RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Logics of Public Authority: Understanding Power, Politics and Security in Afghanistan, 2002–2014

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This paper applies the three logics of public authority – the political market-place, moral populism and civicness – to the case of Afghanistan in 2001–2013. It shows how the logic of the political marketplace offers an apt interpretation of the Karzai regime, while the logic of moral populism is more relevant as a way of categorizing the Taliban. Based on a civil society dialogue project, the paper discusses the way that civil society actors characterize the situation and envisage a logic of civicness. The paper argues that the mutually reinforcing nature of the two dominant logics explains pervasive and rising insecurity that has been exacerbated by external interventions. The implication of the argument is that security requires a different logic of authority that could underpin legitimate and inclusive institutions.

Introduction

Since the overthrow of the Taliban regime in 2001, the international community has invested billions of dollars on security and reconstruction programs aimed at ending conflict and strengthening state legitimacy, yet both Afghanistan's public authority and security landscapes have remained highly variegated and often fragmented at national and sub-national levels. By 2013, as President Karzai's nearly ten-year presidential term was coming to an end, Afghan citizens had grown increasingly insecure and alienated by current political and security arrangements. Overall violence had doubled between 2011 and 2012, while the reach of the Afghan state in administering justice had contracted

considerably, even in areas where there was little presence of Taliban insurgents (Giustozzi 2012b).

This article makes two arguments. First, the international community has failed to consider the ways in which public authority functions in Afghanistan. Outside intervention we suggest, especially large-scale aid provision, military largess and security practices have contributed to, and exacerbated, abusive neo-patrimonial power relations and the manipulation of extremist Islamic nationalist narratives, leaving a legacy of pervasive insecurity. Second, there do exist social and political practices that could potentially provide the basis for legitimate forms of public authority that are a necessary condition for security but these practices have been marginalized and squeezed out by the dominant power relations characterizing Afghan political arrangements. The implication of this

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argument is that security does not depend on the scale and nature of the security apparatus; rather it is a function of social and political relations.

To develop these arguments, the article applies the conceptual framework developed in the Conflict Research Programme (CRP).[1] This framework focuses on the notion of public authority, which includes both the state and other forms of public authority above, beyond and below the state, and the way in which public authority functions. The framework articulates three logics of public authority – the 'political marketplace', 'moral populism' and 'civicness'. The article shows how the system of state authority consolidated under President Karzai, widely described in neo-patrimonial terms, can be interpreted largely in terms of a political marketplace logic that pervades all levels, while the Taliban claim to authority and legitimacy has been primarily characterized by the logic of moral populism. The paper argues that the two logics are mutually reinforcing and that there are elements of the political market place to be found in the functioning of the Taliban and elements of moral populism in the way that the Karzai government framed its behaviour. Finally, the article draws on a research and dialogue project conducted between 2009–2011 that investigated Afghan experiences of political authority and their conceptions of civil society to explore civicness and what it implies for security.

The paper takes the case of Afghanistan from 2001 to 2013 – the period of Karzai's administration – to illustrate the analytical value of these logics in different contexts beyond sub-Saharan Africa in understanding the sources of security and insecurity, and offers an interpretation both of the complexity of conflict-torn spaces and the unanticipated consequences of international intervention. The first section provides a brief overview of the conceptual framework. We then discuss the dominant logics of the political marketplace and moral populism. The last section is about civicness.

Outlining the Logics of Public Authority

The term 'public authority' was developed as a way of moving beyond the dichotomy in the development studies literature between a preoccupation with failed, fragile, collapsed or weak states on the one hand (OECD 2013; Woodward 2004; Collier et al. 2003) and a newly emerging body of literature that focuses on what are known as hybrid institutions on the other hand (Richmond 2011; Boege et al. 2009; MacGinty 2011). The former tends to prescribe state-building policies, often of a technical type, based on the assumption of a Weberian model of statehood,[2] while the latter tends to over-emphasize the advantages of the local and traditional. According to the CRP definition, public authority can refer to any form of authority beyond the family that commands a minimum of voluntary compliance (even in contexts of substantial coercion); such an authority could be the state, local government, customary authority, religious authority, armed groups, community groups, international agencies, and so on. The utility of the term is that it enables the scholar to study public authority as it is, not as it ought to be, and to understand the daily processes producing and contesting it; moreover, it focuses attention on the exercise of power rather than merely on institutions. What matters is not whether an authority is national or local but rather how it functions – what CRP describes as the logic of public authority. CRP findings suggest that in difficult conflict-affected places, public authority can usefully be understood as negotiated, produced, maintained and reshaped by the interplay of three logics of governance. These are not normative categories; they are ways to describe the actual functioning of public authority. Each of these logics results in different forms of security or insecurity.

First, the 'political marketplace' is a contemporary system of governance in which politics is conducted as exchange of political services or loyalty for payment or licence to

extort resources (de Waal 2009). It is concerned with the market in political power: how politicians sustain their political projects, whether substantive or simply power for its own sake, using business principles and material transactions. Much of northeast and central Africa exhibits advanced and militarized political markets, characterized by pervasive rent-seeking and monetized patronage, with violence routinely used as a tool for extracting rent. These political markets are integrated into regional and global circuits of political finance. Politicians operate as political entrepreneurs and business managers to seek and sustain power in turbulent circumstances.

Second, the logic of 'moral populism' derives from the idea of a moral order that has a degree of purchase among the population. It draws upon and reinforces collective ideologies, moral norms, including ethnic, religious or spiritual beliefs, to construct forms of public authority that tend to crowd out more deliberative possibilities, often involving the use of violence for ritual, punishment or exclusion. It contains the assumption that morality can trump reason on occasion and that the people are bounded and held together against an 'other'. It can engender stability, but almost invariably at the cost of social exclusion and the scapegoating of the vulnerable. But it can also be a source of violence as in the case of vigilante gangs or the legitimisation of moral panics.

Third, in many cases a logic of 'civicness' can be discerned, where individuals and communities organise themselves for mutual benefit to provide public services including security. Indeed, it is often a survival mechanism. Like the other logics, civicness can be exclusive; indeed, all social contracts are by their nature bounded. However, civicness is based on the Golden Rule, in which outsiders are strangers rather than enemies who should be treated humanely, in contrast to the other two logics. It is a logic that tends to involve more inclusive and horizontal forms of self-organisation and more open

discussion and deliberation, sometimes underpinned by individual or collective acts of resistance. The use of law and notions of stateness and civility are often salient in instances of civicness. Stateness broadly refers to the character, quality and legitimacy of political authority – the system of rules and practices often associated with a state (Pfister 2004: 22–23), while civility highlights the norms and practices that encourage the kind of social interactions, bonds and shared identities necessary for reducing fear and achieving stability and justice (Rucht 2011; Anheier 2011; Kaldor 2003). The term civicness can be translated into vernacular concepts in conflict settings – thus, in the DRC the idea of *Citoyeneté*, or in the Middle East the notion of *Madani* are terms that have similar resonance.

The provision of security must be understood in the context of these three logics. The everyday insecurity that is experienced by ordinary people is not just a consequence of state weakness or an exogenous phenomenon; rather it is necessary for the functioning of the dominant logics. In the case of the political marketplace, insecurity is a mechanism for control and predation and, at the same time, it is fear that animates the discourses and practices of moral populism. Only in the context of civicness, is it possible to discern relative security.

In what follows, we show how these logics help us to understand the functioning of public authority and continuing insecurity in Afghanistan. In addition to our own research conducted in Afghanistan between 2009 and 2012, we build on the extensive literature on conflict, violence and statebuilding; in particular those scholars who explore political authority through a political economy perspective and highlight how external actors, resources, and institutions shape elite incentives, the state-society compact, and the political and economic order (See, e.g. Goodhand and Sedra 2007; Kühn 2008; Nixon and Ponzio 2007; Suhrke 2013).

The Political Economy of State-Building and Counter-Terrorism

Since 2001, external players have exerted immense influence in Afghanistan, becoming a foundational part of the domestic political landscape, able to shape internal affairs and reconfigure local power dynamics through their vast resources, local partnerships, priorities and aid practices. External resources, particularly security assistance, have become deeply entangled with the exercise of authority and the emergence of fragile, elite political coalitions, by cultivating a 'rentier' political marketplace characterized by pervasive rent-seeking and intense competition among elites for access to resources at local, national and international levels (Kühn 2008; Maley 2013; Suhrke 2011).

To understand post-2001 political developments, it is helpful to highlight how previous patterns of political rule required both external financing and skilful management of patron-client relations (see Rubin 1995; Shahrani 1998; Saikal 2005). Throughout history, Afghan rulers have confronted strong peripheral forces holding a level of autonomy from, and leverage with, central authorities (Saikal 2002: 193). Rulers' lack of monopolistic political power meant that they often faced considerable challenges from strong sub-national elites especially when they embarked on modernization programs. Unable to mobilize internal revenue sources, their ability to secure external rents was critical to the central state's viability. Barnett Rubin (2002: 81–105) argues that the rentier nature of state formation in Afghanistan entrenched a form of patrimonial rule and never forced the ruling elite to develop a social contract or domestic accountability. Instead, rulers entered complex patronage-based relationships with sub-national elites, and employed strategies to co-opt or coerce them into accepting their authority. These political pacts, however, were contingent on the continued distribution of externally-sourced rents rather than development of internal legitimate social and political capital. Thus, these strategies

often secured loyalty in the short-term, but never displaced informal power at local levels. Rulers' political skills and relative success in attaining external rents and managing these patron-client relationships have been central to determining the extent of their regime's power, authority and stability (Saikal 2005: 196).

Since the conflict began in 1979, extreme levels of armed violence and the participation of numerous transnational actors, from the Russians and Pakistanis, to the United States and the international community, have disrupted traditional patron-client relationships inter alia. Decades of war have militarized the periphery and have shifted local power from traditional leaders towards a new class of strongmen with access to guns, funds and foreign forces (Giustozzi and Ullah 2007: 169–172). These commanders introduced political-military structures that dislodged many of the informal, historically mediated societal relations and mobilized new networks along ethnic, religious, tribal, and regional lines (Dorronsoro 2005; Giustozzi 2009; Marten 2012). This reinforced identity politics within society, even if these new networks enjoyed only limited political legitimacy among the population (Goodhand and Mansfeld 2010: 6). As conflict deepened, the growth of smuggling and illicit economies, especially the drug trade, integrated peripheral areas into regional economies and further increased their autonomy from broader society and from the state (ibid). When the state collapsed and external support sharply decreased during the civil war, commander networks in search of new resources became progressively predatory to the civilian population and involved in transnational criminal networks associated with regional 'shadow economies' connected to smuggling and the opium trade (Giustozzi 2009). The violence and criminality of this period contributed to the groundswell of support for the Taliban, who consolidated control over most of the country by 1998.

In post-2001 Afghanistan, the exercise of political authority is still marked by complex

dynamics between external forces, formal institutions and the persistent salience of informal forces. After the US-led intervention dislodged the Taliban regime in 2001, the scale of foreign patronage once again dramatically increased as external actors set out to rebuild the central state and fight the war on terror. Vast amounts of security assistance further transformed patron-client relations and, over time, have narrowed patronage networks and made them more exclusionary. 'Current-day corruption,' writes Goodhand (2008: 411), 'appears to be built upon earlier practices of patronage, but one of the principal differences between the pre-war and post-war economy is the level of monetization of everyday relationships.' While traditional patterns of affiliation by clan, tribe and ethnicity persist, the monetization of patronage has meant that rulers increasingly require large cash budgets or the ability to grant local elites license to extract resources in order to be successful patrons – a typical pattern to be observed in the political marketplace.

External decisions to prioritize counter-terrorism over state-building have been central to shaping the new political economy and creating the conditions that gave rise to the current form of the political marketplace in Afghanistan. The nature of the invasion and elite 'peace settlement' in 2001 laid its foundations rather than create a 'constitutional moment' (Afsah 2011: 157) that might have helped to construct legitimate political authority. Braithwaite and Wardak (2013: 186) characterize it as an exclusive elite pact between America's chief allies in the war on terror where the state became the instrument for a 'personalized division of spoils rather than an institutionalized division of powers.' Allied local commanders from the Northern Alliance received political and financial rewards to join the post-Taliban settlement, allowing them to entrench their power in the immediate post-2001 state in strategic security ministries – Interior, Defence, Foreign Affairs and the National Directorate of Security – where they

strengthened their networks of patronage and corruption (Danspeckgruber and Finn 2007: 131).

At the same time, the strong presidential system favoured by Karzai and the Bush administration, encoded in the 2003 Afghan constitution, vested extensive authorities in the Presidency. In theory, a strong state led by a strong presidency was based on a set of ideas that attribute (probably rightly) contemporary conflict to state weakness and fragility but, which understood state-building in overly technical terms and failed to account for existing *de facto* power structures that were extremely fractured and decentralized. This serious design flaw in the constitution, explains William Maley (2013: 258), 'sharpened political competition by holding out the prospect that a strong state could be a significant political asset to control.' The highly-centralised design of the political system, combined with the near wholesale incorporation of non-state armed actors into state structures, arguably turned them into an instrument for personal gain, furnishing opportunities for them to expand and consolidate their political-economic power to the detriment of the state-building effort (Nixon and Ponzio 2007; Rangelov and Theros 2012).

The ways in which foreign aid and security assistance were delivered further accentuated long-standing tensions between regions, and between centre and periphery. Considerable literature explores how vast amounts of aid recreated the structural conditions that led to the outbreak of violent conflict in the first place (e.g. see for example, Goodhand & Sedra 2007; Wilder 2008, and Surkhe 2011). While major donors provided funding to the central state and focused on building formal institutions, foreign security actors such as the CIA, the PRTs, and NATO supported networks and structures outside the state, which were often inimical to the state-building imperative to centralize the means of coercion (Zyck 2012: 256, Goodhand and Mansfield 2010). These resources cultivated regional political economies and shaped the

government's approach to patronage politics and institution building. Goodhand and Mansfield (2010: 13) explain how contradictory policies affected bargaining processes in Afghanistan's political marketplace:

> Military and financial support for the central state had the effect of lowering the price of loyalty, thus decreasing the necessity for central state elites to negotiate with peripheral elites. Conversely, CIA funding of regional 'warlords' artificially inflated the price of loyalty, strengthening the bargaining powering in relation to the central state.

Like previous eras, the post-2001 distribution of power and authority rests on the ability of elites to appropriate resources and distribute them to their clients. At the sub-national level, elites have developed sophisticated strategies to strengthen their powerbases and bolster their patronage networks by 'managing their resources and position in regional economic networks, both licit and illicit, while also tapping into international support' (Barma 2017: 182–3). Links to foreign actors have benefitted them, e.g. through off-budget security assistance to paramilitary groups, the control of construction companies and provision of goods, as well the proposal of beneficiaries of reconstruction aid. Patronage connections to the centre have remained a major source of wealth accumulation and power, especially after Karzai worked to ensure greater control over appointments that provide access to internal revenue sources as well as business opportunities.[3] The emergence of monopolies controlled by politically-connected elites has fuelled violent racketeering in the private sector and undermined the creation of a competitive private sector. Criminality and the expanding drug economy has furnished even greater avenues of patronage, implicating elites across the country: Goodhand notes, for example, that an estimated 80 percent of parliamentary candidates had some form of contact or involvement with drug traffickers and armed groups (Goodhand 2008, fn. 3).

The Logic of the Political Marketplace and the Rise of Karzai's Neo-Patrimonial Rule

Ironically, Karzai was propelled to power under the US-sponsored Bonn agreement precisely because he was considered a weak, and therefore exploitable, choice with a limited domestic network of independent support. It was this perceived weakness that convinced Northern Alliance commanders to give their consent to the preferred US candidate. When he became head of the Transitional Administration in 2002, he inherited a barely existent government with limited coercive capabilities and control over financial resources (Mukhopadhyay 2016). The elite settlement at Bonn, paired with the US decision to block the expansion of NATO forces beyond Kabul in 2002, further complicated his attempts to extend his authority and regulate inherited political arrangements in the provinces. His vulnerabilities were compounded by aid practices – including vast security assistance – that created an 'aid-and-war economy' which largely bypassed central government officials and channelled resources directly into the coffers of sub-national elites (Suhrke 2013: 275–6). What aid did flow through the central government was heavily ear-marked, further constraining Karzai's budgetary authority for policy-making.

The logic of a decentralized, rentier political marketplace was central to shaping presidential strategies for power and political survival. Within this marketplace, Karzai was only one of the newest entrants in a somewhat crowded field; and he controlled limited resources. Logically, Karzai's strategy to enhance his domestic power was predicated on making presidential patronage a central feature of Afghan politics at the expense of rational institution-building. Thanks to the highly-centralized design of the political system and the extensive legal and constitutional powers vested in the presidency, Karzai's ability to legislate by decree and

make extensive appointments across central and sub-national levels were key to managing elite competition, purchasing loyalty and capturing resources (Maley 2013: 259; Suhrke 2013: 278). Most of these strategies had little to do with sustaining the state or promoting development. Rather, they served to co-opt competing commander networks, divide the opposition, and foster reliance on access to state power and presidential patronage (Forsberg 2012).

While the logic of a rentier political marketplace informed Karzai's power strategies, he also invoked identity politics and appeals to Islam – demonstrating how he has attempted to combine elements of moral populism in his larger power strategy to generate cooperation and popular support. In a deeply conservative and religious society like Afghanistan, the strategic use of Islam has played a central role in the strategies of political actors 'to legitimize their actions, mobilize support, undermine rivals, attract foreign aid, and control populations' (Sinno 2010: 25). Yet, his ability to leverage Islam met with little success due to the growing appeal of the Taliban against the perceived 'moral corruption' of his key allies in government and his foreign-backers, whose actions are increasingly viewed by many citizens as anti-Muslim.[4] As William Maley has noted in his study on legitimization strategies during the pre-2001 conflict, 'Islam has proved to be an ideology of resistance to, rather than support for, the regime' (Maley 1987; 717–718).

When Karzai first assumed power, he initially aligned himself with Western-educated technocrats such as Ali Jalali and Ashraf Ghani and directly confronted commanders. He pursued strategies to remove regional strongmen, such as Ismail Khan in Herat, by forcing them to accept positions in Kabul to break links with their constituents (Sharan 2011: 1121). Yet, his ability to marginalize them between 2002 and 2004 proved difficult given their continued relationships with foreign forces and his lack of coercive control. Many had forged direct relationships with external actors and received considerable funds outside formal government

channels through foreign civil and military programs (Mukhopadhyay 2016). As aid became converted into the political currency of patronage, they strengthened their networks of armed men under their control and could present a direct challenge to his government. Their growing power was demonstrated in 2004 after they mobilized their ethno-regional networks and performed well in the parliamentary elections.

Around this time, Karzai increasingly faced the reality that the US would continue its support to regional powerbrokers as part of its counter-terror mission. After the 2005 election when his political calculus shifted, Karzai began to shed the early reformers in favour of an inner circle composed of family members, loyalists and key commanders. He then pursued strategies to co-opt and divide the opposition through government patronage in the form of government appointments, capture of lucrative contracts, and protection from prosecution (Sharan and Heathershaw 2011: 315). 'This network is part of his survival mechanism', explained former US Ambassador to Afghanistan, Ron Neumann to the New York Times (Risen 2010); 'Karzai is convinced that we are going to abandon him [so] what's his answer? To create a web of loyalties and militia commanders and corrupt families all knitted together.'

The corruption of the Afghan state rose in part because of the Karzai administration's weakness and high political cost of confronting it. Given that the price of loyalty was artificially inflated by external assistance, his use of patronage to extend his authority and build alliances in exchange for loyalty often meant tolerating the use of delegated state authority for private gain and criminality (Maley 2013). When the US began to realize how corruption had become a key driver of the insurgency by 2009, Karzai's relationship with his patrons started to sour over anti-corruption initiatives and he began acting more decisively to reshape the distribution of power in Afghanistan (Interview, UN official, Kabul 2011). He pursued several strategies:

- First, he began openly criticizing and distancing himself from unpopular US policies, such as air strikes and night raids, to increase foreign deference to him, knowing that they also depended on him to pursue their counter-terror objectives;
- Second, as the 2009 elections neared, he and his allies sought alliances with key commander leaders, such as Marshal Fahim, the *de facto* head of the Northern Alliance who controlled powerful patronage networks;
- Third, he worked to ensure greater control over patronage and revenue streams, including foreign spending, internal revenues and criminal proceeds.

These strategies played themselves out differently across the country but they made Karzai increasingly reliant on 'criminalized patronage networks' that linked corrupt officials, businessman, warlords and even Taliban commanders in mutually beneficial relationships (Forsberg and Sullivan 2016). In the insecure south, where the drug trade and large amounts of security spending outside government channels constituted the major sources of wealth, Karzai sought to capture and control these revenue streams via family members and other allies (Aikens 2012). His half-brother, Ahmad Wali Karzai, for example, became the most powerful political figure in Kandahar, where he oversaw a vast patronage network until his assassination in July 2011. Their patronage to southern drug networks, financiers and *hawala* networks, and other allies in exchange for support to the Karzai regime allowed them to consolidate control over private security, real estate and contracting.

In the north, where commanders had deeply infiltrated state institutions, his political calculus focused on co-opting powerful patronage networks and making them dependent on his patronage through shared business ventures and protection from prosecution. His ability to reorganize alliances

was made possible by the growing influence of money in the new political economy, where money began trumping party, ethnic and regional loyalties to some extent. The Kabul Bank stood at the heart of his strategy to buy off rivals and incorporate them into a rent-seeking coalition that brought together northern and southern elites. Although the bank's collapse threatened the government's financial sustainability, it proved critical to Karzai's short-term political survival by cementing an alliance with Marshal Fahim, who ensured the support of his powerful networks in Karzai's re-election campaign.

The Kabul Bank case represents a clear example of how politics and money mix in Afghanistan's rentier political marketplace. It functioned as a financing network, underwritten by international aid money and poor Afghan depositors, that linked together the military, political, criminal and economic elite around the narrow networks of the Karzai and Fahim families.[5] The Bank was run by the Chairman and CEO, with backgrounds in smuggling and criminal activity during the pre-2001 conflicts, as a Ponzi scheme with new deposits funding unsecured loans to the powerful. These two men sought alliances with the brothers of President Karzai and Marshal Fahim to buy government patronage and protection (Forsberg 2012). 'The only way to become a successful businessman is to be linked to the political caste,' explained one civil society actor (Interview, Kabul, 2011). Indeed, soon after they secured the brothers as shareholders, the bank was awarded several large government contracts that covered its mushrooming liabilities, including one to pay civil servants at a sum of $75 million per month (Interview, Kabul, UNAMA official, July 2011; Filkins 2011; Rubin and Risen 2011). For Karzai, the bank financed his successful election campaign, bought the vote banks of his rivals and divided his opposition. His continued protection of its key players in its aftermath despite the high political cost demonstrates how important it was in stabilizing relations among competing networks,

serving as a 'visible marker of a national-level political settlement' (Aikens 2012: 4).

Violence and Instability in Afghanistan's Rentier Political Marketplace

Under Karzai's system of governance, Afghanistan has functioned primarily as an aid-based rentier political marketplace, in which the President provided access to government patronage and protection in the form of government appointments and access to lucrative contracts and business opportunities. In this way, the President could consolidate a fractured rentier marketplace into a more consolidated one, bringing many of the powerful commanders and regional warlords into a fragile rent-seeking coalition. This system of patronage may have helped ensure his short-term political survival, but it has undermined the long-term viability of the state, making it completely dependent on the presence of foreign forces and continued inflows of aid and security assistance.

The rentier political marketplace in Afghanistan has proved to be inherently unstable and violent. It has produced an anarchic model of security, which has led to more insecurity and conflict in the country and creates an environment where anti-government elements have flourished. There were several paradoxical trajectories during this period of inquiry: the accumulation of power by the Karzai regime, mainly in the form of centralizing patronage, on the one hand, and the dispersion of violence and fragmentation on the other (Rangelov and Theros 2012: 243–244). Karzai's strategy of building alliances with regional powerbrokers by renting their loyalty helped contribute to his political survival, but it was 'not able to constrain and control the predatory behaviour of such actors or shift their basis in violence, exploitation and criminality' (ibid:). Indeed, the ability of these powerbrokers and their clients to commit crimes with impunity, explain Forsberg and Sullivan (2016: 15) 'established a precedent

of violence and coercion as valid tools to be wielded by government elites.'

Braithwaite and Wardak (2012) argue that a Hobbesian view of Afghanistan adopted by the international community led them to push for a 'Leviathan' as the Hobbesian response to the disorder and anarchy. Our argument is somewhat different, namely that the emphasis on reaching agreement among warlords from the top as a form of constitution-making, akin to agreements like Dayton or Oslo, ended up entrenching a political marketplace. Because western donors had a rather technical understanding of security, their whole security strategy, which was based on building up local and national security forces, further nourished the political marketplace. This contributed to the rise of Karzai's repression, as well as the development of initiatives from the 'bottom-up' to create paramilitary forces under the control of the Ministry of Interior. Yet, these programs did not provide community policing capabilities and instead, ended up regularizing existing militias (Lefevre 2010: 1).

As Goodhand and Hakimi (2014: 6) explain, 'Western efforts to regulate the security market have been contradictory and often ill considered. On the one hand, interventions were directed toward bureaucratizing coercion by building up a monopoly on the means of violence through security sector reform.… On the other hand, foreign forces continued to support and fund local power brokers, creating militias and deploying private security companies, who operated either above or below the law.' Without sufficient attention to the influence of patronage networks, formal institutionalism had afforded opportunities for commanders incorporated in the political process to integrate their ethno-militia networks within the Afghan National Security Forces and consolidate their political and economic power (Lister 2007; Gordon 2009: 123). This severely compromised efforts to professionalize the forces, especially the police, and triggered the emergence of new forms of conflict and

illicit activities (Tadjbakhsh and Schoiswohl 2008: 259).

At the same time, initiatives aimed at building local defence groups have also been riddled with controversy. Vanda Felbab-Brown explains that, with little oversight and accountability mechanisms in place, financial flows through these programs have strengthened existing strongmen and at times, even spurred violence between rival allies in their attempts to monopolize money (Felbab-Brown 2013: 195). Yet, US military officials interviewed in 2011 called the Afghan Local Police (ALP) 'the closest thing we have to a game changer' for local security (Interviews, Kabul 2011), even as Afghans consistently described them as militias prone to abusing civilians, engaging in criminal activities, and intensifying local rivalries. In highly polarized areas with little history of tribal militias, these programs hijacked by rent-seeking commanders have furthered the security dilemma among local communities and deepened ethnic antagonisms; in Baghlan, for example, efforts to stand up Pashtun ALP units in 2011 sparked rival Tajik powerbrokers to arm their ethnically-based militias (interviews, NATO officials, Kabul, 2011).

In this rentier political marketplace, the threat or exercise of violence has become a central part of the bargaining process. Political actors with coercive power can engage in threats of violence to demonstrate the power they hold and negotiate better deals for themselves. William Byrd (2016) explores how these dynamics played out during the presidential elections in 2014–2015 after the end of Karzai's term, highlighting the challenges of holding elections in an unstable political marketplace during a critical period of 'transition' and reduction of foreign forces. The contested elections invited threats of violence and secession from northern elites with coercive power opposed to the outcome of a second-round that saw Ashraf Ghani win over Abdullah Abdullah. With a strong powerbase and control over armed violence in Balkh province, Governor Atta's threat of violence encouraged the intervention of Secretary John Kerry and helped the 'loser' of the elections negotiate a position for himself within an extra-constitutional 'national unity' government even before the results of an inquiry were completed.

The Logic of Moral Populism: the Taliban Approach to Authority and Security

The increasingly heterogeneous group of anti-government armed elements is often labelled 'Taliban'.[6] These different forces are neither ideologically coherent nor simply reflecting the growing appeal of Taliban ideology as such (Rutting 2009: 1–2). Anand Gopal cautions that the Taliban cannot be divided into neat categories of ideological leadership and rank-and-file fighters motivated by financial concerns (Gopal 2013: 3). Even so, Taliban strategies for power and legitimation can be broadly characterized by the logic of moral populism, although elements of the political marketplace clearly shape and contribute to their strategies for survival and expansion in the post-2001 period. Their ability to exploit the dynamics of exclusion and marginalization engendered by Karzai's governance system and an aggressive foreign military presence has been central to their progress. Since 2006, they have conducted an increasingly successful campaign of violence and propaganda to gain local support (or acquiescence) and to appeal to morally-imbued identities and religious values to project themselves as a just alternative to the externally-backed Karzai regime. Even if their exclusivist agenda does not resonate with most Afghan citizens, the significance of their moral populism lies in the framework it provides for legitimizing grievances and mobilizing individual and collective action among the marginalized and disaffected.

Their ability to draw support from the population stems from their deep knowledge of the social landscape, where they have taken advantage of patterns of exclusion – whether of an excluded ethnic group, tribe or even segment of a tribe (Gopal 2016). For some communities, predation and marginalization at various levels of governance have pushed

them to align with insurgent groups strategically in the short-term as they react to abuses, seek revenge or position themselves for greater influence (Rangelov and Theros 2012: 241). Among foot soldiers, the Taliban have used financial incentives and an ideological framework for recruitment, but many also take up arms due to grievances rather than an appeal to their political program (Giustozzi 2012c; Chayes 2015). Documented interviews with fighters show that abusive practices committed by government and pro-government forces such as arbitrary arrests, land grabs, as well as torture and executions have been key motivating factors for individuals (Ladbury et al. 2009). The study concludes that 'young men become Taliban combatants for a mix of reasons…but their peers then 'radicalize' them into presenting their cause only in terms of jihad and only with reference with Islam' (Ladbury et al. 2009: 4).

To make claims of legitimacy, the Taliban have sought to communicate a strategic vision for justice and security around Afghan sovereignty and Islamic principles as defined by the Taliban themselves (Semple 2014; Weigand 2017). Their Eid al-Fitr statements, for example, have highlighted government predation while other propaganda materials have fed on perceptions of injustice and marginalization (CFR 2015). Their messages have drawn upon collective experiences of abuse and popular suspicions of the West's malign intentions to portray the Karzai government as morally-corrupt and controlled by anti-Muslim powers. Their simple strategic vision of sharia enforcement finds resonance among Afghan citizens eager to end the criminality and impunity that has flourished under the Karzai regime (Semple 2014).

Significantly, these anti-corruption narratives evoke the founding myth of the original Taliban movement in the 1990s when they gained initial support from the goal of restoring order and ending warlord rule (Gopal 2010: 7). In the post-2001 period, they once again employed this rallying cry and developed a discourse of moral corruption that links the externally-backed Karzai regime to the predations of the pre-2001 period of warlordism, criminality and extensive foreign interference (Broschk 2011). Even as they have fanned ethnic or tribal resentments to mobilize Pashtun communities, they have consistently downplayed tribal, regional or ethnic identities in favour of an Islamic Afghan identity. By deploying the language of religious legitimacy and moral righteousness, they have strived to 're-brand themselves as a broad-based independence movement' aimed at defending the Afghan people against external invaders, rather than the rural and Pashtun-based fundamentalist movement they had been pre-2001 (Brahimi 2010: 4).

Their discourse of *jihad* should not be overestimated given the history of state crises in Afghanistan, when society has become mobilized by narratives of abuse and oppression – especially across religious groups (Roy 1990; Dorronsorro 2005: 104–109). It should be noted that the Taliban have contributed the majority of civilian casualties, even while they seek to provide a rhetorical alternative to Afghanistan's predatory order. They have used religion to legitimize the extreme violence they employ to control communities, destroy opponents and gain the acquiescence of local leaders – but then blame the government for its inability to stem insecurity. They have increasingly acknowledged public discontent over abuses and civilian casualties, and have responded by creating an ombudsman and codes of conduct, the *Layeha*, which sets out guidelines for local Taliban commanders on treating the population fairly (Kilcullen 2010: 157–158). Even though these nominal mechanisms of redress for the population have not functioned properly, Vanda Felbab-Brown (2013: 56) argues, their establishment demonstrates their sophisticated communications operations and stands 'in stark contrast to the absence of accountability mechanisms for government officials or pro-government powerbrokers.'

By 2009–2010, at the peak of Karzai's governance regime, the Taliban had expanded

their shadow governance apparatus to nearly every province, aside from Panjshir – the heartland of the Tajik-dominated Northern Alliance (Giustozzi 2012a). In areas under their control, the provision of effective justice has been central to their progress as it underpins their claim to legitimacy, highlights government corruption, and responds to community needs (Giustozzi and Baczko 2014). When the Taliban came to power in 1996 on a manifesto of security and justice, they imposed a harsh but effective legal order based on religious authority with the acquiescence of tribal justice authorities (Sinno 2008). Similarly, the exclusive model of security and justice they have extended in the post-2001 period is aligned with their vision of reorganizing Afghan society along Islamic principles (Semple 2014). As early as 2003, they reconstituted their justice system as an alternative to the official one, and over time, their courts gained popularity by resolving local disputes, such as land conflicts, and making resolutions of agreements stick (Kühn 2011). Despite the harsh punishments meted out, their court system has offered more predictability, accessibility and reliability than the arbitrary system of state justice, in which the individual who pays the highest bribes to the most people over the longest period wins (Weigand 2017).

At the same time, the Taliban's survival and expansion in post-2001 has been highly dependent on Pakistan and the maintenance of a large patronage network of clerics and fighters (Semple 2014). With the sanctuary and active support provided by Pakistan in terms of training, funding, munitions and supplies, the Taliban regrouped and launched an increasingly successful insurgency that expanded in scale and geographical scope. In mid-2008, Seth Jones (2010) reported that 'the United States [had] collected fairly solid evidence of senior level complicity [in Pakistan's intelligence services support to the Taliban].' Wiegand (2017: 17) notes that many Afghans in government-controlled areas perceive the Taliban as a group acting in the interest of Pakistan

rather than legitimate 'jihadists'. A religious leader we interviewed in 2009 explained, 'the Taliban are not fighting for the will of God and country but to protect foreign interests in Afghanistan,' although he added that foot soldiers primarily fight for money or out of anger at the abuses committed by government or international forces (Author interview, Jalalabad, 2009).

Elements of the political marketplace in the functioning of the Taliban insurgency can also be seen in their accumulation strategies and administration of patronage networks. While they have relied on local taxation as a source of income, they have also been linked to drug smuggling, predatory economic activities, transnational criminal networks and international fund-raising, and pay-offs from pro-government forces for the protection of assets to finance their activities and their network of fighters. They have used financial incentives to recruit poor farmers and unemployed young men as fighters and have gained local acquiescence by providing entitlements, livelihoods and benefits such as stipends for wedding expenses and Hajj trips, motorbikes and other gifts. Michael Semple describes the movement as a 'massive redistributive enterprise, forcefully accumulating resources and channelling them' to those loyal to them (Semple 2014). Even so, some suggest (e.g. Schmeidl 2010: 10) that the failure of government initiatives to buy-off lower level Taliban members 'demonstrate the limits to the monetization of the political marketplace' and the degree to which political loyalty could be bought by the highest bidder.

Yet, despite efforts to provide an alternative to Afghanistan's post-2001 predatory order, their brutality and exclusivist ideology have continued to alienate most Afghan citizens and communities, especially in areas where a history of mass atrocities has predisposed populations to oppose them. In localities under their effective control, their predatory rule has often provoked local backlash. Abusive practices include the forced conscription of youth, kidnapping

and ransoming, assassinations, corruption and criminality, and forcibly taking wives for their commanders. While their exclusivist conception of justice, which promotes *hadood* – or corporal punishment for criminal offenses – and extreme gender segregation has some appeal, it remains contested among Islamic jurists and among the larger population. In Afghanistan's crowded marketplace, the Taliban appear to have a ceiling to their reach, both militarily and in their powers to morally persuade.

The Logic of Civicness: the role of Civil Society

We suggest that the logic of civicness can be most clearly discerned in Afghan conceptions and practices of civil society – as defined by Afghan citizens themselves. To explore instances and practices of civicness, this article draws on a civil society dialogue process we facilitated in Afghanistan that investigated the dynamics of violence at local levels, and captured some of the complex ways in which citizens understand, manage and respond to risk and insecurity during a specific period: 2009–2012 – the peak of President Karzai's consolidation of his system of governance. It draws on consultations and dialogues with more than 200 Afghan citizens across a range of social groups, including professors and local teachers, religious and community leaders, youth, civil society and community-based activists from across eight provinces (Balkh, Baghlan, Herat, Takhar, Nangarhar, Kabul, Khost and Kandahar).[7] Such an analysis of local realities and social actions through multiple dialogues illustrates how Afghan experiences of trauma and insecurity have generated a deeply normative understanding of civil society – one that seeks to promote the values of a 'just society' while informing the modes of action possible in a context of predatory governance and violent insurgency.

The research project was co-designed and facilitated with Afghan researchers and activists to manage, at least in part, ethical concerns permeating the entire process, including issues of positionality and power relations as they play out in conflict areas (Sultana 2005; Herr and Anderson 2005). Participants were selected in such a way as to capture different perspectives, genders, ages, social positions, and different 'regions' of the country that represent the diverse political, social and security experiences that exist. It is important to note that participants were not intended to be statistically representative nor representative of the entire range of actors and opinions. Indeed, there were biases towards those concerned about the 'common good', those engaged and/or seeking to play a role in their communities, and those willing to share their ideas and experiences.

Interviews and dialogues were conducted in the format of in-depth conversations, with the use of open-ended questions aimed at triggering discussions on their lived experiences of insecurity, as well as their ideas for what might constitute a more legitimate and stable political order. Of particular interest was how relations with political authorities – e.g. external actors, state and local-level officials, and informal powerbrokers – were perceived and managed. Because the term civil society – or *jamea-e-madani* – is largely understood in Afghanistan as 'signifying civilized society' (Schmeidl 2009), the term acted as a useful entry point for engaging the 'moral imagination' of individuals who wished to reflect on and redefine the social contexts they shared and to consider the kind of society they wished (Bakhtin 1989; Taylor 2004). At times, the format of discussions (e.g. individual interviews, single-identity dialogues, or mixed dialogues) had to be adapted last minute to account for security considerations – for example, in locales where political authority was more consolidated, e.g. in Balk province, participants preferred individual interviews over group dialogues as they feared potential surveillance by participants who might be linked to political authorities. The series of interviews and smaller dialogues (each between six to ten participants) largely took place in

provincial capitals but included participants from surrounding areas, urban and rural. Two larger dialogues consisting of over 120 plus individuals from across the country took place in Kabul and Mazar in 2011.

In Afghanistan, citizen and community efforts to both manage risk and envision a different way of life are greatly determined by their experiences of wartime violence, their perceptions and interactions with the structures and agents of security and authority at different levels, and their own (competing) ideas of what constitutes a just, secure and inclusive order. Across dialogues, a sense of profound disappointment was pervasive: participants had expected a transition from violence and repression but instead watched 'the same actors and groups who destroyed the country benefit from the intervention.' 'The system is bad at its core,' exclaimed a young female teacher in Baghlan (2011), while a community leader from a village in Nangarhar echoed, 'this system is rigged.' A young man from Balk explained, 'to have real power here, you need money, guns and connections' (Mazar-e-Sharif, 2011). Over time, between 2009 and 2012, most participants in the dialogues spoke of 'collusion' between various parties to the conflict, describing the cycle of instability as a 'mutual enterprise' where belligerents from opposing sides use insecurity as a cover for personal and political ambitions. A young Kabuli man, explained, 'the problems are interlinked, it is like a game, or a chain where all have personal financial interests' in maintaining insecurity (Kabul, 2011).

By 2012, the abuse of power was increasingly seen as an organizing principle of the post-2001 political order, whereby elites derive power both from external actors and their ability to manipulate divisions within a fragmented society through ethnic and factional mobilization. These dynamics of insecurity and marginalization produced by the political marketplace had also generated opportunities for the Taliban to strengthen their power, especially by claiming the ability to resolve the many local conflicts at the community level that have become

politicized and instrumentalised even if they still acknowledged the central role external players (namely Pakistan) played in financing the insurgency. For the participants, the expansion and consolidation of the Taliban is an outcome both of abusive policies by state actors and of international engagement policies that weaken (and corrupt) civil society and traditional structures for mediating disputes. Religious and tribal leaders described how externally-backed strongmen were disrupting social mores, undermining traditional processes for resolving conflict and redirecting development down violent paths. They discussed the loss of their authority and ability to mediate disputes within and across communities. Youth and grassroots activists also explained how they struggled to address challenges, advocate and coordinate civic action in an evolving security climate and context where donor-support is channelled to urban NGOs, many of which were controlled by politically-connected individuals.

Where questions of societal disintegration and public (in)security loom large, they held a deeply normative understanding of civil society, which they defined in reaction to their lived experiences of insecurity and deprivation along with their perceptions of who has benefitted from the 'business of war'. They contrasted civil society with a violent society dominated by predatory actors, both state and non-state. This accords with other research that found that, in Afghanistan, civil society is conceived as 'a different way of life, one that is not dominated by *jang* and *tofang salars* [gunlords, warlords]' (Schmeidl 2009: 69). *Civil* society was not distinguished from the state but from *un-civil* society, and represented a different kind of life across political, economic, social and private spheres. It was seen as both a goal to achieve and an approach to remedy the current ills of society including insecurity, societal disintegration and material deprivation.

The notions of 'stateness' and civility were salient in their conceptions of civil society. Different visions of state-society relations were certainly expressed, ranging from an Islamic state to religious freedom and

tolerance in a more secular state, but the notion of 'state-ness' was emphasized by a common language calling for legitimate leadership and national unity underpinning these competing visions. Nearly all assumed the need for a state strong enough to monopolize the legitimate use of violence, enforce minimal rules and facilitate peaceful relations, and provide minimally adequate services of justice, health and education. Civility, in contrast, emphasized the role of people in producing their own ideal of 'democracy' or participatory governance rooted in local values and religion, and became associated with the individual and group actions aimed at creating new kinds of political, security and civil arrangements at local and national levels. Encouraging civility was seen as central to the creation of a shared sense of identity and citizenship, in order to go beyond the logic of persistent rent-seeking and material benefits prevalent in the current political order.

Empirically, dialogue participants also applied the normative conception of civil society to the range of state, non-state, and economic actors. For example, professionalized NGOs were rarely included as part of civil society, but nor were the 'uncivil' armed elements that many social scientists often speak about within civil society. Instead, civil society included many state, non-state, religious, economic and even kin-based actors normally excluded from Western definitions of civil society – as long as they worked towards the 'public interest' and 'common good' as opposed to factional and personal gain. They spoke of poets who used satire to challenge the *status quo*; the policeman who stops a suicide bomber without regards for his life; the public sector worker who did his job well in the face of intimidation and corruption; the mullah who supported educating girls in his community; and, the activist exposing abuses in the security sector. When conceived in this way, they applied qualities of civility and the public interest to measure which actors should be included in civil society, and to allocate their functions.

Among participants, civicness could be found in individual acts of 'moral courage', in creative expression, and in strengthening 'solidarity' or 'stability' networks that can challenge the influence of uncivil powerbrokers and promote a new sense of public interest among the population. Central, they explained, was the need for strategies to 'connect and communicate' to build trust relationships and dampen down fear across communities. In the dialogues, Afghan citizens spoke of the micro-actions people took to resist the war system, to prevent the further fragmentation of the country, and to challenge political authorities (inside and outside the state) who claimed to authentically represent them. They emphasized actions that encourage civicness across communities and individuals – whether regional, ethnic, or party – to reduce the influence of alternative powerbrokers exploiting societal tensions and institutions for personal, political and material gain. For many, especially those in the provinces, the value of developing a networked approach lay in creating secure spaces for association, dialogue and collective action, while providing protection and expanding constituencies for peace.

Numerous examples, however small, of individuals and groups cooperating across social, geographical and other divides to break through client networks, decrease their isolation, and strengthen connections were cited. For example, modern and traditional civil society actors have engaged in dialogues despite differences in values and agendas to discuss political, security and social issues. Women's groups have worked with religious *shuras* and leaders to promote women's rights within cultural and religious frameworks. In the east, representatives of local *shuras*, modern NGOs, and religious networks have worked together to publicize egregious examples of corruption and abuse, despite intimidation (Dialogues, Nangarhar, 2010). Other village elders mentioned how they formed consultation groups attended by farmers, community elders, teachers, drivers, and businessmen to discuss how to best resolve their problems (ibid).

Connecting these local associations into a national network of solidarity emerged as a shared vision but violence and insecurity prevented their ability to stitch together their efforts and activities. Many of them interpreted the series of conflicts as one long war against civil society: violence did not simply engulf civilians and local communities, it has been directed deliberately at the cultural and traditional values and structures in society. Over the past three decades, intellectuals, tribal and community leaders, religious elders, and moderate political forces have been the first casualties of war. These groups were targeted equally by communists, *mujahedeen* commanders and the Taliban during the 1980s and 1990s, and then again, after 2001, by insurgent forces, corrupt officials and local pro-government strongmen enjoying international support. They described how internal and external forces continue to undermine civil society through violence, co-option, and political disenfranchisement. Across all dialogues, youth believed local officials and powerbrokers intimidate students to reduce their potential to organize and challenge the established order. Many, especially in insecure areas of Nangarhar, discussed the fear of being associated with the 'wrong crowd' by the Taliban, US forces or the government. Other reports have explored how religious leaders became increasingly squeezed between the Taliban and the government-aligned jihadi warlords, 'creat(ing) a dynamic which forces religious leaders to keep a low profile or join the militant opposition (Borchgrevink and Harpviken 2010: 10). Many repeatedly complained that government and Western actors only sought assistance when they required public support, and that this type of co-optation decreased their influence in their communities.

It is worth noting that the themes of civil society, bottom-up engagement, and grassroots mobilization did indeed become increasingly central in international policy discourses and practices in Afghanistan. An active civil society was expected to provide a vehicle for development, a buffer against corrupt actors breeding violence, and a means for fighting a growing insurgency. But by 2012, foreign donors increasingly questioned their large investments in civil society, often asking a variation of the same question: 'where is Afghan civil society and why isn't it standing up?' (Interviews with EU, US, and UN officials, Kabul and Mazar, 2011–2012). In explaining this 'failure of civil society', many officials reverted to Afghan stereotypes, often stating in one way or another that Afghans lacked the traits that allowed others to democratize and develop in other countries, and were instead driven by Islamic, tribal and sectarian identities inconsistent with the creation of a strong civil society.

Afghan participants, however, told another story and largely faulted external actors for their role in 'corrupting' society and nourishing a violent political marketplace that undermined their ability to resist regressive forces manipulating their insecurity. Many believed that foreign actors fail to appreciate local dynamics of legitimization and power, and instead turn to inappropriate and reductionist cultural frameworks to frame strategies. In particular, external actors focused on security are seen as valorising the role of tribes or other 'traditional actors' with little consideration of the realities of a society transformed by extreme violence and mass migration. When citizens try to lodge complaints, or seek support for community mobilization, they remain unheard: foreigners speak only to 'armed actors, government officials and English-speaking elites' while the Kabul government is 'unresponsive, like a fortress' (Interviews and dialogues, Jalalabad, 2011). For example, Thomas Ruttig (2010: 9–10) notes how some communities established councils or committees to protect against attacks and settle disputes, such as the Tribal Solidarity Council, the Dzadran Unity Meeting, and the Mangal Central Shura, but these were ignored by Kabul and foreign actors, which left them isolated and vulnerable to the Taliban.

Moreover, they questioned donor approaches to civil society that focused on creating professionalized service-delivery NGOs, which encouraged rent-seeking and discouraged Afghan values of volunteerism and unity. 'NGOs operate as private contractors', some argued, 'competing with one another and private enterprises for foreign funds' (Dialogues, Mazar and Kabul, 2011). Indeed, many NGOs were created in response to funding programs and controlled by politically-connected individuals. In their view, Western-manufactured civil society had been captured by elites who claimed to act in the public good but instead lined their pockets and those of their followers. In response, grassroots actors increasingly preferred unregistered organizations and networks to not only make a distinction between 'business' NGOs and 'public interest' groups but also to avoid 'co-option' by government and international actors. The type of external support that would be beneficial, they suggested, was for external actors to scale up their protective role, reconsider close alliances with armed and corrupt actors, reduce the large volumes of aid and redirect support to local activities that strengthen links between communities, recreate a shared sense of purpose and identity, and provide a safe space to hold powerbrokers to account.

In this context, reinvigorating civicness reveals the need to think through the dynamics of political authority, public security and societal disintegration. For many, attaining security is less about the introduction of more armed groups or security instruments but about creating new kinds of civil society arrangements that can promote an alternative vision and organizational framework for achieving justice and stability.

Conclusion

In this article, we have shown that the CRP framework of public authority, developed largely in an African context, can be usefully applied to explain the persistence of violence in the Afghan case. Public authority at all levels in Afghanistan is pervaded by the logic of the political marketplace – something that has been fuelled by international aid and military intervention. The insecurity and injustice experienced by ordinary Afghans has created the basis for the logic of moral populism espoused by the Taliban. In all parts of Afghanistan, it is also possible to identify a logic of civicness but its potential is constrained by the dominance of the other two logics. This theoretical approach offers a valuable corrective to the dominant approaches in the field, which tend to stress either state-building or a focus on the local and traditional.

The framework, however, needs to be integrated into a broader framework that considers the logics of external players. Persistent violence can partly be explained in terms of a sort of myopia on the part of the international community. It can be argued that external players fail to take the prevailing logics into account because they either believe in the construction of a Weberian state or else they have somewhat romantic notions about nurturing the local and traditional. But equally, myopia may be a structural construction; external behaviour can also be explained by the War on Terror and the fact that for the some of the outside actors, the priority is to ally with those, usually former *mujahedeen* commanders, who will help them in their self-perpetuating goal of killing or capturing those considered to be terrorists.

The international community is not, of course, monolithic and the CRP framework could help to underpin efforts to open-up alternative policies. There are those, particularly among the Europeans, who are aiming to contribute towards stability for Afghanistan and who believe that civil society could help them in achieving this goal. Yet our findings show that their efforts to support civil society usually through funding are obstructed by the pervasiveness of the dominant logics. Part of the problem is the tendency to view civil society in empirical terms as a combination of groups and associations, rather than in terms of the way in which civil society can contribute to an alternative logic of

civicness. Or put in another way, civil society can be interpreted as those who perform a pre-figurative politics that could potentially provide the kernel of a logic of civicness. On this understanding, funding may be positively harmful, infecting civil society with the logic of the political marketplace. Rather, what is important is political engagement, offering deliberative forums, channels of communication and genuine justice mechanisms, that marginalize other ways of doing politics whether it is money (the political marketplace) or extremist ideology (moral populism) and that preserves, sustains and extends the sort of politics (civicness) performed by civil society and that could contribute to security.

Notes

[1] The Conflict Research Programme, funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID), investigates the drivers of conflict in the Middle East and Africa. The conceptual framework builds on an earlier programme funded by DFID, the Justice and Security Research Programme (JSRP).

[2] Weber defined the modern state as the organisation that successfully upholds the monopoly of legitimate violence. He explained the modern state as a rational, bureaucratic, law based organisation. See Weber 1947.

[3] Their worth can be seen in the estimated price individuals have paid for provincial level appointments, estimated at $50,000–$100,000 by NATO officials interviewed (Kabul, July 2011).

[4] For example, events in 2012 like the Quran burnings by US soldiers, the video of US soldiers urinating on dead Taliban members in January, the killing spree by a US army officer that left sixteen civilians dead in March, combined with unpopular night raids and airstrikes, fuel suspicions over the 'anti-Muslim' intentions of external actors.

[5] Detailed findings from field research conducted by Theros in 2010–2011 supported by the French Development Agency as part of a larger project on Regressive Networks and Globalization will be published in a forthcoming article.

[6] For detailed history of the Taliban, see e.g. Cramer and Goodhand (2002), Edwards (2001), Rashid (2001), Shahzad (2011), and Strick van Linschoten and Kuehn (2012).

[7] For more detail on participants and methodology used, please see (Theros and Kaldor 2011) and (Theros 2012).

Competing Interests

The authors have no competing interests to declare.

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