7. Neither Functioning, nor Failing of the State! Seeing Violence in Afghanistan from Local Perspectives [1]

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INTRODUCTION

Triggered by the terror attacks of 9/11, the subsequent international involvement in Afghanistan has catapulted the country into the center of international political attention. The military intervention by the US forces and its allies, which started in October 2001 and led to the total collapse of the Taliban regime that Autumn 2001, resulted in a power vacuum, which was immediately filled by large numbers of militia commanders as well as tribal and religious leaders. These 'big men' either possessed some legitimacy or were able to control the means of violence to a sufficient degree. This development was further strengthened by the US-strategy to use Afghan militias to support them in their fight against the remnants of al-Qaida and the Taliban. [2]

Thus, the world suddenly witnessed various military structures, which had developed during 22 years of continuous warfare in the absence of a functioning state and was unlikely to be changed immediately by military intervention. Consequently, the international peace process in Afghanistan was repeatedly shaken by recurring acts of violence and the lack of a clear designation of responsibilities for security tasks. This volatile situation was seen by international observers as a complete lack of security and was regarded as the core obstacle to all the political steps towards a successful peace process (such as the *Emergency Loya Jirga* in June 2002, the *Constitutional Loya Jirga* in December 2003, the presidential elections in September 2004 and the parliamentary elections in September 2005).

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[1] This contribution is based on a version, which was published under the title "Beyond Warlordism. The Security Architecture in Afghanistan" in: *International Policy and Society 2007*, 2 pp. 136-153. In this revised version we take the political dynamics since 2007, especially the re-emergence of the Taliban, into consideration. Moreover, it should be mentioned that this paper is a result of the research project "Staatsverfall als friedens- und sicherheitspolitische Herausforderung", which was generously funded by Deutsche Stiftung Friedensforschung.

[2] Suhrke, Astri et al. (2004) Conflictual peacebuilding: Afghanistan two years after Bonn. Accessed at: http://www.cmi.no/publications/2004/rep/r2004-4.pdf.

Indeed, it was no other than Lakhdar Brahimi, the United Nations special envoy to Afghanistan from 2001 to 2003, who coined the phrase that Afghanistan is in need of three things: "Security, security and security".

Notions of 'security' can vary a lot and have even been understood in a contrary way. In the case of Afghanistan, international policy-makers, journalists and researchers heavily stress the lack of physical security circumscribing it with the term 'warlordism'. [3] This description was the expression of a modern, state-centric understanding of physical security, which generally assumes that the institution of the state holds the monopoly of violence. Contrary to this blueprint, in Afghanistan, individual actors – so-called warlords – were identified as the ones who *de facto* control the means of violence. Between 2002 and 2006, virtually no influential political figure in Afghanistan could avoid this label, which subsequently became the category to describe all actors trying to spoil or even cast doubts on the international agenda of the Afghan peace process. Hereby the term *jang salar* (Dari term for 'warlord') which had never been used in the Afghan parlance in the past, found its way into the Afghan rhetoric and is used – in contrary to the mainly used term 'commander' – in a very biased and negative sense.

'Warlordism' and its connoted perceptions in our view are not sufficient enough to characterize the structures of violence in Afghanistan. [4] While we do not deny the existence of warlords in Afghanistan, the manifold forms of individual leadership as well as the local differences regarding security arrangements are too significant for them to be positioned on a linear axis between warlords on the one side and the modern state on the other. To support our argument, we will discuss the balance of power and influence between the center and the periphery in Afghanistan. Based on this analysis we will reveal the security situation on a provincial level in three case studies – Kunduz, Kandahar and Paktia. Hereby, we intend to demonstrate that the variety of security arrangements on the local level is enormous.

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[3]   Ignatieff, Michael (2003): *Empire Lite*. London: Vintage. See also: Sedra, Mark (2002): *Challenging the Warlord Culture – Security Sector Reform in Post-Taliban Afghanistan*. Bonn: BICC.

[4]   For a detailed discussion of the term warlordism, see: Giustozzi, Antonio (2003): Respectable Warlords? The Transition from War of All against All to Peaceful Competition in Afghanistan; accessed at: http://www.crisisstates.com/download/others/SeminarAG29012003.pdf. Also: Schetter, Conrad, Glassner, Rainer & Karokhail, Masood (2007): Beyond Warlordism. The Security Architecture in Afghanistan" in: International Policy and Society, 2: 136-153.

PERIPHERIZATION OF THE CENTER

Often enough 'warlordism' is regarded as a local phenomenon and can be interpreted as the power struggle between the center and the periphery. [5] However the interactions are much more complicated due to the fact, that the center and the periphery cannot be separated from one another because each side endeavors to influence the other. However, during the last few years the center was not in the position to strengthen its power in the periphery, while the periphery gained the ability to impose its interests on the center. So we can talk about a 'peripherization of the center' in Afghanistan. To illustrate this argument we like to present some examples.

The Afghan state in Afghanistan never developed beyond an embryonic status in the past. The protracted and ongoing war since 1979 destroyed the remaining state structures completely. So the government, which was established in December 2001, possessed neither a well-founded authority nor a positive legitimacy in the eyes of the people. Hence the primary objective of the Afghan government was to re-establish a state owned monopoly of violence and to dismantle local militias. In both processes the international community supported the Afghan government. However, the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration process (DDR) from 2003 to 2005, as well as the subsequent Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups process (DIAG) that began in 2005 and is planned to be completed in 2011, were not able to disband the 'clientelistic' structures between the commanders and their militiamen, even though they were able to collect a certain amount of weaponry. [6] In most cases, influential warlords were able to preserve their power by taking over formal positions in central or regional government or by transferring their militias to regular units of the army or the police. Accordingly, the security sector of the state is made up, to a large extent, of warlords and their militias. [7]

Also, Hamid Karzai's strategy to restrict the power of the warlords who had gained a position in the state apparatus had only a modicum of success. Hamid Karzai decided to rotate governors, ministers and police chiefs from one position to another to prevent them from establishing their own power bases. In the be-

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[5] Rubin, Barnett R. & Helena Malikyar (2003): The Politics of Center-Periphery Relations in Afghanistan, Center for International Cooperation, New York, accessed at: http://www.cic.nyu.edu/pdf/WBCPAfgh.pdf

[6] Giustozzi, Antonio (2008): "Bureaucratic façade and political realities of disarmament and demobilisation in Afghanistan" in: *Conflict, Security & Development*, S. 169-192, Bd. 8, Nr. 2.

[7] Schetter, Conrad (2005): Warlords und Bürgerkriegökonomie in Afghanistan. In: Claudia Gomm-Ernsting & Annett Günther (Ed.): *Unterwegs in die Zukunft. Afghanistan – drei Jahre nach dem Aufbruch vom Petersberg*. Grundlagen und Perspektiven deutsch-afghanischer Sicherheitskooperation. Berlin: Berliner Wissenschafts-Verlag, p. 102-142.

ginning, Karzai gained some promising results, for example, by sacking Ismail Khan, the then governor of Herat, in 2004 and appointing him as the Minister of Energy and Water in Kabul or by shifting Gul Agha Shrizai in 2004 from the governor post in Kandahar to the governorship in Nangarhar. However, in recent years this policy has been less successful because, as well as the warlords themselves, increasingly, the local elites also began to resist against the policy. Usually, local elites have only had to mobilize their clients and to demonstrate that the enforcement of a state decision would lead to a destabilization and to an increase of violence for them to prevent a decision of the government being implemented. A good example of this was when Hamid Karzai appointed Juma Khan Hamdard as the new governor, first of Jawzjan, and then of Kunduz province. Hamdard, who is an ethnic Pashtun and was a former member of Hikmatyar's *hizb-i islami*, was allied to or fighting against many of today's warlords in Northern Afghanistan during the 1990s. In May 2007, Rashid Dostum, the dominant warlord in Northern Afghanistan, organized a demonstration against governor Hamdard in Sheberghan, the provincial capital of Jawzjan. Hamdard was accused of incompetence and ethnic prejudice. The demonstration turned violent and left at least 10 people dead and 40 injured. To prevent a destabilization of the situation in Jawzjan, Hamid Karzai decided to withdraw Hamdard from Jawzjan and to appoint him as governor to Kunduz. When rumors about this decision became public, at the end of 2007, protests immediately began. Local elites, related to the local warlord Mir Alam, who fought against Hamdard in the 1990s, organized protests and signed a petition threatening dire consequences if the central government continued with this appointment. Again Karzai found himself in an uncomfortable position, gave in to the pressure and withdrew his decision.

The political center in Kabul is strongly influenced by local politics. Local elites endeavor to develop close relationships with officeholders in the central government or members of the parliament in Kabul. Often enough, local elites are interwoven with political decision-makers in Kabul by family ties. Consequently, local elites are able to influence decision-making processes in the capital, which has an immediate impact on local politics. For example, in Farkhar district in the province of Takhar, the Afghan Interior Ministry wanted to downgrade and replace Abdul Ali the chief of police. Abdul Ali managed to defend his position by using his family networks to high-ranking officials in the Kabul government, who directly influenced a reversal of the decision in the responsible office.

These examples show that the government not only faces tremendous local resistance in its efforts to implement its decisions beyond the capital. It also underlines the fact that local elites are heavily constraining the sphere of activities

of the government. This highlights why a study of the localization of power is so tremendously significant for an understanding of Afghan politics. [8]

THE LOCALIZATION OF POWER

As demonstrated above, alongside the variety of actors, local differences play a crucial role in Afghan politics. We intend to show that on a local level the varied social, economic and political factors result in different security architectures. Moreover, it is not possible to position these security architectures on a linear spectrum between the poles of the state on the one side and the warlords on the other. The main reason for this is that there are many variables which define the security situation. In all the case studies – Kandahar, Kunduz and Paktia – we chose the provincial level as the level of research for the sake of clarity, while we are aware that the situation is much more complex at the sub-provincial level due to local dynamics.

KANDAHAR – FEUDAL WARLORDISM

The city of Kandahar is not only the capital of the homonymous province, but also the main center of Southern Afghanistan. Kandahar has played an important role in Afghan history. Afghans perceive Kandahar as the birthplace of modern Afghanistan and the town has also served as a stronghold and secret capital for the Taliban. Since the movement was ousted from Kandahar in December 2001, the province has been dominated by a handful of strong warlords collaborating with the government as well as by the Taliban and the international anti-terror forces.

To understand the emergence of warlordism in Kandahar, it is important to take the socio-economic structures of the province into consideration. The Pashtun confederations of the Durrani and Ghilzai, which comprise several tribes, have been competing for the control of Kandahar city since the 18th century. [9] In contrast to the Pashtuns of Eastern Afghanistan, the tribes of Kandahar are structured in a more hierarchical manner. Already during the 18th century a small landowning aristocracy had emerged within each tribe, which managed to seize the economic resources and control local decision-making processes, while ordinary tribesmen often ended up as their clients (*hamsayagan*). Thus, tribal coherence has not only been built on common tribal identities and values, but also on the access to economic resources, patronage and protection.

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[8]   Schetter, Conrad (2007a): Talibanistan – der Anti-Staat. In: Internationales Asienforum.
[9]   Noelle, Christine (1997): *State and Tribe in Nineteenth Century Afghanistan*. Richmond: Curzon Press.

These socio-economic structures are reflected in the security architecture of today's Kandahar province. Within each large tribe we find either a single or a small number of powerful commanders stemming from landlord or business families and maintaining their own private militias. [10] The powerful elite of Kandahar province consists of no more than half a dozen men. [11] Furthermore, members of this small elite compete for the control of core government positions to extend their regional influence. They have already succeeded in taking over core positions within the Kandahar provincial administration and have successfully placed their clients within the civil administration as well as in key local security posts. During the DDR process these commanders managed to transform their militias into regular army units, especially within the security sector. [12] To examine these violent organizations, it is useful to look at two prominent warlords: Ahmad Wali Karzai and Gul Agha Shirzai.

Ahmad Wali Karzai is the younger brother of President Hamid Karzai and the head of the provincial council of Kandahar province. [13] The Karzai family has been influential in the Kandahar region for decades and is one of the leading families of the Popalzai tribe, to which the king's family also belongs. Ahmad Wali Karzai makes use of his closeness to Hamid Karzai while at the same time being the main representative of the Popalzai tribe in Southern Afghanistan. Furthermore, he is said to control a big share of the drug trade in the region. [14]

Besides the Popalzai, the Barakzai are the second largest tribe in Kandahar province. [15] The most prominent member of the Barakzai is Gul Agha Shirzai. However, in contrast to Ahmad Wali Karzai, Gul Agha Shirzai is not descended from the tribal aristocracy. His father, Haji Latif, was an important *mujahidin* commander in the 1980s and his family gained influence due to their large property holdings. Gul Agha Shirzai served twice as provincial governor of Kandahar and for a short period as a minister in Hamid Karzai's cabinet. He has to be considered as one of the most powerful men in Kandahar, not least since he integrated his

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[10]   ICG – International Crisis Group (2003a): *Afghanistan: The Problem of Pashtun Alienation.* Kabul/Brussels:ICG.

[11]   Findings of a survey undertaken in 2005/2006 by the Tribal Liaison Office (TLO) on local leadership in Kandahar province. Information about Kandahar is based on field research if not indicated otherwise.

[12]   ICG – International Crisis Group (2003b): *Disarmament and Reintegration in Afghanistan –* ICG Asia Report No 65. Kabul/Brussels: ICG.

[13]   HRW – Human Rights Watch (2004): *The Rule of the Gun – Human Rights Abuses* and*Political Repression in the Run-up to Afghanistan's Presidential Election,* accessed at: http://www.hrw. org/backgrounder/asia/afghanistan0904/afghanistan0904.pdf.

[14]   Baldauf, Scott (2004): *Warlord Politics Heats Afghan Vote,* accessed at: http://www.csmonitor. com/2004/1006/p01s01-wosc.html, also: Gall, Carlotta (2004): 'Afghan Poppy Growing Reaches Record Level, UN Says', in: *New York Times*, November 19.

[15]   ICG – International Crisis Group (2003b): Ibid.

militias into the Afghan National Police during the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration process. His militias have also assisted the Coalition Forces in fighting insurgency groups.

The situation in Kandahar is strongly influenced by the US-driven 'War against Terrorism' and the counter-operations of the anti-government resistance. While valid information about the latter is rare, it is interesting to note that the opponents of the Coalition Forces are highly embedded in the local communities. Thus rural districts such as Panjwaye, Naish, Arghistan, Khakrez and Ghorak are time and time again under the control of the Taliban and have become backbones of the anti-government resistance. It was in these districts that the Taliban movement began its rapid military expansion in the mid-1990s. Here the population shares the norms and values of the former Taliban regime. Moreover, the local population still perceives the physical security provided by the Taliban as better and more applicable than that provided by either the government or the Coalition Forces. [16] A common sentiment is that the harsh and uncompromising exertion of power by the Taliban replaced banditry and created some accountability in everyday life. In addition, the military operations of the Coalition Forces have strengthened the relationship between the Taliban and the local population. This is especially so with military actions such as routine house searches that are seen as violating local customs such as the hiding of the womenfolk from men's eyes. Due to the high intensity of fighting between the Taliban and the Coalition Forces the local elites have been forced to position themselves either with the Coalition Forces or with the Taliban. The dramatic increase in violence and instability along with the increasing anti-governmental sentiments expressed by local institutions such as *shuras* have made it difficult to bridge the gap between the government and the communities.

Opium cultivation has also had a strong impact on the security situation. Even though it dates back to the pre-war times in Kandahar province, this economy only started booming since the late 1980s when the Soviet troops withdrew from Afghanistan. In 2005, nearly 13 percent of the Afghan area under poppy cultivation was situated in Kandahar province. [17] The dominance of the opium economy is so strong that hardly any elite family can maintain a leading position within its tribe without an involvement in the drug economy. The counter narcotic strategy of the international community, which was initiated in 2004, however, pressures

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[16]   Giustozzi, Antonio (2007): Koran, Kalashnikov and Laptop – The Neo-Taliban Insurgency in Afghanistan. London: Hurst Publishers Ltd.

[17]   UNODC – United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2006): AFGHANISTAN – Opium Rapid Assessment Survey 2006, p. 39. Accessed at: www.unodc.org/pdf/research/Afg_RAS_2006.pdf.

those elites loyal to the government to curb their poppy cultivation. [18] This has led to a situation in which patronage networks are facing tremendous pressure to change. More and more farmers and traders, for whom the drug economy constitutes the basis of their daily livelihood, have shifted their loyalties to the Taliban. Today the drug trafficking networks make use of both the government as well as the Taliban, depending on which group controls a particular area.

Summing up, during the last few years, the combination of insurgency, well-financed drug networks and hierarchical tribal structures has restricted the influence of the Afghan government in Kandahar province and, instead, has encouraged the emergence of both strong local commanders and the Taliban. The only difference between the former and the latter is that the Taliban still maintain a corporate identity in the outside world. However, it is noticeable that the Taliban are also becoming more and more an umbrella for heterogeneous actors such as militant Islamists, drug barons, tribal elders, warlords and unemployed youth. [19]. Furthermore there are significant differences between the ideology of the former Taliban and those presently operating under this label today. This is why many analysts tend to use the term 'Neo-Taliban' instead of Taliban. [20]

KUNDUZ – FRAGMENTED WARLORDISM

Despite the long distance between the capital Kabul and Kunduz, as well as the geographical barrier of the Hindukush mountain range, the Afghan state has been influential in the North-eastern province of Kunduz since its emergence as a state at the end of the 19th century. [21] This was a prerequisite for Pashtun colonization, which has taken place in several waves since the early 1920s, encompassing stockbreeders, farmers and the Pashtun aristocracy. While the latter received large landholdings from the central government, the migration of stockbreeders, especially, created tensions with the indigenous population. [22] This colonization policy required a strong state to effectively control the distribution of land. Consequently, all the influential officials were Pashtuns who were mostly related to the king's family. Accordingly, the language spoken in the provincial government was

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[18] Blanchard, Christopher M. (2005): *Afghanistan: Narcotics and U.S. Policy, p. 17-18.* CRS Report for Congress. Washington.

[19] Schetter, Conrad (2007b): Lokale Macht- und Gewaltstrukturen in Afghanistan. In: Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte (APuZ) 39: 3-10.

[20] Giustozzi, Antonio (2007): Ibid.

[21] Noelle, Christine (1997). Ibid.

[22] Grötzbach, Erwin (1990): *Afghanistan: eine geographische Landeskunde.* Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft. And: Shalinsky, Audrey C. (1982): 'Islam and Ethnicity: The Northern Afghanistan Perspective', in: *Central Asian Survey* 1:2/3, 71-83.

Pashtu, which excluded the bulk of the population from direct access to the state. [23] The result of this colonization was a complete change in the power structure due to the confiscation of large landholdings belonging, mainly, to the Uzbeks. More-over, the ethnic diversity of Kunduz is enormous and often changes from village to village. Besides Pashtuns, Tajiks, Uzbeks, Hazara, Arabs, Baluchs and Turkmen are also located in Kunduz province.

This historical anchorage of the Afghan state in Kunduz has had a significant influence on the constellation of today's power architecture. Holding an official position in Kunduz province is regarded by the elites as a guarantee of power and as an important material as well as symbolic resource. The intermingling of the pursuit of personal interests and the holding of a state position directly affects the security situation. For example, high-ranking officials within the highway, border and provincial police, are accused of deploying policemen for their own interest. In fact, the local population describes the police as private militias in uniform. [24] This also means that warlords who are not holding an office, regularly bring them to the attention of the public – often by the conscious use of violence and by fighting rivals, who do hold an office. For example, in 2005 several clashes occurred between the police, on the one hand, and the sub-commanders of Mir Alam, a powerful strongman in Kunduz, on the other. The background for this violent conflict was a long-standing rivalry between Mir Alam, who was trying to bully someone in an official position, and Mutalib Beg, the then chief of police.

Due to migration and pashtunization, as well as the ethnic diversity of the province and the frequently changing frontlines during the war, there are no universally accepted communal forms of organization and institutions that are capable of checking and balancing the power of individuals. [25] This has resulted in myriads of mini-fiefdoms as well as localized 'rules of law' or 'rules of the gun'. Thus, each village is headed by a 'big man', who often held the position of commander during the civil war. *Opinions* of these 'big men' differ from place to place. While some are seen as good and honorable others are described as killers and stealers. Smaller warlords can often act with impunity since they are backed by others. In the past, the territory under control of the respective commanders was sharply demarcated due to the levying of taxes such as *ushr or zakat.* [26] But

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[23] Patterson, Mervyn (2004): *The Shiwa Pastures, 1978-2003: Land Tenure Changes and Conflict in Northeastern Afghanistan*. Kabul: AREU.

[24] Within the context of projects funded by the German Peace Research Foundation and the Volkswagen Foundation the authors carried out research in Kunduz and Paktia province in spring and summer 2005.

[25] Glassner, Rainer (2007): Kunduz und Paktia – Zur Lage in der afghanischen Provinz. In: Chiari, Bernhard (Ed.): Wegweiser zur Geschichte – Afghanistan. Paderborn: Verlag Ferdinand Schöningh, 2007, p. 149-158.

[26] Dorronsoro, Gilles (1999): 'Afghanistan: von Solidaritätsnetzwerken zu regionalen Räumen',

with the collapse of the Taliban and the presence of the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Kunduz, the visible commander system has experienced a decline and the levying of taxes has been disrupted so, consequently, the borders of the warlords' territories have disappeared. Nowadays, armed militias are not often to be seen; nonetheless the mutual relationship between commanders and militiamen remains significant. Local commanders usually have good relationships with the state and the international community; neither the central state nor external actors are seen as an immediate threat as long as they respect the influence and economic interests of the commanders. The loyalty of a militiaman is primarily directed to his immediate commander. Alliances among militias tend to be brokered on a broader scale and seldom rely exclusively on tribal, ethnic or regional similarities. Communal or religious institutions are too weak to control these small warlords and their militias.

The cities of the province (e.g. Kunduz, Khanabad, Imam Sahib) are controlled by the police, which is composed of former militiamen. while the rural areas are still controlled by numerous warlords. However the security architecture varies from place to place, as is illustrated by the example of the two districts of Imam Sahib and Khanabad. Imam Sahib is situated on the border with Tajikistan. It is an agrarian, fertile district and moreover a key hub for the drug-trade. Accordingly, both the district itself and the post of the chief of the border police are strategically very significant. Imam Sahib is dominated by the Ibrahimis, an Uzbek clan, which rose from nothing to become the predominant family of that district and beyond in the course of the war. Ibrahim Abdul Latif became the governor of Kunduz province in 2002, before he was appointed governor of Faryab in 2004. His brother Haji Raoof earned a reputation as a commander, headed the border police in Imam Sahib and won a seat in the parliamentary elections. Finally, the locally strategically important position of the *mirab bashi*, who controls the farmers' access to the key resource of water, is in the hands of Afiz, the brother in law of Haji Raoof, whereas in other districts this position is commonly exercised by members of different clans and usually varies from irrigation canal to irrigation canal.[27] Thus the Ibrahimis rule the district in a quasi-feudalistic way and control access to the economic resources. Hence, most small warlords in Imam Sahib are directly dependent upon this family. While one family monopolizes the

in: François Jean and Jean-Christophe Rufin (Ed.): *Ökonomie der Bürgerkriege*. Hamburg: Hamburger Ed., p. 121-154. Also: Goodhand, Jonathan (2002): 'From Holy War to Opium War? A Case Study of the Opium Economy in North-Eastern Afghanistan', in: Christine Noelle-Karimi et al. (Ed.): *Afghanistan – A Country without a State*. Linz, p. 139-160.

[27] Shah, Usman (2006): *Livelihoods in the Asqalan and Sufi-Qarayateem Canal Irrigation Systems in the Kunduz River Basin*. January 2007 (Amu Darya Series 4), accessed at: http://131.220.109.9/fileadmin/webfiles/downloads/projects/amudarya/publications/ZEF_Amu_Darya_Series_SMWA_4.pdf.

means of violence in Imam Sahib, Khanabad provides a different picture. During the war, the district was under the control of Commander Amir, the most influential commander of the Islamist Abdulrab Sayyaf in North-eastern Afghanistan. After Amir's death, he was succeeded by his brother Ghulam, who lost several of his sub-commanders in the upsurge of ethnic and political division after the collapse of the Taliban. Taken together with the lack of commonly shared institutions, this led to a fragmentation of violence and the emergence of myriads of loosely connected small warlords, rarely controlling more than one village. Their actions are solely restricted by the competition with other warlords, but not controlled or regulated by the local population or the government.

Summing up, numerous warlords, who differ widely in the scope of their influence and power, are controlling the means of physical violence in Kunduz province. Moreover, a lack of religious, ethnic-tribal or even modern institutions can be observed which might have been capable of constraining the arbitrary acts of these local rulers. This results in a strong localization of the 'rules of the game' and varying architectures of the power structure from district to district and, as in Khanabad district, from village to village. Additionally, the rentier economy, which stems from various sources (e.g. taxes on land, drug economy) strengthens the position of the warlords, makes them independent from the population and further weakens the existing collective institutions. At the same time, local elites manage to obstruct a development in which positive aspects of statehood reach the population and in which state institutions become functional.

PAKTIA – RULE OF THE TRIBES

Paktia province is located in the eastern part of the so-called Pashtun belt and is, more or less, ethnically homogenous. Despite its geographical proximity to the capital Kabul, state influence in Paktia has always remained weak, which is largely the result of the strength of the tribal system. By the end of the 1970s, state influence did not extend beyond the provincial capital of Gardez. Similarly, the Taliban were only present in the provincial capital and had no control whatsoever of the countryside. Even today the power of the government is very limited: The Afghan National Army and the Afghan National Police are concentrated in Gardez and along the main roads.

The Pashtuns of Paktia are divided along tribal lines. Tribal identities are still perceived as the most important points of reference, incorporating ideas of honor and justice as well as daily behavior [28]. The *pashtunwali,* the Pashtun tribal code of

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[28] Steul, Willi (1981): *Paschtunwali – Ein Ehrenkodex und seine rechtliche Relevanz.* Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag. Also: Glatzer, Bernd (2002): 'The Pashtun Tribal System', in: Georg Pfeffer and Deepak Kumar Behera (Ed.): *Concept of Tribal Society.* New Dehli: Concept Publish.

law and behavior, is the commonly accepted 'rule of the game', which is binding for everybody and provides strict guidelines on how to deal with a specific situation. Although the community values of the *pashtunwali* vary slightly from tribe to tribe, the main underlying notion influencing all interpretations of the *pashtunwali* in the east is that all Pashtuns have an equal status and no one should possess more rights and power than the others.[29] According to this notion, all Pashtuns descend from the same ancestor and possess equal social and political status. Furthermore, the Paktia tribes settle their problems by consensus building, meaning that tribal gatherings (*jirga*) are the place to mediate conflicts until a solution is found. In contrast to many other regions of the Pashtun tribal belt, such as the already discussed case of Kandahar, the tribal system in Paktia is still intact.

Due to this tribal structure and the underlying egalitarian understanding of society, political leadership is always hard to win.[30] This is why the last two decades have been characterized by a continuous struggle between the tribes on the one hand and single warlords, who have challenged the tribal system, on the other hand. Very often, strong men – first the *mujahidin*, then the warlords – have endeavored to gain a powerful status within their tribes. But, as soon as they behaved contrary to the codes of the *pashtunwali,* conflicts arose between them and the tribes. This was especially the case after the collapse of the Taliban in the Winter of 2001/2, when Bacha Khan of the Zadran tribe seized power in Paktia even without the support of his own tribe. The Northern Alliance and the Coalition Forces initially backed Bacha Khan in his operations against the Taliban. He was able to mobilize warriors from his Zadran tribe as well as small warlords such as Raz Mohammad and Wazir Khan. As a result of the arbitrary way in which he gained power over the province, by disregarding the rules of the *pashtunwali*, most of the tribes regarded him as an illegitimate 'bandit' or *jang salar.* Within a few days, the tribes reacted to Bacha Khan's seizure of power and managed to build up a counter force across tribal boundaries. After several days of heavy clashes in Gardez, which left more than one hundred people dead, the tribes were able to oust Bacha Khan. The Coalition Forces then took the side of the newly appointed governor of Paktia against Bacha Khan. Following this event, the tribes re-established their power across the entire province.

Since that incident, policing in the tribal areas of Paktia has been carried out by the *arbakee*, a sort of traditional tribal police. According to the tribal system,

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P. 265-282.

[29] Janata, Alfred and Reihanodin Hassas (1975): 'Ghairatman – Der gute Paschtune – Exkurs über die Grundlagen des Paschtunwali', in: *Afghanistan Journal* 2: 3, p. 83-97.

[30] Anderson, Jon W. (1983): 'Khan and Khel: Dialectics of Pakhtun tribalism', in: Richard Tapper (Ed.): *The Conflict of tribe and state in Iran and Afghanistan.* New York: St. Martin's Press, p. 119-149. See also: Steul, Willi (1981). Ibid.

the establishment of an *arbakee* becomes necessary if the decision of a *jirga* is not accepted by one of the persons affected by a dispute despite a ruling having already been passed. Hence, the *arbakee* implement the decisions of a *jirga* and are legitimized and controlled by tribal elders. However, the *arbakee* remain a spontaneous force, which is only in power as long as the tribal *jirga* is in need of it. Since first being established in 2001, the tribes installed *arbakee* in all districts of Paktia and today they far outnumber the regular police. The *arbakee* have taken over many classical police tasks as well as the protection of tribal resources such as forests and pastures. This scope of operations rests very comfortably with the notion of community policing. The *arbakee* are controlled by a *wazir* (commander) who takes part in the tribal gatherings and receives his orders from the tribal elders. Interestingly enough, since 2002, the *arbakee* have increasingly become an interface between the state and the tribes. Several security tasks such as the protection of forests and road security were officially handed over from the provincial government to the *arbakee*. Moreover, since 2002 the state has been permanently financing 40 to 60 members of an *arbakee* in each district and even increased this number drastically during the elections. Despite being paid by the state, the *arbakee* remain loyal to the tribes and are exclusively controlled by the tribal *jirga*. Consequently, the *arbakee* experience a much broader acceptance by the local population than the regular police, who are often regarded as corrupt and ineffective.

However, the tasks of the *arbakee* are highly dependent upon the tribal norms and values, which in many cases are diametrically opposed to Western norms and values, but in full accordance with the *pashtunwali*. For example, the strictly obeyed exclusion of women from the public sphere in Paktia, contradicts with the idea of gender equal communal participation. Also, the continuing legitimacy of blood feuds undermines attempts to introduce modern conflict solving mechanisms. Finally, one has to underline that *arbakee* do not constitute neutral forces, but are time and again involved in tribal rivalries. One example is the long lasting tribal feud between the Ahmadzai tribe and the neighboring Totakhel tribe, which was aggravated by the establishing of the *arbakee*. Furthermore socio-economic differences challenge the egalitarian principle within each tribe, especially amongst tribesmen who benefit from remittances from family members working in the Middle East or Pakistan and who are gaining a stronger influence in decision-making. These dynamics are increasingly challenging the egalitarian character of the tribal system. Furthermore, in Paktia, ex-commanders of the *jihad* have also succeeded in obtaining positions within the governmental system and use this to enforce their will, especially in land conflicts, which occur regularly, when their official positions are used to pursue their own interests. A recent example of this was a land conflict in Shana Zawar in which Matin, a current

officer in the Afghan National Army, played a significant role. Moreover, Matin was supported by the governor of a neighboring province with whom he shares kinship ties.

However, the *pashtunwali* has, up to now, remained strong enough in Paktia for tribal leaders to have to follow the egalitarian ideal in both their rhetoric and behavior. In other words, the tribal system in Paktia, either obstructs or at least constrains the emergence of warlordism.

TALIBAN AS CONTEXT AND PRETEXT

As we have shown, the situation in Southern Afghanistan since 2001, particularly in Kandahar, has been dominated by the conflict between the insurgents and the Taliban on the one side and the international forces and the Afghan government on the other. Thus, in Kandahar for many years the local structures of violence have been strongly influenced by the insurgents. Since 2006 a rise in the number of insurgents can be observed across the country. This fresh wave of insurgency has also affected the aforementioned provinces of Kunduz and Paktia. In both provinces the insurgency can hardly be separated from the local scene. However, the position of the insurgents within the political arena of both provinces varies a lot.

In Paktia most of the tribes aim to stand apart from the conflict between the insurgents and the government and international troops. The tribes had successfully followed more or less the same strategy during the Soviet occupation, whereby they allowed the Taliban and the government (as well as the international actors) to cross their tribal territories as long as no one challenged the tribal order. Today, while most of the tribal leaders endeavor to sit on the fence in the conflict, they also maintain their networks with influential actors in the Afghan government, ISAF and the insurgency groups. However, recently, the Taliban have increasingly begun to attack those tribal elders who are collaborating with the government and ISAF. On the other side, in the southern district of Zurmat, where the tribal system, with its myriads of tribes and clans, is rather fragmented and tribal codes are weakened, the insurgents have gained more support than in other parts of the province, where tribal structures are more stable. [31] However, a pronounced rift between pro-government and pro-Taliban tribes and sub-tribes cannot be observed as yet. If this does eventually happen, it would generally be defined more by the long-standing tribal rivalries than by political ideologies.

The situation in Kunduz is different. Here most of the conflicts in the last years have revolved around land disputes between returnees, who during the war

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[31] Trives, Sébastien (2006): "Afghanistan : réduire l'insurrection : le cas du sud-est" in: *Politique étrangère*, p. 105-118, Bd. 71, Nr. 1.

went to exile in Pakistan, and those who remained in Kunduz. These conflicts are complicated by the fact that, depending on political groupings, land owner-ship often changed hands from one owner to another during wartime. Addition-ally, conflict over land tenure often coincides with the ethnic composition of the province. Most of the returnees are Pashtuns, who are now claiming their lands back and feel sidelined by the administrative structures, which are dominated by the non-Pashtun warlords who were able to establish and enlarge their power bases during the war. These land conflicts are, at least in the perception of large parts of the population as well as the international observers, strongly interwoven with the recent emergence of the Taliban. Indeed there is a popular rumor circulating at the moment that accuses the Pashtun communities of harboring and support-ing the Taliban fighters. This rumor is based on the fact that most ambushes and roadside explosion occur along the roads to Pashtun settlements in the districts of Chardara, Aliabad and Khanabad. Based upon this argument, the deterioration of the overall security situation and the recent growth of the Taliban is being used by many warlords as a pretext to legitimize the re-arming of their militias. Even the fact that the Afghan government is deploying Auxiliary Militia Forces among the Pashtun tribes in Southern Afghanistan to counter the insurgency is widely in-terpreted by non-Pashtuns in Northern Afghanistan as a rearming of the Pashtun tribes in general. This policy is regarded by non-Pashtuns as part of the overall agenda of the Afghan government to re-establish Pashtun domination across the country. Against this background it is easy to understand the resistance against the appointment of Juma Khan Hamdard as governor which we discussed in the beginning of this chapter. So, in Kunduz today the ethnic rivalry, dating back to the Pashtun colonization in the first half of the 20th century, is seen not only as the dominant cause of the increase in violence, but also as an argument for strength-ening warlordism.

SECURITY ARCHITECTURE

After the fall of the Taliban people "hated the commanders, but now they love them again", one informant told us in Kunduz. This statement reflects concerns about the return of the Taliban among many Afghans especially in the North as well as the inability of the international actors to establish a new political order. Moreover, it shows that many Afghans, due to the absence of reliable state gover-nance regard the phenomenon of 'warlordism' as a system of political life, which is at least better than an unpredictable future.

However a certain socio-political order can only be sustained as long as it is regarded as legitimate or unchangeable. This is why power-holders need legiti-macy to endue their power with authority. Socio-political order under such con-

ditions follows its own rules and in many cases overlaps with modern concepts of statehood. Instead, local power-holders resist state penetration but aim to instrumentalize state resources for their own interest. At the same time, local elites are able to provide their constituents with a certain amount of security and some welfare functions thereby they enhance their legitimacy. Moreover, our research showed that these elites are strongly embedded into local societies. This 'embedding' limits their scope of action and, at the same time, produces expectations within their constituencies.

This chapter set out to illustrate the diversity of security architectures in different Afghan provinces. As the case of Kunduz demonstrated, one can even find a variety of security architectures within a single province, often diverging from valley to valley and from village to village. The fundamental finding of this chapter is that a contextualization of the situation is key to understanding security architectures. On the basis of the aforementioned examples, the basic observable dimensions affecting the local security structure are the social organization and the economic resources as well as the presence of the state and international organizations.

Social structures play an eminently important role and, moreover, invariably have to be examined in a specifically local context: The different social structures in Paktia and Kandahar make clear that their characterization as simply 'tribal Pashtuns' is too superficial and does not say anything meaningful about the tribal impact on the security architecture. Also, the history of a region has to be taken into consideration: Due to the colonization process of the 20th century the population of Kunduz is shaped by a high heterogeneity on the one side, and by a rift between the Pashtun latecomers and the autochthonous inhabitants on the other. On this basis, a common ground of values and rules could hardly be expected to be achieved, which is what has contributed to the fragmentation of warlordism in Kunduz. In this regard Paktia provides the opposite example, with a tradition of tribal culture that is accepted by the people at large, it is these strong tribal institutions that have averted warlordism.

Similarly, local economies have an impact on the security architecture. In regions such as Kandahar, which rely heavily on drug cultivation and drug trade, one can witness the establishment of strong warlord structures. Apparently, the financial resources connected with the drug economy contribute to the strengthening of the hierarchical structures. This argument is supported by the example of Kunduz, where a strong clan succeeded in establishing itself in the district of Imam Sahib, which is strategically important for the drug trade, while the district of Khanabad, which has not benefited from the cultivation of drugs, faces a fragmentation of the control of power and violence.

The presence of the state also has a significant impact on the security archi-

tecture. In general, most states try to control the security sector and to establish a monopoly of violence. One could imagine that in places where the concept of the state is more accepted, the dominance of the warlords would be easier to break. But, contrary to this, as the examples of Kandahar und Kunduz reveal, warlordism is very strong in exactly those regions where the state, at least in the notion of elites, is regarded as important. Thus warlords often enough perceive the state as a desirable influence that they can control and have access to. Thus it seems that Charles Tilly's [32] argument – that warlordism is a concomitant phenomenon of the state building process rather than being diametrically opposed to it – also proves true in the case of Afghanistan. In contrast, the egalitarian tribal structures in Paktia, where the state is hardly recognized as such, prevent the consolidation of warlordism.

The role of the international community is difficult to judge. Without doubt the presence of international actors has led to the disappearance of weapons in public – warlords and militias are now forced to keep a low profile. This trend is particularly visible in those Afghan provinces that are being heavily funded by the international community for reconstruction programs (e.g. Kabul, Herat). For many warlords, a share in the international reconstruction resources constitutes a vital economic incentive. Yet, the international presence does not always have a taming influence on the violence structures. Ultimately, it was the establishing and equipping of Afghan warlords and their militias by the US-army in its 'War on Terrorism' that caused the temporary emergence of warlordism with Bacha Khan in Paktia and continues to determine the security structures in Kandahar to this day.

This chapter set out to make a contribution to an understanding of the complex and locally very heterogeneous security structures in Afghanistan. Even though a broad definition of the term 'warlord' can be applied to many actors of physical violence in Afghanistan, it fails to take into account the vast variety of local security architectures. While the presence of the state and of international actors also has a direct influence on the security architecture, the local social and economic conditions primarily shape the mechanisms for producing security. Moreover, the concentration of power on the local level is so strong, that even the core institutions of the state are under siege to local interests.

Finally, it has to be stated that the occasional sensational use of the term 'warlord' in the international media has more recently been replaced by headlines using the term 'Taliban' in order to try to make sense of the highly dynamic political structures in Afghanistan. Many analysts, who aim to provide smooth models

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[32]   Tilly, Charles (1985): 'War-Making and State-Making as Organized Crime', in: Peter Evans et al. (Ed.): *Bringing the State Back in.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. P. 169-191.

by which to understand the political situation in Afghanistan, are re-defining the highly differentiated political landscape in Afghanistan along a bipolar axis: The recent trend is to construct the isomorphism of the categories Taliban, Pashtuns, Insurgents and Drug dealers to make clear who the enemy really is. As a result, the debate on 'warlords versus state' becomes more and more a sideshow, which is subordinated to the conflict between the Taliban and the state. However such a discourse on defining the lines of conflict in Afghanistan expresses much more the concerns of the interventionists than it reflects the highly differentiated local realities. Thus the local contextualization of the Taliban phenomenon proceeds in Paktia in a different way from that in Kunduz.

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