AHR Roundtable
Partisan Intervention and the Transformation of Afghanistan's Civil War

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THE UNITED STATES' 2001 OCCUPATION OF AFGHANISTAN, although it was prompted by al-Qaeda's 9/11 attacks on U.S. soil, is an example of direct partisan intervention by outside powers to end a civil war. Unlike peacekeeping operations, which have received much scholarly attention, partisan interveners aim to decisively reverse likely victories by organizations that they deem threatening and to establish, protect, or reestablish allied regimes. Instances of partisan interventions include the 2013 French involvement in Mali to preempt the collapse of the government at the hands of Touareg Islamists, and the U.S.-assisted Ethiopian (2006) and Kenyan (2011) invasions of Somalia to twice roll back nearly victorious Islamist organizations. In Afghanistan, the U.S. military cooperated closely with members of the Afghan Northern Alliance (Shura-e Nazar) to reverse Taliban gains. The Taliban controlled more than nine-tenths of the country by September 2001 and were preparing to defeat the rump Alliance after their al-Qaeda allies assassinated its legendary leader, Ahmad Shah Massoud. Soon after the Taliban retreated under the joint onslaught, the George W. Bush administration brought to power their erstwhile opponents, including leaders of the Northern Alliance and later Afghan president Hamid Karzai.

To decisively end the conflict in favor of its allies, the U.S. formed an alliance wider and more diverse than any before it. The Coalition, as it is commonly known, appeared to have all the underpinnings of success.[1] Its budget was up to a thousand times larger than that of the Mujahideen, as its opponents called themselves, and its members benefited from technologies and military training that were generations

[1] "The Coalition" is the generally accepted term to refer to the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), U.S. troops not under ISAF command, non-military Western personnel, and Western contractors. I use it to refer to these organizations and their political leaders.

ahead of those available to their ragtag opponents.[2] And yet, the U.S.-led Coalition produced generally dysfunctional Afghan state institutions, and as of early 2015, it had withdrawn more than nine-tenths of its military presence without having considerably weakened the militant organizations, including the Taliban, challenging it and the Afghan state institutions it established. The civil war continues even though the Coalition committed at peak presence some 140,000 troops, roughly as many contractors, and tens of thousands of employees of civilian agencies; spent some $700–800 billion on operations; and suffered casualties that included some 3,500 military deaths (as well as the deaths of more than 1,500 non-Afghan contractors) and 25,000 wounded. Pessimism was such that many Coalition members withdrew their troops before the end of their commitments, and the Obama administration tried to conciliate the resilient Taliban.[3] The regime of Hamid Karzai found it prudent to distance itself from the Coalition, even though its corrupt institutions were kept together by the influx of Western money and its army suffered from an attrition rate of 20–30 percent a year during his presidency.[4] Minority militias with their origins in the Northern Alliance have rearmed in preparation for the return of the Taliban. Instead of decisively ending the Afghan civil war by defeating the side it disliked, the Coalition extended the conflict and partly transformed it by establishing a new but fragile institutional actor, the Afghan state. The civil war is likely to continue in earnest after most or all of the foreign Coalition troops withdraw, with many of the participants tracing their lineage to the pre-2001 belligerents.

[2] I use the term "Mujahideen" to describe the fighters resisting the U.S. and NATO–led military forces and the Afghan state they attempted to establish. These Mujahideen include the Taliban, Hizb-i Islami, and other non-affiliated fighters. The term may be confusing to some observers of Afghan conflicts because it was used to designate anti-Soviet fighters and survivors from this cohort, some of whom supported the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan and continue to use the designation as an honorific. The Taliban and other members of the post-2001 resistance, however, refer to themselves with the same theological term, and the meaning of "Mujahideen" is therefore changing with time in Afghanistan. Yearly expenditures in Afghanistan by the U.S. alone were 500–1,000 times greater than the Taliban's budget. The direct costs to the U.S. in Afghanistan exceeded $500 billion by the end of 2012 and were an estimated $100 billion a year after the 2010 surge. U.S. allies probably spent another $150 billion combined (data from the Congressional Research Service). The Taliban's yearly budget was probably below $150 million in 2005–2008 and within the $150–400 million range in 2009–2012, with other Mujahideen adding another 20–50 percent to the insurgents' total expenditures. A UN Security Council committee in charge of imposing sanctions on the Taliban estimated in September 2012 that they had a budget of $400 million, including less than $100 million from the drug trade. Antonio Giustozzi estimates the budget of the Taliban at $120–140 million for 2009. The Coalition's budget was therefore 250 to 1,000 times larger than the Mujahideen's. Giustozzi, "Negotiating with the Taliban: Issues and Prospects," Century Foundation Report, June 20, 2010, 13, http://www.tcf.org/assets/downloads/tcf-Giustozzi.pdf.

[3] For example, the Dutch ended their deployment in 2010, and the Canadians ceased military operations in 2011. France, which had 4,000 troops in Afghanistan in 2010, withdrew all fighting forces in November 2012, and Australia reduced its troops from 1,550 to 200 by the end of 2013, ahead of the 2014 commitment they made to the Obama administration.

[4] For a quantification of the staggering scale of government corruption in Afghanistan, see United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), "Corruption in Afghanistan: Bribery as Reported by the Victims," January 2010, https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/Afghanistan/Afghanistan-corruption-survey2010-Eng.pdf. The survey finds that 52 percent of Afghans had to pay at least one bribe to police and local officials over the previous year. The average bribe was $160 in a country where the average income was less than $425 a year. Afghans paid out $2.5 billion, or 23 percent of Afghanistan's GDP, in bribes over the year preceding the survey. The largest bribes went to judges, and many went to police officials (9, 4–5). In 2014, Afghanistan ranked as the fourth most corrupt country in the world in Transparency International's Annual Corruption Perceptions Index; http://www.transparency.org/cpi2014/results.

THE U.S.-LED COALITION'S INTERVENTION IN the Afghan civil war raises fundamental questions about the nature of civil wars in an age of increased globalization and complicates the meaning of outside intervention. What does it mean to call a conflict a civil war when transnational militants and the great powers they challenge intervene regularly in local conflicts, and when conflicts between organizations such as al-Qaeda and the Islamic State and their franchises, spinoffs, and allies, on the one hand, and the United States and its allies and clients, on the other hand, look increasingly like a global insurgency that ignores borders? All sides recruit and kill people who share their identities across borders—al-Qaeda and its affiliates have killed other Muslims (80 percent of their victims by some counts), and the U.S. has assassinated and incarcerated American citizens it considers, correctly or not, to be supporters of its nemeses. The United States justifies military operations in dozens of Asian and African countries on the basis of protecting American security, while al-Qaeda justifies terrorist attacks on U.S. soil, some perpetrated by U.S. residents, as retaliation for U.S. abuses in Muslim countries. The intervention of Westerners and Islamist operatives in the civil wars of Muslim countries has become the norm.

The conflicts in countries such as Mali, Somalia, Syria, Iraq, Yemen, and Afghanistan continue to be civil wars when al-Qaeda or the United States intervenes, particularly if the domestic conflict resumes, even if in a slightly different form, after the outsiders leave. As of 2014, for example, civil war has resumed in Iraq, with both al-Qaeda and the U.S. playing peripheral roles, with the government relying on Iranian help even more than on Western support, and with the Islamic State losing its connection to al-Qaeda. Former Saddam Hussein loyalists have reorganized under the flag of a Sufi militant organization, Shiite militias that once took shelter in Iran now act alongside the partisan state but not under its control, and the same Kurdish Peshmerga organizations that long resisted the Iraqi state continue to fight for autonomy. Iraq's civil strife never stopped during the partisan American intervention of 2003–2009—it was merely transformed, intensified, and extended. Perhaps our understanding of civil war as involving parties within official borders has become obsolete and should be expanded to include episodes of outside intervention.[5]

Recent conflicts also complicate our understanding of what it means to intervene to end a civil war. When academics started to theorize the outcomes of civil wars in the 1990s, they focused on processes that evoked neutrality and the desire to reduce human suffering such as negotiated settlements and peacekeeping operations, perhaps because of their own sensitivities.[6] Even peacekeeping operations, however, often reflect the geostrategic interests of the states that intervene and the organizations that become involved. In addition to the desire to stop the genocide, the 1995 U.S. intervention in Bosnia, for example, was motivated by the desire to preserve the credibility of U.S. foreign policy, eject the Iranians and Sunni Islamists supporting the Bosnian Muslims, and preserve stability in Europe.[7] And while partisan interventions

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[5] Another reason to do so is that wars of liberation and irredentist movements are often considered to be civil wars by the colonial or occupying powers, but not by insurgents. It is often after the conflict concludes that we consider them to be one or the other. See, for example, James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War," *American Political Science Review* 97, no. 1 (2003): 75–90.

[6] See, for example, Roy Licklider, *Stopping the Killing: How Civil Wars End* (New York, 1995).

[7] Steven L. Burg and Paul S. Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina: Ethnic Conflict and International Intervention* (Armonk, N.Y., 2000).

in civil wars are certainly driven more by geopolitical interests than by humanitarian concerns, they may still be impelled by or be marketed in part on the basis of humanitarian motivations—the Clinton, Bush, and Obama administrations all justified their enmity toward the Taliban in part on the basis of the organization's restrictions on women. It may therefore be useful to think of all interventions in civil wars as being motivated by varying combinations of geopolitical and humanitarian interests.

THE COALITION'S PARTISAN INTERVENTION IN THE Afghan civil war also shows that the tools of intervention can be the same as those of counterinsurgency, and it provides an opportunity to unravel the processes through which intervention could transform and extend a civil war instead of terminating it.[8] The more partisan the intervention, the more likely that the relatively weaker group or organization it targets will reorganize as an insurgent group. In Afghanistan, the overthrown Taliban rulers took three years to reorganize as insurgents, and were joined by others, including Hizb-i Islami, independent Afghan groups, and some non-Afghan Mujahideen, in the fight against the regime and the Coalition.[9] The post-2005 Taliban reorganized and operated in a way that allowed them to outlast the foreign Coalition forces that backed their Afghan opponents.[10] They developed a redundant and decentralized organization with regionally specialized and broadly autonomous local commanders supervised by a layer of shadow military and civilian administrators appointed by the Quetta Shura.[11]

[8] I developed my analytical narrative here by analyzing interviews and other types of off-the-record communication with dozens of participants in Coalition operations from the past decade, by examining blogs and unpublished notes by some participants, and by consulting scholarly publications, publicly available institutional reports, leaked official documents, and journalistic accounts.

[9] Hizb-i Islami, the fighting organization of the resilient Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, was at least nominally allied with the Taliban, but their troops fought each other in some areas, and Hekmatyar, many of whose erstwhile lieutenants became associated with the Karzai regime, has been much more willing to negotiate with the government than the Taliban. The post-2001 Hizb was a shadow of its former self, with some 2,500 fighters. For more on the organization of insurgents, see Thomas Ruttig, "The Other Side: Dimensions of the Afghan Insurgency—Causes, Actors and Approaches to 'Talks,'" Afghanistan Analysts Network, July 14, 2009, https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/publication/aan-papers/the-other-side-dimensions-of-the-afghan-insurgency-causes-actors-and-approaches-to-talks/; Antonio Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov, and Laptop: The Neo-Taliban Insurgency in Afghanistan* (New York, 2008). Al-Qaeda's involvement consisted mostly of providing support for Taliban media operations, particularly the production of the Arabic-language magazine *Sumood*; raising funds in the Gulf and channeling them to Afghanistan through untraceable *hawala* transactions; and transferring basic technologies of insurgency such as the manufacture of effective roadside explosives. For more on the relationship between the Taliban and al-Qaeda, see Alex Strick van Linschoten and Felix Kuehn, *An Enemy We Created: The Myth of the Taliban–Al Qaeda Merger in Afghanistan* (New York, 2012); Seth G. Jones, *In the Graveyard of Empires: America's War in Afghanistan* (New York, 2009), 290–295.

[10] Taliban leaders made no secret of their strategy to outlast the Coalition—one of their favorite sayings was "The Americans have the watches, but we have the time."

[11] For the Taliban's official description of its own structure, see Thomas H. Johnson and Matthew C. DuPee, "Analysing the New Taliban Code of Conduct (*Layeha*): An Assessment of Changing Perspectives and Strategies of the Afghan Taliban," *Central Asian Survey* 31, no. 1 (2012): 77–91. For studies or participants' analyses of the Taliban's structure that are particularly inconsistent, see David Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One* (New York, 2009), chap. 2; Shahid Afsar, Chris Samples, and Thomas Wood, "The Taliban: An Organizational Analysis," *Military Review*, May–June 2008, 58–73; Antonio Giustozzi, *Decoding the New Taliban: Insights from the Afghan Field* (New York, 2009); Anne Stenersen, "The Taliban Insurgency in Afghanistan—Organization, Leadership and Worldview," Norwegian Defence Research Establishment (FFI) Report 2010/00359, February 5, 2010, https://www.ffi.no/no/Rapporter/10-00359.pdf; Jones, *In the Graveyard of Empires*. General Stanley McChrystal describes the organization both as a network and as a decentralized structure, two very

The Quetta Shura, led by Mullah Mohammad Omar and close acolytes who issued orders in his name after he died in 2013, provided strategic guidance, troubleshooting, and some resources (including additional fighters, money, weapons, and skills). It also orchestrated special operations, engaged in propaganda, conducted fundraising, encouraged discipline by setting operational standards, and organized the provision of one public good that was in high demand: an honest court system.[12] Relatively autonomous Taliban commanders engaged in local taxation, managed local alliances, recruited locally, planned operations based on local circumstances, cooperated directly with other Taliban commanders, and even liaised and cooperated with units from other Afghan or foreign organizations, such as al-Qaeda, Hizb-i Islami, and Lashkar Tayba.[13] This autonomy and local specialization allowed field commanders to use sophisticated local strategies, including the manipulation of social segments, to their advantage and to capitalize on Coalition mistakes. The Taliban's decentralization also increased the sources of funding available to them.[14] A substantial portion of the money raised locally was used for local insurgent operations, which shielded self-sufficient units from the damage inflicted on other Taliban units or from the interruption of supply lines.[15] The Taliban limited breakdowns in discipline by issuing a *layeha* (code of conduct) to protect the organization's image, reduce "un-Islamic" behavior, and promote the equitable treatment of civilians, and by punishing abusive commanders.[16]

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different patterns: McChrystal, "It Takes a Network: The New Front Line of Modern Warfare," *Foreign Policy* 90, no. 2 (March/April 2011), http://foreignpolicy.com/2011/02/21/it-takes-a-network/; McChrystal, *My Share of the Task: A Memoir* (New York, 2013). On the organization of the Taliban in Qandahar, see Anand Gopal, "The Battle for Afghanistan: Militancy and Conflict in Kandahar," Counterterrorism Strategy Initiative Policy Paper, November 2010, https://www.newamerica.org/international-security/the-battle-for-afghanistan/. For more on the reconstitution of the Taliban as a guerrilla movement, see Robert Johnson, *The Afghan Way of War: How and Why They Fight* (New York, 2011), chap. 7; Tim Bird and Alex Marshall, *Afghanistan: How the West Lost Its Way* (New Haven, Conn., 2011), chap. 4. The Taliban also had several military shuras to facilitate regional cooperation: the Quetta Regional Military Shura directed activities in southern and western Afghanistan; the Peshawar Regional Military Shura managed activities in eastern and northeastern Afghanistan; the Haqqani-led Miramshah Regional Military Shura operated in Paktika, Paktia, Khost, Logar, and Wardak; and the Gerdi Jangal Regional Military Shura focused exclusively on Helmand Province.

[12] On the Taliban court system, see Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla*, 47.

[13] For more on the Taliban's flexibility, innovation, and increasing strategic sophistication, see Gilles Dorronsoro, "The Taliban's Winning Strategy in Afghanistan," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, June 29, 2009, http://carnegieendowment.org/files/taliban_winning_strategy.pdf; Thomas H. Johnson, "Taliban Adaptations and Innovations," *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 24, no. 1 (2013): 3–27.

[14] The Mujahideen's main sources of income were, in likely descending order of amount, income from all levels of the narcotics trade; kickbacks and protection money from Coalition members, contractors, and NGOs; donations from the Arabian Peninsula and from Afghan and Pakistani businessmen; local taxation; and, some support from the Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence. The Hizb-i Islami did not seem to rely on the narcotics trade as much as the Taliban did (its areas of influence were not generally opium-growing ones), and independent Mujahideen relied on different mixes of sources. Douglas A. Wissing, *Funding the Enemy: How US Taxpayers Bankroll the Taliban* (Amherst, N.Y., 2012); Steven A. Zyck, "How to Lose Allies and Finance Your Enemies: The Economisation of Conflict Termination in Afghanistan," *Conflict, Security & Development* 12, no. 3 (2012): 249–271. On the difficulty of assessing Taliban revenues from different sources, see Catherine Collins and Ashraf Ali, "Financing the Taliban: Tracing the Dollars behind the Insurgencies in Afghanistan and Pakistan," New American Foundation, Counterterrorism Strategy Initiative Policy Paper, April 2010.

[15] The Taliban raised locally some $125 million in 2011, according to the UN Security Council sanctions monitoring team. Reports are accessible at http://www.un.org/sc/committees/1267/monitoringteam.shtml.

[16] The burden was higher on Coalition troops to maintain discipline because it was much easier for the Taliban to instrumentalize harmful activities by foreigners for propaganda purposes among fellow

Some Taliban commanders were particularly successful and had sub-commanders of their own. The most renowned group (often referred to fallaciously as the Haqqani "network" by observers) was led by the veteran mujahid Jalaluddin Haqqani, who successfully fought the Soviets in the 1980s, and his family. While observers disagree on how autonomous the group was from the Taliban, the Haqqanis were very explicit about their loyalty to Mullah Omar, to whom they referred with his chosen title of Amir al-Mu'mineen (Prince of the Believers).

The Taliban also benefited from their complex and multi-layered ties to Pakistan. Pakistani agencies, including the Inter-Service Intelligence (ISI), actively supported the Taliban's rise in the 1990s and maintained strong ties with them after 2001, even as Pakistan battled the eponymous but organizationally distinct Tehrik-i Taliban Pakistan (the Pakistani Taliban).[17] The Afghan Taliban developed deep and direct relationships with Pakistani religious parties, militant organizations, businessmen, gangsters, and mullahs and their madrassas. These relationships made them less susceptible to pressure and manipulation by ISI than they otherwise would have been, prompting the Pakistani intellectual Ahmed Rashid and others to speak of the "Talibanization" of Pakistan instead of the projection of Pakistani power in Afghanistan.[18] These complex relationships and the weak Pakistani government's limited control over a military fearful of Indian influence in Afghanistan have shielded the Taliban from American pressure on policymakers in Islamabad. They also enable the Taliban to have secure safe havens in Pakistan in which to reorganize, strategize, mobilize, and recruit, with the help of the Pakistani military. The Taliban's operational prowess, particularly after 2007, combined with their cultural advantages and Pakistani support to make them a formidable insurgent organization.

AFTER THE TARGETED GOVERNMENT OR ORGANIZATION reorganizes as an insurgent group and adopts the tactics of asymmetric warfare, the interveners fall back on the tools of counterinsurgency—those necessary to build state institutions and defeat insurgents. As they do so, they have to convince members of politicized groups they undermined through their intervention to accept the legitimacy of their efforts and that of a government dominated by their opponents. They have to wean the state institutions they have hurriedly developed from waste, corruption, and a culture of dependency, and prepare them to fight insurgents who, by necessity, have become brutally efficient. They have to reconcile inherent contradictions in their mission,

Pushtun than the other way around. The first version of the *Layeha* was distributed in late 2006, and Mullah Omar provided updated versions of it during his annual addresses on the Islamic Eid holiday. For more on Taliban discipline challenges, see Johnson and DuPee, "Analysing the New Taliban Code of Conduct"; Ruttig, "The Other Side"; Giustozzi, "Negotiating with the Taliban."

[17] The Pakistani Taliban is a complex organization whose member groups have different attitudes toward the Afghan Taliban and the Pakistani state. The most compelling evidence that the Afghan Taliban's interests lie in maintaining strong ties with the Pakistani state is the organization's disproval of the Pakistani Taliban's attacks on civilian targets. See, e.g., "Afghan Taliban Condemns School Attack by Pakistani Taliban," *Reuters*, December 16, 2014, http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/12/16/us-pakistan-school-afghan-idUSKBN0JU2BQ20141216.

[18] See, for example, Ahmed Rashid, "Pakistan on the Brink," *New York Review of Books*, June 11, 2009, http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2009/jun/11/pakistan-on-the-brink/.

such as advocating for the rule of law while keeping their own forces above the law of the land, even as they commit the kinds of atrocities that inevitably accompany counterinsurgency operations. They also attempt to increase support for the regime they have established by encouraging the development of a sense of common national destiny under its banner after exacerbating divisions with their partisan intervention and while fighting insurgents who frame their resistance, much more convincingly, in nationalist terms. Such inherent contradictions make partisan interventions dauntingly challenging.

Some countries pose additional inherent cultural challenges to partisan interventions. In Afghanistan, the conservative rural Pushtuns' historical memory of resisting the heavy-handed nineteenth-century British and 1980s Soviet occupations made it difficult to convince them that the Coalition's occupation was meant to benefit Afghans. Those among the Pushtuns who joined Coalition-sponsored militias or government institutions did so with the understanding that they were joining a patronage network with low exit costs, the way they or others had done during the Soviet occupation or under various Afghan states; they did not intend to become permanently associated with them the way the Coalition may have wished.[19] And many Pushtuns who joined the Afghan National Army (ANA) did so thinking they could leave at will to help their families during harvest season (as many in fact did), and did not expect to be subjected to a strict disciplinary regimen that they found to be particularly humiliating because it was imposed by foreigners. Just as in Iraq, American forces' poor understanding of the concepts of honor, privacy, extended kinship, and revenge caused entire clans they targeted, often based on flawed intelligence, to join the Mujahideen, and every mistake they made (including posting British troops in the south without considering the connotations of historical revenge for that decision) bolstered a Mujahideen narrative that linked the Coalition to historical attacks on Afghanistan and Muslims well beyond it.[20]

Many of the inherent challenges of the partisan intervention in Afghanistan were compounded by how it was conducted. In a frank speech at the Munich Conference on Security Policy on February 10, 2008, U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates addressed NATO leaders about how the shortcomings of their efforts in Afghanistan endangered the future and credibility of the Alliance.[21] He identified restrictions on contributors' contingents, the separation of military and civilian operations, the lack of a coordinating civilian body, organizational complexity ("bureaucratic hurdles"), and differing tactics, cultures, goals, and training as the reasons why "our [NATO] effort is adding up to less than the sum of its parts." These organizational problems, and others that Secretary Gates did not recognize in this speech, were exacerbated in

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[19] On the Soviet experience, see, e.g., Barnett R. Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan: State Formation and Collapse in the International System* (New Haven, Conn., 2002); William Maley, *The Afghanistan Wars*, 2nd ed. (New York, 2009).

[20] It is often difficult to discern whether observable behavior is culturally or rationally (in the game-theoretical or economic sense) driven because what is cultural or traditional is often also rational in traditional societies in conflict. The advantages of a rational explanation over a cultural one when the two are reinforcing are that a rational explanation provides a more consistent narrative and that it does not reduce strategic and diverse individuals to reflections of a reified culture. Yet there is no denying that culture and belief systems matter. I therefore crafted this narrative based on rational strategic and organizational analysis but note the importance of cultural elements when they matter.

[21] http://www.defense.gov/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1214.

the seven years that followed. What he missed is that the decentralization and out-sourced warfare typical of American military operations create behavioral incentives that make them particularly ill-suited for intervention to end civil wars. The incentives and motivations of the Coalition's members frequently did not align with its own broad evolving mission because they were accountable to principals (such as shareholders, donors, changing governments, and bureaucratic and administrative superiors) that were outside the mission's scope. This discordance added to the inherent challenges of the Coalition's partisan intervention in Afghanistan by severely handicapping its ability to conduct effective state-building and counterinsurgency operations.[22]

SOME FORTY-TWO CONTRIBUTING GOVERNMENTS agreed to commit forces before 2005 for what they thought was a low-risk state-building operation that their publics would support, not a counterinsurgency.[23] They soon faced increasing militant opposition, however, and were forced to adopt postures that awkwardly balanced domestic considerations and existing commitments to the United States. Many were not willing to position troops in dangerous areas, which led to non-optimal geographic deployments and the uneven sharing of risk. Some militaries that suffered from a shortage of materiel (such as the UK contingent) posted troops in or near insurgent strongholds, while others, including the Germans, Italians, and Turks, were assigned to safe areas with restrictions on engaging in offensive activities even though they were well-equipped for combat. Still others took on training or non-combat missions for which they were not suited. The Japanese, for example, ran an unsuccessful disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration program, an area in which they had limited experience. For several years, these NATO and allied militaries were divided under two commands, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and the mostly American mission Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), and U.S. Special Forces remained separate even when the two began to operate under the NATO-led ISAF structure. Each country was also represented by a number of agencies, many of which worked independently of each other.

In addition, Coalition leaders welcomed non-governmental organizations

[22] The experiences of erstwhile superpowers that attempted to occupy Pushtun areas or Afghanistan support Secretary Gates's prognosis that incoherent organization reduces the already dim odds of defeating insurgents and building governing institutions. Andrew Roe tells us in his history of the tumultuous British occupation of Waziristan (1846–1947) that relative success in containing uprisings in the area required "the full integration of all political and military resources under a unified chain of command." Roe, *Waging War in Waziristan: The British Struggle in the Land of Bin Laden, 1849–1947* (Lawrence, Kans., 2010), 219. The Soviets failed to defeat the Mujahideen of the 1980s in large part because they did not centralize their occupation institutions, or those of the regime they supported, to be able to take advantage of their enormous resources. Abdulkader H. Sinno, *Organizations at War in Afghanistan and Beyond* (Ithaca, N.Y., 2008), chaps. 5–6. The Coalition's decentralization was far more extreme than the Soviets'.

[23] Reasons for participating in the occupation included sympathy toward the United States because of the 9/11 attacks; accepting the reasoning behind the Bush and Obama administrations' involvement; believing that this was the way to help Afghans; the desire of some countries to ingratiate themselves with the U.S. to increase their odds of joining NATO; wanting to placate the U.S. without contributing to the Iraq War, which was believed to be more dangerous than Afghanistan's before 2005; and succumbing to U.S. pressure or inducement. Jones, *In the Graveyard of Empires*, chap. 14.

(NGOs), some 1,500–2,000 of which registered with the Ministry of Economy, because they thought that reconstruction would help win support for the Karzai government. These NGOs prioritized donors' agendas and the safety of their own personnel, not the Coalition's mission. The U.S. and other Coalition governments also hired Western contractors, firms motivated by profit, to gain an increase in operational capabilities without committing additional personnel. These contractors, who made up 62 percent of the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) workforce in Afghanistan in 2009, performed services as diverse as providing logistical support and security, gathering intelligence, and preparing drones for CIA operations.[24] Additionally, the United Nations established the UN Assistance Mission for Afghanistan (UNAMA) to act as an umbrella organization for peacemaking and reconstruction efforts, and a large number of UN and EU agencies and international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) established a presence in the country.

The Coalition members impeded their own state-building mission by financing Afghan militias that increased insecurity, weakened state influence, and sometimes funded and cooperated with their opponents.[25] These militias were often officially registered with the Afghan state as security contractors by local strongmen or regional warlords who wanted a safe way to preserve and fund their forces. NGOs hired them to protect their personnel and showcase projects. Overstretched or fearful Coalition militaries and intelligence agencies used them as auxiliary forces, and Western contractors hired them to act as intermediaries with insurgents to help them deliver on their contracts. Even the U.S. military directly subsidized militarized local groups in return for operational help (such as safeguarding the outer perimeter of bases), including tribal kith and kin of the Mujahideen, who shared their revenues with insurgents to avoid feuds within and among clans.[26]

Coalition members' funding of militias reduced local leaders' need for building local support and alliances, and consequently increased their likelihood of relying on coercion and predatory behavior, thus increasing insecurity. Their greater wealth and

[24] Of the 104,101 contractors acknowledged by the U.S. Department of Defense in 2009, 9 percent were U.S. citizens, 75 percent were Afghans, and 16 percent were third-country nationals. DoD contractors' numbers decreased slightly to 90,339 during the Obama administration's surge, but the total number of contractors (many were also contracted by the State Department, CIA, USAID, etc.) is uncertain, and the DoD acknowledged that it is not sure of the accuracy of the numbers it reports to Congress. Moshe Schwartz and Joyprada Swain, "Department of Defense Contractors in Afghanistan and Iraq: Background and Analysis," Congressional Research Service, May 13, 2011, 10, http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/R40764.pdf.

[25] On Western contractors' financing of militias and the Mujahideen, see, e.g., Jean MacKenzie, "Are US Taxpayers Funding the Taliban?," *Global Post*, September 2, 2009, updated May 30, 2010, http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/afghanistan/090902/usaid-taliban-funding.

[26] Evidence is abundant on this point. See Syed Saleem Shahzad, "Taliban Profit from U.S. Largesse," *Asia Times*, May 5, 2005, http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/GE05Df03.html; Shahzad, "The Face of Afghanistan's Resistance," *Asia Times*, August 26, 2003, http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Central_Asia/EH26Ag01.html. Many officers I interviewed described how they suspected that some of the militiamen they paid, especially early in the conflict, would lob mortars at their bases to make themselves appear more needed; e.g., Col. Bruce Wood, Georgia National Guard, chief of information warfare for the U.S. contingent, Bagram Airbase, unpublished Afghanistan journal, February 13, 2003. Keeping bridges open and hedging bets are widespread and accepted practices during episodes of uncertainty in Afghan conflicts. Many local leaders did so during the Soviet occupation and shifted their allegiance from the regime of Mohammad Najibullah to anti-Soviet Mujahideen or among Mujahideen parties with limited repercussions. Many also abandoned traditional Mujahideen parties to join the Taliban in 1994–1996, easing the latter's rapid expansion in the south and east of Afghanistan.

power also enhanced their ability to limit state penetration into their regions and to co-opt state institutions by purchasing Afghan National Police (ANP) or other government positions to further increase their influence. They frequently maintained ties with the Mujahideen as a hedge and to be able to effectively deliver on their contractual agreements to protect Coalition clients, often paying the Mujahideen a cut of 20 percent or more of their revenues.[27] Some militia leaders also became part of the narcotics industry by collecting fees on transport or production in their areas, thus developing communities of interest with insurgents, drug traffickers, and corrupt government officials, and consequently weakened the process of state-building. While the Coalition's official aim was to create a strong Afghan state with a monopoly on the use of force, its members funded many small centers of power that resisted state penetration.[28]

The complexity of the Coalition also bungled institution-building. INGOs such as the World Bank and UNDP and some sixty donor countries provided 50–70 percent of their aid directly—not through Afghan state institutions—over the years.[29] Their donor agencies financed and managed, often through contractors, some 6,000 Afghans who worked in the civil service as "consultants"—a so-called "second civil service." These Afghan consultants were agents not of the state (or the population they were supposed to serve), but of donor agencies and contractors. They had little invested in the ministries to which they were assigned and adopted the institutional cultures of the donors who trained, placed, and paid them. Unsurprisingly, the presence of this cast of civil servants produced non-cohesive institutions with fault lines between employees and consultants and among consultants working for different donors, fragmented institutional cultures, and dysfunctional operations. State employees made up the very large difference between their and the consultants' pay by requesting bribes and stealing institutional resources. The lack of institutional cohesion created a sense of futility and encouraged all stakeholders, including Western contractors, to maximize profits instead of investing in the institutions they were building, which led to waste and fraud on an enormous scale.[30] It also encouraged

[27] A congressional inquiry found that some Afghan security contractors were *themselves* Mujahideen commanders. U.S. Senate Committee on Armed Services, "Inquiry into the Role and Oversight of Private Security Contractors in Afghanistan," 111th Cong., 2nd sess., September 28, 2010, https://www.congress.gov/111/crpt/srpt345/CRPT-111srpt345.pdf. For an example of a militia leader who was formally part of the ANP attempting to charge Coalition forces a passage fee, see the leaked document "Other RPT TF Pegasus: 0 INJ/DAM," November 22, 2009, http://wl.wikileaks-press.org/afg/event/2009/11/AFG20091122n2337.html.

[28] Such behavior is part of a long tradition of local leaders attempting to increase their autonomy vis-à-vis the state, even with resources acquired from state patronage. Various Afghan monarchs as well as the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan regime in the 1980s struggled to balance the need to gain regional supporters through patronage with the risk of strengthening these supporters to the point of making them threatening. Examples of abusive local leaders who made fortunes and financed their militias in part through contracts include Ahmad Wali Karzai, Gul Agha Shirzai in Qandahar, and Sher Mohammad Akhundzada in Helmand.

[29] For a more detailed account of this problem of state-building, see Astri Suhrke, *When More Is Less: The International Project in Afghanistan* (London, 2011).

[30] Several Western advisers helping to professionalize Afghan institutions expressed to me in interviews in 2010 and 2012 that large sums of money were still being siphoned away by Afghan employees and Western contractors, who have become quite proficient at circumventing auditing and control mechanisms.

the consolidation of destructive rival patronage networks as an alternative way to provide some safety and certainty in an otherwise chaotic institutional environment.[31]

The failure to establish an effective Afghan police force illustrates how Coalition decentralization and contracting impeded institution-building.[32] Coalition members initiated two major police-training programs and several smaller ones, and by 2007, twenty-five countries and several international organizations were training or otherwise supporting the police sector in Afghanistan.[33] Coalition members were not able to agree on the purpose of the training programs—the U.S. aimed to make "little soldiers" out of Afghan policemen, in the words of a European critic, while most Europeans rejected the idea of training them in anything but civilian policing skills. The American militarization of ANP training upset the Germans (Germany was originally the "lead country" in charge of ANP training) and impeded coordination between their two programs.[34] The European Union Police Mission to Afghanistan (EUPOL) replaced Germany as the lead training entity in June 2007, but it failed to establish a working relationship with ISAF, and European contributors remained unenthusiastic because of intra-Coalition disagreements.[35]

Organizational cultures and practices also inhibited progress. The Germans were so meticulous and slow, reflecting a policing culture far removed from the realities of Afghanistan, that the U.S. developed a quick training program for existing officers in 2003 to complement it.[36] The United States' reliance on a cost-conscious contractor, however, made its training program ineffectual. DynCorp used short training courses it had originally developed to train literate Balkan policemen in a highly bureaucratized environment, which were not suitable for training the Afghan recruits, 70–75 percent of whom were illiterate.[37]

In addition, policemen and soldiers from many different law-enforcement backgrounds were put in charge of building policing institutions, not just training policemen, in a country they hardly understood. As a result, institution-building was such that the ANP could not keep track of its equipment or personnel, and a 2006 assessment study found that it had only 30,000 policemen instead of the 70,000 on its books. Moreover, the trainers' skills were not what the ANP needed; only a few police trainers from Northern Ireland, for example, had any experience policing divided

[31] Timor Sharan, "The Dynamics of Elite Networks and Patron-Client Relations in Afghanistan," *Europe-Asia Studies* 63, no. 6 (2011): 1109–1127.

[32] For another example of how the intervention of countries with different legal cultures and interests produced failed institutions, see Suhrke, *When More Is Less*, chap. 7. The state's court system is notoriously corrupt, with judges deciding based on the relative size of the plaintiff's bribes.

[33] Andrew Wilder, "Cops or Robbers? The Struggle to Reform the Afghan National Police," Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU), July 2007, http://www.areu.org.af/Uploads/EditionPdfs/717E-Cops%20or%20Robbers-IP-print.pdf.

[34] See Ramin Shirzay, "Favoring Warlords: Afghan Local Police," *Small Wars Journal*, May 18, 2012, http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/favoring-warlords-afghan-local-police.

[35] For example, Europeans deployed only half of the 400 trainers they committed. Robert M. Perito, "Afghanistan's Police: The Weak Link in Security Sector Reform," United States Institute of Peace Special Report 227, August 2009, http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/afghanistan_police.pdf.

[36] Ibid.

[37] The DynCorp program also did not include the necessary follow-up supervision or training, presumably because the company's officers wanted to reduce costs.

populations in the context of an insurgency.[38] Afghan trainees became flustered because they were learning irrelevant skills.[39] Patronage networks in the Afghan Interior Ministry, which was in charge of selecting recruits for the American-led program, also hampered the development of the ANP by enlisting allied local strongmen who joined the police to better fund their militias and prey on the local population they were being trained to protect. Ultimately, the decentralization of training programs produced a dysfunctional police force without clear operating procedures, esprit de corps, or a distinctive culture. The ANP was loathed by the population for its officers' corruption, involvement in the narcotics trade, and abuse of the population. Some of its units even facilitated and participated in insurgent operations against Coalition troops.

THE INHERENT CHALLENGES OF PARTISAN INTERVENTION and the complexity of the Coalition also impeded its counterinsurgency operations.[40] Until 2009, and thereafter to a lesser degree, the Coalition's managerial attention was scattered among the mission's counterinsurgency, counterterrorism, institution-building, economic-rebuilding, training, and counternarcotics components. The complexity of the mission prevented the concentration of resources and their flexible use, and progress in one area sometimes undermined other missions. In one example, the U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan, Ronald Neumann (served 2005–2007), succumbed to congressional pressure to set a target of 10,000 hectares of poppy fields for eradication in the hope of protecting USAID's budget. The counternarcotics operations that ensued, however, punished farmers in areas under government control and drove some toward the Taliban, thus undermining counterinsurgency efforts.[41]

[38] Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies (London) and Foreign Policy Research Institute (Philadelphia), "Reforming the Afghan National Police," September 2009, https://www.fpri.org/docs/ReformingAfghanNationalPolice.pdf.

[39] Rod Nordland, "With Raw Recruits, Afghan Police Buildup Falters," *New York Times*, February 2, 2010, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/03/world/asia/03afghan.html.

[40] Even the closest of NATO allies (U.S., UK, and Canadian troops) have had their share of damaging cultural clashes that hindered strategic planning and operations. See, for example, Colonel Harry D. Tunnell IV, "Memorandum for the Honorable John McHugh, Secretary of the Army," August 20, 2010, http://www.michaelyon-online.com/images/pdf/secarmy_redacted-redux.pdf. The existence of such disagreements was confirmed in several interviews with senior officers from all three countries. The consequences of the Coalition's decentralization were clear to its members in the field. See, for example, McChrystal, *My Share of the Task*, 300–301, 308, 343. McChrystal lamented the inadequate military command structure. Karl Eikenberry, the U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan from 2009 to 2011, gave as one of six reasons why he intensely disagreed with McChrystal's request for additional troops that "the proposed strategy does not remedy an inadequate civilian structure"; leaked cables from Eikenberry to U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, November 2009, http://documents.nytimes.com/eikenberry-s-memos-on-the-strategy-in-afghanistan. The tensions between the two men and their agencies were symptomatic of the disagreements that ailed decentralized U.S. and Coalition occupation institutions. See a typical leaked document from the Wikileaks War Diaries, "251200ZAUG07 CJ3 JEC USDP Edelman and Counselor Cohen discuss Afghanistan and Pakistan with Adam Thompson, FCO Director for South Asia and Pakistan (Source: American Embassy London 03279, 24 Aug 07)," http://www.wikileaks.org/afg/event/2007/08/AFG20070825n856.html, in which senior British and U.S. officials expressed to each other dissatisfaction regarding organization and coordination among their institutions in Afghanistan.

[41] Ronald E. Neumann, *The Other War: Winning and Losing in Afghanistan* (Herndon, Va., 2009), 106. Leaked Afghan War documents contain numerous mentions of farmers revolting after counternarcotics operations. For example, "D1 020700Z TF Vanguard ANP FIRE SAF AT LNs VIC CHAPARHAR (mod)," dated April 2, 2007, mentions the killing of Afghan farmers by the ANP after

Relations with powerful warlords and corrupt government officials also created tensions among administratively distinct advocates of different missions. Ahmad Wali Karzai, a half-brother of President Karzai who was particularly powerful in Qandahar before his 2011 assassination, was shunned by the U.S. Department of State and counternarcotics agencies because of his corruption, abuses, and large role in the drug trade.[42] Yet he was supported by the CIA, which he assisted by recruiting a Pushtun militia to support its operations in both Afghanistan and Pakistan, and by U.S. Special Forces, who benefited from his clout in Qandahar.[43]

The Coalition's structure also severely restricted its ability to implement the counterinsurgency strategies it attempted, including "winning the hearts and minds" of Afghans. As part of this strategy, U.S. troops doled out money, built infrastructure, and gave agricultural advice to convince Pushtuns in insurgency-prone areas to support the government.[44] The Coalition, however, was weakest in the type of intelligence-gathering needed to make the "hearts and minds" strategy successful—the ability to learn local leaders' attitudes toward the Mujahideen and assess their behavior in response to both punishment and financial incentives.[45]

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an eradication effort; https://wikileaks.org/afg/event/2007/04/AFG20070402n604.html. In "D2 180908Z TF Diamondback SAF ATK ON ANP/ANA IVO MEHTAR LAM (MOD)," dated April 18, 2007, the governor of Laghman as well as the ANA and ANP requested ISAF support against revolting farmers; https://wikileaks.org/afg/event/2007/04/AFG20070418n674.html.

[42] Rajiv Chandrasekaran, *Little America: The War within the War for Afghanistan* (New York, 2012), 311–314. For a good analysis of the younger Karzai's role in Qandahar, see the leaked cable "Kandahar Politics Complicate U.S. Objectives in Afghanistan," December 6, 2009, http://www.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09KABUL3890_a.html. See also Dexter Filkins, Mark Mazzetti, and James Risen, "Brother of Afghan Leader Said to Be Paid by C.I.A.," *New York Times*, October 27, 2009, http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/28/world/asia/28intel.html.

[43] Sherard Cowper-Coles, *Cables from Kabul: The Inside Story of the West's Afghanistan Campaign* (London, 2011), 80–82.

[44] This was a poorly conceived strategy. In regions with a precarious balance of power among local leaders, the Coalition sometimes unwittingly encouraged local leaders to join the Taliban after giving their opponents aid that appeared to be preferential. Afghans often criticized such funding because of perceptions of unfair allocation, poor choices of projects, and the fueling of corruption on a large scale. See Wilder, "Cops or Robbers?" The U.S. military did not quite understand the classic "hearts and minds" strategy that the British military had used successfully in Malaya and Kenya during the colonial era. It consists of isolating the insurgent organization to destroy it by attrition while providing positive sanctions to the population to inhibit them from replenishing insurgent ranks. This strategy requires high levels of coordination and accurate gathering of intelligence, and works only against a highly centralized opponent whose structure is not intertwined with that of the population. None of these conditions obtained in Afghanistan. The U.S. military trained its officers instead in using money "as a weapon"; see *Commander's Guide to Money as a Weapons System*, Center for Army Lessons Learned Handbook 09-27, http://www.usma.edu/cnrcd/SiteAssets/SitePages/Government%20Publications/CALL%20MAAWS%20Handbook%202009-27%20%28APRIL%2009%29.pdf.

[45] For more on the failures of Coalition HUMINT and the lack of intelligence-sharing even among NATO allies, see Russell W. Glenn and S. Jamie Gayton, "Intelligence Operations and Metrics in Iraq and Afghanistan," RAND National Defense Research Institute, November 2008, https://file.wikileaks.org/file/rand-iraq-afhanistan-intel-2008.pdf. See also Michael T. Flynn, Matt Pottinger, and Paul D. Batchelor, "Fixing Intel: A Blueprint for Making Intelligence Relevant in Afghanistan," Center for a New American Security, January 2010, http://www.cnas.org/files/documents/publications/AfghanIntel_Flynn_Jan2010_code507_voices.pdf. Programs to give U.S. officers with short deployments the necessary knowledge, such as the Human Terrain System, have largely failed because of high turnover rates, the required depth of linguistic training and local specialization, and the need for even well-trained experts to build long-lasting relationships to gain the requisite insights, and because of the strategic savvy of local Afghan leaders with strong survival instincts and long experience managing outsiders interested in manipulating their local structures of power. For critical reviews of the Human Terrain System program, see Christian Caryl, "Human Terrain Teams," *Foreign Policy*, September 8, 2009, http://foreignpolicy.

Artificial geographic and operational assignments of Coalition militaries increased the cost of communication, hindered the acquisition and dissemination of human intelligence, and deterred full disclosure. Short rotations (tours of six months or less for some) made it difficult for personnel to accumulate knowledge—incomers wasted considerable attention on learning a complex set of cultural skills instead of keeping up with a fast-changing landscape of power, local alliances, hostilities, and preferences.[46] Contractors had incentives to keep private the information that gave them operational advantages they could monetize, and to dissimulate arrangements with insurgents that allowed them to fulfill their contracts for the Coalition. NGO personnel did not share knowledge they gained with Coalition militaries to avoid being targeted if the Mujahideen got wind of such collaboration.[47] Karzai regime officials who had dealings with narcotics traffickers and insurgents fed the Coalition false information to protect their interests. Many ANP and Afghan Local Police (ALP) units did not share intelligence with Coalition militaries to limit hostilities and casualties in their districts and because they recognized that they were likely to have to deal with Mujahideen commanders for years to come, and perhaps surrender to them, after a Coalition withdrawal. Afghan security contractors manipulated their Coalition patrons to promote their interests by, for example, claiming that local rivals were Taliban sympathizers, and they fabricated intelligence to make themselves appear useful.[48] Such misinformation led to Coalition operations that caused unnecessary damage to Afghans, created new opponents, and fueled the insurgency.[49]

Poor intelligence doomed the "hearts and minds" strategy to failure, but it had been unlikely to succeed anyway because the Mujahideen were intertwined with the Pushtun social structure. Not only did Coalition officers and NGO personnel rarely know the true leanings of those they were giving money to, but the recipients were often connected by clan or family ties to the Mujahideen and funded them with a large cut of the donation or project cost to avert tensions within their communities and to preempt revenge after the Coalition's departure.[50] Even U.S. military officials

com/2009/09/08/human-terrain-teams/; and Ben Connable, "All Our Eggs in a Broken Basket: How the Human Terrain System Is Undermining Sustainable Military Cultural Competence," *Military Review*, March–April 2009, 57–64. The Taliban, on the other hand, had the complex knowledge necessary to deal effectively with fellow Pushtuns, and their decentralization allowed local and regional commanders to remain up to date on quickly changing loyalties, alliances, and opportunities.

[46] See, e.g., Cowper-Coles, *Cables from Kabul*, 64–65.

[47] The killing of dozens of NGO personnel at different junctures led to the withdrawal of key organizations and the cessation of much humanitarian work in the south and east of the country, shifting the cost of their work to the Coalition. Gerard McHugh and Lola Gostelow, "Provincial Reconstruction Teams and Humanitarian-Military Relations in Afghanistan," Save the Children UK, September 2004, http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/sites/default/files/docs/Provincial_Reconstruction_Teams_and_Humanitarian-Military_Relations_in_Afghanistan_2004_09_1.pdf.

[48] Committee on Armed Services, "Inquiry into the Role and Oversight of Private Security Contractors in Afghanistan."

[49] It appears, for example, that the U.S. destruction of a convoy of tribal elders sent by Jalaluddin Haqqani to attend Karzai's inauguration on December 20, 2001, was based on misleading information fed by Afghan contractors. Ahmed Rashid, *Descent into Chaos: The U.S. and the Disaster in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Central Asia* (London, 2008). Haqqani's organization later became the most effective group of anti-Coalition Mujahideen.

[50] Andrew Wilder and Stuart Gordon, "Money Can't Buy America Love," *Foreign Policy*, December 1, 2009, http://foreignpolicy.com/2009/12/01/money-cant-buy-america-love/; Wissing, *Funding the Enemy*.

in Kabul estimated in 2009 that 10–20 percent of the Pentagon's logistics contracts, hundreds of millions of dollars a year, went to the Mujahideen.[51]

The Coalition also unsuccessfully attempted to isolate the Mujahideen by establishing Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), units of 50–500 soldiers and civilians that were supposed to expand the state's influence and establish its institutions in the provinces.[52] Different missions hindered cooperation—the U.S. and UK considered PRTs to be part of counterinsurgency operations, but others, such as Germany, Italy, and Iceland, were reluctant to use them in support of military operations because of their publics' stance on the war. Countries that had not developed organizational umbrellas in their capitals to facilitate cooperation among the many agencies that contributed to their PRTs suffered from damaging turf battles, and PRT staff sometimes had to reconcile conflicting directions from ISAF and multiple national agencies.[53] Short ISAF deployments of three to twelve months, even for key personnel, reduced the ability to coordinate by eliminating the informal arrangements that were devised to make up for poor inter-agency coordination mechanisms. Short rotations also imposed a steep learning curve on new arrivals and required the rebuilding of ties of trust with Afghan army and police officers, and local leaders, in the area. These shortcomings made the PRTs ineffective at institution-building in the provinces, and consequently they were not able to contribute to the isolation of the Mujahideen.

Poor coordination among Coalition contingents also hindered their ability to isolate the Mujahideen. Illogical geographic assignments and various "caveats" on the operations of Coalition forces produced local counterinsurgency strategies that did not add up to a coherent whole.[54] In a representative example, Norwegian troops based in Faryab under Regional Command North (led by the Germans) were not able to effectively pursue Taliban militants who attacked them from neighboring Badghis for two years (2007–2008) because the latter province was under Regional Command West, which was led by the Italians. The Norwegians were also not able to count on help from the much larger German contingent because it was not allowed to engage in offensive operations (its mandate later became more flexible).[55]

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[51] Aram Roston, "How the US Funds the Taliban," *The Nation*, November 11, 2009, http://www.the nation.com/article/how-us-funds-taliban.

[52] There were twenty-seven PRTs in 2010, but only one remained as of November 2013 because of Western troop withdrawals and the Karzai government's disenchantment with their performance. For more on these issues and illustrations of shortcomings, see Nima Abbaszadeh et al., "Provincial Reconstruction Teams: Lessons and Recommendations," Occasional Paper, Princeton University Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, January 2008, http://wws.princeton.edu/sites/default/files/content/docs/news/wws591b.pdf; Oskari Eronen, "PRT Models in Afghanistan: Approaches to Civil-Military Integration," *CMC Finland Civilian Crisis Management Studies* 1, no. 5 (2008), http://www.cmcfinland.fi/download/41858_Studies_5_Eronen.pdf; Markus Gauster, "Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan," George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies Occasional Paper no. 16, January 2008, http://www.mar shallcenter.org/mcpublicweb/MCDocs/files/College/F_Publications/occPapers/occ-paper_16-en.pdf.

[53] The United States, Canada, and the UK created such institutions to implement a so-called "whole of government" approach to nation-building. Italians suffered greatly from competition among their PRT agencies. For more on the unwieldy lines of commands for PRTs, see U.S. Army Combined Arms Center, Center for Army Lessons Learned, Handbook 11-16, *Afghanistan: Provincial Reconstruction Team—Observations, Insights and Lessons Learned*, chap. 5, http://usacac.army.mil/sites/default/files/publications/11-16.pdf.

[54] Interviewed Coalition military officers often referred to these multiple uncoordinated strategies by mentioning that Afghanistan had many ongoing wars, not just one.

[55] Ultimately, the Norwegians received aid from a new American force, and President Karzai agreed to redraw provincial borders to allow them to enter the Pushtun areas of Badghis. For a fascinating account of this episode and Coalition rigidity, see Suhrke, *When More Is Less*, 89–102.

The United States, with a $1.3 billion budget and additional help from Coalition donors, started a program in 2009 to draw foot soldiers away from the Taliban by inducing them with money and benefits.[56] This strategy of "flipping" Taliban fighters assumed that Taliban members trusted the Coalition to deliver on its promises to those who would defect.[57] The Coalition, however, had failed in the past to adequately deliver on promises to pay, train, and protect defectors because of corruption and poor cooperation among agencies, which deterred Taliban members from attempting to do the same after 2009. Divisions among Coalition organizations also led to behavior that the Mujahideen interpreted as untrustworthy. In Helmand Province, for example, beleaguered British forces agreed to a locally mediated agreement with the Taliban that lasted from September 2006 until February 2007. Both sides withdrew their forces five kilometers from the center of the district of Musa Qala and were replaced by a locally recruited police force.[58] A powerful local clan associated with the Karzai government, the Akhundzadahs, feared losing influence and agitated against the agreement, and the U.S. consequently opposed it.[59] When an American general took charge in the area, a U.S. airstrike killed the brother of the local Taliban commander, who ended the agreement and reentered Musa Qala. The Coalition's reversal in this episode, and others like it, diminished its credibility and limited its ability to get Taliban leaders to negotiate or to convince the rank and file of the organization to defect.[60] Just like previous failed attempts (only one substantial group splintered from the Taliban in 2005, but it rejoined the organization a few months later), the 2009 campaign to encourage insurgents to defect failed to undermine the Taliban.[61]

STARTING IN 2011, THE INABILITY TO DEFEAT the Taliban and the Obama administration's commitment to withdraw in 2014 prompted the Coalition's Afghan allies to adjust their strategies in anticipation of a Taliban comeback. President Karzai attempted to appeal to Pushtun sentiment and to placate the Taliban by condemning the unpopular night raids conducted by American Special Forces, releasing Taliban members captured by Coalition forces, and refusing the terms of an agreement necessary to maintain a rump U.S. military presence beyond 2014. Leaders from the

[56] Susan Cornwell, "U.S. Defense Bill Would Pay Taliban to Switch Sides," *Reuters*, October 27, 2009, http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSN2796610.
[57] It is also not clear why Coalition strategists thought that Taliban members would want to leave an organization that many Pushtun believed will outlast the Coalition in Afghanistan, risk being branded as traitors by kith and kin, and perhaps pay for the act with their lives.
[58] Bird and Marshall, *Afghanistan*, 173–177.
[59] For some of the reasons the U.S. disliked the Musa Qala agreement, see the leaked diplomatic cables "Musa Qala Agreement: Opposing Interests and Opposing Views, but One Way Forward," November 27, 2006, http://www.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/06KABUL5584_a.html; "Ambassador's Meeting with Kandahar Governor," October 26, 2006, http://www.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/06KABUL5215_a.html; and "Musa Qala—Showing GOA Authority Is Essential," November 13, 2006, http://www.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/06KABUL5437_a.html.
[60] Suhrke, *When More Is Less*, 102–112.
[61] Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov, and Laptop*, chap. 3.

erstwhile Northern Alliance, including those who worked closely with U.S. forces in 2001–2002 and later surrendered most of their militias' heavy weapons, expanded their militias and formed a new alliance dubbed the National Front of Afghanistan in late 2011.[62] And many Pushtun clients or employees of the Afghan state, including ANP and ALP commanders, increased their communication with the Mujahideen.

The post-Coalition Taliban will likely be able to reorganize in a way that allows them to concentrate their resources for decisive battles and to protect safe havens within Afghanistan. They already have the hierarchy to do so, and the faction led by the Haqqani family has little incentive to act independently of the Quetta Shura, to which it has been constantly loyal. A more centralized Taliban, particularly with Pakistani support, would be more similar to the Taliban of 1994–1996 than to the fragmented Mujahideen parties of 1989–1992 that were not able to mount successful assaults on the strongholds of Mohammad Najibullah's regime. If the past is any indication, the unruly and predatory local warlords that the Coalition is leaving behind in Pushtun areas will increase the desire among Pushtun civilians for a return to the Taliban's strict law-and-order regime, but that return will be slow enough to allow minority organizations to better prepare to fight the rising Taliban yet again.[63]

The Afghan state will last so long as money continues to flow to it from international donors, but it will likely unravel soon thereafter, the way the government of Najibullah did. The Najibullah regime was able to resist Mujahideen assaults for only six months after Moscow's funding ceased in late 1991. Its institutions either disbanded, split along ethnic lines with units defecting to ethnic kin among the Mujahideen, or became independent militias. Similar ethnic and regional networks are at work in post-Coalition Afghan institutions, and many of their members are allied with militant organizations, including the Taliban. Like anyone concerned with self-preservation in a chaotic environment, officials constantly weigh the merits of defection against the material gains that accompany regime affiliation. They will defect in droves when the former outweighs the latter.

Once the Taliban consolidate their grip on the south and east in a reprise of their 1994–1996 expansion, they will face the reconstituted Tajik, Uzbek, and Hazara militias, as well as a diminished Hizb-i Islami, led by the same opponents they faced in 1998–2001 or by their surviving acolytes.[64] And while there were no independent state institutions during the 1992–2001 civil war, and the lessons of history need not be deterministic, Afghanistan seems to be heading toward a conflict that is curiously similar to the pre-Coalition civil war. The Coalition, in spite of its formidable resources, merely extended the 1992–2001 civil war instead of terminating it decisively in favor of its anti-Taliban allies. In the process, it illustrated the inherent challenges and contradictions of partisan interventions in civil wars, particularly those

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[62] Minority leaders particularly feared an alliance between Karzai and the Taliban that would sideline them, something they felt Karzai was angling for, unrealistic as this alliance may have been.

[63] The Taliban will likely deal piecemeal with ALP and ANP units and other local strongmen, and co-opt or chase away other Mujahideen groups, including Hizb-i Islami units, the way they successfully did in 1994–1996. See Sinno, *Organizations at War in Afghanistan and Beyond*, chap. 8.

[64] These mainly include Abdul Rashid Dostum's Jumbish, the Tajik Panjshiri-led organization, and the Hazara Hizb-i Wahdat. One large militia, Ismail Khan's around Herat, has been severely weakened, but Ismail Khan still has support in western Afghanistan. Hizb fighters are mostly in the east and north (Kunduz and Baghlan).

conducted by coalitions, and provided an opportunity to unravel the processes that lead to their unexpected outcomes.

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