how donor projects affect the position of local leadership in a non-intended way, sometimes strengthening local elites who are opposed to statebuilding, while weakening the participation of traditional leaders.[29] They call for a cautious analysis to determine which local structures should be strengthened to ensure peace, stability, and long-term development. Military analysts furthermore emphasize the significance of local security arrangements and political power structures, arguing that engagement with rural socio-political organizations will be decisive in the struggle against the Neo-Taliban insurgency and in the attempt to win hearts and minds.[30] There is a growing emphasis on the local context.

Afghanistan exemplifies that the Weberian state often lacks relevance locally.[31] Social reality in is defined by customary law, traditional social structures (including clans, tribes, village communities) as well as traditional authorities (for ex. village elders, strongmen, religious leaders). Lund describes these as "twilight institutions…[that] are not the state but exercise public authority."[32] The state-centric intervention attempts to substitute these informal rules rooted in clientelism and patronage with the depersonalized, formalized and rationalized rules of a bureaucratic Weberian State. Critics point out that the result amounts to a "layering of new forms of authority over existing forms, resulting in a hybrid system and institutional multiplicity," often accompanied by a process of contestation.[33] Statebuilding is not a linear process.

Local elites use appropriation of material and immaterial resources of the new state not only for personal enrichment, but to gain legitimacy from relevant constituencies— they usurp the imposed polity for their own agenda.[34] William Reno describes this phenomenon as a "shadow state [,which is] the product of personal rule, usually constructed behind the facade of de jure state sovereignty…These private uses of state assets and prerogatives [create] a framework of rule outside formal state institutions, a shadow of state bureaucratic agencies based on personal ties."[35] Analysts warn against such state formation, noting that it allows for "protective network[s] for illicit activities

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[29] Boboyorov et al: 7.
[30] Seth G. Jones (May/ June 2010) "It Takes the Villages Bringing Change From Below in Afghanistan " *Foreign Affairs* (Council on Foreign Relations) http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/66350/seth-g-jones/it-takes-the-villages
[31] Sarah Lister (2007) "Understanding State-Building and Local Government in Afghanistan" *Crisis States Working Papers Series No. 2* (May) : 3.
[32] C. Lund, (ed.) (2007) *Twilight Institutions. Public Authority and Local Politics in Africa.* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing): 1.
[33] Lister (2007): 3.
[34] Tobias Debiel, Daniel Lambach (2009) 'How State-Building Strategies Miss Local Realities', *Conflict, Security & Development.* 21:1, 22-28: 38.
[35] W. Reno, (2000) "Shadow States and the Political Economy of Civil Wars." In Mats Berdal and David M. Malone, eds. *Greed and Grievance: Economic Agendas in Civil Wars.* (Boulder, Col.: Lynne Rienner)

[to be] 'folded into' the formal institutions of the state." This consolidation of organized crime compromised key state institutions, which become corrupt and entangled in criminal activities.[36]

Other analysts maintain that hybrid state formation may also be positive. Menkhaus argues it leads to a more constructive "mediated state in which the government relies on partnership (or at least coexistence) with a diverse range of local intermediaries and rival sources of authority to provide core functions of public security, justice, and conflict management in much of the country."[37] In short, in a shadow state the traditional authorities see the state as an exploitable resource and continue to work primarily on personal, patrimonial rule, criminalizing the state. The mediated state constitutes a working arrangement in which the traditional institutions provide an additional mean of governance and check on abusive power. Hybrid statebuilders strive for the mediated state as an ideal outcome.

Despite the various takes one hybrid state formations, these analysts agree that statebuilding is framed by the local reality of the population. Such customary orders are built on shared mental models which form practice and social institutions. Embedded within this sociopolitical landscape are rivaling actors who re-produce their power and influence, perform governance functions and possibly undermine the ambitions of building a modern, liberal democratic state.[38] Hence, progress in statebuilding does not result solely from aims, intentions, or errors of the peacebuilders, but from the strategic interaction between the various local actors, concerned with advancing their interests and the multilateral statebuilding agencies.[39] However, as I will show in my analyses of the National Solidarity Program, many external actors disregard the importance of the local context.

The Interaction of External and Internal Actors

The dominant, blue print approach to statebuilding neglects the importance of the local context. There are at least three ways the international community ignores such local power arrangements: Firstly, peacebuilders ignore that the constitutional solution, which ends a civil war, is always an imposition by whoever has the power sufficient to gain legitimacy over alternatives. This entails a process of contestation. Secondly, institutions designed to regulate conflict through political competition will only last if they persuade losers, who still control arms, that they gain by these new rules, or that they have no alternative but to hope thus. The later is very important in the case of Afghanistan, where power is diffused amongst a range of armed non state actors. Finally, the causes for contestation require creative, legitimate, and powerful leadership, willing and able to redefine them in inclusive ways in the political agenda.[40]

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[36] Lister (2007): 5.

[37] Ken Menkhaus (2007) "Governance without Government in Somalia: Spoilers, State Building, and the Politics of Coping" *International Security* 31.3: 74-106.

[38] Tobias Debiel, Rainer Glassner, Conrad Schetter, and Ulf Terlinden, (2009): 'Local State-Building in Afghanistan and Somaliland', *Peace Review*, 21:1, pp.38 — 44: 38.

[38] V. Boege et al (2009)

[39] Kahler: 292.

[40] Susan L Woodward (2010) "Do the Root Causes of Civil War Matter? On Using Knowledge to Improve Peacebuilding Interventions" *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding, 1: 2*: 159.

To explain the complex interaction between the state-building enterprise and local power-holders, the work of Stathis Kalyvas is insightful. Referring to violent conflict, he joins macro-level with micro-level, partly anthropological analyses to illuminate the complex interplay of local and international agenda— this mirrors the contested politics surrounding statebuilding in Afghanistan. Kalyvas argues that civil war is defined by the ambiguity embedded in the interplay of political and private identities and actions. He exemplifies this point based on Afghanistan, where local rivalries feed off global aspirations. He points out some noticeable phenomena: firstly, rather than the greater struggle being imposed on local politics, local actors appropriate politics and use them for their own purposes in conflicts that are intensely local. Simultaneously, elites manipulate local cleavages to suit their aims in the larger conflict. Additionally, war generates new local cleavages, as power shifts and delicate local arrangements are disturbed— both developments that are observable in statebuilding efforts.[41] Hence, local realities should be recognized in analyses, and motivations cannot be derived exclusively from either the local or the greater cleavages: instead, agency is located simultaneously at the top and at the bottom and "may thus be understood as transforming into a joint process the collective actors' quest for power and the local actors' quest for local advantage."[42] This mirrors the statebuilding process, where rivaling actors strive to reproduce their power and influence, perform governance functions and possibly undermine the ambitions of building a modern, liberal democratic state.[43] Analysts maintain that progress does not result solely from aims, intentions, or errors of the interventionists, but from the strategic interaction between the various local actors and multilateral statebuilding agencies.[44] Statebuilding is not only imposed from above, or formed from below— instead it is the interaction of the interveners and the locals that determine its progress and shape.

Michael Barnett and Christopher Zürcher have theorized this process in a 'peacebuilding game' that can lead to different outcomes. They argue that the objectives and interests of the key actors involved in statebuilding processes– state elites, subnational elites, and national and international peacebuilders – are fundamentally different; they visualize this process using game theory, assuming that elites interact strategically with each other. Local actors do not relinquish control over political power. Instead, peacebuilding becomes a process of negotiation, where the degree and form of local and international control over political power are contested by local, national and international elites.[45]

While the international community strives for cooperative peacebuilding, where local elites accept the peacebuilding agenda and fully cooperate with the peacebuilders; the national and local elites seek captured peacebuilding, where they are able to redirect the distribution of assistance so

[41] Stathis N. Kalyvas (2003) "The Ontology of 'Political Violence': Action and Identity in Civil Wars", *Perspectives on Politics* 1:3, 475-494.
[42] Kalyvas: 486.
[43] Tobias Debiel, Rainer Glassner, Conrad Schetter, and Ulf Terlinden, (2009): 'Local State-Building in Afghanistan and Somaliland', *Peace Review*, 21:1, pp.38 — 44: 38.
[43] V. Boege et al (2009)
[44] Kahler: 292.
[45] Michael Barnett and Christoph Zürcher (2009), "The Peacebuilder's contract_ How external statebuilding reinforces weak statehood" in *Dilemmas of Statebuilding* ed. Roland Paris, Timothy Sisk (New York: Routledge): 31-35.

that it is fully consistent with their interests. The authors argue that 'compromised peacebuilding', which strikes a balance between the interests of the different actors, is the most likely outcome. This is especially true because appeasement of local elites constrains national elites. Even if national elites agree to cooperative statebuilding, their need to conciliate local elites seeking to maintain autonomy will force them to opt for compromised statebuilding. Hence, the liberal political ideals of external agents are not fully realized. Instead, international 'peacebuilders' mainly transfer the ceremonies and symbols of the liberal-democratic state. The final product is a hybrid political arrangement, much like the current state of Afghanistan.[46]

Barnett and Zürcher thus see the current status quo— dissatisfying to the diverse interveners as well as the governing elite and the local traditional elite— as the inevitable outcome when peacebuilders, who ultimately do not have the power to impose their governing arrangement over legitimate alternatives, meet the local realities. Peacebuilders inevitably become part of the patrimonial power structures. Hybrid statebuilders disagree. They argue that recognizing local power structures may open the way to a more creative, legitimate and locally adapted statebuilding process.

These theoretically and ideologically different approaches in turn affect the intervening parties' approach. For example, the Tribal Liaison Office is situated in the hybrid statebuilding and reformist camp: they define the local sociopolitical order as crucial. Before designing an action plan, they study the local context. Their work process reflects the emphasis on local institutional and power arrangements and the importance of power. Building on local institutions will ensure a sustainable and locally relevant Afghan state.

In contrast, the National Solidarity Program reflects the dominant statebuilding blueprint approach. The solution to Afghanistan's woes lies in the construction of a strong central state. The local context matters only in so far as it is acknowledged that the central state must perform locally: democracy, development and service provision must be instituted at the village level. In this program design, pre-existing local institutions are disregarded at best, scorned at worse. The heated theoretical debate surrounding the statebuilding intervention thus has direct consequences on the various interventions in practice.

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[46] Barnett; Zürcher (2009): 31-35.

Chapter III: Simplified Theories and Complex Local Realities in Afghanistan

"In a country where rural development policies have meant either almost no government services, or the opposite extreme- unwanted reforms, forced on the people leading to uprising and war- drastically different rural policies are needed, ones that are sensitive, sustainable, and participatory."[47]

The intervention in Afghanistan occurs in complicated context. External actors operate in a contested political environment. Behind the façade of a unified intervention are numerous small interventions by diverse external actors. The political trend that enables the intervention and advances statebuilding as a strategic necessity for the security of the developed world is the unifying force. Peacebuilders, while unified under a common slogan, have in effect diverse objectives and goals. Simultaneously, in the context of Afghanistan, leadership is contested between traditional leaders and new power-structures that emerged during conflict. The responses of elites to the intervention are diverse and ever-changing. The theoretical models may visualize the process of contestation between categories of actors. But they fail to capture the true range of actors and the diversity of objectives. The reality on the ground is exponentially more complicated. Local power arrangements matter and external actors must be highly aware of their limitations to impose their narrative of peace over the local perceptions. This chapter gives an overview of how practitioners juggle complex local realities and the political trends defining the intervention process.

The Political Meta-Context: Unified Rhetoric and Divergent Agendas

With the involvement of an increasing range of actors in post-conflict statebuilding, separate objectives are merged under the umbrella of a fragile or failed state agenda. The diversity of factors that engender state fragility, the variety in which state fragility manifests itself, and the divergent responses of the international community all lead to an intervention that is broad and ill-defined.[48] The overarching objectives are summarized with vague terms, such as statebuilding, development, governance and capacity building. But humanitarian- or development- or security-focused practitioners' define these terms differently. Their assumptions of what constitutes the main cause of fragile states diverge. Logically, their working assumption, their goals, and their operational process impact the execution of policies.

Causal assumptions regarding state-failure and suppositions regarding the development of the conflict influence the external actor's project design. This starts with primary assessments on whether organizations see themselves operating in a humanitarian or a post-conflict, peacebuilding, or development situation: "The way in which a situation is defined impacts directly on the posture that agencies vis-à-vis the government and other forces at play"[49] There is a lack of agreement regarding the most fundamental questions about the intervention in Afghanistan. These range from

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[47] Omar Zakhilwal; Jane Murphy Thomas (2005) "Afghanistan: What kind of Peace? The Role of Rural Development in Peace-Building" *From War Termination to Sustainable Peace: What Kind of Peace is Possible?* (North South Institute Research Project): 4.

[48] Diana Cammack, Dinah McLeod, Alina Rocha Menocal, Karin Christiansen (2006) *Donors and the 'Fragile State Agenda: A Survey of Current Thinking and Practice* (Overseas Development Institute; March): 16.

[49] Antonio Donini (2007) "Local Perceptions of Assistance to Afghanistan" *International Peacekeeping*, Volume 14, Issue 1 158 - 172 : 160.

the causal assumptions of state fragility to the analyses of whether Afghanistan represents a post-conflict development challenge, or a protracted conflict, necessitating a humanitarian approach.[50] Some analysts go so far as to claim that "failure on the ground has been the result of an inability of the international community to agree on what states actually do and how they can perform [essential] functions."[51] The disagreement between the many factions involved in the intervention leads to a fragmented, incoherent and at times contradictory approach, which negatively affects the progress of sustainable peace and development.

Analyzing the diversity of actors in the statebuilding field, Cammack et al categorizes three broad approaches: firstly, conflict resolution specialists and peacekeeping agencies, as well as humanitarian workers emphasize local peace, the basic needs of the population and human security (defined as freedom from want and fear and safety from chronic threats such as hunger, disease, repression). Their main underlying assumption is that politicization of ethnic and religious divisions, and of resource constraints, causes conflict, which in turn undermines development. Their intervention is aimed at easing tensions and ensuring that immediate basic needs are met.[52] One of the organizations analyzed in this paper exemplifies this approach: the Tribal Liaison Office works to create a space for mediation between local actors, statebuilders and the international community to address important issues, such as local conflict, aid distribution, and representation. The assumption is that if the politicization of these local conflicts can be prevented, and if local grievances can be addressed, peace and development and good governance in rural Afghanistan can be cultivated.

The approach of the second group, composed of development and humanitarian professionals, donor agencies, economic analysts, governance and human rights workers, differs slightly. They stress political development and governance as their main objective. They connect the lack thereof to state failure, which, in turn, causes poor developmental outcomes. Governance is seen as the primary driver of economic growth. Development is assumed more likely in well-governed countries, and good governance, in turn, necessitates economic development. Thus, long-term statebuilding and governance goals are accentuated over humanitarian goals. In short, "state and nation building are high on the agenda of development workers, although incidental to humanitarian aid workers."[53] The second intervention examined, the National Solidarity Program, exemplifies the policies that follow these assumptions: the goal of this program is to bring new egalitarian governance structures to Afghan villages, which, through donor funding, will concentrate on bringing local development projects to the villages. The assumption is that democratic governance and economic development will stabilize the countryside, counter-act the conflict-entrepreneurial power structure, and bring development and peace to Afghanistan.

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[50] Donini: 162.
[51] Ashraf Ghani and Clare Lockhart, (2008) *Fixing failed states : a framework for rebuilding a fractured world / Ashraf Ghani, Clare Lockhart* (Oxford University Press, Oxford ; New York): 6.
[52] Cammack et al: X.
[53] Cammack et al: 25.

There is a third category of actors from the security establishment, which has dominated the rhetoric surrounding statebuilding. It defines weak states as threats to national and international security, and as one of the most urgent challenges facing the international community.[54] The poor quality of governance and the economy in these states is believed to generate organized crime, such as the drug trade, as well as problems like terrorism, immigration, and general social cohesion concerns. It follows that development and good governance in these countries are instrumental to reducing global security threats.[55] Analysts argue that the danger emanating from failed states for its own population, regional stability and international security requires a concerted and comprehensive preventative and stabilizing effort by the international community.[56] Security is expanded from its military-defense meaning to a broader one, both down to an individual and up to a global level in a humanization of the concept.[57]

This way, the security discourse validates the intervention in Afghanistan and determines its shape. State building becomes the new development paradigm: its appeal lies in linking development and humanitarian measures with security and crisis prevention concerns.[58] The nation state, a development of Western history up to the 20th century, is upheld as a suprahistorical principle that cannot be questioned and legitimates drastic action.[59] As Chesterman et al. summarize it, "a world of capable, efficient and legitimate states will help achieve the goals of order, stability and predictability and promote national and human security."[60] Statebuilding becomes a strategic imperative to secure the developed world.

Discourse, perspectives, frames, and assumptions matter, because they define the actor's causal suppositions and hence solutions. Keen, drawing on Foucault, stresses that it is important to examine how 'truth' surrounding interventions is constructed, who has the right to pronounce it, and simultaneously, whose perceptions of reality are excluded, marginalized, or disqualified as unscientific: "particular systems of social intervention…tend to generate the data that in turn legitimize and sustain them…this insight can help us to understand the shortcomings in humanitarian intervention."[61] The securitization, which emerged from the political needs of the developed world, thus shapes causal assumptions regarding state fragility. This political context shapes the intervening parties' approach and process in peacebuilding.

The dominance of the security discourse facilitated a merging of different agendas of the actors involved: linking aid to the security of states gives development and humanitarian workers a

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[54] Volker Boege, Anne M. Brown, and Kevin P. Clements, (2009): 'Hybrid Political Orders, Not Fragile States', *Peace Review*: 3.
[55] Cammack et al: X.
[56] Volker Boege, Anne M. Brown, and Kevin P. Clements, (2009): 13.
[57] Cammack et al: 22.
[58] Tobias Debiel, Daniel Lambach (2009) 'How State-Building Strategies Miss Local Realities', *Conflict, Security & Development*. 21:1, 22-28 .
[59] Christine Noelle-Karimi, Conrad Schetter, Reinhard Schlaginweit (2002) "Introduction" *Afghanistan- A Country without a State?*" Schriftenreihe der Mediothek für Afghanistan Band 2 (IKO- Verlag für Interkulturelle Kommunikation; Frankfurt am Main)
[60] S. Chesterman, M. Ignatieff, and R. Thakur (2005): 359.
[61] David Keen, 2008, *Complex Emergencies*, Cambridge: Polity: 15.

voice in policy making and better access to fundraising. The surface level agreement belies their divergent emphasis and agendas however. These differences affect how the diverse aid workers engage with their Afghan counterparts as well as how they design their projects. Sustainability, effectiveness, and the viability of coordinated and harmonized Afghanistan-wide approach are negatively affected by these masked differences. Nevertheless, peacebuilders cater to political discourse because it provides them funding and political support.

The Afghan Context: Statebuilding to Date

The diversity of actors united under the state-centric discourse, which strongly frames development policies of major donor countries and international institutions, limit the greater stabilization efforts.[62] Engagement in Afghanistan is marred by conflict of interests and a largely top down involvement that lacks coherent overarching strategy.[63] Donor policies created an unsustainable rentier state that is fragmented, weak, and relies on foreign rather than domestic resources. The governance structure is dependent on foreign consultants and aid provides 50 % of Afghanistan's gross domestic product. This system requires the state to be accountable to donors rather than its population. Ironically, such reliance on foreign donors fails to foster either economic development or a culture of democracy. [64] Despite the impressive progress in the creation of new government bodies, their operational capability remains limited and the state's authority remains rudimental in political and territorial terms. Analysts are increasingly critical, arguing that the current efforts led to a "non-functional pseudo-state" that fails to provide security, services, and does not constitute a democracy.[65] Instead, "the country seems to provide some perfect examples of hybrid political orders."[66] At the same time, the intensifying war in Afghanistan renders the statebuilding enterprise increasingly difficult.[67]

The current design of the intervention leaves little room for alternative or indigenous approaches, which may not fit with the "northern humanitarian dogma."[68] The weakness of the Weberian statebuilding is that it labels customary institutions as counter-productive obstacles. The dominant discourse leads to either blindness to social organization on the ground or ideological opposition to cooperation with the locals. Such frames have debilitating consequences on policy decision. As Charles King notes; "Believing in… the nihilistic worldviews of … insurgents hardly

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[62] V. Boege et al (2009): 13.

[63] Schmeidl et al .

[64] Jude Howell; Jeremy Lind (2008) *'Civil Society With Guns Is Not Civil Society': Aid, Security And Civil Society In Afghanistan* www.lse.ac.uk/ngpa/publications : 6.
Astrid Suhrke (2006) 'When more is less: Aiding Statebuilding in Afghanistan' *Madrid: Fundacion para las Relaciones Internacionales y el Dialogo Exterior (FRIDE Working paper 26)* .
Jonathan Goodhand; Mark Sedra (2010) "Who owns the peace? Aid, reconstruction, and peacebuilding in Afghanistan" *Disasters*, 34: 584.

[65] Rubin (2006): 184.

[66] Susanne Schmeidl, Masood Karokhail " 'Prêt-a-Porter States': How the McDonaldization of State-Building Misses the Mark in Afghanistan" in: Martina Fischer and Beatrix Schmelzle (eds.). *Building Peace in the Absence of States: Challenging the Discourse on State Failure.* (Berghof Handbook Dialogue No. 8.) Berlin: Berghof Research Center 67-79: 68.

[67] Anatol Lieven, (2007) "Afghanistan: An unsuitable candidate for state building" *Conflict, Security & Development*, 1478-1174, Volume 7, Issue 3, Pages 483 – 489.

[68] Antonio Donini (2007)"Local Perceptions of Assistance to Afghanistan" *International Peacekeeping* Vol.14, No.1: 160.

leads to workable, focused policies for potential third-party interveners."[69] In her reflection on the intervention in the former Yugoslav states, Woodward notes that the interveners did not only ignore the institutions most important to the local communities, but instead "saw them as obstacles to their goals," which were to facilitate a fundamental transformation. Hence, "with regards to pre-war institutions and customs, the attitude was one of slash and burn"[70] In the post-Taliban years, external aid agencies exhibited hostility towards the traditional institutions of local decision-making, not just because their focus was not on development but also because they are seen to embody illiberal values, and their diffuse nature contradicted the donors preference of working with formal, registered NGOs.[71] Schmeidl and Karokhail notes that the donor community's hostile view of customary institutions, which collide with the individualistic focus of modern governance, remains one of their major challenges in the Tribal Liaison Office's attempt to work towards bottom-up governance.[72]

Simultaneously, there are inherent contradictions in a statebuilding mission which seeks to promote national autonomy, but does not look at how to utilize citizens and their vision in the rebuilding efforts.[73] Analysts go so far as to argue that the "reconstruction enterprise in Afghanistan set itself up for failure by adopting a developmental template, which is wholly unsuited to the context"[74] Throughout a large part of the recent intervention, donors favored cooperation with reformers over traditionalists, disregarding their actual power base and engaging only obliquely with existing politics and power structures in Afghanistan. While there is progress, the early donor project design and execution largely progressed without the involvement of Afghan stakeholders.[75] As a result, new institutions are grafted on pre-existing ones in a process of highly conflictual statebuilding, as those who benefit from the former and current political structures resist or try to co-opt the new developments.[76]

The international community, concerned with negative effects on peace and stability, attempted to fix the problem with more of the same: more aid, more consultants, and stronger measures to professionalize the ruling elite. Starkly absent from this international commitment was any substantive engagement with Afghan traditions. [77] The result is that donors and a narrow clique of Afghans 'own' a bureaucratic façade of reforms, while real ownership is exerted by local

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[69] Charles King (2007), „Power, Social Violence and Civil Wars" in Crocker, Chester A. et (eds) *Leashing the Dogs of War: Conflict management in a divided world* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press) :119; 122.
[70] Woodward (2009): 52.
[71] Jude Howell; Jeremy Lind (2008) *'Civil Society With Guns Is Not Civil Society': Aid, Security And Civil Society In Afghanistan* www.lse.ac.uk/ngpa/publications : 15.
[72] Schmeidl, Karokhail (2006): 72
[73] Theo Hollander (2009) "Gender Equality and the Hybrid Reality in Fragile States" Working Paper 1.5 *Peace Security and Development Network:* 4.
[74] Jonathan Goodhand; Mark Sedra (2010) "Who owns the peace? Aid, reconstruction, and peacebuilding in Afghanistan" *Disasters*, 34: 593.
[75] Christian Davids, Sebastian Rietjens, Joseph Soeters (2010) "Measuring Progress in Reconstructing Afghanistan" *Baltic Security and Defence Review* Vol 12, Is 1: 37.
[76] Goodhand; Sedra: 583.
[77] Astrid Suhrke, Kaja Borchgrevink, (2008), 'Negotiating justice sector reform in Afghanistan', *Crime, Law and Social Change*, Vol. 50., Issue 3: 214

powerholders. This explains the starkly different outcomes of the intervention in Afghanistan from those intended.[78]

The Afghan context is complicated, because of a historic legacy of a weak central state; yet, with a robust civil society filled with micro-societies.[79] Experts such as Lister, Giustozzi and Barfield note that Afghanistan's historic state evolution led to a dichotomy between a highly centralized state— fiscally and administratively one of the most centralized in the world with limited local input on spending and planning— and the traditional countryside. [80] In fact, the state's organization was designed to maintain a standoff between a modern state, reflected in the cities and administrated top down to the provinces, and the tribal governance structure that remained important. This conservative state structure does not facilitate the envisioned modernization of the wider Afghanistan.[81] The diversity of competing power structures throughout Afghanistan makes it difficult for international actors, both military and civilian, to identify reliable and legitimate Afghan partners in the statebuilding endeavor.[82] Historical failure to change Afghanistan's patronage, based local governance structures, into a central state foreshadows the difficulties of building an unexampled state in the Afghan context.[83]

Hybrid Statebuilding Attempts

Practitioners across a disciplinary spectrum from development, statebuilding, or security studies search for an alternative way forward and increasingly emphasize the local social political order. They maintain that Afghanistan's volatile history forced Afghans to rely on customary institutions for the services traditionally provided by the state, amongst them the provision of justice, security and other services. These socio-political formations represent significant opportunities in the effort to rebuild Afghanistan's war-torn society; yet they remain ignored and under-researched.[84] Revisionist statebuilders call for a cautious analysis to determine which local structures should be strengthened to ensure peace, stability, and long-term development. Some analysts propose to incorporate local institutions in the statebuilding enterprise as service providers. Many revisionist analysts see the Afghan society as a fundamentally tribal society. Despite the changes induced by decades of civil war, they propagate tribal engagement: "While the coherence and strength of the tribal structure has been eroded in many parts of the region, there is still sufficient coherence among tribes to allow them to play a significant role in peace-building."[85] They call for a decentralized statebuilding, and an engagement with the existing institutions. Thus, the "pendulum has recently

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[78] Goodhand; Sedra: 587.
[79] Chesterman et al: 366.
[80] Lister (2007): 4.
Antonio Giustozzi (2009) "The Eye of the Storm: cities in the vortex of Afghanistan's civil wars" Crisis States Working Paper No : 62 (series 2)
[81] Thomas J. Barfield (1984) "Weak Links on a Rusty Chain: Structural Weaknesses in Afghanistan's Provincial Government Administration" in M. Nazif Shahrani and Robert L. Canfield (eds), Revolutions and Rebellions in Afghanistan: Anthropological Perspectives. Berkeley, CA : Institute of International Studies.
[82] Davids et al: 37.
[83] Maaß (2007); 10.
[84] Goodhand; Sedra: 583.
[85] Tomas Gregg Caught in the Crossfire: The Pashtun Tribes of Southeast Afghanistan Lowy Institute: 3.

swung from reservation of working with traditional structures to what could be considered 'jumping on the tribal bandwagon'."[86] There is thus a recent push towards hybrid statebuilding.

Tribal Engagement: Hardly a Panacea to Afghanistan's Troubles

The urge to see tribal engagement as the solution must be approached with caution. In much of rural Afghanistan, the tribal system is in crisis because it can no longer provide "peace, income, a sense of purpose, a social network" to the local youth, who are attractive targets for the radical movements. The Neo-Taliban offers an outlet where they can express their frustration and earn prestige once offered in the tribal system. Even in the Pashtun "Southern Afghanistan and much of the South-East too, tribal structures [have] long disintegrated and tribes [have] lost their cohesion, if they ever had any."[87] Peacebuilders must be careful and assess the local power structures.

In today's Afghanistan, tribal relationships compete for political space with new social structures, which evolved in response to war, drought, migration, sedentarization, and other factors. "As a result, a range of other identities can transcend tribal structures, such as identities based on reputations earned during the anti-Soviet jihad, land ownership, or wealth acquired through licit or illicit activity (such as road taxes or the drug trade)."[88] This complicates efforts of foreigners to intervene and shape local politics.[89] Tribal engagement is unlikely to be a panacea for Afghanistan's woes: it is neither straightforward nor suited for to all parts of the country.[90]

Limitations of Tribal Structures

Tribal institutions have inherent limitations. As Afghanistan analyst Brick noted pithily, if customary organizations are effective at providing public goods and services, why does Afghanistan remain so abysmally poor?[91] Brick notes that Afghanistan exemplifies a society that cooperates on such a low level of government authority; it becomes trapped in an equilibrium which tolerates no government transgressions, even for service provision.[92] Rather than in tribes, the Afghan society is structured in solidarity networks, the *qawns*. In this social landscape of constantly renegotiated networks, there is no power structure that is defined by place of person. "Power in rural Afghanistan resides neither in a specific location, nor in a person; it rests upon a kinship network which strikes the uninitiated as elusive"[93]   This complicates any central government's strategy to target territory or power structures in advancing central statebuilding.[94]

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[86] Susanne Schmeidl (2009) "Promoting Civil Society in Afghanistan: Deconstructing Some Myths" *Petersberg Papers on Afghanistan and the Region Vol IV* ed Wolfgang Dansbeckgruber (Princeton University Press, Princeton New Jersey) : 74.
[87] Giustozzi (2007): 39: 49.
[88] Seth G. Jones (May/ Relations) http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/66350/seth-g-jones/it-takes-the-villages
[89] Seth G. Jones (2010)
[90] Gregg: 3.
[91] Jennifer Brick (2008), *The Political Economy of Customary Organizations in Rural Afghanistan,* unpublished manuscript (Madison: University of Wisconsin, Department of Political Science): 36.
[92] Jennifer Brick, (2008) *The Political Foundations of State-Building and Limited Government in Afghanistan* "Midwest Political Science Association Annual Meeting, Chicago, IL: 1.
[93] Raphaëlle Guillon; Bobby Anderson (2007) "How to Accommodate the Agenda of the Afghan Government, Local Communitites and Development Actors" *Scratching the Surface: Democracy, Tradition and Gender* ed. Jennifer Bennett (Heinrich Böll Foundation): 335.
[94] Raphy Favre, (2005) *Interface between State and Society in Afghanistan* (Addis Ugebia, Addis Abeba, Ethiopia : AIZON): 3.

These solidarity networks have a dual effect: one the one hand, they contain crucial social capital, ensuring resilience to external shocks such as war, drought and failing or transgressing government. On the other hand, they prevent the central government from promoting modernity, including service provision.[95] They have the beneficial effect of limiting government extraction and expropriation, but simultaneously create a political confederation with an exceptionally weak central government.[96] Decentralized public good provision alone will likely fail to bring the development and stability necessary to move Afghanistan out of poverty and instability.

The intensely local nature of customary institutions

Customary norms differ across Afghanistan, but the common objectives are restitution, reconciliation, and restoring community harmony. The *jirga* gatherings are more attuned to the social context and the needs of Afghanistan's agrarian society, for whom the formal system is foreign and forbidding.[97] In legal matters, they are favored by victims, because they promise compensation and community harmony, while the formal system only focuses upon punishment. Due to the strong influence of sharia law, the rural, religious communities see no conflict between the enacted law and their legal understanding thereof.[98] On the community level, the *qawn* structures provide stability: where people share common values and attitudes, customary institutions provide more certainty, as everyone understands their logic and focus on substance rather than procedure.[99]

Shuras and *jirgas* are intensely local institutions. This limits their impact, despite their presence across Afghanistan. They cannot create enforceable obligations on anyone beyond their own community.[100] The "spin giri— the white bearded elders— the patrons of such clientelistic networks tend to have a limited scope of influence that rarely goes beyond tribal boundaries."[101] The marginal cost of such relation-based governance, which restricts transaction with people outside the community is considerable.[102] "While enhancing effectiveness and legitimacy, [the] requirement for social cohesion also limits the viability of customary mechanisms in the current environment. The enormous disruptions caused by the last thirty years of turmoil and displacement have strained social bonds in many areas."[103] Customary institutions by design cannot address the challenges of post-conflict Afghanistan: Never intended for inter-community relations, they are unable to mediate in

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[95] Favre: 3.

[96] Brick *The Political Foundations of State-Building and Limited Government in Afghanistan:* 2.

[97] Leigh Toomey, Alexander Thier (2007) "Bridging Modernity and Tradition: Rule of Law and Search for Justice in Afghanistan" *United States Institute for Peace Panel Discussion Briefing* http://www.usip.org/resources/bridging-modernity-and-tradition-rule-law-and-search-justice-afghanistan .

[98] Thomas Barfield (2006) *Informal Dispute Resolution and Formal Legal System in Contemporary Northern Afghanistan* (United States Institute of Peace: Washington DC): 2.

[99] Thomas Barfield et al (2006): 17.

[100] United States Army, (September 2009) "My Cousin's Enemy is My Friend: A Study of Pashtun "Tribes" in Afghanistan" *Afghanistan Research Reachback Center White Paper* (Fort Leavenworth, KS): 18.

[101] Schmeidl, Karokhail (2006): 65.

[102] Brick *The Political Foundations of State-Building and Limited Government in Afghanistan:* 6.

[103] Thomas Barfield, Neamat Nojumi and J Alexander Their (2006) *The Clash of Two Goods State and Non-State Dispute Resolution in Afghanistan.* US Institute of Peace. Washington, D.C. http://www.usip.org/files/file/clash_two_goods.pdf: 18.

larger conflicts between armed groups, or address the atrocities and grievances of the Afghan conflict. Many of Afghanistan's large scale problems defy resolution by existing means.[104]

The volatile nature of tribal law

The limitation of these institutions may lead to rapid escalation of conflict between communities. The resulting insecurity negatively affects the quality of life, impedes development work and is exploited by factions of the conflict, such as the central government, the local warlord and the Neo-Taliban, to strengthen their power. Currently, a significant minority of disputes results in violence—the most common causes are *Zar, Zan*, and *Zamin* (gold, women, land).[105] An Oxfam study identified a range of factors contributing to local conflict: these include poverty and widespread unemployment, land and water resource constraints, family disagreements spreading to the tribe, tribal and ethnic disputes, displacement and the difficulties of reintegration, the side effects of the opium trade, the distribution of aid without regard to how it will affect local power relations, and the lack of local government's capacity to prevent escalation.[106] Local conflicts rarely attract attention. But they are a major source of fear and uncertainty. One third of Afghans perceive security to be bad or very bad, largely because of the local feuding. This limits the community's abilities to engage in joint initiatives. Such limited cooperation likely inhibits development.[107]

Pashtunwali— the Pashtun law as an example of the difficulties of tribal engagement

An example of the difficulties of building on tribal institutions is the tribal law of the Pashtuns, the largest ethnic group of Afghanistan which resides in the Eastern, Southern and Western parts of the country. Its norms at times conflict with international human rights law and complicate peacebuilding considerably. The *Pashtunwali*'s defining feature is an emphasis on honor and the unique competitive relationship of first cousins on the father's side, the *Tarbur*. In Pashtun, *Tarbur* also signifies enemy. This double meaning explains an essential feature of *Pashtunwali*: a man's honor, defining his public reputation and place in Pashtun society, depends on how he compares to his first cousin. Competition between cousins over personal attributes, such as bravery, is central and is representative of future struggles over land inheritance. Honor and competition are seen by Pashtuns as the very mechanism that preserves Pashtun society as something separate from the wider world.[108] Such competition may lead to a *Gundi*, an internecine rivalry between brothers or cousins (then also called *Turborwali*) within a clan or tribe. These often escalate into a *Patna*, a feud between families and tribes which continues for generations.[109] "The code [of *Pashtunwali*] is defined by quick bold action, reached by consensus, in order to defend the honor of the tribe and take revenge against enemies, regardless of future consequences."[110] Despite the prevalence of violent

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[104] Barfield et al (2006): 18.
[105] Barfield et al (2006): 8.
[106] Matt Waldman (2008), "Community Peacebuilding in Afghanistan- The Case for a National Strategy" *Oxfam International Research Report* (February): 8-11
[107] Waldman (2008): 4; 11.
[108] United States Army: 10.
[109] Shahmahmood Miakhel, (2009) *Understanding Afghanistan: The Importance of Tribal Culture and Structure in Security and Governance* (Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad Institute Center for South Asian Studies): 4.
[110] Miakhel: 6-7.

feuds, this competition over honor is accepted as the social structure.[111] Because of the centrality of honor in the Pashtun society, revenge seeking is not only legitimate, but an essential part of life on either the individual level or the collective level. Failure to seek blood retaliation, in the most severe crimes, is a sign of moral weakness; however this often leads to a spiral of revenge and often only when the harmony of the entire community is at stake, dispute resolution is initiated.[112] This *Badal*, direct vengeance, is particularly troubling in cases of murder, where conflicts with state law and international human rights norms. [113] The normative frame of the Pashtunwali thus legitimizes the persistency of violent conflict.

Because of the emphasis on personal autonomy and consensus, the *jirga* is dependent on the voluntary acceptance of its authority: the two warring parties must accept its intervention. Such an intervention is often only instigated if the wider community is negatively affected by the feud.[114] It is a reactive rather than pro-active institution and not designed to prevent conflict, but to alleviate its escalation into de-stabilizing blood feuds. [115]

Tribal Law and International Human Rights

Statebuilders open to the opportunities of hybrid institution building face the reality that in traditional societies social institutions, norms, values and the resulting practices tend to clash with the human rights framework, especially as they engender sexist inequalities. These customary institutions are dominated by men, and women's rights are restricted. Thus, especially among the Pashtuns, customary justice may include the practice of the *baad*, the marriage of women from the offender's family to a relative of the victim, or the habitual denial of women's legal rights to inheritance.[116] Furthermore, as male only institutions, *jirgas* are vulnerable to excessive influence of powerful elders.[117] Especially in areas where the traditional power balance is eroding, due to changes in wealth and power, composition of these traditional institutions may aggravate socio-cultural tensions.[118]

Working with local powerholders may also open opportunities, as cultural and religious norms are flexible. Dialogue may yield more positive results than working around local norms:[119] "There is much research which has shown that positive change for more gender equality can only have good results when the defining social structures, in other words the 'hybrid political orders', are not ignored."[120] Unlike popular assumptions, customary law and its execution changes with time and social condition. For example, in the north, there is universal condemnation of baad and a strong move to recognize forced marriages as Un-Islamic. Despite the difficulties of tribal engagement, working with tribal leaders may advance human rights in rural Afghanistan.

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[111] United States Army: 10.
[112] Barfield et al (2006): 8.
[113] Ali Wardak (2004) "Building a Post-War Justice System in Afghanistan" *Crime, Law & Social Change* 41: 319-34: 327.
[114] Barfield et al (2006): 8.
[115] Waldman (2008): 14.
[116] Toomey, Thier (2007).
[117] Wardak (2004): 327.
[118] Waldman (2008): 11.
[119] Theo Hollander (2009) "Gender Equality and the Hybrid Reality in Fragile States" Working Paper 1.5 *Peace Security and Development Network*: 6.
[120] Hollander (2009): 7.

The context in which intervening actors work is highly restraining— both in the political sense, where donor priorities influence the rhetoric and design of projects, and in the complex Afghan landscape. Central statebuilding so far has yielded unsatisfying results. Yet, tribal engagement by itself it currently is unlikely to bring peace and development. It is with this complicated context in mind that I analyze the efforts of two different statebuilding approaches.
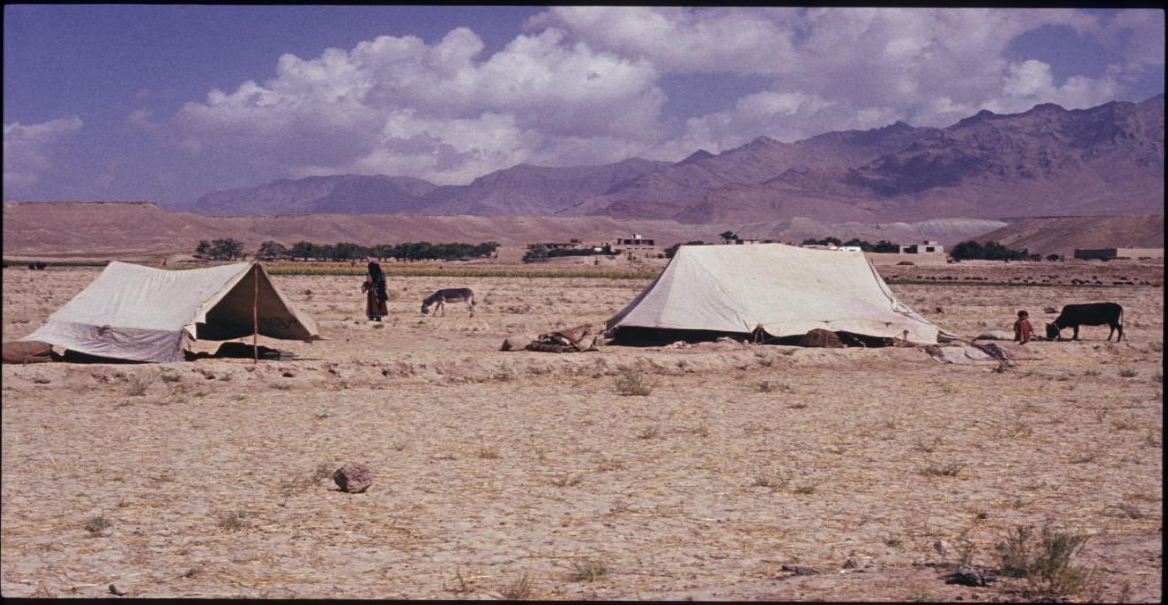
Chapter IV: The Tribal Liaison Office

"Accepting as the default position that 'we are essential' to Afghanistan's recovery is an unhelpful, patronizing and potentially dangerous propositions. It may be useful to start looking for alternatives that are more grounded in local realities, more sustainable, more empowering and more in line with the needs of ordinary people."[121]

The Tribal Liaison (TLO) is a unique initiative in the Afghan statebuilding intervention. Situated at the community level, this Non Governmental Organization (NGO) exemplifies the hybrid statebuilding approach. Formally founded in 2003, the TLO is an extension of a pilot project run by Swisspeace Afghanistan in the province of Ghazni. It presents itself as an embodiment of bottom up statebuilding: rather than being imposed by the donor community and the central government onto the rural areas, the TLO started as a cooperation which involved the initiative of the tribal leaders. Tribal elders of the Ahmadzai and Mangal tribes from the area of Loya Paktia, spanning the provinces of Paktia, Khost and Paktika, approached the Afghan Civil Society Forum of Swisspeace-Afghanistan.[122] The latter had already established itself as a forum for civil society organizations to highlight important local issues, initiating collaboration between local actors and peace- and statebuilders.[123] The elders directed requests to the NGO, asking for assistance on how to participate in the new reconstruction effort.[124] Out of the ensuing collaboration, the idea of a space for all actors to liaise emerged, and developed into an advocacy organization for the recognition of tribal structures.

The TLO exemplifies a learning institution that is process-oriented. They are highly effective in the resolution of local conflicts. Their approach of liaising with all actors involved and building institution gradually through consensus, is both strength and a weakness. It increases effectiveness, but limits their work to a cooperative environment. Nevertheless, their expansion into some of the more conflict ridden areas suggests that their approach is making headway and contains opportunities for growth. The biggest threat the organization faces is a polarization of the local population and ruling elite in the progressing conflict.

The TLO uses the greater rhetoric of the statebuilding intervention: its stated objectives are "improving local governance, stability and security in Afghanistan through systematic and institutionalized engagement with traditional tribal structures and civil society groups."[125] However, they represent the hybrid statebuilding camp. They argue that the current Weberian statebuilding endeavor misses the realities of the Afghan socio-political landscape with regards to power and service delivery. Stressing the importance of the local context, they argue that statebuilders have a responsibility to engage with legitimate powerholders, and to strengthen the traditional institutions. As local peacebuilders, the TLO attempts to prevent the politicization of resource constraints by

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[121] Antonio Donini (2007) "Local Perceptions of Assistance to Afghanistan" *International Peacekeeping*, Volume 14, Issue 1 158 - 172 : 171.
[122] Schmeidl, Karokhail (2006): 64.
[123] Afghan Civil Society Forum *About Us*
http://www.acsf.af/English/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=69&Itemid=29 (accessed 14.11.2010)
[124] Schmeidl, Karokhail (2006): 64.
[125] Tribal Liaison Office Website (accessed 08.12.2010) http://www.tlo-afghanistan.org/

addressing the grievance of "non-inclusion:" the perception of tribes that development aid is slow to arrive and largely excludes them, because of politicized security assessments.[126] Tribal engagement, the TLO believes, will strengthen service provision, foster good governance and stabilize the wider region.

The working assumptions impact the project design as well as the organization's interaction with the local socio-political context. There is a political choice to engage with political powerholders deemed to be legitimate partners based on the TLO's perception of traditional institutions. Their local emphasis both constrains and enables the TLO's achievement of its stated objectives: their research first method permits them to identify and address local concerns in an inclusive manner, and build governance and stability bottom up. However, their emphasis on legitimate tribal leaders binds them to an enabling socio-political context.

Design

The TLO is designed to connect the tribal leadership with the central Afghan state and with the international community looking for local partners for reconstruction projects. The NGO is an extension of a Swisspeace Afghanistan project on local governance through cooperation and networking. The TLO is funded through continuous support of the Heinrich Böll Foundation, a German Think Tank connected to the Green Party, as well as with startup funding from German and Finish ministries.[127] Originally it was designed as a research project on how best to engage tribal elders in the new statebuilding endeavor. It grew rapidly and by 2006, the TLO had operations in the Southeastern provinces of Paktia, Paktika and Khost (called *Loya Paktia*, or Greater Paktia), and expanded its work to central and southern region. There, the TLO conducted research, covering the provinces of Logar, Uruzgan, Helmand and Kandahar. To support the work in southern Afghanistan, an office was opened in Kandahar in 2005. In late 2007 and early 2008, TLO also began to expand its activities to the Eastern region, mainly through holding a peace and stability jirga— tribal gatherings of regional elders to discuss destabilizing conflicts. Furthermore, since 2009 TLO expanded to Ghazni and Kunduz provinces.[128] This expansion into some of the conflict ridden provinces suggests that the TLO has the potential to work in contentious environments.

The interesting aspect of the TLO's program design is the assumption that an effective intervention necessitates a thorough understanding of the local socio-political landscape. The TLO hence precedes its work with a research phase. This makes it a learning institution: they adjust the project design depending on context. Preparing its work with research allows the organization to understand the local security arrangement, the degree of legitimacy powerholders enjoy, and the priority of needs identified by villagers. Mapping the political economy of Loya Paktia, the researchers identified the precarious position of tribal leaders, who focus on peaceful means of governance and are willing to cooperate with the central government. These leaders are threatened by both gun-bearing elites, who gained power during the Afghan civil war and the insurgency that

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[126] Masood Karokhail (2007) "Informal Structures and Approach of Tribal Liaison Office" *Scratching the Surface: Democracy, Tradition, Gender* (Heinrich Böll Stiftung): 205.
[127] Schmeidl, Karokhail (2006): 64.
[128] Tribal Liaison Office Website.

targets tribal leadership collaborating with statebuilders. [129] The TLO strives to give these tribal leaders the possibility to communicate their problems to the government and statebuilders. Together this leadership can devise solutions that target local problems. In this flexible approach, working assumptions do not only influence the work process, but lessons learned through the process in turn form new assumptions. The TLO's conclusion regarding local power relations lead to political choices regarding partnerships.

The TLO strives to identify traditional leaders, presumed to be legitimate powerholders, and provide them with assistance to better serve the communities through cooperation with the central state and external actors in the area.[130] The project strategy relies on cooperation with tribal structures in the form of the *jirgas* and *shuras*. Elders from district, provincial and tribal *shuras* serve on consultative groups that advise the TLO and liaise with their shuras and tribes. [131] The TLO has formulated the following core-objectives: Promote dialogue and cooperation between tribes, provincial and central government, as well as with international actors; build the capacity of local *shuras*, leaders and community groups to provide good governance within the national framework and increase tribal accountability; and facilitate the reconstruction and development of public infrastructure, through the participatory assessment of community needs. Finally they strive to promote an understanding about local tribal structures and decision-making patterns.[132]

Working Assumptions

State Fragility: a Flawed Design

The Tribal Liaison Office (TLO) is embedded in the perspective of hybrid statebuilding, which impacts its project design and work philosophy: its founders describe Afghanistan as a country that "seems to provide some perfect examples of hybrid political orders."[133] The founders of the TLO stress that the state is too weak to provide services, control the means of violence, or act as a unifying force across Afghanistan's territory. Instead, the statebuilding enterprise is troubled with a variety of hybrid political orders, and a mismatch between the de jure state, heavily funded and constructed from above, and the de facto state power. The failure of the Afghan state, they maintain, lies in its very design: An ahistorical strong state, which disregards the traditional arrangement with an autonomous rural population. Historically, rural leaders negotiated cooperation with the central state selectively.[134] Furthermore, a disconnect between the local norms and the centralist, modernizing agenda persists. Tribal, ethnic, religious, and clan institutions and loyalties compete with formal institutions, which lack legitimacy and capacity. Hybrid statebuilders maintain

[129] Karokhail (2007): 201. Abubakar Siddique (July 23, 2010) "Taliban Violence Creating Social Revolution Among Pashtuns" *Radio Free Europe*
http://www.rferl.org/content/Taliban_Violence_Creating_Social_Revolution_Among_Afghanistans_Pashtuns/2108012.html.
[130] Schmeidl, Karokhail (2006) : 65.
[131] Schmeidl, Karokhail (2006): 64.
[132] Karokhail (2007): 117-118.
[133] Susanne Schmeidl, Masood Karokhail (2009) " 'Prêt-a-Porter States': How the McDonaldization of State-Building Misses the Mark in Afghanistan" in: Martina Fischer and Beatrix Schmelzle (eds.). *Building Peace in the Absence of States: Challenging the Discourse on State Failure.* (Berghof Handbook Dialogue No. 8.) Berlin: Berghof Research Center 67-79: 68.
[134] Amitai Etzioni "Bottom-Up Nation Building" *Policy Review* (Dec 2009/Jan 2010): 57.

that without a better understanding of the interaction between statebuilders and local institutions, the impact of peacebuilding and development work will remain limited.[135]

Taking issue with the current, top-down statebuilding enterprise, the TLO enacts an alternative approach.[136] They work on the hypothesis that engagement of traditional structures with the peace and reconstruction process in Afghanistan will benefit rather than counter the statebuilding process. By engaging Pashtun tribes in the peacebuilding and reconstruction process, the aim is to positively influence security, and to ensure an enabling environment for the delivery of rapid reconstruction measures in the region. The TLO maintains that an Afghan state that is responsive to its citizen's needs necessitates an institutional dialogue with multiple segments of society.[137]

The Crucial Local Context

The TLO deems the local context to be crucial in any intervention. The organization situates itself in the revisionist camp: the assumption is that the interventionist strategies can be adjusted to local political context through research and a learning-process. From their research, the NGO deduces conclusions about the legitimacy of local elites, and makes political choices regarding their partners. Thus, the TLO maintains that historically "village communities, clans, tribal groups and religiously defined communities formed the most important reference points for political identity and action."[138] The working assumption is that traditional tribal structures such as *spin giri* (tribal elders), the *jirga* (tribal gathering) or its more modern counterpart, the *shura* (councils of tribal elders involving multiple villages, and often instigated on behalf of a leader, such as a strongmen, or an external actor, such as an NGO) play a historically vital function in conflict settlements and maintenance of law in the absence of a service providing central government. It is assumed that an engagement with these institutions will strengthen peaceful sectors of local population and weaken power structures established by force and drug money.[139] For the TLO local context is crucial: unlike the National Solidarity Program to be analyzed subsequently, the TLO sees local powerholders as key in state- and peacebuilding. Intervening in a highly contested political situation, they analyze the local socio-political arrangements, and attempt to strengthen those leaders and institutions, they deem to represent the population and cultural norms.

In their cooperation with local elites, the TLO go beyond other intervening parties: many external actors, especially in the security department, have worked with local power bearers, often local militia commanders, without prior assessment of their legitimacy. This approach rewarded "strength, without any real verification of the extent of depth of the popular legitimacy of those it

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[135] Seth Kaplan (2008), *Fixing Fragile States: A new Paradigm for Development* (Praeger Security International: Westport, CT, USA) : 20.

[136] Schmeidl, Karokhail (2009):70.

[137] Susanne Schmeidl, Masood Karokhail (2006) "Integration of Traditional Structures into the Sate-building Process; Lessons from the Tribal Liaison Office in Loya Paktia" *Heinrich Boell Publication Series on Promoting Democracy under Conditions of State Fragility* (Heinrich Böll Foundation: Berlin): 61.

[138] Andreas Wimmer and Conrad Schetter (2002) *State-formation first: Recommendations for reconstruction and peace-making in Afghanistan* (Bonn: ZEF – Discussion Papers on Development Policy): 7 quoted in Schmeidl, Karokhail (2006): 60

[139] Christine Noelle-Karimi (2006) "Village Institutions in the Perception of National and International Actors in Afghanistan" *Amu Darya Series Paper No 1*(Center for Development Research ZEF, Bonn).

rewards."[140] The TLO appears to agree with analysts that point out that certain local institutions and leaders are more likely to be constructive in a legitimate statebuilding: tribal elders enjoy influence and are surmised to be legitimate leaders, while gun bearing elites are seen to perpetuate patronage and corruption.[141] Thus the TLO makes a political choice with regards to their chosen partners: idealizing the tribal elders as the legitimate ruling elite, they work to strengthen their weakened position.

There remain open questions about the popular support for 'traditional' bodies in local government, as the National Solidarity Program (NSP) visualizes. Provided the option to elect leaders through a secret ballot, such as the NSP facilitates, local people at times vote for people other than their traditional leaders. Furthermore, the strength of the tribal system varies across Afghanistan. While traditional structures hold considerable legitimacy and contain a wealth of knowledge and understanding that can benefit local governance, their position is also contested.[142] Cooperation with tribal elites represents a political choice to strengthen one faction in a complex political landscape.

Strategies and Working Process

The TLO consciously rejects the dominant blueprint approach of how to build a state in post-conflict countries. Instead, they adopt the beliefs of revisionist statebuilders that "in-depth intimate knowledge and understanding of local and national actors, forces and dynamics" is crucial for a successful intervention.[143] Furthermore the TLO represents an integrated development approach: success in project design, they surmise, must build on political cooperation on all levels. Revisionists assume that projects built on local solutions and responses are more sustainable, cheaper and more effective. The success of local efforts depends on their integration in the wider institutional and administrative systems through both horizontal and vertical linkages. Integration into the state ensures access to resources, and facilitates political cooperation. Involvement of political leadership at all levels increases the sustainability of project. Simultaneously, the inclusion of customary structures makes use of well established coping mechanisms already servicing the disadvantaged.[144] The TLO argues such cooperation to be the most viable long-term approach.

These assumptions influenced the TLO's program design: their objective is to connect working tribal institutions to the central state, and their process allows for dialogue. The State, through cooperation with the existing service providers, has more tools to bring development and the rule of law to the villages in an effective manner, rendering its presence more legitimate. The statebuilding envisioned by the TLO can be said to reflect Menkhaus' "mediated state" in which local institutions provide an additional mean of governance and check on central power abuse. In

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[140] Kimberly Marten (2009) "The Danger of Tribal Militias in Afghanistan: Learning from the British Empire" *Journal of International Affairs* (Fall/ Winter, vol 63 No1): 159.

[141] Lister (2007): 12; 15.

[142] Lister (2005): 7.

[143] Quoted in Barakat; Chard: 827.

[144] Barakat; Chard: 823- 824.

this process, research and action are integrally linked to devise projects that enhance local socio-political institutional performance.

The TLO believes that statebuilding could only progress if the actors involved would be convinced of their gain in the process. The TLO project design, infused by these working assumptions, has borne out in practice. Dialogue and cooperation between tribes, provincial and central government and the international actors, including the military (the TLO regularly liaised with the Provincial Reconstruction Teams, whom they considered an important intervener in the region) facilitates consultation and interest representation in important matters such as development aid. For example, the TLO's participatory rural assessments met both the needs of the rural community to articulate their wants and those of the statebuilders, who were provided a list of projects, prioritized by the recipient community.[145] As part of this process, the TLO strengthens traditional leaders: Elders' legitimacy depends in part on their ability to provide services to their community and ensure access to politics in Kabul. Their interest to negotiate access to development organizations in order to eventually bring growth to the regions and thereby strengthen their own political base assured acceptance of the TLO in the elders' perception.[146] This approach strengthens both local and national elites.

Examples of the TLO's Work

The TLO's projects are wide-ranging. The TLO trains the capacity of local shuras, leaders and community groups in peacebuilding, conflict resolution, human rights and development work. They work to increase tribal accountability and strengthen their contribution to peace and security.[147] They also work on conflict resolutions through projects designed to stabilize the region. For example, they were able to contribute to the attenuation of a long-standing tribal land conflict between the Sabari and Bal Khail tribes through the execution of a road project giving both tribes better resource access. They thus identified outstanding grievances and worked to de-politicize these before conflict could escalate. The diversity of projects makes success difficult to measure.

The Commission of Conflict Mediation as an Example of Hybrid Statebuilding

As hybrid statebuilders, the TLO searches for creative ways to include traditional institutions in the central state. An excellent example of the projects that result from the cooperation the TLO facilitates is the Commission on Conflict Mediation (CCM) of Khost Province. In Khost, the local governor noted that land and resource conflicts were straining provincial government; left unresolved, they had a destabilizing effect. As Afghanistan struggles to emerge out of protracted conflict, land and resource conflicts abound. In fact, 70% of land lacks legal documentation of ownership. Furthermore, changing patterns of migration—like the settlement of traditionally nomadic groups— lead to increased competition for land. Land disputes are likely to become one

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[145] Karokhail (2007): 206-7.
[146] Schmeidl, Karokhail (2006): 69.
[147] Schmeidl, Karokhail (2006): 67.

of the most destabilizing factors in Afghanistan: the rural population doubled in the last three decades, while much of agricultural land and livestock was destroyed.[148]

With the help of the Tribal Liaison Office, the governor assembled a *jirga*— a gathering of respected elders and village leaders— and established the Commission on Conflict Mediation (CCM). This is a complimentary framework, merging the formal system while building on intact tribal structures, and is embedded in the traditional jirga process. This judicial hybrid statebuilding recognizes the strong resurgence of customary practices in Afghanistan, which Afghans see as more readily accessible than formal courts, and continue to utilize it in both criminal and civil matters.[149] Ninety percent of Afghans rely primarily on customary dispute resolution mechanisms, even though the latter is not explicitly recognized by the central state.[150] The six member CCM is composed of respected and influential elders, nominated by tribal representatives. It represents alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, akin to Western out-of-court arbitration, to resolve resource and land based conflicts. At the same time it is officially authorized to arbitrate conflicts by the Provincial Governor, who also selects and refers the appropriate conflicts to the Commission. The CCM achieved estimable rates of effectiveness and exemplifies successful hybrid statebuilding. In its first 18 months, it resolved 18 cases, and referred 3 to the provincial court.[151] This is an excellent example of the strengths of hybrid statebuilding.

The Regional Factor: The Tribal Liaison Office and the Local Context

The Tribal Liaison Office's design is greatly facilitated by its base in the Loya Paktia, which is a distinctive area in Afghanistan. These provinces, Paktia, Khost, Paktika are relatively stable. Located in the eastern part of the tribal belt, the area is comparatively ethnically homogenous. The presence of the state has been traditionally weak, but so has the appeal of the Taliban.[152] Their location close to Kabul facilitated an administrative special status throughout Afghanistan's history of state expansion. In return for pledged loyalty to the ruler, these areas were exempt from state taxes, military conscription and assured minimal state intervention.[153] Such arrangements, codified through tribal contracts among tribes, and between tribes and the government, still persist in the area, and ensure security.[154] Furthermore, due to the strength of the local Sufi network, which is either politically indifferent or pro-government and resists the Neo-Deobandi ideology of the Neo-Taliban, the clergy largely remained hostile to the insurgency.[155]

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[148] Giustozzi Book: 230.

[149] Leigh Toomey, Alexander Thier (2007) "Bridging Modernity and Tradition: Rule of Law and Search for Justice in Afghanistan" *United States Institute for Peace Panel Discussion Briefing* http://www.usip.org/resources/bridging-modernity-and-tradition-rule-law-and-search-justice-afghanistan .

[150] Theo Hollander (2009) "Gender Equality and the Hybrid Reality in Fragile States" Working Paper 1.5 *Peace Security and Development Network*: 8.

[151] "Between the Jirga and the Judge Alternative Dispute Resolution in Southeastern Afghanistan" (2009) *TLO Program Brief* http://www.usip.org/files/file/jirga_judge.pdf

[152] Conrad Schetter, Rainer Glassner, Masood Karokhail, (2007) 'Beyond Warlordism: The Local Security Architecture in Afghanistan' *International Politics and Security Issue* 2: 146.

[153] Tom Gregg (2009) "Caught in the Crossfire: The Pashtun Tribes of Southeast Afghanistan" *Policy Brief* (Lowy Institute): 3-4.

[154] TLO (2009) "Tribal Jurisdiction and Agreements" *TLO Policy Brief* (Heinrich Böll Stiftung): 3.

[155] Giustozzi Book: 43-45.

The Loya Paktia area is quite unique: tribal institutions were neither replaced by state administration nor warlordism. This ensured that the balance of power remained fluid and tribal leaders strong.[156] Tribal divisions over access to natural resources and representation notwithstanding, the unique history of Loya Paktia allows tribal structures to remain stronger and more unified than in other parts of the country.[157] This restrains the rise of the warlord. The social landscape, with power structures determined on an egalitarian principle and differing in village to village, rendered it impossible to bypass social segmentation: every strongman was trapped in his tribe.[158] Thus, local tribal institutions retained viability parallel to the developing infrastructure of war.[159]

However, in much of the rest of Afghanistan, the traditional structures are eroding, pressured by the dramatic effects of the war, amongst them changing migration patterns, generational changes, new power structures and a lack of social cohesion. The weakness of tribal leaders in much of the rest of Afghanistan casts doubts on the viability of the TLO approach on a larger scale. The founders of the TLO recognize this geographical limitation: as part of its effort to engage local institutions, the TLO has worked with the traditional tribal police in Loya Paktia, the *arbakai*, to advance community policing and to ensure security during 2004 and 2005 elections.[160] Despite their laudable success in reinvigorating tribal policing and linking it with central state security interests, the TLO warns that such tribal community policing cannot be applied outside the Loya Paktia: the legitimacy of tribal policing depends on strong and cohesive tribal structures, and any attempt to copy them in other parts of Afghanistan without these preconditions may instead empower warlords and their militias, which lack legitimacy and are unchecked in their power.[161] Tribal engagement, such as the TLO exemplifies, may only be effective where the tribal leadership remains strong and legitimate and able to provide security, services and a sense of identity.

The Goals of Good Governance, Security and Peacebuilding

As of now, it is unclear whether and to which extend invigoration of traditional governance structures, such as through the hybrid statebuilding the TLO advances, will diminish the wartime power structure or protect the villages from Neo-Taliban influence— the two main challenges with which peacebuilders are faced.[162] Even in Loya Paktia, tribal leadership is not insulated from the current conflict. In areas of the south-east, such as southern Ghazni, much of Paktika and Zurmat of Paktia, the influence of the tribal leadership is weaker and that of the clergy stronger: There, the Neo-Taliban expands rapidly.[163] While in most of Paktia, the tribal leadership remained strong, the

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[156] Mohammad Osman Tariq (2008) "The Tribal Security System (Arbakai) in Southeast Afghanistan" *Crisis States Occasional Papers* (Crisis States Research Center): 2.
[157] Gregg (2009): 3-4.
[158] Antonio Giustozzi & Noor Ullah, (2006) " 'Tribes' and Warlords in Southern Afghanistan, 1980-2005" Crisis States Working Paper No 7.
[159] Noelle-Karimi: 7.
[160] Karokhail (2007): 199.
[161] Susanne Schmeidl ;Masood Karokhail (2009) "The Role of Non-State Actors in 'Community-Based Policing' - An Exploration of the Arbakai (Tribal Police) in South-Eastern Afghanistan" *Contemporary Security Policy:* 333.
[162] Noelle-Karimi.
[163] Giustozzi (2007): 53.

province, bordering Pakistan, has also been a strategic crossroad for fighters.[164] On their supply route, insurgents use violence to weaken customary networks as well as target civilians, who refuse to support the insurgency.[165] The rest of Loya Paktia is not immune either. With the rapid expansion of the insurgency along these smuggling routes, the traditional structures are unable to stop the progress of the conflict: amongst US military strategist, Khost is now mentioned alongside the toughest trouble spots such as Kandahar.[166] The success of such hybrid statebuilding as the TLO embodies is not insulated from the outcome of the conflict.

Nevertheless, the TLO has been able to achieve smaller, not insignificant improvements in local stability. As peacebuilders, their aim is to address the local conflicts to prevent their politicization and wider destabilizing effects. Their work successfully addresses some of the security challenges that negatively affect the local quality of life. They effectively translate the recognition of the importance of local institutions into an engagement strategy devoted to strengthening the local capacity in resolving conflicts in a way that is fair, effective and sustainable. Providing training to resolve disputes through mediation, negotiation, and conflict resolution and supporting civil-society involvement in peace and development goes a long way in increasing trust, safety, and social cohesion within and between communities.[167] They also address intercommunity conflict, by initiating *jirga* council between warring communities, such as in Khost, where the settling Kuchi nomad population conflicted with the settled population. While these inter-community *jirgas* are not able to resolve the conflict in the first instance, the TLO maintains that such inter-community communication is crucial in conflict mediation and if followed up with a government peacebuilding strategy, could yield significant results.[168] Such liaising shows that populations of rural Afghanistan are not averse to innovation and may provide structural mechanisms that could build a fruitful relationship between central government and rural Afghanistan.[169] As Barakat and Chard pointed out, "peace is not a quick fix but a development process that begins and can be nurtured long before ceasefires are brokered," and local capacity building is an important step in this process.[170] Nevertheless, it is unreasonable to expect that local peacebuilding alone will be a counterforce to the larger conflict, or provide the government with enough strength and legitimacy to counter the appeal of the Neo-Taliban pledge of harsh, but stabilizing justice.

In the end, the stress on local governance, development and stability is crucial: in the TLO's design, peace can only be build gradually village by village. Their approach is limited to an enabling environment, identified through a gradual learning process. While their work is important in local

[164] Ian Pannell (2009), "Can militias contain the Taleban?" *BBC News* (21 February) http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/7902093.stm.
[165] Andrya Hill (2009) "Insurgents Make Afghans Focus of Attacks" *Defense Video and Imagery Distribution System* (26 June) http://www.dvidshub.net/news/35671/insurgents-make-afghans-focus-attacks.
[166] Peter Baker; Rod Nordland (14.11.2010) "U.S. Plan Envisions Path to Ending Afghan Combat" *The New York Times* http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/15/world/asia/15prexy.html?_r=1&nl=todaysheadlines&emc=a2 (accessed 15.11.2010).
[167] Waldman (2008): 14-16.
[168] Tribal Liaison Office (2008) "Stability Through Dialogue: Kuchi Conflict Mitigation Workshop Report": 15-16.
[169] Barfield (2006) 11.
[170] Barakat; Chard: 818.

peacebuilding, it is unlikely to provide the answer to the development and governance challenges in wider Afghanistan. The TLO exemplifies the strengths and opportunities of hybrid statebuilding. Yet such an approach may be too gradual and piecemeal for the political needs of donors and the central government: both face the political strain of showing quick, large-scale results to gain their support. The TLO's emphasis on understanding the local context provides important lessons for the success of any intervention: identifying stakeholders and cooperating with local power holders is important. Power holders must be given a stake in the statebuilding process. Local institutions reflect the population's world view and a creative engagement can form a productive working relationship between statebuilders and the local traditional elite. Most useful perhaps is their success as a learning institution: their research first approach grounded them in the local political context, and enabled them to locate legitimate partners and to identify local grievances. It gave them the flexibility to adjust to the local context and allowed them to negotiate with all important actors on the ground.

Chapter V: The National Solidarity Program

Blindness to underlying power relations on the one hand, or narcissistic beliefs in the transformative potential of aid on the other, may play a part in preventing the emergence of more legitimate, nuanced, and contextually grounded approaches to peacebuilding.[171]

The National Solidarity Program (NSP) is the most significant non-customary organization in rural Afghanistan and one of the most wide-ranging development initiatives in the country.[172] A government's flagship program, it is lauded as one of the most successful Community Driven Development programs worldwide.[173] The NSP was launched soon after the Bonn Conference with the help of former finance minister Ashraf Ghani, who is an avid advocate of reformist statebuilding. The program continues a tradition of initiatives that attempt to modernize village governance and mould traditional structures in favor of the state.[174] The NSP is designed to provide government services in a visible manner and tackle Afghanistan's immense poverty. After decades of conflict, Afghanistan is in an abysmal state: 70% of its physical infrastructure is damaged or destroyed, causing poor access to safe drinking water, sanitation, electricity, and social services. Its economy fails to support its population, and its human capital is limited. Literacy rates remain under 30 % and three-quarter of Afghan children lack access to primary education. In this environment, the NSP is pioneering a new approach of Community Driven Development (CDD) at the village, the most intimate level of Afghanistan's social organization.[175] Although it is an attempt to impose democratic governance onto the rural communities, the program simultaneously aims to cultivate local-level participation and partnership and to anchor the democratic processes in the local communities.[176]

The objectives of the program are to cultivate inclusive local governance, advance rural reconstruction, and promote poverty alleviation. The overarching goal is to ameliorate social cohesion: the NSP is designed to build up "community level governance in order to address the lack of social cohesion brought about by almost three decades of conflict and to re-build the trust and

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[171] Jonathan Goodhand; Mark Sedra (2010) "Who owns the peace? Aid, reconstruction, and peacebuilding in Afghanistan" *Disasters*, 34: 579.

[172] Brick, "The Political Economy of Customary Village Organizations in Rural Afghanistan": 11.
Hamish Nixon (2008) "The Changing Face of Local Governance? Community Development Councils in Afghanistan" *Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit Working Paper Series*: 11.

[173] Palwasha Kakar (2005) "Fine-Tuning the NSP: Discussions of Problems and Solutions with Facilitating Partners" *Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit Working Paper Series*: 4.

[174] Robert B. Zoellick (22.08.2008), "The Key to Rebuilding Afghanistan" *The Washington Post* (accessed 23.11.2010) http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/08/21/AR2008082103110_pf.html

[175] Andrew Beath, Christia Fotini, Ruben Enikolopov, Shahim Ahmad Kabuli (2010) *Randomized Impact Evaluation of Phase II of Afghanistan's National Solidarity Program (NSP)* accessed 23.11.2010) http://www.nsp-ie.org/reports/BCEK-Interim_Estimates_of_Program_Impact_2010_07_25.pdf.
Mohammad Ehsan Zia (16.05.2008), "Afghan aid that works The National Solidarity Program empowers local people, but risks underfunding." *The Christian Science Monitor* (accessed 23.11.2010) http://www.csmonitor.com/Commentary/Opinion/2008/0516/p09s01-coop.html.
Bijay Karmacharya (2007) "Establishing Village Institutions through National Solidarity Programme" *Scratching the Surface: Democracy, Tradition and Gender* ed. Jennifer Bennett (Heinrich Böll Foundation): 213.

[176] Inger W. Boesen(2004) "From Subjects to Citizens: Local Participation in the National Solidarity Programme" *Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit Working Paper Series*: 2.

confidence of the people of Afghanistan by strengthening the very fabric of society."[177] These are lofty goals, filled with assumptions about the transformative capabilities of development aid and democratic structures.

The NSP's strength lies in its achievement in bringing development to a hereto isolated population with just a fraction of the budget of other aid programs. However, the organization's approach ignores the political nature of aid, which leaves it unprepared for resistance. Their determination to push through a program, without addressing the conflict it caused, prevented the NSP from reaching its governance and statebuilding goals, and risks its sustainability. The NSP's strength and weaknesses reflect unspoken assumptions, with which program designers approached state- and peacebuilding in Afghanistan. The program relies on problematic assumptions regarding the causes of state fragility, as well as transformative effects of aid, and the nature of traditional institutions. Weak service delivery is presumed to cause fragile states. The proposed solution is rapid, local development, and the installment of democratic governance structure at the village level. Aid is assumed to be capable of dispersing resistance. The NSP project design disregards the heterogeneous landscape, in which it operates, and this leaves it unprepared for resistance. A preemptive analysis of possible contention could lead to better strategies to address these obstacles. Such a reflective engagement could open new opportunities for the NSP. The threats, the NSP faces, include insecure donor funding, shaky support amongst Afghanistan's elite, and local opposition.

As a development program, the NSP is highly successful, especially if it is compared to other donor driven, imposed programs. To date, the program reached 70 % of Afghan villages.[178] The state mobilized roughly 23,000 villages for participation, and completed around 22,000 projects across 361 of 398 districts in all 34 provinces.[179] The state spent an estimated $593 million, an average of $33,000 per village per year. It is thought to have reached 13 million people.[180] Simultaneously, the NSP encountered significant problems in the implementation of its design. These regarded relations with existing village leadership, inter-community tensions caused by the NSP, and ensuring meaningful participation of women in decision-making. Consequently, it fell short of its expectations to build social cohesion, improve local governance, or *strengthening the very fabric of society*. Failure to achieve the latter ensues from the political and ambiguous definition of what constitutes the fabric of society. Additionally, flawed planning and execution impaired the

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[177] Islamic Republic of Afghanistan(2010) *NSP Objectives* (accessed 23.11.2010) http://www.nspafghanistan.org/default.aspx?sel=101 .

[178] Ben Arnoldy (11.06.2010), "New plan to woo Afghan Taliban could harm villages" *The Christian Science Monitor* (accessed 23.11.2010) http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Asia-South-Central/2010/0610/New-plan-to-woo-Afghan-Taliban-could-harm-villages.

[179] Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (2010) *The most important achievements of the NSP to date* (accessed 23.11.2010) http://www.nspafghanistan.org/default.aspx?sel=103.
Beat et al: 2.   Zoellick.

[180] Frankie Sturm (2008), *Security Through Development: Saving the National Solidarity Program in Afghanistan* (Truman National Security Project): 2.
Bere Kamal (25.03.2010) "Wise council Village-development councils are taking on more serious roles" *The Economist* (accessed 23.11.2010) http://www.economist.com/node/15772771.

sustainability of the NSP - thus defeating the hope of constructing lasting governance institutions.[181] Pre-conceived notions about statebuilding limited the organization's impact.

The program differs substantially from the TLO. It enforces new state society relations, through its imposition of democratic governance structures. This makes it a highly political program. Additionally, its large-scale nature involves a range of different actors, such as the donor community, the Afghan governing elites, the NGO community and the local elite and population. Rather than a process-oriented institution (such as the TLO), the NSP is a product-oriented institution. This means that the disagreements and divergent priorities of these actors are not addressed. Instead, the emphasis lies on rapid delivery. Agreement is presumed, and the program is executed hastily, in disregard of possible opposition. The hope is that the NSP's success will dispel resistance. However, this process without politics limits its progress and impact. Despite the differences, this comparison highlights its strengths and its opportunities for reform.

Design

The Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development implements the program, which was created in 2003 with funding from bilateral and multilateral donors through the International Development Association and the Afghanistan Reconstruction Fund. The prime contributors include the World Bank, the United States Agency for International Development, the UK Department for International Assistance, the Danish International Development and Assistance Agency and the Canadian International Development Agency.[182] Facilitating Partners (FP), which are nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) selected from a pool of applicants, implement the projects.[183] An interesting aspect of this arrangement is that it requires Afghan government approval of donor funded and NGO initiated projects.[184] For the first time, the Afghan government engaged in an operational partnership with NGOs: this enables the government to promote its objectives while drawing on the experience of NGO's for the implementation.[185] The attempt to provide equal services across Afghanistan fosters new cooperation.

The NSP is an example of community driven development (CDD)—a new mechanism to deliver development services in rural areas. This approach is currently popular among aid agencies, revisionist statebuilders and NGOs. It is a conscious break with the blue-print statebuilding approach, as it recognizes the importance of connecting the local population to the central state. Through the creation of democratically elected village development councils, it strives to involve village communities throughout the project cycle. CDD stresses decentralized, participatory service delivery.[186] The NSP's design has four core elements: firstly, it starts with a facilitated participatory planning process at the community level to assist with the establishment of community institutions;

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[181] Howell, Lind: 24.
[182] Kakar: 4.
[183] Kakar: 4.
[184] Jude Howell, Jeremy Lind (2008) "Civil Society With Guns Is Not Civil Society: Aid, Security And Civil Society in Afghanistan" *Non_Governmental Public Action Programme Working Paper Series* www.lse.ac.uk/ngpa/publications: 23.
[185] Boesen: 2.
[186] Beath et al: 2.
Brick "Political Economy of Customary Organizations in Rural Afghanistan": 11.

second, it works through a system of direct block grant transfers to support the development activities of these institutions; thirdly, it fosters capacity development to enhance the competence of communities for financial management, procurement, useful technical skills and programs with available services and resources; and fourthly, it facilitates links to other institutions and programs providing resources and services. [187]

The development grants are allocated to villages that comprise over 50 families at $200 up to a maximum of $60,000 per village. [188] In the first phase, each village is paired with an NGO, the Facilitating Partner (FP), which is responsible for mobilizing the population, explaining democratic governance and elections, and helping the villagers to identify development priorities. It is hence the FP, rather than the government, that makes contact with the community and starts building the trust to facilitate a working relationship. The performance of the diverse NGOs is crucial. Next, the FP explains the democratic election process and the purpose of a representative Community Development Council (CDC).[189] To access block funds, communities are required to elect a CDC, which should be a decision-making body with both male and female representatives either in a gender mixed council, or separate female and male councils with a shared bank account. [190]

CDCs differ from pre-existing governance structures in three ways: firstly, they are elected while the *jirga* council is constituted of a mix of influential elders esteemed for their conflict resolution and oratory skills, as well as land-holders and mullahs. Secondly, the mandate of the CDCs, in part to avoid conflict with pre-existing powerholders, has progressively been narrowed to one of solely developmental concern. Hence, it excludes traditional governance and conflict resolution tasks. This signifies a turn away from the governance aspect of the NSP towards a more hardware-oriented program. Yet, there are indicators that successful CDCs gradually take on a broader mandate. Thirdly, the CDCs, unlike *jirgas*, are required to involve women in decision-making processes.[191]

If the village agrees to participate, elections are held: to avoid dominance of powerholders, there is a no-candidate rule, and to necessitate the involvement of women at least 60% of the population must participate. Villages are divided in voting clusters of 25-30 families required to

[187] Omar Zakhilwal; Jane Murphy Thomas (2005) "Afghanistan: What kind of Peace? The Role of Rural Development in Peace-Building" *From War Termination to Sustainable Peace: What Kind of Peace is Possible?* (North South Institute Research Project): 15-16.   Arnoldy.

[188] Omar Zakhilwal; Jane Murphy Thomas (2005) "Afghanistan: What kind of Peace? The Role of Rural Development in Peace-Building" *From War Termination to Sustainable Peace: What Kind of Peace is Possible?* (North South Institute Research Project): 15-16.   Arnoldy.

[189] Karmacharya: 217.

[190] Omar Zakhilwal; Jane Murphy Thomas (2005) "Afghanistan: What kind of Peace? The Role of Rural Development in Peace-Building" *From War Termination to Sustainable Peace: What Kind of Peace is Possible?* (North South Institute Research Project): 15-16.   Arnoldy.

[191] Howell, Lind: 23.

Raphaëlle Guillon; Bobby Anderson (2007) "How to Accommodate the Agenda of the Afghan Government, Local Communitites and Development Actors" *Scratching the Surface: Democracy, Tradition and Gender* ed. Jennifer Bennett (Heinrich Böll Foundation): 349. Kakar: 10-11.   Bere.

select a representative from their cluster with at least 40% voting.[192] With a CDC established, the FP helps the community to prepare Community Development Plans (CDP) and to prioritize several development activities. These are usually small-scale projects, such as water pumps, small dams, hydropower generators, schools or community centers and are chosen by the councils themselves.[193] Upon receiving these proposals, the MRRD reviews them and transfers block grants. The FP aids the council with the project implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and project completion.[194]

Working Assumptions

State Fragility is Fundamentally a Development Challenge

The program design reflects the assumptions of development workers that bad governance and lack of development cause state fragility. These assumptions translate into a project design that proposes one general approach to Afghanistan's heterogeneous environment: democracy and development are suggested to be the solutions to Afghanistan's challenges. The imposition of democratic governance structure and targeted development, it is assumed, will legitimize the Afghan state.[195] This design fails to account for the diversity of contexts in which the NSP operates. The engineers of the NSP do not take into account local power and governance arrangements. This reflects the central statebuilders belief that a strong state will bring stability, development and good governance. However, I suggest that success in building a relationship between a democratizing, decentralizing state, and traditional or other informal elites necessitates an awareness how this interaction pays out locally: understanding the function, capacity, legitimacy and shape of diverse local governance arrangements is key in any attempt to change these power arrangements. There may be different functional arrangements, and such differences affect the intervention.[196] By defining state fragility fundamentally as a developmental challenge, the proponents of the NSP evade the contested nature of state expansion. The result is akin to peacebuilding without politics.

Local Context and the Belief that Democracy will Unite Afghans

The NSP makes the political choice to ignore current powerholders and the diversity of Afghanistan's socio-political landscape. While the NSP Manual does provide the FPs with flexibility to enact the process as they see fit locally, the NSP design does not propose engagement with local elites. Instead, they see the imposition of democratic processes as a way to foster an Afghan democratic culture. The word choice of *strengthening the society's fabric* suggests that the NSP designers hold an egalitarian notion of tribal structures, and presume to build on these traditions, in attempt of modernization. The egalitarian nature of tribal law is read as a disposition towards democracy, and the CDC is seen as a modernization of a jirga council.[197] While never stated, the hope is to

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[192] Yamas Torabi (2007) "Assessing the National Solidarity Program: The Role of Accountability in Reconstruction" *Integrity Watch Afghanistan*: 218-220.

[193] Bere.

[194] Karmacharya: 218

[195] Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (2010) *NSP Objectives* (accessed 23.11.2010) http://www.nspafghanistan.org/default.aspx?sel=101.

[196] Hamish Nixon (2007) "Some Considerations on Local Democracy and Traditional Society" *Scratching the Surface: Democracy, Tradition and Gender* ed. Jennifer Bennett (Heinrich Böll Foundation): 182-183.

[197] Noelle-Karimi: 9. Zia.

restructure and realign traditional power structures in Afghan communities to redefine the current equilibrium into one that supports an Afghan state presence.[198]

Local governance structures are ignored in the program design. The NSP's rationale is to fill a perceived gap in governance in rural Afghanistan: an MRRD official stressed in a presentation about the NSP, that the program is necessary because "village governance structures had not existed in Afghanistan for more than 200 years."[199] This statement reflects the disregard the Afghan government holds for customary governance institutions. The need to rebuild local leadership reflects the desire to avoid the existing powerholders' influence over the development process.[200] The designers assume that the current powerholders lack the characteristics to be legitimate or effective partners in developing Afghanistan. Instead, they hope the consultative election process will produce new leadership, capable of sidelining existing elites. Elections are seen to involve the entire community in an inclusive process.[201] The assumption is that the modern, congruent with the democratic, will necessarily translate into legitimacy. In an environment like Afghanistan, where "traditional societies are comprised of indelible hierarchies, based on inter-dependencies and patronages forged over decades or even centuries between families, ethnic/ tribal [qawn] groups" this supposition is unlikely.[202] The interveners ignore that the legitimacy of non-modern social structures may be bestowed by other means such as consensus, effectiveness, or other forms of selection.[203] Elections are legitimacy gaining mechanisms foreign to Afghans.

The conjecture that the NSP would be able to replace traditional and war-generated power structures with more equitable ones results in conflictual peacebuilding.[204] The NSP operates at the core level of traditional power structures, the village. There, government intervention conflicts with the Muslim perception of the state as a distant and benevolent ruler. Traditional powerholders perform legitimate services, and their sustained presence, despite Afghanistan's turbulent history, reflects the important role they play in the populations' normative perceptions of the world. [205] Moreover, a democratic system cannot curtail the ability of armed power-holders to manipulate the political process.[206] This disregard of local power relations left the NSP without any strategy of how to constructively engage powerholders. Yet, interviews with Facilitating Partners showed that they encountered opposition from local powerholders during each phase of the NSP, resulting in conflictual peacebuilding.

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[198] Kakar: 12.
[199] Quotation in Brick "The Political Economy of Customary Village Organizations in Rural Afghanistan": 12.
[200] Noelle-Karimi (2006).
[201] Karmacharya: 217-219. Kakar: 12.
[202] Zakhilwal, Thomas: 24.
[203] Nixon (2007): 177.
[204] Noelle-Karimi: 2.
[205] Kakar: 5; 11-12.
[206] Noelle-Karimi: 2.

Strategies and Working Process: Aid as a Tool to Change Political Attitudes

The NSP design assumes that introducing local democracy will change the local culture to foster the feeling of an Afghan nation. A similar transformative effect is ascribed to the power of development aid. The NSP project reflects the international community's goals in Afghanistan: good governance, strengthened women's rights, and improved security— the latter because of the presumed transformative effect of aid. Development, it is assumed, will weaken the appeal of the Neo-Taliban, and increase safety of Afghans and international forces.[207] The argument is that a state that can deliver, especially in the rural areas, will inspire more confidence in the government and increase resistance to anti-government forces.[208] Unfortunately, there is little evidence for the link between security and development. Currently, the poorest areas of the country, such as central Afghanistan, are least affected by the insurgency, while the main recipients of development funds, Kandahar and Helmand, are at the forefront of the battle.[209] The merging of the development agenda with the security goals risks setting up unrealistic expectations of the program. It politicizes development aid as a military tool, rather than a humanitarian one, thereby risking its neutral status. The NSP project depends on the expected transformative power of aid.

The Politics of Large-Scale Programs: Development Yes, Governance No

The NSP is an ambitious program aiming at constructing new state-society relations. It attempts to achieve a balance between the need for centralization in order to consolidate the new state and the need for decentralization to foster development and a feeling of citizenship.[210] In this way, it attempts to reform the current shortcomings of a state that is too centralist and too removed from the majority of the Afghan population. Unfortunately, in its design, larger questions about how it fits with the traditionally centralist ruling class in Afghanistan and a heterogenic, largely autonomous civil society are unaddressed. The consequence is resistance to the program's more ambitious governance agenda.

As opposed to the bottom-up TLO, the NSP is a large-scale, donor driven program. Like many political projects involving numerous political actors, the NSP is a product of a negotiated agreement amongst them. It would be naïve to presume that external donors, national elites and diverse NGOs have the same objectives and agendas. Disagreements amongst them, as well as changing priorities, have an important effect on the NSP's execution. This is a burden more local NGOs, such as the TLO, do not face. The result is an emphasis on development and a side-lining of the program's larger governance agenda.

The Contested Value of Decentralization

The government, faced with a staggering development challenge, lacks state mechanisms to tackle it. Consequently, it chose a decentralized approach. It strives to engage Afghan citizens in the nation building process.[211] The hope is to create lasting institution that can be formalized and integrated

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[207] Zia. Sturm: 2.
[208] Howell, Lind: 24. Torabi: 5.
[209] Goodhand: 595.
[210] Guillon, Anderson: 339.
[211] Karmacharya: 213.

into an Afghan state. However, lack of agreement and cooperation amongst the ruling elite and the ministries, as well as amongst donors, and conflict with the local population, make this highly unlikely.[212]

The NSP attempts to de-concentrate state power and to move resource access and responsibility to the local level, which would remain accountable to the center. But it works in the context of a highly centralized state that holds little influence and legitimacy throughout its territory. This creates a paradox: deconcentration of state power presupposes strength of the central state. The NSP, however, is faced with a contested state sovereignty: ideas about state-society relations remain disputed, and real power is held by non-state actors and informal structures. Program designers, searching for alternative ways to connect the periphery to the center, work with implicit assumptions about the value of decentralization, preferred for a combination of normative and technical reasons. However, there appears to be little engagement with the larger question brought about by these political choices.

Decentralization is a political process. Amongst Afghanistan's ruling elite, there is ambiguous support for even modest devolution of central governmental functions. The constitutional mandate for such decentralization is unclear.[213] Many politicians and more traditionalist bureaucrats of other ministries remain concerned about this process. Their reticence translates into a lack of institutional support for CDCs. Despite intent to link the CDC to other government institutions at the local and national level, to date, connections with other assistance programs or relevant ministries remain poor. In the case of the Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Husbandry, where large budget programs in rural Afghanistan overlap with the NSP, lack of cooperation and information-sharing means resources are used inefficiently. Realistically, any sustainability of CDCs as governance institutions beyond the initial funding cycle requires the integration and mainstreaming of the program across ministries and governance structures.[214] Furthermore, with the removal of Ashraf Ghani, and the departure of his supporters in the ministry, the agenda of revisionist statebuilders within the government lost impetus. Building more support amongst Afghanistan's elite will determine the NSP's sustainability.

The very nature of the NSP situates it at the nexus of different, and often contradictory, agendas and sets of interests. Amongst these, the only agreement appears to be the benefits as a development tool, with broad resistance to its governance function.[215] Not addressing these contradictions, the NSP risks the sustainability of its program and achievement of its larger objectives. The execution of the NSP without prior agreement suggests little regard for the value of political consensus on such broad, strategic issues as state society relations.[216] This approach limits the NSP's chances of achieving its ambition to become a lasting institution rather than a short term development project. The difference between creating role-oriented organizations, the development councils, and building institutions is not acknowledged in its design: the latter can be seen as

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[212] Kakar: 12.
[213] Nixon (2007): 173-174. Sarah Lister (2005) "Caught in Confusion: Local Governance Structures in Afghanistan" *AREU Briefing Paper*. 2.
[214] Kakar: 30-31. Zakhilwal, Thomas: 22. Goodhand: 593.
[215] Guillon, Anderson: 338-339. Goodhand: 597.
[216] Noelle-Karimi: 2.

organization for the promotion of some object, but which is marked by stability, persistence, value beyond their technical task, and popular belief in their legitimacy.[217] Organizations only become institutions, if time proves their utility, and they are integrated into legitimate norms surrounding social organization. Without wider institutionalization, the future of the CDCs remains insecure.

A Political View of Civil Society

Simultaneously, the NSP's design glosses over the politicized view of state-society relations. Reflecting the neo-conservative view of the state, its role is restricted to ensuring an enabling framework for the development of a market economy. The private sector and NGOs, through sub-contracts, provide key services, such as education, health, housing and social welfare. At the community level, this intervention is far from neutral, but of a normative, political character. The NSP defines what civil society actors should do and how they ought to do it. Classifying civil society in modern, service-delivery terms evades its contested nature: Afghan civil society comprises a multiplicity of actors with divergent interests, values, ideologies and purposes. The Western cultural bias to conceive civil society as an aggregation of organized interest excludes the social formations central to Afghans' lives, which are often the traditional institutions. Instead, the expectation is that the population will adopt the characteristics of Western, organized civil society.[218] Despite claims to the contrary, the NSP design prevents civil actors from deliberating on questions of public affairs, such as how best to arrange central and informal government relations.

Changing Donor Priorities

Donors understanding of the programs also vacillated. While the NSP originally was designed to provide new governance structures in rural Afghanistan, this aspect was progressively sidelined by the need to show quick results, both by the Afghan elected officials and by donor organizations and development workers. The emphasis progressively became one of a hardware-oriented program. This affected its execution: changing expectations and donor priorities regarding poverty reduction and the promotion of gender issues changed the types of reports and measuring criteria generated. Changes in the execution of the program in turn caused inefficient use of resources and delays.[219] The initial timeline for the NSP was to reach nearly every village in only three years— an unprecedented speed and scale. Afghan politician and donor countries needed to make visible changes fast. Speed was prioritized over preparation. The general practice of preliminary study, analyses and tests involving pilot projects was abandoned. As a consequence contested objectives such as peace-building and governance were not clearly integrated into the program design.[220]

Progressively, donors shifted their attention to even larger 'signature projects' that are seen as crucial in the hearts and minds campaigns of anti-insurgency agenda. So while the NSP was initially designed as a 5-6 year program to target all communities, even in that time span, periodically funding ran out, before it was extended again.[221] In 2008, the NSP faced a debilitating funding deficit

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[217] Barakat, Chard: 819.
[218] Barakat, Chard: 822.
[219] Guillon, Anderson: 348.
Torabi: 14.
[220] Zakhilwal, Murphy: 14-15.
[221] Kakar: 29.

of $200 million. Currently, the World Bank extended its funding once again, but the financial support continues to be short-term.[222] It is unclear, whether donors and the Afghan government will continue to fund the program, or whether, as initially intended, the CDCs will be left to apply individually for donor funds.[223] Insecure funding is an important obstacle: delays of paying invoices or delivering block-grants, due to lack of funding, strain working relationships between FPs and the community. Concerns remain that opposing elites will succeed in undermining the organizations when left without support. In this context, FPs work to endow CDCs with skills and human capital to make them sustainable will be vital. [224]

Despite this disagreement on multiple levels, the NSP was pushed through, effectively leaving broader questions regarding how it fits into the Afghan state, and how these organizations can be made sustainable institutions, open to evolve with time. Hence, as a mechanism for local governance, the NSP lacks clarity; while as a development program it gained reputation. It is astonishing that such an ambitious, large-scale program was designed and executed without addressing the important political questions surrounding it. The program's unaddressed political contentious nature left the NSP without a strategy to address these issues, and ultimately endangers its sustainability and success.[225]

Achievements

The multifarious objectives of the NSP—amongst them good governance, rural infrastructure rehabilitation, livelihood generation, capacity building and women's empowerment— complicate an assessment of its success.[226] As a development program, the NSP far surpasses other aid programs. The community driven design consciously breaks with the standard blueprint development approach. It shows awareness that development, state- and peacebuilding cannot be achieved without local participation. This recognition bears out in practice and the NSP can boast a range of achievements. Rural communities experience development for the first time. NSP projects are cost-effective, as villagers contribute their own labor: locals don't require extensive security details, and are better able to negotiate lower materials costs.[227] Furthermore, the NSP builds a connection between villages and the central government. Perceptions of the government, as well as of the security situation, measurably improve. The program addresses the disconnection between donors and locals through a consultation mechanism, and there are indicators that the NSP succeeded in promoting a sense of local ownership. For instance, there are fewer attacks on NSP investments compared to other reconstruction projects.[228] Corruption is limited through transparency

[222] Goodhand: 589.
Gregory Warner (2007) "The Schools the Taliban Won't Torch" *Washington Monthly*
http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/2007/0712.warner.html (accessed 29.11.2010): 29.
World Bank (2010) *National Solidarity Program: Making Progress in Afghanistan* (accessed 30.11.2010)
http://www.worldbank.org.af/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/SOUTHASIAEXT/AFGHANISTANEXTN/0,,contentMDK:22631440~menuPK:305990~pagePK:2865066~piPK:2865079~theSitePK:305985,00.html.
[223] Zoellick.
[224] Kakar: 29-30
[225] Sarah Lister (2005) "Caught in Confusion: Local Governance Structures in Afghanistan" *AREU Briefing Paper*: 2.
[226] Torabi: 27.
[227] Warner: 26.
[228] Zia.

mechanisms. The project alters the structures of village governance, in particular regarding the involvement of women. Furthermore, it enhances the responsiveness of existing village institution. Qualitative research suggests that initially the universality of the NSP does increase support for the government. It cultivates a sense of ownership of the development process. Only in the later stages, in cases where local powerholders dominate the program, this initial support turns into frustration and disillusionment.[229] All this has been accomplished with a fraction of the development money poured into Afghanistan.[230]

A quantitative, randomized impact evaluation across Afghanistan confirms these results and shows the NSP has mixed effects overall.[231] With regards to utilities, infrastructure and services, the NSP appears to be particularly successful with its drinking water projects, measurably increasing its availability.[232] This is promising, because communities repeatedly identify the need for water as prime.[233] However, electricity projects show little effect, and infrastructure shows no improvement. There is no measurable difference in access to and duration of these services. This may be because only a limited amount of electricity and infrastructure projects were finalized at the time of the study, as well as the difficulties of connecting these projects to the larger grid. There are few identifiable changes in measures of household economic activity, signaling that the NSP does not improve overall economic activity. Nevertheless, there is a clear positive change regarding the villagers' perceptions of their economic situation as well as their optimism about the economic prospects of the village. There are indicators that women's involvement in income-generating activities increases, but there is no change in the ability of women to exercise control over income earned. While overall, the NSP's developmental achievements are mixed, it harbors potential.[234]

Interestingly, the NSP does improve the perception of government and nongovernment officials amongst male villagers, including such representatives as the president, provincial governor, district governor as well as government judges and NGO workers. However, this does not translate into more acceptance of government authority, especially regarding jurisdiction over local crimes or government taxation. Furthermore, it does not improve villagers' knowledge about elected representatives. Men do appear more supportive of elections as a selection mechanism for village leadership. The program has a noteworthy impact on woman's participation in governance, enhancing men's openness, and the responsiveness of village governance institutions to women's needs. This does not translate into changes with regards to overall female socialization.[235]

The NSP is also an important pull-factor for the capacities of the central government. The implementation of the NSP pushed the government to improve their capacities of monitoring and developing a transparent financial system. The banking system expanded, as the NSP introduced bank accounts to rural Afghanistan and increased demand.[236] Corruption in the NSP has been

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[229] Torabi: 24
[230] Zia. Beath et al: 65.
[231] Beath et al: 65
[232] Beath et al: 43; 57-69; 71.
[233] Boesen: 24.
[234] Beath et al: 43; 57-69; 71.
[235] Beath et al: 43; 57-69; 71.
[236] Torabi: 14.

restraint as officials are not able to access the small disbursements (the average grant is $30,121) without the councils noticing.[237]

The Regional Factor: the NSP and the Local Context

Unlike the TLO, the NSP operates across Afghanistan, and is faced with the country's ethnically, religiously and culturally diverse population. Reflecting this heterogeneity, the success and progress of the NSP across Afghanistan is diverse. The socio-political landscape, in which the NSP operates, is complex. Local power structures and neo-patrimonial ties, as well as the social cohesion of the villages, directly impact the outcome of the NSP. They determine whether villagers consider the NSP successful, or a bothersome intrusion. Simultaneously, the NSP outsources the government's work to a range of NGOs. In turn, the FP's capacities, organizational experience, know-how in Afghanistan, and their philosophical differences, impact progress. The diversity of the outcomes can be seen a logical result of the participatory and flexible design of the NSP. [238] Rather than a drawback, this is part of the learning process of a state-imposed program attempting to be more attune to local needs and recognizing its own weakness in service delivery. Yet, recognition of this diversity might have given the government strategies of how to address these differences.

Engaging with Pre-Existing Power Structures

The CDCs are super-imposed on a network of pre-existing governance arrangements that includes both pre-civil war, traditional leaders and warlord structures. In this context, the imposition of new governance structures, which is in effect an assertion of state authority over rural areas, is not a neutral activity. Elites can and do interfere, often actively resisting the introduction of CDCs. Their influence cannot be undone through secret ballot elections. The introduction of the funding-induced CDC represents both a threat and a chance for powerholders. To date, CDCs appear to co-exist rather than displace traditional institutions.[239] Traditional and war-generated institutions reacted in different ways, either choosing to interact with and integrate into the CDC structure, or to interrupt and oppose them. Some traditional leadership saw this introduction of new development structures as a chance, and participated in the mobilization for election. They also worked as guardians in financial reporting, procurement controls or surveillance of the work. Depending on the context, and the personality of the rulers, pre-existing local governance structures were replicated and folded into the new structure. This resulted in a merging of the NSP's governance and development aspect, but not in a way intended by its design.[240]

The designers of the NSP made the political choice to ignore the diversity of power arrangements across Afghanistan. As aforementioned, the national, reformist elite has little regard for customary power structures. The belief that democratic structures will sideline other powerholders lies at the heart of the NSP design. Thus, the program lacks any strategy of how best to engage with Afghanistan's diverse power arrangements. In practice, this often led to conflict.

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[237] Zia

[238] Torabi: 7.

[239] Guillon, Anderson: 334-338.
Beath et al: 1.

[240] Torabi: 23-24.
Guillon, Anderson: 335.

Interviews with FPs across Afghanistan point to a persistent conflict with local powerholders. This begins with the decision of what constitutes a village that qualifies for grants. The selection of villages is based on government records of registered communities, which are at times outdated, faulty and absent after years of war. Hence, imposed boundaries sometimes conflict with self-identified community ones.[241] Communities in Afghanistan cannot be simplified to primordial entities and territorial units, but instead reflect the network structures, the *qawn*.[242] The government's demarcations fail to reflect underlying social structures in a given district, risking sub-optimal identification of needs, and use of resources. Furthermore, they fail to take into account the interdependence of communities. At times, as in the district of Bamyan, the NSP sidelines other networks, such as development cooperation shuras following the community demarcation of *manteqas* that donor agencies fostered during the civil war, and thus inadvertently sweeps away representative structures that emerged over the last two decades.[243] At times, however, FPs take the initiative to research the community's self-identified boundaries and regional networks to facilitate the development work.[244]

Subsequently, during the mobilizing phase which ought to cumulate in a social contract between the community and the FPs, existing powerholders resist the imposition of elections for a variety of reasons. Elections for a new council infused with donor money represent a threat for traditional elders and their governance institutions. Many of the *spin giri* and other leaders with status at the local *jirga* believe it to be a representative body and do not see the need for a new institution. For example in a village in the Kabul district, the *maliks* and *spin giri* saw themselves as the legitimate governing representatives. In interviews with villagers, these pointed to their *malik* as the decision makers and leader, thus justifying opposition to elections. However, when the community was threatened with aid withdrawal, they finally obliged. Interestingly, the *malik* was not elected. This might be, because FPs, in order to allay the fears of powerholders, advocated the NSP as a developmental program, rather than a governance program, and community members thus looked at CDC from an instrumental and project-focused perspective.[245] However, it may also indicate that with generational and societal changes, the traditional elite may be losing some of its status. Qualitative research shows a growing generational divide. Such election results may be contributed to impatience amongst the young villagers with education, who are eager to use their knowledge, and participate in social, economic development. For example, in a village in the Aqcha district, the CDC chairman was in his early 20s, educated and experienced with local and international NGOs. Asked about this, older CDC members emphasized that the CDC was just a framework for development cooperation, and not a larger governance body. Nevertheless, this appears to indicate that the NSP gives the space, so that the generational divide can be transformed

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[241] Brick, "The Political Economy of Customary Village Organizations in Rural Afghanistan": 12.

[242] Hafiz Boboyorov, Henrik Poos, Conrad Schetter (February 2009) *Beyond the State-- Local Politics in Afghanistan Symposium Report* (Bonn: Center for Development Research): 6.

[243] Raphy Favre(2005)*Interface between State and Society in Afghanistan* (Addis Ugebia, Addis Abeba, Ethiopia: AIZON: 10-11.

[244] Boesen (2004): 7.

[245] Kakar: 12-17.

Boesen: 30.

into productive cooperation.[246] This is an important difference between the TLO, which attempts to preserve traditional powerholders, and the NSP, which strives to foster new modern ruling elites.

Other reasons, why local powerholders resisted the introduction of the NSP included the resistance to women's participation in leadership, the fear of another fickle donor promise and a lack of understanding of the NSP.[247] Election and representation are viewed as 'Western' concepts aimed at undermining Afghan values and culture, and the lack of any precedence, and the high rate of illiteracy complicates the process.[248] Finally, influential leaders searched to dominate council decisions and capture the aid for their own interests.[249] Ironically, these difficulties mirror the problems that other Community Development Initiatives in Rwanda and East Timor encountered.[250] This suggests that a previous analysis of possible obstacles, and the challenges existing power arrangement may pose, could have lead to a more sophisticated engagement, and perhaps limited the conflictual nature of the NSP. FPs, depending on their own understanding of the countryside, and the experience they have accumulated in working in Afghanistan, were able to find diverse ways of addressing these problems. However, these measures are retro-active, short-term and depending on a changeable diplomatic agreement between all actors. Blatantly lacking in the NSP design are any pro-active preventative strategies to bring existing powerholders on board, offer them opportunities of ownership in the program and integrate them in peace-time community leadership positions.[251]

Interaction with Local Powerholders during the Program Execution
In practice, the NSP does not result in a substantial erosion of local governance function accorded to customary leaders. Where a traditional council exists, CDC's responsibility is limited to development, and traditional leaders remain the local problem solvers. As aforementioned, elections do introduce new leaders from the unrepresented populations of the village; however, quantitative assessments showed where strong leadership exists, they are not displaced. Displacement appears to only affect the periphery of leadership.[252] Interestingly, the introduction of CDCs impacts the activity of pre-existing governance institutions, measurably increasing their activity: they tend to meet more often, and attendance of the jirga by male and female villagers increases. The introduction of the NSP increases villages with a regular village council. It could be concluded that the NSP mobilizes the villages to address governance issues. While the NSP does not displace traditional governance structures, in some cases it induces a partial transfer of village governance authority from tribal elders to the CDC. Such a transfer, if noted, happened especially in the areas of service provision, including the mediation of disputes, provision of emergency assistance, and certification of documents. Statistically, this shift remains too small to concur that CDCs take over the domain of customary leaders.[253] But if this trend continues and the CDCs' responsibilities

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[246] Boesen: 43-44.
[247] Kakar: 12-17.
[248] Karmachacharya: 218.
[249] Kakar: 12-17.
[250] Jarat Chopra; Tanja Hohe (2004), "Participatory Intervention" *Global governance*, Volume: 10 Issue: 3: 15.
[251] Kakar: 12-17.
[252] Beath et al: 27.
[253] Beath et al: 24-29.

expand, so will the possibilities for conflict with traditional powerholders, who see their influence challenged.

Case studies point to the importance of social structure of villages in the implementation and success of the NSP. The need of development is pervasive in Afghanistan, but the communities the NSP differ profoundly: their experience during war, and with local commanders, the Taliban, and external actors (such as the Soviets, the Coalition forces, and NGOs) vary; and in turn affect their openness to external intervention. The villages, in which the NSP operates, differ in terms of ethnic, religious and socio-economic composition, as well as political history, and allegiances. Some have experienced major refugee resettlement, while others have been more isolated. Where the tribal and clan organizations survived, villagers remained united against the outside world, and hence much more skeptical of the NSP. For example, in some villages in Baghlan province, the FP described people as extremely wary and fearful of change, resisting the NSP because of concerns how it will affect traditional, conservative gender roles and family patterns. In yet other villagers, rivalries between local commanders were the major obstacles to the NSP. Where villagers had the courage to resist the attempts of warlords to influence the CDC, they faced retaliation and could not work safely in the fields. FPs identified threats, intimidation and attacks from local powerful leaders, such as commanders and the Taliban, as their most important security problem.[254] The history and power constellation of villages determined the NSP's progress.

Moreover, whether or not the village already has a culture of social governance and of collective identity had an immense impact on NSP implementation: "Where unity already existed before the arrival of … the NSP and the money and organizing it brings appears to compliment or even increase such unity. The downside was that the same money and organizing coming from outside may exacerbate strife and disunity where it already existed."[255] In areas with weak traditional governance structure, but a strong community feeling, such as in a case study in Faizabad, the local population appears more open to external influence and the use of new leadership structures. In such cases, the introduction of CDCs is promising. Also, where strong tribal norms existed, they positively shaped accountability: in Pashtun areas with strong social cohesion and a significant collective identity, accountability was framed as a question of trust, where social control was enough to ensure smooth progress and accounting of the project.[256] Similarly, in one case study in Parwan province, where social cohesion is strong but local governance weak, the NSP was able to make great strides: in the eyes of the locals, the NSP gave them the possibilities to address community needs known by everyone, but left unaddressed because of lack of means. However, even in the same province, diversity exists. Just downstream from the successful case study, the village was divided and social cohesion weak. The CDC was dominated by the local strongmen, who pushed

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Bere.

[254] Boesen: 10-13.

[255] Zakhilwal, Murphy: 24.

[256] Torabi: 24.

through his agenda and the NSP project actually increased tension.[257] Social cohesion was a determining factor of NSP success, which was the opposite of what the NSP hoped to achieve.

Where social cohesion was weak, the NSP made at best fragile progress, at worst aggravated tensions. In Wardak province, despite the absence of conflict, the social cohesion of an ethnically mixed village was fragile, which translated into weak participation, weak sense of ownership and a CDC that appeared removed from the village at large: the village in turn was disinterested in maintaining the project, in this case a generator.[258] In another case study in Nangarhar Province, the village had a history of conflict and rivalries, which resulted in three different rival blocks with their own maliks. The CDC reflected the divisions of the village and they could not agree on a prioritization of a project. After a month of quarrel they decided instead to dig one water well for every family compound. This ended a long tradition of the *Gudar*, the village water well which was an assembly point for women to gather for water, laundry and socializing. This project increased women's isolation, ignoring their needs, and ended an important part of village culture that was also mourned by male bachelors, who now lost their opportunity to observe girls in a socially accepted environment.[259] The NSP could not foster social cohesion.

Failure to take on a geographic perspective led to the disregard of inter-community tensions, negatively affecting the viability of infrastructure programs which required inter-community cooperation: anecdotal evidence points to roads that were never finished because neighboring villages refused to sacrifice land, or hydro-power plants that were destroyed because they flooded the agricultural land of neighboring communities.[260] Communities with strongmen appear to be more divided: there the election process was often less satisfactory, and the introduction of the CDC led to an increase in the propensity for conflict by 10%. At times, these powerholders attempted to capture the aid process and use the CDC to increase their legitimacy. The CDC than introduced more tension in the villages, especially if sub-projects were imposed on the villagers by the commander.[261] The local context defined the NSP progress. Recognition of its importance might have given the NSP strategies to address problems and resistance.

The Importance of Facilitating Partners

Equally important to the local context are the experiences and working philosophy of the Facilitating Partners, especially since the NSP design encouraged flexibility and gave minimal guidance on important issues such as how to organize elections. Aid NGOs come in very different hues- some have decades of experience and a developed track records, while others are newer; some rely heavily on expatriates and imported capacities, while others prefer to hire locally. These differences impact their project implementation. For example, FPs who were newcomers to

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[257] Guillon, Anderson: 334-335.
Beath et al: 21-25.
Zakhilwal, Murphy: 17-19.
[258] Torabi: 24.
[259] Zakhilwal, Murphy: 19.
[260] Zakhilwal, Murphy: 17-19.
[261] Torabi: 23.
Beath et al: 29.

Afghanistan, and relied on expatriates, were the least cost-effective; while those that worked in Afghanistan for an extended period were the most reliable performers. Often, the latter were deeply imbedded in social and cultural realities of the region and could devise creative solutions to problems.[262] The Facilitating Partners consist of some 24 organizations, who report to an Oversight Consultant, the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ).[263] As aforementioned, the NSP design combines rapid expansion and unprecedented scale. Its rushed preparation meant that there was inadequate time allocated for capacity building of FPs. Despite the fact that this was a new program, FPs were assumed to have the necessary skills in participation and community development.[264]

FPs were selected because of their expertise in Afghanistan and some were very successful in merging the NSP with local cultural perception regarding governance. For example, the International Red Cross's (IRC) experience in Logar and Paktia gave them the ability to frame accountability in Islamic terms of collective goods. Others, such as the Sanayee Development Foundation (SDF) found creative ways of engaging traditional leaders in project implementation, such as monitoring of procurement. Similarly, the IRC deliberately integrated local powerholders in the NSP implementation through the formation of advisory councils, the Masharano Shura for governors as well as jirga members and local commanders and the Ulema Shura for religious scholars and leaders. This way, the IRC, in an attempt to thwart opposition, found a way to invite key stakeholders to influence the program through their advice. Moreover, the IRC also asked powerholders for recommendations for IRC staff and used these for employment pool. This permitted them to hire credible and reputable people to introduce and represent the NSP locally. This approach enabled the IRC to address the concerns of key stakeholders, and hence, to reduce conflict. The SDF had strong conflict resolution skills, which allowed them to address protracted conflicts in villages. This prevented these conflicts from negatively affecting the program execution. They furthermore regularly engaged the CDCs as well as the local *jirgas* in peacebuilding training. The SDF was able to better achieve the peacebuilding goals of the NSP.[265] Other FPs stressed the long term sustainability of the CDCs. The Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), for example, takes a long-term and integrated approach, with a commitment of 10 to 20 years. The NSP is an incorporated element in their wider development work, and they utilize the CDCs for the conceptualization of five-year development plans, striving to make their own development demand driven, rather than supply driven. The AKDN can take such a long-term approach, because it supplements the MRRD funding with their funds.[266] These examples show how important the skills and approaches of the various FPs are in the success of the NSP.

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[262] Donini: 167.
Torabi: 17-18.
[263] Torabi: 15.
[264] Zakhilwal, Murphy: 15-16.
[265] Torabi: 18-19.
Boesen: 14.
Kakar: 16-18.
[266] Boesen: 15.

Seeing the FPs' different approaches, and Afghanistan's diversity, it is hardly a surprise that there are significant differences in the CDCs experiences and progress. However, it is to the NSP's credit that it left the FPs the flexibility to approach the diverse contexts in the manner they deemed most appropriate. The Afghan state acknowledged their weakness in imposing democratic governance and development across the countryside. Instead, it drew on the experience and knowledge of external actors, who worked in the areas for decades. Nevertheless, a more consultative approach with NGOs and a more realistic view of the importance of local governance structures could have ensured a less conflictive peacebuilding.

Concluding Remarks

The NSP is a remarkable program, bringing development to previously isolated villages efficiently and cost-effectively. It changes the structure of village governance, in particular with regard to women's participation. It succeeds in improving perceptions of villagers about their economic situation, and in changing male villager's attitudes towards government figures. It creates links between Afghanistan's central state and the rural, autonomous regions.

Nevertheless, as a large scale, top- down program, it faces inherent limitations. The divergent agendas of the involved parties, namely the divided governing elite, the donor community and the various local stake holders, limit the NSP from achieving its more ambitious agenda: rather than being seen as a governing body, the CDCs are largely seen as a development distribution instrument. This risks their sustainability once funding is terminated. As an imposed program, it lacks the necessary connection with the local landscape to optimally use its resources. The government imposed community boundaries conflict with those of the village and ignores the inter-connectedness of the various villages. Super-imposed on Afghanistan's complex socio-political landscape, the NSP conflicts with local powerholders.

The existing social culture and power structures largely determine the NSP's local progress— a fact the designers resolutely ignore. The program is deeply embedded in the larger developmental agenda that good governance and economic development will lead to a strong and stable Afghan state: however, the diversity of the NSP across Afghanistan shows that the local socio-political situation is crucial. The NSP cannot induce social coherence and good governance, but where it is already present, it can strengthen it. Democracy alone will not change local governance arrangement or limit the influence of local leaders. Aid and development do not abet the conflict or insulate villages from the influence of insurgents. Nevertheless as a development mechanism, the NSP is comparatively highly successful and cost-efficient. More research into the local context and likely impediments could limit the NSP's negative side-effect and improve its progress and sustainability.

Chapter VI: Conclusion

"Peace-building is not a linear process. The roads to peace are less like highways than bumpy and potholed roads—sometimes barely marked; sometimes not marked at all. It is these roads that outsiders who wish to contribute to peace-building must take, both physically and symbolically."[267]

In this thesis, I compare two different approaches to statebuilding, namely the Tribal Liaison Office (TLO) initiative, and the National Solidarity Program (NSP), which reflect the current rift in academic thinking and statebuilding practice on the subject. Divergent assumptions and strategic interests are subsumed under a common rhetoric using key words such as statebuilding, good governance, and development. In practice, however, the divergent assumptions underlying this supposedly unified approach have different results. This research concentrates on how the assumptions of the intervening actors affect their project design and process, and influence their interaction with Afghan counterparts. The most determining assumptions relate to the causes of state fragility and the statebuilding process: the questions about how to achieve such ambiguous goals as good governance, statebuilding, and development. Moreover, assumptions regarding the Afghan cultural and socio-political landscape are decisive. These assumptions, I argue, are a determining factor in achieving success. I herewith expand the current research, which often focuses on the weakness of the Afghan state, to an examination of external actors and their working processes, policies, and postulations. I show that stated and hidden assumptions affect the intervening party's program design and process, including interaction with the local socio-political order. I show how these determine the success of achieving the stated objectives.

The TLO and the NSP are both statebuilding programs that work on the most local level in Afghanistan: the village. They attempt to connect the political realities in the rural countryside with the central state and vice versa. However, the TLO are peacebuilders and hybrid statebuilders. In contrast, the NSP represents a development approach to central statebuilding. Both have inherent strengths and weaknesses: the TLO exemplifies a learning institution that is process-oriented. This makes them highly effective in the resolution of local conflicts. Such stabilizing work ameliorates the quality of life for the rural population significantly. Their approach of liaising with all actors involved, and gradual institution building through consensus, limits their work to a cooperative environment. Nevertheless, their expansion into some of the more conflict ridden areas suggests that their approach is making headway and contains opportunities for progress. The biggest threat the organization faces is a polarization of the local population and ruling elite in the progressing conflict.

The NSP's strength lies in its achievement in development. It reached a hereto isolated population with a fraction of the budget of other aid programs. However, their focus on development lacks recognition that aid is intrinsically political. Their determination to push through a program without addressing the contention it caused prevented the NSP from reaching its governance and statebuilding goals, and risks its sustainability. The threats, the NSP faces, include

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[267] Béatrice Pouligny, Simon Chesterman and Albrecht Schnabel "Introduction" *After Mass Crime Rebuilding States and Communities* ed. Béatrice, Simon Chesterman and Albrecht Schnabel (United Nations University Press) : 15.

insecure donor funding, shaky support amongst the ruling elites, and local opposition. However, an analysis of the causes of contention could equip the NSP with better strategies to address these obstacles; reform would open new opportunities for the program. The differences of the TLO and the NSP, their strength and weaknesses, relate to the unspoken assumptions with which program designers approached the problem of how to build peace and a state in Afghanistan.

These assumptions reflect the divisions in the academic debate on statebuilding. The dominant statebuilding approach is situated in a securitization of the development and humanitarian agenda: failed states are seen as endangering their own population, regional stability, and international security. They require a concerted and comprehensive statebuilding effort. Through this securitization, statebuilding became a military, in addition to a developmental and humanitarian concern. In this new alliance, different agendas are merged in a centralist statebuilding approach that idealizes an increasingly rigid statebuilding template designed to build a democratic state, abiding by international laws, and enabling a free-market economy. However, with current centralist statebuilding showing weak results, a strong counter discourse emerged. Critical analysts propagate more locally situated statebuilding. Questioning the current approach, these analysts suggest that in the absence of the state, numerous other institutions and power holders provide core public services: they challenge the statebuilding industry to embrace this hybrid reality and use these customary institutions as building blocks to achieve human security without necessarily building a modern Weberian state. Throughout the different disciplines, a new emphasis on the local order is emerging.

Furthermore, I outlined that, while the statebuilding enterprise uses uniform rhetoric, it is filled with ambiguous terms, such as statebuilding, development, governance, and capacity building. The myriad of actors involved define these terms differently. Humanitarian workers, as well as peacekeeping agencies, emphasize the resolution of local conflicts first. They work to address local grievances before they can be politicized. Alternatively, development workers, donor agencies, and economic analysts stress political development and governance. They connect the lack thereof to state failure; which, in turn, causes poor developmental outcomes. They stress long-term statebuilding and governance goals over immediate peacebuilding. Finally, the military establishment defines weak states as a security challenge: development and good governance in these countries become military tools in reducing global security threats. The securitization of statebuilding boosted funding and popular support for the current efforts- strengthening the agenda of the other disciplines. Unfortunately, this blurring of diplomacy, defense, and development agendas, in what amounts to a militarization of aid, negatively affects the success of the stabilization effort and taints the neutrality of all actors involved. The diversity of actors translates into different and competing statebuilding attempts under the guise of a unified nationbuilding intervention.

The interventions analyzed in this thesis display these ideological rifts. Their progression tests the validity of causal assumptions underlying these statebuilding approaches. One exemplifies the centralist statebuilding agenda: The NSP is designed to fortify the reach of the Afghan state across its territory, and combat state fragility through the delivery of services and good governance. It

exemplifies the policies that follow the developmental analyses of state failure: new egalitarian governance structures in Afghan villages, with the help of donor funding, are presumed to bring local development projects to the villages. Democratic governance and local economic development presumably are assumed to stabilize the countryside, counter-act the conflict-entrepreneurial power structure, and strengthen democracy, development, and peace in Afghanistan. Development will likely address grievances of villagers, cultivate a loyalty to the central state, and insulate villagers from the influence of the Taliban.

The second statebuilding organization, the TLO also aims to improve local governance, stability, and security in Afghanistan. However, the TLO is situated in a contra-debate: as hybrid statebuilders, they highlight that power and sovereignty in Afghanistan are fragmented. Tribal institutions deliver key services, such as security, justice, and governance. Their aim is to influence the current intervention so as to promote systematic and institutionalized engagement with traditional tribal structures and civil society groups. It is assumed that formal integration of communities, and their traditional governance structures within Afghanistan's newly emerging state, will situate the latter in the realities on the ground, improve delivery of services, and contribute to conflict resolution. The TLO also exemplifies the peacebuilding approach: they work to create a space for mediation between local actors, statebuilders, and the international community to address important issues, such as local conflict, aid distribution, and representation. The assumption is that if the politicization of these local conflicts can be prevented, and if local grievances can be addressed, peace, development, and good governance in rural Afghanistan will follow.

The differences between the TLO and the NSP complicate a comparison: the TLO as an NGO has the flexibility to follow a learning process, which allows it to adjust to the local political context. Local, but effective work is prioritized over large scale projects. The NSP, however, is one of the state's signature programs, and is a cooperation between donors and revisionist elite in the Afghan government. Both of these are dependent on voter support for their endeavors, and are required to produce large scale results rapidly. As a large-scale program, it involves a range of important political actors with distinct agendas. Their disagreements limited the achievements of the ambitious goals, such as establishing lasting governance institutions, and progressively restricted the program to a development tool: rather than being seen as a governing body, the Community Development Councils are largely seen as a development distribution instrument. This risks sustainability, once funding is terminated. Despite these differences, assumptions, with which the external actors approached the statebuilding challenge, determined their project design.

Through the comparison of these two interventions, I show three important assumptions that impact the progress of the program: Firstly, I show that causal assumptions about state failure impact the proposed solutions. Secondly, assumptions about the process of building a strong state matter. Thirdly, the external parties approach Afghanistan with their view of the local population, and these assumptions impact how they interact with the local order. The TLO prioritizes local context and engages with traditional leaders. The NSP builds on egalitarian notions of traditional institutions and attempts to use these to impose new, democratic structures in an effort to sideline

existing elites. These preconceived notions, often unspoken, determine the process and success of these interventions. Assumptions regarding the causes of state failure directly translate into the prescribed solutions and project design. For the TLO, the weakness of the Afghan state lies in its centralist and ahistorical design that disregards the institutions and cultural norms that serve the people. They maintain that, in order for the state to gain legitimacy, it must connect with the mental modes of its citizens. As hybrid statebuilders, they search for creative ways to integrate local institutions into the central Afghan state. They try to engineer a mediated state in which the Afghan state makes use of the order on the ground; and at the same time, becomes useful to the local powerholders. I contrast this approach with the revisionist approach, such as the NSP represents, which is focused on a central state. For them, statebuilding is fundamentally a developmental challenge: the weakness of the state lies in its absence of visible service provision across its territory. Providing each village with new governance structures infused with development money, will strengthen the state, unify the country, and address grievances of villagers; thereby, insulating them from the influence of the Taliban. Democracy and development are seen as the solutions to the myriad of Afghan problems, and as a uniting force of a heterogeneous country. The latter approach relies on the Western state models, while the former has a more flexible vision of a state. Their differing analyses of what explains the weak reach of the Afghan state lead to different proposed solutions.

These proposed solutions contain other significant assumptions. The NSP's logic is anchored in the presumed transformative effect of aid: development, it is assumed, will weaken the appeal of the Neo-Taliban and increase safety of Afghans and international forces. The argument is that a state that can deliver, especially in the rural areas, will inspire more confidence in the government, and increase resistance to anti-government forces. Unfortunately, there is weak evidence for such a link between security and development. The merging of the development agenda with the security goals creates unrealistic expectations of the program. In contrast, the TLO represents an integrated development approach. Statebuilding must build on political cooperation on all levels. The success of local efforts also depends on their integration in the wider institutional and administrative systems through both horizontal and vertical linkages. Involvement of political leadership at all levels increases the sustainability of the project. Integration into the larger state ensures access to resources, while the inclusion of customary structures makes use of well established coping mechanisms already servicing the disadvantaged. Political consensus ensures acceptance and increases the changes for sustainability. The divergent approaches of the two intervention show that such working assumptions are important in determining the form and success of interventions.

Furthermore, assumptions regarding Afghanistan's socio-cultural landscape determined how the intervening party interacted with the local order. The TLO prioritized the understanding of the status of local powerholders, and the interaction between them and external actors. This relates to their belief that any intervention must be preceded by careful research to understand the local situation. The TLO maintains that, in order to gain legitimacy, a state must be useful to local powerholders. Furthermore, through research, they determined that some elites were more cooperative in building a mediated state, and were more representative of the local population. They

then made a political choice to engage with traditional leaders in the hope of sidelining gun-bearing elites. In contrast, the NSP makes no reference to the diversity of contexts in which they operate. They do not recognize the challenges posed by local powerholders. In fact, the NSP designers hold a disregard of the traditional institutions, presumably conflicting with a modern, individualistic state. The program is designed to sideline existing elites through the introduction of elections and democratic councils surmised to foster new, legitimate elite. However, the disregard of local power arrangements means that the program lacks any strategy on how to bring local powerholders on board, and make them accept the new government's expansion. This omission leads to conflictual peacebuilding throughout the program's expansion. The Facilitating Partners noted resistance from local powerholders during each phase of the NSP execution. Interestingly, local context determined the success of the program: research showed that if the NSP entered a village with social cohesion and effective leadership, the program increased such unity and worked more effectively. However, in divided villages, often amongst them were those with local strongmen, the same money and governance structures aggravated tension. Local political context proved crucial in both programs, but only the TLO was flexible enough to institutionalize creative responses to the local problems.

Both of these programs can show important achievements. The TLO flexibility translates into a wide range of different programs. This diversity makes progress difficult to measure. Nevertheless, they have been able to achieve improvements in local stability. As peacebuilders, their work addresses security challenges that worsen the quality of life, with important results. Providing training to resolve disputes through mediation, negotiation, and conflict resolution, and supporting civil-society involvement in peace and development goes a long way in increasing trust, safety, and social cohesion within and between communities. Their success with working with local powerholders— especially in contrast with the NSP's failure therein— shows that successful statebuilding may depend on identifying and engaging stakeholders to make the state expansion a useful addition to the local order. Local institutions reflect the population's world view, and a creative engagement can form a productive working relationship between statebuilders and the local traditional elite. Most useful, perhaps, is their success as a learning institution: their research first approach grounds them in the local political context, and enables them to locate legitimate partners, and to identify local grievances. Yet, their local approach also limits their ability to expand. They build peace gradually, village by village. Their approach is dependant on an enabling environment, which is identified through a gradual learning process. Thus, while their work is important in local peacebuilding, it likely will not address the wide-ranging development and governance challenges in Afghanistan. Furthermore, this peacebuilding approach cannot be a counterforce to the insurgency, or provide the government with enough strength and legitimacy to counter the appeal of the Neo-Taliban. The TLO exemplifies the strengths and opportunities of hybrid statebuilding. Simultaneously, it shows the limitations of such tribal engagement. Such an approach may be too gradual and piecemeal for the political needs of donors and the central government: both face the political strain of showing quick, large-scale results to gain their support. Nevertheless, their conclusions to peacebuilding in Afghanistan and to strengthening governance in the rural areas are to be commended.

The NSP is a remarkable attempt to revise centralist statebuilding and bring it to the village. Its design acknowledges that the current Afghan state is too removed from its rural population and that it must deliver services, in an inclusive manner, rapidly. The community-driven design consciously distances itself from the standard blue print development approach: it shows awareness that development, state- and peacebuilding, cannot be achieved without local participation. The multifarious objectives of the NSP—amongst them good governance, rural infrastructure rehabilitation, livelihood generation, capacity building, and women's empowerment— complicate an assessment of its effectiveness. Yet, as a development program, the NSP is vastly successful, and far surpasses other aid programs. Rural communities experience development for the first time. NSP projects are cost-effective and involve local labor. The NSP promotes a sense of local ownership of the development projects. Additionally, the program addresses the disconnection between donors and locals through a consultation mechanism and builds a connection between villages and the central government. This improves local perceptions of the government, as well as of the security and economic situation measurably.

Nevertheless, as a large scale, top-down program, it faces inherent limitations. Rather than a process-oriented institution (such as the TLO), the NSP is a product-oriented institution. This means the emphasis lies on speedy delivery, at the expense of consensus and long-term planning. Agreement is presumed and the program is executed hurriedly, regardless of possible opposition. However, designed to impose new governance structure, it enforces new state society relations. This makes it a highly political program and, without addressing its political aspect, the NSP leads to conflictual peacebuilding. Super-imposed on Afghanistan's complex socio-political landscape, the NSP lacked a strategy on how to engage with the diverse power arrangements across the country. The hope is that the NSP's success will dispel resistance; in effect, this process limits its ultimate impact. Ironically research showed that the local socio-political situation is an important determining factor in a NSP's progress. The NSP cannot induce social coherence and good governance, but where it is already present, it can strengthen it. Unfortunately, in the absence of a socially oriented culture, the NSP aggravated tensions. Aid and development do not abet the conflict or insulate villages from the influence of insurgents. The focus on development led to a project design removed from the local realities, and failed one of the most important developmental guidelines: the do-no-harm principle. By ignoring the local power arrangements and failing to address the conflictive politics of its peacebuilding program, the NSP aggravated tensions in divided villages. This likely will limit the impact of future community development endeavors.

This comparison shows that frames and narratives, with which external actors approach the weak state, matter tremendously. Spoken and unspoken assumptions must be analyzed and questioned, and compared with how they play out on the ground. Such analyses should lead to a better understanding of how to achieve desired objectives. This work sheds light on the interplay between the intervener's working assumptions and Afghanistan's heterogeneous local political context. Hopefully, the lessons highlighted will facilitate the design and implementation of a more nuanced involvement. Both the centralist and hybrid statebuilding approaches show some important strengths. The developmental state-focused approach succeeded in bringing development, yet falls

short of bringing governance, security, or social cohesion. Unfortunately, in its worst moments, it worsened tensions. The hybrid statebuilding approach does better in achieving such objectives as governance and peacebuilding, but it does so gradually and only in a cooperative environment. Tribal engagement can only work where tribal institutions remain effective and legitimate. Unfortunately, across Afghanistan the tribal systems are weakening as they face the changes of war, migration and a new generational divide. Tribal engagement is not the answer to Afghanistan's larger woes. Absent from the current attempts is a larger, nationwide, peacebuilding strategy. Local conflicts continue to destabilize the country-side and fuel the expansion of the insurgency. While the hybrid statebuilding approach is too gradual and piecemeal to persuade the larger donor community of its worth, it contains important lessons: an understanding of the local context is crucial in statebuilding. Only through an understanding of the local situation, can peacebuilders make political choices regarding powerholders, and devise effective strategies on how to negotiate the expansion of state services. Peace without politics risks conflict, and development alone cannot solve the larger challenge of a country still struggling to emerge out of protracted conflict. External actors are entering an alien terrain: rather than imposing their path, a more humble, listening approach may help them navigate the potholes on this bumpy road of peacebuilding.

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