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**THESIS**

**UNDERSTANDING WARLORDISM**

by

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March 2007

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**UNDERSTANDING WARLORDISM**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

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## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this thesis is to understand warlordism, and in particular, the warlord environment in Afghanistan. Weak central authority in the state of Afghanistan has been a political tradition due largely to a patronage system of governance. This weak political structure allows warlord military organizations to draw resources from the environment. Warlord organizations use armed force to access these resources. Warlords also wield political power and use their military organizations as a base to expand their power and fame. There are numerous population bases of support, and not all are good for the growth of stable organizations. However, warlords are able to develop their political organizations reliably because of the stability provided by their military organizations. Because of these factors, the warlord Ahmed Rashid Dostum, a man with minimal political education, has slowly but surely built a political organization based on ethnicity.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this thesis is to understand warlordism, and in particular, the warlord environment in Afghanistan. Weak central authority in the state of Afghanistan has been a political tradition due largely to a patronage system of governance. This weak political structure allows warlord military organizations to draw resources from the environment. Warlord organizations use armed force to access these resources. Warlords also wield political power and use their military organizations as a base to expand their power and fame. There are numerous population bases of support, and not all are good for the growth of stable organizations. However, warlords are able to develop their political organizations reliably because of the stability provided by their military organizations. Because of these factors, the warlord Ahmed Rashid Dostum, a man with minimal political education, has slowly but surely built a powerful political organization.

Abdul Rashid Dostum is an ethnic Uzbek Afghan warlord. Involved in Afghan internal politics for over 20 years, his fame spread globally after 9/11 when he became one of the Northern Alliance leaders fighting with American Special Forces (SF) against the Taliban. Dostum's activities span the periods of Afghan monarchy, communist rule, Soviet occupation, civil war, Taliban rule, and the current Afghan government. When the communist regime collapsed in 1992, Dostum, a former communist general, established himself as a warlord in the north. His activities provide an abundance of data illustrating various aspects of warlordism, including the nature of his power bases and how his power base changed as the Afghan regime climate changed.

The relevance of the warlord problem is revealed in failed states such as Afghanistan. In Afghanistan, the U.S. faces a political situation where historically there have been several back and forth cycles of weak central state rule and civil war. Reporter Masood Farivar describes how the warlord problem has been overshadowed by the Taliban insurgency that seeks to overrun the state.<sup>1</sup> Essentially, the warlord problem points to the enduring problem of the Afghan state: weak central control of the grass

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<sup>1</sup> Masood Farivar, "Washington's Blind Spot in Afghanistan," *Wall Street Journal* Jun 21, 2004.

roots population in the periphery. It has been seven years since the U.S. forces decapitated the Taliban regime, installing first an interim and then a democratically elected Afghan government. Although democratic institutions take years to develop, the plan for Afghanistan is running out of time.

Warlords are defined by their military legitimacy and their desire for political power, fame, and wealth. Rashid Dostum's rise to his current position as one of the most powerful military leaders in Afghanistan resulted from his desire for power and fame and presents a challenge to the Afghan state as it struggles for peace and stability.

Patronage as a form of state governance is an inherently weak system. Patronage politics in Afghanistan has shallow roots, revealed by weak state policies. As long as patronage (supported by monetary disbursement) flows to local leaders, nominal allegiance is paid to the central government and governance is left to traditional organizations and local strongmen. Patronage ties are much stronger at local levels; there strongmen become warlords and seek to widen their political powers, undermining the central government. Foreign patronage of warlords also compromises the state's ability to govern locally.

Warlord economics revolves around a variety of potential revenues for financing warlord groups. There are four types of resources: natural resources, taxes, illicit activities, and foreign aid. Under the communist regime, Dostum ran a militia funded by the government, and resources for operations came from a stable and simple environment. When the Afghan central authority disintegrated and the state plunged into civil war, the opportunities for revenue abounded, but the number of adversaries increased. This new economic environment became very complex.

Warlord organizations flourish amidst an environment of weak central state authority. In simple environments, the warlord exercises direct control over his subordinates. In highly complex environments, a warlord patron network may extend horizontally to other warlords, state institutions, international actors, illegal-clandestine actors and other partners.

Dostum's early organization, the 53<sup>rd</sup> Division, was a pure military organization, with dedicated revenues from the state and foreign donors. Even in the 1980's and early

1990's, Dostum funneled capital from the state both legally and illegally, as the customs fees he collected at Hairatan should have been forwarded to Kabul. This was a complex situation. But due to the weakness of the state, there was never really a risk that the state would stop his illegal activities. Thus, the environment in the 1980s could be considered stable. When the Najibullah regime fell, Dostum commanded a division-sized element, probably the largest organization operating at the tactical level. He established standing operating procedures through fear and ruthless leadership to ensure consistent behavior from his subordinates.

In terms of popular support, because traditional society does not extend beyond the local level, cross ethnic political movements may be difficult to establish without the support of one base ethno-linguistic population. To expand a political base of support across ethnic groups, the threat or use of force can accelerate to consolidation of various political groups. A warlord like Dostum, who has slowly grown a strong military and ethnic power base, may prove to have better success in the long run surviving in the turbulent Afghan political environment.

Dostum can be a positive force by providing an alternative to the Pushtun and Jihadi political elements in the rest of the country. It will be interesting to see which group is better capable of subduing or integrating tribal society into national level politics. Dostum has shown that a disciplined, secular militia can form a strong base to mobilize ethnic populations. However, since it is not clear that tribal law can work at the national level, what group can better subdue the unstable and violent tribal society?

Warlords will be brought into the national regime when the government gains control of the sovereign right to the use of force within the state boundaries. This includes the government's ability to regulate and tax the sources of warlord revenue. Taxation and representation are the means and building blocks for a functioning democratic state. Implementing these means is integral to replacing the weak option of patronage style governance. These means allow the state to build institutional bodies that can effectively govern the populace. Until the central authority seizes their role of governing in the countryside, warlords like Dostum will hold tight to their place in Afghan society.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to understand warlordism, and in particular, the warlord environment in Afghanistan. Weak central authority in the state of Afghanistan has been a political tradition due largely to a patronage system of governance. This weak political structure allows warlord military organizations to draw resources from the environment. Warlord organizations use armed force to access these resources. Warlords also wield political power and use their military organizations as a base to expand their power and fame. There are numerous population bases of support, and not all are good for the growth of stable organizations. However, warlords are able to develop their political organizations reliably because of the stability provided by their military organizations. Because of these factors, the warlord Ahmed Rashid Dostum, a man with minimal formal political education, has slowly but surely built a political organization based on ethnicity.

The relevance of the warlord problem is revealed in failed states such as Afghanistan. In Afghanistan, the U.S. faces a political situation where historically there have been several back and forth cycles of weak central state rule and civil war. Reporter Masood Farivar describes how the warlord problem has been overshadowed by the Taliban insurgency that seeks to overrun the state.<sup>2</sup> Essentially, the warlord problem points to the enduring problem of the Afghan state: weak central control of the grass roots population in the peripheries. It has been seven years since the U.S. forces decapitated the Taliban regime, installing first an interim and then a democratically elected Afghan government. Although democratic institutions take years to develop, the plan for Afghanistan is running out of time.

Many have warned that since the September 11, 2001 attacks on the United States, Afghanistan's weak government has allowed warlord organizations to proliferate.

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<sup>2</sup> Masood Farivar, "Washington's Blind Spot in Afghanistan," *Wall Street Journal* June 21, 2004. While crushing the Taliban insurgency is critical, the U.S. must abandon its single-minded focus on military operations against radicals. The Taliban still enjoy some support in the south largely because the region's residents have not benefited from their fall. Reconstruction is not happening, and the security situation has not improved there or elsewhere in the country. It's just as important to give Afghans hope for the future by focusing resources on such efforts.

Soon these warlords may become too powerful for the U.S.-backed Afghan regime to deal with politically, economically, and militarily.

With \$2.6 billion plus in poppies and another couple of billion that come through in the regular smuggling world ... at what point do [the warlords] not need us anymore? At what point, with all of this money coming in, do they look at us ... and say, 'Thank you very much, we are quite happy with the way it is. I have my big house, my militia, so don't [mess] with me.'<sup>3</sup>

The country is in a vicious cycle: the longer Kabul goes without reining in the warlords, the more difficult that crucial task will become. The longer the warlords rule in the countryside, the less faith the people of Afghanistan will ever have in the central government.

#### **A. RESEARCH QUESTION**

The primary research question of this thesis will be: What is the nature of a warlord's rise to power?

#### **B. METHODOLOGY**

To elaborate on the primary research question, this thesis uses theory and historical evidence to explore each of six specific research questions. Each succeeding research question adds additional understanding. The final question provides a conclusion to help explain how and why warlords operate as they do

1. What is a "warlord"?
2. How do patronage systems affect governance?
3. What are warlords' sources of wealth?
4. How does organizational theory illuminate the nature of warlords and their organizations?
5. What is significant about the population base for political mobilization?
6. What is the nature of warlords' political organization in places such as Afghanistan?

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<sup>3</sup> Kathy Gannon, "Afghanistan Unbound;" *Foreign Affairs* 83, no. 3 (May/June 2004), 35. Bearden warns that the warlords and factional leaders may not be willing to cooperate with the United States for much longer, since they will soon have enough resources to strike out on their own.

Each question is answered with reference to an academic theory that sheds light on a different aspect of warlordism. Historical and contemporary case study material is used as supporting data to illustrate the theoretical points. The career of the Afghan warlord Abdul Rashid Dostum will be drawn upon to provide this data.

### **C. ABDUL RASHID DOSTUM: CASE STUDY**

Abdul Rashid Dostum is an ethnic Uzbek Afghan warlord. Involved in Afghan internal politics for over 20 years, his fame spread globally after 9/11 when he became one of the Northern Alliance leaders fighting with American Special Forces (SF) against the Taliban. Dostum's activities span the periods of Afghan monarchy, communist rule, Soviet occupation, civil war, Taliban rule, and the current Afghan government. When the communist regime collapsed in 1992, Dostum, a former communist general, established himself as a warlord in the north. His activities provide an abundance of data illustrating various aspects of warlordism, including the nature of his power bases, and how his power base changed as the Afghan regime climate changed.

### **D. ORGANIZATION**

This thesis contains seven chapters, including this introduction. Chapter II begins with a general description of patronage systems, and presents historical aspects of patronage in Afghanistan, including discussion of centralized patronage, weak state policies, foreign sponsorship and state weakness, the decline of Pushtun dominance, warlord patronage and the role of foreign states in the patronage system. The chapter ends with an analysis of examples of patronage interactions in which Dostum has been involved.

Chapter III describes the sources of Afghanistan's revenue and the revenue available to warlords. After a brief introduction of the four classifications of revenue, a short theoretical piece on stability and complexity provides a method to assess the warlord economic environment.<sup>4</sup> The discussion then returns to a more detailed

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<sup>4</sup> The author's understanding of organization theory is derived from classes with Eric Janzen at the U.S. Naval Postgraduate School in 2006, including Organizational Design for Special Operations. The application of organization theory to violent non-state actors is discussed in Troy S. Thomas, Stephen D. Kiser and William D. Casebeer, *Warlords Rising : Confronting Violent Non-State Actors* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2005), 254.

discussion of the four sources of warlord revenues: natural resources, taxes, illicit revenues, and government funds and foreign aid. This is followed by an analysis to show that globalization, though not a direct cause of warlordism, has impacted warlord revenues by increasing the demand for many of the above-mentioned resources. The chapter closes with an assessment of the Afghan environment's complexity and uncertainty.

Chapter IV analyzes the effect of traditional social structures on the stability of armed and political groups. This chapter is concerned with the interrelated facets of armed groups, ethnicity, tribe, *qawm*, and political mobilization. The term *qawm* refers to a local grouping of persons based on location often related to family or profession. The discussion begins with an overview of Afghan ethnic groups and a look at how the traditional social structure of the tribes affects armed groups. Next, the role of khans and *qawms* is analyzed, followed by a discussion of village level politics. After a brief discussion of *qawm* based militias, the chapter goes on to describe Ahmed Rashid Dostum's militia, which is not *qawm* based but merit based. A theoretical discussion of warlords and their warriors draws on material developed by noted experts on warlords. This is followed by an analysis of Dostum's leadership and adversarial relationships.

Chapter V traces how warlords build political legitimacy from their military base. It begins with an overview of the political changes in modern Afghanistan. It next provides a background on the origins of Dostum's Junbesh party, followed by discussion of the Turkic population base that has become the political base for the organization. This is followed by a description of the gradual change in Dostum's activities from military to politics. The chapter concludes with a discussion of Dostum's political campaigning, political demands and compromises, and his difficult public relations.

Chapter VI, the conclusion, summarizes the main points of the thesis.

## **E. WHAT IS A WARLORD?**

In this section, a working definition of the concept of a warlord is presented, followed by brief biographical information on Dostum, whose history as an Afghan warlord serves as the main case study in this thesis.

Drawing on extensive field research, Antonio Giustozzi offers a definition of a warlord focused on distinguishing warlords from other non-state actors. The warlord, he says, “is recognized as a legitimate and maybe even charismatic military leader, because of his ability to provide important services to subordinate commanders, such as leadership, coordination, logistics and possibly others including foreign relations.”<sup>5</sup> Thus, an important aspect of the warlord definition is military legitimacy.<sup>6</sup>

To define a warlord as one who practices military action provides a basis on which to build a more comprehensive explanation of the phenomenon. But as Giustozzi notes, the use of force is a dangerous proposition even for a warlord. “At any given time during the course of the war some of [the] actors might have an interest in perpetuating the conflict. However, once fortunes are accumulated, war and the uncertainty of outcome which characterize it become a problem.”<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, Giustozzi notes that successful Chinese warlords of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century showed benevolent behavior.<sup>8</sup>

A well-developed academic approach to the concept of warlords is based on an economic point of view. Many scholars have studied the economics of warlordism.<sup>9</sup> Through this lens, the warlord is ruthless in seeking selfish aggrandizement of wealth and resources.<sup>10</sup> As practitioners of the use of force, warlords are what Mackinlay and Keegan classify as “true warriors” rather than “true soldiers.”<sup>11</sup> An overwhelming economic motive drives the use of force, and the use of force itself is not uniformly a military manifestation. Sasha Lezhnev provides a particularly insightful discussion of the

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<sup>5</sup> A. Giustozzi, *The Debate on Warlordism: The Importance OF Military Legitimacy* (London: Crisis States Program, [2005]), 14.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>9</sup> John Mackinlay, *Defining Warlords*, Monograph 43, (London: Center for Defence Studies, 2000), 1. “Warlordism implies a diversity of activities and cultural structures, and a definitive picture must also involve other actors, including anthropologists and military experts in addition to the humanitarians who are at the epicenter of the ‘economy of civil war’ approach.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. 9 “Firstly, the warlord was not a mindless barbarian returning an ungoverned population back to a tribal phase in their evolution....He was a product of his time and of his environment, intensely modern, not regressive or backward looking. Secondly, the warlord was above all exploiting the same global marketplace and universal culture that increasingly dominated organized society in the world at large.”

<sup>11</sup> Mackinlay, 9 “The proposition that warlords were not (using Keegan’s definition) true warriors who would stand and fight in a disciplined, Clausewitzian manner, but real warriors who followed a Cossack fighting tradition and saw war as an opportunity for profit and as a way of life, was not new.”

warrior education and worldview, noting that in regards to their background and motivation, warlords are “people who are driven overwhelmingly by personal power, glory, and monetary gain and who are ready to sacrifice thousands of lives, land, and property for that power.”<sup>12</sup> Lezhnev claims that the central motivation of the warlord, in addition to monetary resources, is the quest for “wealth, power, and fame.”<sup>13</sup>

This thesis accepts the idea that warlords share two main characteristics: they have military legitimacy, and they are motivated by political power, wealth, and fame.

## **F. DOSTUM’S BACKGROUND**

Giustozzi notes that Dostum might have been considered a warlord as early as 1992 when, during the post-communist regime, he controlled what was the only mobile fighting force of the former Afghan state, the 53<sup>rd</sup> Division.<sup>14</sup> Dostum used the militia to gain control of one-tenth of Afghanistan by 1994. His military legitimacy, recognized even during the communist regime, is unquestionable. Equally important is his evident desire for wealth, power, and fame. During the 1992-1996 Afghan civil war, Dostum co-founded and headed the Junbesh-I Milli-yi Islami, the National Islamic Movement, and over time built a following that increased both his political base as well as his military power.

Dostum used his military skills to rise above his humble origins. He was born into a poor Uzbek farming family and worked in the natural gas fields near Sheberghan. He eventually joined the military, becoming a Communist party member during the Khalq and Najibullah regimes. With only a few years of primary school, he has been mocked for his lack of education.<sup>15</sup> His reputation as a classic rough and tough strongman, the “Mike Tyson of Afghan politics,”<sup>16</sup> reinforces his political fame as a warlord.

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<sup>12</sup> Sasha Lezhnev, *Crafting Peace: Strategies to Deal with Warlords in Collapsing States* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2005), 2-4.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>14</sup> Antonio Giustozzi, *The Ethnicisation of an Afghan Faction: Junbesh-I I-Milli from its Origins to the Presidential Elections* (London: Crisis States Research Center,[2005]), 2.

<sup>15</sup> Antonio Giustozzi, *Respectable Warlords? The Politics of State building in Post-Taleban Afghanistan* (London: Crisis States Program,[2003]), 7.

<sup>16</sup> Anthony Davis, "Makeover for a Warlord," *Time* 159, no. 22 (June 3, 2002), 46.

Dostum began by setting up and managing security forces, the Jauzjani, to protect the gas fields in northern Afghanistan for the state-owned natural gas company. By the mid-1980's, he commanded a battalion of Jauzjani militia. Eventually, the government expanded the role of the Jauzjani forces. In 1988, Dostum's force was redesignated the 53<sup>rd</sup> Division, a mobile division with an internal security mission reporting directly to communist leader Najibullah. Dostum became Najibullah's security chief. As the Soviet war machine retreated home, mujahideen warriors began a rebellion against Najibullah. Dostum's Soviet-financed division of hardy Uzbek and Turkmen warriors became Najibullah's de facto national mobile strike force.<sup>17</sup> Dostum first gained fame that year after he dispatched the force to Kandahar to thwart a coup by Durrani mujahideen and army officers.

Dostum came to preeminence after the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989. Under the communist regime, General Dostum consolidated his militia force in northern Afghanistan, centered on Mazar-I Sharif.<sup>18</sup> As the communist regime weakened, it sought to reassert control in the north by placing ethnic Pushtun General Rasul in power in Hairatan garrison. Dostum successfully raised support for the garrison commander, General Mumin, and rallied opposition to the regime's replacement. In March, 1992, Dostum defeated Rasul's 18<sup>th</sup> Division in Balkh and seized control of Mazar-I Sharif. The transition in Mazar met little resistance and the north remained stable under Dostum's military rule.

With the imminent fall of Kabul to jihadi forces, Dostum turned against Najibullah and reached an agreement with Ahmed Shah Massood, the Tajik Islamist military leader, to enter Kabul in order to expel the Pushtun jihadi leadership. This began a period of broken alliances, failed peace agreements and the civil war of warlords versus Jihadis that devastated Kabul and the countryside for five years. During this time, Dostum alternately supported the primary groups in the area: the jihadi Pushtuns under Hekmatyar and the Tajiks under Massood.

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<sup>17</sup> Antonio Giustozzi, *Respectable Warlords? The Politics of State building in Post-Taleban Afghanistan* (London: Crisis States Program,[2003]), 7.

<sup>18</sup> Barnett R. Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan: State Formation and Collapse in the International System* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), 159.

After the fall of Kabul's centralized authority in 1992, Dostum's force was the law of the land and in his militia he had his power base. During the 1990's, he went back and forth in alliances with almost every Afghan civil war faction on the battlefield, including the ideologically motivated Taliban. During this period, Dostum co-established Junbesh-I Milli-yi Islami with other Uzbek and Ismailia commanders, and by 1993, he had consolidated control in the north and began to establish a political stance, all the while exhibiting warlord characteristics. Dostum's political rise was aided by carefully chosen advisors, including former Communist party members. Under pressure from his Uzbekistani patrons, he spoke in favor of a unified state of Afghanistan. However, in reality, he maintained virtual sovereign control over the north.<sup>19</sup>

The Taliban era brought Islamic fundamentalist rule to Kabul in 1996 and their control extended to the rest of Afghanistan's Northern provinces a year later. Dostum was driven into exile twice, in 1997 and again in 1998. He returned to Afghanistan in the spring of 2001 to fight along side Atta Mohammed in the Northern Alliance, against the Taliban in the hills south of Mazar-I Sharif.

Dostum's alliance with Atta has since disintegrated and they are now bitter rivals, with Atta controlling Mazar-I Sharif and Dostum controlling the areas to the north and west. Though he claims a deputy position in the state defense department, Dostum's failure to control Mazar, the capital of the north and key to the area's agricultural, oil and gas wealth, has weakened his political and economic strength.<sup>20</sup>

To summarize: Warlords have both military legitimacy and the desire for political power, fame, and wealth. Dostum meets this definition as one of the most powerful military leaders in Afghanistan; his own personal desire for power and fame presents a challenge to peace and stability in the struggling Afghan state.

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<sup>19</sup> Rubin, 275.

<sup>20</sup> Davis, *Makeover for a Warlord*, 46.



## **II. THE PATRONAGE SYSTEM**

Afghanistan has a tradition of the central government in Kabul acting as a patron to the countryside. At the same time, regional strongmen have their own regional patronage systems. These systems weaken national level government, especially in a state heavily dependent on foreign support. When weak states collapse, the regional strongmen fight each other for opportunities to obtain revenue that will strengthen and expand their own regional patronage networks.

This chapter describes the concept of patronage systems and the history of patronage systems in Afghanistan. As the chapter demonstrates, patronage yields an inherently weak system. Patronage ties are much stronger at local levels where leaders are closer to the populace. It is at the grassroots level that local strongmen become warlords and widen their political scope, thus weakening the central government from below. Foreign patronage of warlords further damages the ability of the state to govern at the local level.

### **A. GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF PATRONAGE SYSTEMS**

Patronage establishes allegiances among a group of people. The patron provides for the client, and the client gives allegiance to the patron. Warlord patronage networks consist of personal ties with the purpose of generating and allocating resources based on the priorities of the warlord. The simplest form of patronage is a single warlord and his band of warriors. The warlord is the patron; the warriors are his followers. This simple patronage system provides the manpower that runs a warlord organization. As the warlord's goals expand, his patronage may extend to other actors, such as political or commercial interests. The warlord himself may come under the patronage of another actor, such as a foreign state.

Warlord organizations blend warrior loyalties with political or business partnerships. A patron-client tie binds leaders to clients on the basis of personal trust. Cultural incentive structures often reinforce these patronage ties. Michael Mousseau uses

the concept of clientalism to describe business deals in non-Western societies.<sup>21</sup> Local ties create obligations based on various social “in-groups.” Contractual legal agreements and Western-style notions of legitimacy have little utility. Power is distributed from the patron to clients in the “in-group.”

When a member of the in-group does not fulfill his part of a bargain, there is no lawful way to regulate his actions, so other members of the in-group personally regulate that member’s behavior by making claims on his honor. The prospect of expelling a violator from the in-group is challenging due to strong family or religious bonds. This tradition conflicts with Western market capitalism, which espouses efficiency based on free market competition, legally binding contracts, and the laws of supply and demand. In the traditional setting, when the use of force is determined the appropriate means for policing within the network, the person who guarantees results and security is the warlord. Mousseau points out that “those with the most to lose ... are patrons and their lieutenants who hold privileged positions in the old clientalism hierarchies.”<sup>22</sup>

Applying these concepts to the situation in Afghanistan, it is clear that with Afghanistan's regime changes, new leaders fought to overcome the old elite. Upon assuming power, they reestablished the system of governing through the tribal patronage ties which continued to undermine an already poorly functioning bureaucracy. (More on tribal politics will be discussed in Chapter V.) Today, Afghan President Hamid Karzai is caught in a vicious cycle. He is trying to improve the efficiency and reach of the government; however, to remain in power, he must welcome incompetent warlords into the government, creating corruption and inefficiency.<sup>23</sup>

## **B. CENTRALIZED PATRONAGE IN AFGHANISTAN**

At the national level, the Durrani Pushtuns developed the patronage system in Afghanistan. Their dominance originated in the mid-eighteenth century, when Pushtun

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<sup>21</sup> Michael Mousseau, “Market Civilization and its Clash with Terror,” *International Security* 27, no. 3 (2003), 10.

<sup>22</sup> Michael Mousseau, “Market Civilization and its Clash with Terror,” *International Security* 27, no. 3 (2003), 10.

<sup>23</sup> Giustozzi, “Good States vs. Bad warlords,” 8. The Afghan government's problems are exacerbated by the fact that many current warlords and administrators dislike and do not trust the intelligentsia.

Ahmed Shah Durrani, based in Kandahar, established a system of patronage where Pushtuns of his tribe dominated other ethnic groups and Pushtuns of other tribes. By the end of the nineteenth century, Amir Abdu-Rahman, in a series of agreements with Russia and Britain, consolidated central Pushtun authority over the present-day borders of Afghanistan. Additionally, he established pockets of Pushtun settlement in northern Afghanistan, areas traditionally populated by other ethnic groups.<sup>24</sup> Pushtun involvement continues today. The previous Taliban regime and the current administration of Hamid Karzai show that the Pushtuns continue to be a force in national politics.

Of course, the tradition of patronage only works if the patron has funds and services to distribute to his clients. At the local level, khans and landlords associate with *qawms* or other tribal institutions to organize and coordinate local peoples. The term *qawm*, the Arabic term for tribe, is a term used in this thesis to describe a social grouping at the grass roots level of society based on kinship, proximity, or profession. *Qawms* and other local social systems affecting warlordism will be discussed more in Chapter V. When traditional leaders use this method at the national level, they control the countryside only when they have money to give out, which makes this a tenuous system. As a consequence, the patronage system fails to institutionalize long-term connections between the population and the state. Once the local *qawms* and religious leaders received patronage in exchange for their allegiance to the central authority, they accept the absence of state institutional structures that would properly represent the people in the national government. When central authority funds are lean, the state has no formal institutions with which to regulate and represent society when tribal leaders become dissatisfied with their patronage.

As Rubin notes, after the Anglo-Afghan wars in the 1800's, the Afghan central government received funds as a result of a constant level of foreign domination.<sup>25</sup> The British suzerainty funded the Afghan patronage system under the Durrani monarchs until 1919, when Afghanistan gained independence in the Third Anglo-Afghan war. Without foreign aid to support his patronage system, the monarch, Abdul Rahman Khan, was plagued by tribal and religious revolts. State services plummeted. From 1955 to 1978,

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<sup>24</sup> Peter Marsden, *Afghanistan: Minorities, Conflict and the Search for Peace* (London: Minority Rights Group International,[2001]), 1-2.

<sup>25</sup> Rubin 19-20.

Afghanistan received \$2.5 billion in aid from the Soviets and \$533 million in aid from the U.S.<sup>26</sup> By the Soviet intervention in 1979, the central authorities had firmly established a reliable funding source, allowing them to reestablish services and a stronger patronage relationship with the population. This period also produced a need for an educated Afghan state civil service and military institution. Well paid military men in the service of the national government helped to insulate the monarchy from the populace.<sup>27</sup>

History makes it clear that the system of centralized patronage in Afghanistan has inhibited the development of strong vertical institutions, and has thereby kept the state from extending its governance to the countryside.

### C. WEAK STATE POLICIES

Laws, state institutions, and force all are potential inhibitors to the warlord. The Afghanistan state was established by the British during the colonial era. Strategically, Afghanistan met the needs of the imperial power as a buffer to block Russian encroachment on British colonial India. As Rubin notes, to achieve this task the state of Afghanistan was constructed with a preponderance of coercive institutions.<sup>28</sup> Other institutions to properly service and represent the population were not developed. As Joel Migdal points out, “social structure, particularly the existence of numerous other social organizations that exercise effective social control, has a decisive effect on the likelihood of the state greatly expanding its capabilities.”<sup>29</sup>

Additionally, educational institutions were not developed to the degree required to service the interests of the local population. Most of the state elites in Afghanistan were trained in Europe, America, and the Soviet Union, and the religious elites were mostly trained in Cairo, Najaf, or Qom. Rubin concludes that predominance of foreign-trained elites undermined Afghanistan's ability to integrate nationally because they were trained

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<sup>26</sup> Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan: State Formation and Collapse in the International System*, 20.

<sup>27</sup> Rubin 20.

<sup>28</sup> Rubin 8.

<sup>29</sup> Joel Migdal S., *State in Society: Studying how States and Societies Transform and Constitute One another* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 64.

outside of the home state.<sup>30</sup> Dependency on foreign education for elites also alleviated the state from developing a large base of quality state institutions within the Afghanistan.

Understanding that weak states have a lack of social control and state capability, two key factors relate to the rise of warlordism. First, warlords are better able to compete with a weak state to exercise control through the use of force. Where the revenues can be best controlled often determines whether the state is weak relative to the warlord. Second, since warlords use force to control society, they often command the only social organization to interact with the state. In such an environment, the state and the warlords may attempt to accommodate each other, avoid each other, or end up in conflict.

#### **D. WITHDRAWAL OF FOREIGN SPONSOR AND STATE WEAKNESS**

"For much of the modern era, Afghanistan might credibly be defined as a large body of rocky land surrounded by neighbors who export their own conflicts onto its territory."<sup>31</sup> As Barnett Rubin and Andrea Armstrong observe, Afghanistan has been the scene for proxy conflict since the British established it as a buffer between India and Russia.

Political scientist Paul Jackson points out that throughout Africa the colonial powers destroyed the traditional political entities that had existed before empire, substituting their own colonial trade networks.<sup>32</sup> His theories apply to Afghanistan, where colonial politics in India were concerned with acquisition of scarce resources for the homeland. Since resource extraction was the goal of colonial governments, governance at the local levels was more like a liaison effort, with no real change to the traditional methods of social control. As a result, no credible intermediate-level state secular institutions developed. When the colonial powers withdrew, the traditional indigenous power networks, rather than the state, were left with the responsibility for the administration of the scarce resources. This created a significant institutional void that in

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<sup>30</sup> Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan : State Formation and Collapse in the International System*, 9.

<sup>31</sup> Barnett R. Rubin and Andrea Armstrong, "Regional Issues in the Reconstruction of Afghanistan," *World Policy Journal* 20, no. 1 (Spring 2003), 31.

<sup>32</sup> Paul Jackson, "Warlords and States in Africa," draft manuscript, 17-18 (accessed October 1, 2006).

many states has never been corrected, and helps to explain why weak states stay weak despite regime changes at the top.

The environment during the Cold War created similar relationships between the superpowers and their third world clients. The state could fund its institutions or projects, so by default, other actors took over many of the state's functions, especially outside of the capital city, where the state normally focuses its resources. As William Reno suggests, states establish patronage with anyone who can provide money or services on its behalf.<sup>33</sup> However, in the long run, this stunts the growth of state institutions and empowers the warlords or other organizations that enter into deals with the state.

In the specific case of Afghanistan, the withdrawal of Cold War sponsors from the area resulted in a series of very shallow regimes with non-existent political infrastructure.<sup>34</sup> When Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev announced the end of the Soviet Union on December 25, 1991, the announcement was immediately followed by a U.S.-USSR agreement to stop all weapons deliveries and support to the Afghan factions, including the central communist regime. Kabul was quickly isolated from the countryside and the regional strongmen thus became warlords. Within three months, the communist regime under President Najibullah had collapsed and Najibullah himself was put under house arrest before he could escape the country.<sup>35</sup>

#### **E. DECLINE OF PUSHTUN AFGHAN DOMINANCE**

As the Soviets withdrew from Afghanistan, some former pro-communist Khalq members of the armed forces secretly allied with mujahideen leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and planned a coup. Although they failed, the coup unveiled divisions within the Pushtun ethnic movement. Najibullah was a Pushtun, as were the Khalq members and Hekmatyar. The failed coup highlights the vulnerabilities of tribal and ethnic

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<sup>33</sup> William Reno, *Warlord Politics and African States* (Boulder: Lynner Rienner Publishers, 1998), 257.

<sup>34</sup> Mackinlay, *Defining Warlords*, 6-7. "It was in the spaces created by this withdrawal of power — in the no-go areas — that the new warlords appeared."

<sup>35</sup> Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan : State Formation and Collapse in the International System*, 1. Najibullah was put under house arrest before he could escape the country. He was killed later.

movements.<sup>36</sup> Looking at the history of the Pushtun tradition, it is clear why, as a tribal movement, the Pushtuns never established control over the countryside and particularly over the other minority groups. Tribal organizations rely on a system of honor and obligation to regulate a particular tribe. They do not necessarily seek to regulate others, and have no right to do so unless they actually share a sense of tribal rules through upbringing or blood. The closer the blood relations are, the tighter the loyalties. Attempts to extend the family lines of responsibility and authority to a whole ethnic group are unveiled to be artificial and in this example turned out to be unstable. (This theme of unstable ethnic politics will be examined in more detail in Chapter V.)

The pro-communist Khalq party members took control of the central authority after the monarchy and during the Soviet occupation. Though the Khalqs were predominantly Pushtun, in line with the previous monarchy, they were of a different lineage, descendents of the Ghilzis and eastern Pushtuns. Leaving aside political ideology, within the Afghan tribal movement the communist coup in April 1978 was seen as the usurping of Ghilzi power over the Durranis. At the same time, the majority of the seven mujahideen leaders were also Ghilzi aligned.<sup>37</sup> Additionally, the Pushtuns never accommodated other minority groups into their tribal codes. According to tribal tradition, this would have been unexpected. This again undermines the effectiveness of governance, since in a patronage system not having tribal control over a population is essentially not having any social control at all. As noted by Anwar-ul-Haq Ahady,

What distinguishes the Pushtuns from other Muslim Afghans is their pre-Islamic code of behavior – the Pushtunwali. Although the Pushtunwali still constitutes a large part of Pushtun culture, the government has never encouraged its enforcement in non-Pushtun communities. Indeed, since 1880's, the government has supported the Islamic Sharia against the Pushtunwali even in Pushtun areas.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Anwar-ul-Haq Ahady, "The Decline of the Pushtuns in Afghanistan," *Asian Survey* 35, no. 7 (July 1995), 635.

<sup>37</sup> Olivier Roy, *the Lessons of the Soviet/Afghan War* (London: Brassey's, [1991]). Roy notes that "Hekmatyar, Sayaff, Nabi (Ghilzi) and Khales (eastern). Gaylani and Mujaddidi have family links with the Ghilzis; only Rabbani is a non-Pushtun. Both the Kabul regime and the Peshawar-based alliance are mainly Ghilzi."

<sup>38</sup> Ahady, *The Decline of the Pushtuns in Afghanistan*, 632.

The only group of the former regime that managed to maintain a functional role was the military. As is often the case with collapsed governments, military and militia leaders had the allegiance of their soldiers and were able to maintain some unit cohesion. Many institutional military commanders took their units and found a faction based on proximity to other military leaders. It is telling that many officers looked to other military leaders for alliances in the context of the state power vacuum—as military men, they understood the value of military legitimacy. A combination of proximity and military legitimacy led many military units to seek out and join the patronage of the regional military strongmen, who in the chaotic absence of central control become warlords. After the fall of Najibullah, Ahady observes,

Although some military units in Kabul defected to the Pushtun-dominated Hizbi Islami, and those units that were stationed in Pushtun areas transferred their weapons to Pushtun commanders, a great many more weapons came under Massud's and Dostum's control. Thus, the chaotic downfall of the communist regime enabled the ethnic minorities to gain military superiority over the Pushtuns.<sup>39</sup>

With the virtual collapse of the central government in Kabul, strongmen and warlords began to control territory and population. Fighting among the various Jihadi and warlord factions across the country began, and Afghanistan slipped into civil war. The military forces themselves fractured into regional networks. Dostum, the former communist general, consolidated a coherent command in the north, and emerged as the key figure among former military commanders.

## **F. WARLORD PATRONAGE**

Warlord patronage systems are based on the flow of funding. They run counter to state authority, diverting funds from government to social institutions, weakening the state-society bond while strengthening the warlords' network. Warlord systems flourish and grow when resources and income are available and the warlord organization can find a means to seize and process them. This occurs when the state collapses and nothing restrains the growth of warlord organizations.

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<sup>39</sup> Ahady, 626.



In the most extreme growth situation, the warlord network may expand and become rich enough to build its own independent armed forces and to administer territory. A warlord has no reason to forward funds to the state and the state is unable to audit or seize the funds. The result is the privatization of all functions aimed at extracting revenue and profits, to the complete detriment of existing state institutions. The ultimate warlord domination of an area leaves the region isolated from central authority and, when warlords circumvent the state, they also have an opportunity to seek patronage from foreign powers.

"Contrary to myth," writes Ahady, "warlordism is not a phenomenon ingrained in Afghan bone marrow by centuries of ethnic hatred and warfare. It is chiefly a legacy of the recent Soviet war."<sup>40</sup> Between 1991 and 1994, the warlords actively recruited isolated military and mujahideen leaders and militias, bringing these groups under their control. Within three years, the warlords began to establish military legitimacy. The period that followed involved turbulent times for the central government. With the exception of the four years of strict Taliban rule, the warlords grew their fiefdoms, often with the help of outside patrons to fund their activities. The next section discusses the warlord general Dostum and the foreign state sponsors who have helped support him.

#### **G. PATRONAGE: FOREIGN STATES AND AFGHAN WARLORDS**

As the U.S. leads the efforts in Afghan reconstruction operations,<sup>41</sup> it discovers many reasons why it has been so hard to lead its coalition partners. American sponsorship of warlords early in the war gradually became full U.S. support for the Afghan government. Neighboring states are wary of U.S. efforts to sustain a presence in Afghanistan. As a result, the states of the region see maintaining ties with their chosen Afghan warlords, historically the means of proxy competition among the states in the region, as in their best interest.<sup>42</sup>

Turkey and Uzbekistan are regional neighbors with long-standing interests in Afghanistan. Dealing with a local client such as Dostum is critical for maintaining their

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<sup>40</sup> Farivar, *Washington's Blind Spot in Afghanistan*, 17.

<sup>41</sup> Though NATO assumed command and control in 2006, the effort and funding have been predominantly U.S. since 2001.

<sup>42</sup> Rubin and Armstrong, *Regional Issues in the Reconstruction of Afghanistan*, 36.

interests there. Dostum has long had close ties with Turkey, which gave him asylum when the Taliban took over. He also has important ties to Uzbekistan, which provided arms and men when he returned to Afghanistan to join the Northern Alliance in 2001. However, as Rubin notes, Dostum is not necessarily using his diplomatic ties with Turkey to gain support for the Karzai government. In fact, he is seeking aid from Uzbekistan and Turkey to strengthen his own control in his traditional northern stronghold, and the change in government has not improved the security environment but rather has allowed Dostum to improve his own position.<sup>43</sup>

After the events of 9/11, the United States went to war against Al Qaeda and sponsored many warlords in Afghanistan. Since the Taliban would not turn over Al Qaeda leader Osama Bin Laden, the President deemed it necessary to topple the Taliban regime. The U.S. invested the might of the American armed forces to aid warlords such as Dostum in unseating the Taliban regime. Though his relations with U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF) by all accounts were cordial, it was clear during this time that the sponsorship of Dostum also served his desires to regain control of the northern provinces of Afghanistan.<sup>44</sup> However, in only a few short years, this relationship has changed, even at the tactical level, where Dostum sees no apparent need to cooperate with the U.S. forces who now occupy what he considers his turf.<sup>45</sup>

Indeed, the present Karzai regime faces the same problems as previous regimes in Afghanistan. The United States is acting implicitly as a patron of the Afghan state, which in turn is permitting the integration of warlords into the legitimate government. The issue is this: Are the warlords once again entering into a shallow patronage relationship, or will they transform into true politicians? At the diplomatic level, U.S. Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad was content to work through the warlord representatives. In an interview with Kathy Gannon, Khalilzad stated, "Some of [the warlords] have had awful

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<sup>43</sup> Rubin and Armstrong, 31.

<sup>44</sup> Sepp, Kalev, I. "Meeting the 'G-Chief': ODA 595," *Special Warfare* 15, no. 3 (September 2002): 10. For a detailed account of the events occurring between Dostum and U.S. forces, this journal article provides insight to Dostum's desire to maintain and protect the enormous air power capabilities that the U.S. SOF team brought to the battlefield.

<sup>45</sup> Ben Fenwick, "Meanwhile in Afghanistan," *Reason* 36, no. 6 (November 2004), 48. For a vivid account of a confrontation with an American Afghan National Army Advisor and Dostum. Tensions heighten between the two, but in the end of the encounter, Dostum and the advisor's actions reflect the adversarial vs. cooperative relationship between the U.S. and warlords.

records. I don't deny that. The question [is] whether one should go toe-to-toe here and now or start an evolutionary strategy." <sup>46</sup> Additionally, former Ambassador Khalilzad has suggested that the local militias, those same groups that the UN is currently trying to disarm and reintegrate into Afghan society, should have provided security for the 2004 election. Khalilzad claimed that the militia members could be vetted and paired with U.S. Special Forces. However, as of 2004, the militias had worked with Special Forces for two years and had shown no signs of improving their behavior. They focused much of their efforts on drugs, extortion, and intimidation, using their relationships with American soldiers to frighten local civilians and advance their own greedy agendas.<sup>47</sup>

The initial appointment of Dostum to the position of deputy defense minister in 2002 signified great promise as the warlords, now government employees, seemed vested in building the new national government for a united Afghanistan.<sup>48</sup> However, in 2004 Karzai's control over the northern provinces still remained tenuous. Far from Karzai's offices in Kabul, Dostum reestablished control and his own form of law and order in the north. Though Dostum had accepted patronage from Karzai in the form of a political appointment, he refused to cede power from his base in the north. An incident in which Dostum expelled a Karzai appointed governor in Faryab province was an explicit and highly publicized example of his rejection of central authority.<sup>49</sup> Though Karzai had some success in other regions marginalizing warlords,<sup>50</sup> the familiar pattern of weak state policies and patronage had reappeared. The failure of the state to establish a political infrastructure to connect with the population was a problem exacerbated by warlords like Dostum.

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<sup>46</sup> Gannon, *Afghanistan Unbound*, 35.

<sup>47</sup> Gannon, *Afghanistan Unbound*, 35.

<sup>48</sup> Farhan Bokhari in Karachi, "Dostum's Appointment Broadens Afghan Government," *FT Com* (December 26, 2001).

<sup>49</sup> Ben Fenwick, "Meanwhile in Afghanistan," *Reason* 36, no. 6 (November 2004), 48. Fenwick describes the developments involving the expulsion of governor from the capital Maimana, Faryab province. Dostum had sent the youth movement of his Junbesh party to the governor offices in a violent protest. The governor fled to the airport to escape the mob.

<sup>50</sup> Johnson, Thomas H. "Afghanistan's post-Taliban transition: the state of state-building after war," *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 25 (March-June 2006). Afghanistan expert Thomas Johnson notes that Karzai was successful in removing Ismail Khan from the governor position in Heart Province. Additionally, Karzai successfully removed Mohammad Fahim the Tajik minister of defense without a military uprising.

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### III. THE ECONOMICS OF WARLORDISM

This chapter describes the sources of revenue for Afghanistan and its warlords, introducing four classifications of revenue and providing a short theoretical discussion of stability and complexity to help classify the warlord economic environment.<sup>51</sup> These four sources of warlord revenues are natural resources, taxes, illicit revenues, and government funds and foreign aid. The chapter then describes how globalization affects warlord revenues, and includes a description of global corporations' search for oil in Central Asia. The chapter closes with an assessment of the Afghan resource environment's complexity and uncertainty.

#### A. SOURCES OF REVENUE

Access to the wealth of a state creates both constraints and opportunities for the warlord. There are various types of revenue. Examples include marketable resources, illegal trade, taxation and customs, international donor funds, etc. This chapter includes detailed discussion of the various types of revenue. As a preliminary matter, it is important to note that different types of revenue are more or less exploitable at the national or local level, with implications for the warlord who strives to dominate the region. Depending on the resources, the warlord can either fight the central government or find some legitimate accommodation with it.

Scholars have emphasized the study of economic factors in civil wars and failed states.<sup>52</sup> The general proposition is that revenues or sources of wealth are directly related to how conducive an environment is to warlordism. Revenues include anything that a warlord can control with his army and transform into wealth, power or fame.

There are four general types of revenues. The first includes natural resources such as oil, natural gas, timber, diamonds and industrial minerals. A second type is

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<sup>51</sup> The author's understanding of organization theory is derived from classes with Eric Janzen at the U.S. Naval Postgraduate School in 2006, including Organizational Design for Special Operations. The application of organization theory to violent non-state actors is thoroughly discussed in Troy S. Thomas, Stephen D. Kiser and William D. Casebeer, *Warlords Rising : Confronting Violent Non-State Actors* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2005), 254.

<sup>52</sup> P. Le Billon, "The Political Ecology of War: Natural Resources and Armed Conflicts," *Political Geography* 20, no. 5 (2001), 561–584. Stergios Skaperdas, "Warlord Competition," *Journal of Peace Research* 39, no. 4 (July 2002, 2002), 435-446. These articles are a representative selection.

revenue generated from taxing the populace and levying customs fees on travel. The third type comes from illegal activities such as weapons sales, drug harvesting and trafficking, or the trafficking of human beings. The fourth source of wealth is assistance from international donors, which includes aid from developmental organizations like the World Bank, reconstruction dollars and training from states like the U.S., and supplies and volunteers from nongovernmental organization (NGOs) such as the Red Cross. A warlord might profit from all these revenue sources, including the last, which is often donated in order to help a state eliminate unruly warlord activities.

## **B. STABILITY AND COMPLEXITY**

This thesis assesses the complexity of the warlord environment by the number of sectors the warlord can potentially tap into, and does not assume that, individually, any sector is more complex sector than another. Stability is a function of relative changes in the environment. How fast do variables change? The pace of change will depend on the nature of the revenues. Natural resources and illegal operations tend to generate unstable and unpredictable streams of revenue. The more the revenue sources that are available to the warlord, the more complex his environment becomes.<sup>53</sup>

## **C. WARLORD REVENUE IN AFGHANISTAN**

The modern Afghan economy began in the 1930's with the establishment of banks, paper money, and an education system.<sup>54</sup> The economy over the last century has evolved into a rentier state as described by Barnett Rubin. In rentier states, little or no revenue is generated from individual income taxes. Most state revenues come from state-owned companies and massive quantities of foreign aid. As a consequence, the duties normally fueling the state, such as road tolls, border customs, and local taxes have been usurped by local governments, warlords and governors. In Afghanistan, the ability of

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<sup>53</sup> Janzen, *Organizational Design for Special Operations*. The organization theory concepts "stability and complexity" are from models derived from a slide packet prepared by Professor Janzen in MN3121. This idea is part of the concept of organization fit derived from Mintzberg, an organization theorist. H. Mintzberg, "Organization Design: Fashion or Fit," *Harvard Business School Reprint*, no. 81106 (1981).

<sup>54</sup> Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, "U.S. Department of State, Background Note: Afghanistan," Department of State, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5380.htm> (accessed January 30, 2007).

local warlords to extract resources can be all-encompassing as evidenced by the following observation by reporter John Daniszewski:

Residents [of Istalif – a village approximately 45 minutes north of Kabul] said they were still waiting for assistance, that most of their children were sick from contaminated water, that the grapes wouldn't grow without pesticides and irrigation, and that they needed their road repaired so that the men could get to jobs in Kabul more easily. "The warlords and commanders take everything," complained one man, Aghrdash Sayed Akram, as he sat in a room decorated with carpets and an old hunting rifle on the wall. "There is nothing for us poor people."<sup>55</sup>

### **1. Natural Resources**

Arguably the easiest source of revenue is natural resources. Natural resources in Afghanistan include oil, natural gas, timber, emeralds, and industrial minerals. A major natural resource for export is the natural gas found in the northern regions near Sheberghan, Mazar-I-Sharif, and Sar-i-Pol. During the 1970's and 1980's, the gas was tapped by the Afghan national natural gas company and exported to the Soviet Union for significant revenue. At their peak in the 1980's, natural gas sales yielded \$300 million a year in export revenue, accounting for 56 percent of the national total. However, ninety percent of this revenue went to the Soviet Union to pay off debt and imports.<sup>56</sup> To prevent sabotage by the mujahideen, the oil fields were capped in 1989 when the Soviets withdrew.

Afghan oil and gas have been extracted since the 1950's; initial oil exploration was conducted by U.S. companies between 1920 and 1945. The Soviets assisted in order to export the oil and gas to the Soviet Union, so resource development was not tied to Afghan local development.<sup>57</sup> Local resources provide enough to pipe energy to Mazar-I-Sharif and the Sheberghan area. There is no gas pipeline connecting the northern fields

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<sup>55</sup> John Daniszewski, "THE WORLD: Putting Together the Pieces of a Shattered Afghanistan," *Los Angeles Times* October 18, 2004, <http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=714761951&Fmt=7&clientId=65345&RQT=309&VName=PQD>. (accessed January 30, 2007).

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Paul Hueper, "Energy Investment a Priority," *Petroleum Economist* 69, no. 12 (December 2002), 7, <http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=275548711&Fmt=7&clientId=65345&RQT=309&VName=PQD>. (accessed January 30, 2007).

to Kabul, though discussions about building one are underway.<sup>58</sup> Political instability has made the business very risky.

A 2006 U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) study estimates as much as 1.6 billion barrels of oil in northern Afghanistan.<sup>59</sup> Experts such as Rob Sobhani, a Georgetown University academic and energy consultant, consider the pipelines and oil fields the centerpiece for rebuilding Afghanistan. Pipeline royalties are estimated at \$25 million a year for the national level government.<sup>60</sup> Because Dostum's power base is in the north, any development there will inevitably profit him in terms of wealth and power. The search for oil as a component of globalization is described at greater length later in this chapter.

## 2. Local Taxes

Taxes and custom fees levied on travel generate a second source of revenue. Taxation and customs duties are customarily state activities.<sup>61</sup> When warlords take over taxation, the wealth they generate allows them to develop their strength at the local level, where they can also build a military force and use it. State and warlord are instantly at odds as they compete to assume the same role. Collusion between corrupt government employees and warlords deter state enforcement mechanisms, creating opportunities for the black or grey markets. Rubin notes that national level leaders' failure to enforce

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<sup>58</sup> Paul Hueper, "Energy Investment a Priority," *Petroleum Economist* 69, no. 12 (December 2002), 11, <http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=275548711&Fmt=7&clientId=65345&RQT=309&VName=PQD>. (accessed January 30, 2007).

<sup>59</sup> "Afghanistan Resource Base Larger, USGS Says," *Oil & Gas Journal* 104, no. 12 (Mar 27, 2006), 34, <http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=1021377551&Fmt=7&clientId=65345&RQT=309&VName=PQD>. and Alexander Kliment, "Afghan Oil Reserves 'Bigger than Thought'," *Financial Times*, section World News, March 16, 2006, (accessed January 30, 2007).

<sup>60</sup> Daniel Fisher, "Kabuled Together," *Forbes* 169, no. 3 (Feb 4, 2002), 34, <http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=101398720&Fmt=7&clientId=65345&RQT=309&VName=PQD>. (accessed January 30, 2007).

<sup>61</sup> Giustozzi, *Respectable Warlords? The Politics of State building in Post-Taliban Afghanistan*, 6. "By 2002 it was estimated that tax collection (or extortion) in the villages amounted to around US\$40 million in the whole of Afghanistan, as opposed to between US\$500m. and US\$600m. collected in custom revenues. At that time road taxes were playing a much more modest role than earlier, but custom revenues had been boosted by the recovery of trade activities. In some regions smuggling, especially of opium, also provided a useful contribution."



international trade restrictions in Afghanistan give warlords an advantage.<sup>62</sup> For instance, goods subject to trade restrictions between Pakistan and Iran are funneled through Afghanistan without censure. Warlords collect duties as goods pass through their regions. The warlords also contribute to the weakness of the state by patronizing particular corrupt government employees in the state apparatus.

During the Soviet era, Dostum collected travel customs duties at Hairatan and passed none of them on to Kabul.<sup>63</sup> The Hairatan port of entry controlled all trade and travel with the Soviet Union, including all trade with the Far East and Europe via Soviet rail lines.<sup>64</sup> Dostum's unregulated control of this source of income probably funded for his creation of the single largest armed force in post-communist Afghanistan.

### **3. Illegal Operations: Opium, Smuggling and Looting**

The third source of revenue comes from illegal activities of various sorts. The legitimacy of Hamid Karzai's new government is challenged by its inability to curb the production of drugs in Afghanistan. Opium growing, which was banned by the Taliban, has returned, sending vast quantities of heroin to the European market via traditional smuggling routes through Iran and Central Asia. By some estimates, warlord drug revenues in 2003 were about \$2.3 billion.<sup>65</sup>

The warlords' drug revenue has a decade-old history. Since the late 1990's, warlord groups have established a system that makes them the world's largest producers of the opium poppy. Afghanistan was the source of 70 percent of illicit global opium production in 2000, the year before the Taliban banned poppy cultivation. The income

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<sup>62</sup> Rubin and Armstrong, *Regional Issues in the Reconstruction of Afghanistan*, 35. Such black or gray markets are a strong incentive for both government employees and regional strongmen to maintain weak states. Both are partners in the parallel economy through various forms of corruption. Shifts in trade can affect the balance of forces in Afghanistan. The shift from transit via the Pakistan-Kandahar route to the Iran-Herat route, for instance, has strengthened Herat and contributed to tension between the two regional/ethnic centers. . Official restrictions on trade items also divert India-Pakistan trade through Dubai and Pakistan-Iran trade through Afghanistan.

<sup>63</sup> Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan: State Formation and Collapse in the International System*, 275.

<sup>64</sup> Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan: State Formation and Collapse in the International System*, 163.

<sup>65</sup> Kathy Gannon, "Afghanistan Unbound" *Foreign Affairs* 83, no. 3 (May/Jun, 2004), 35, <http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=629305041&Fmt=7&clientId=65345&RQT=309&VName=PQD>. (accessed January 30, 2007).

from this crop helped sustain the Taliban, al Qaeda, and components of the Northern Alliance. It also corrupted Afghanistan's state military and law enforcement institutions because, to augment traditional trafficking routes through Pakistan and Iran, corrupt Afghani government officials and Central Asian border guards helped open new routes through Central Asia.<sup>66</sup>

Smuggling has also been a significant source of warlord revenue. The trade in emeralds from Afghanistan's Panjshir Valley supplies a niche grey market. Much more serious, state import duties in Pakistan and India are circumvented by purchases made in duty free Dubai and funneled through Afghanistan.<sup>67</sup> Not only are the Pakistani and Indian governments deprived of funds they would otherwise earn, but import revenues are also denied to Afghanistan, which hurts the smaller Afghan state government to a much larger degree. In this zero sum game, diverted funds further enrich smuggler traditions and fuel warlord organizations and goals.

The legal and illegal arms trade in Central Asia has given rise to uncontrolled weapons proliferation. The weapons are part of what is commonly called the "Kalashnikov culture." Warlords use their revenue to purchase weapons to maintain their armed bands. Additional weapons are introduced into the system by surrounding states seeking regional strategic influence. For instance, Russia, seeking to promote its military industrial exports, sells arms in Uzbekistan at a discount. Since 9/11, the United States, Great Britain, India, Turkey and China have all established foreign military sales or assistance to the Central Asian states.<sup>68</sup>

Finally, the looting of abandoned Soviet depots has contributed to warlord revenue. As an example, the former Soviet military garrison in Hairatan contained huge depots full of military equipment and supplies. Dostum assumed control of the abandoned garrison through a subordinate allied militia leader. Weapons from here enabled Dostum to recruit and reward his followers.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Rubin and Armstrong, *Regional Issues in the Reconstruction of Afghanistan*, 33.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>68</sup> Rubin and Armstrong, 32.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

#### 4. Foreign Aid

The fourth source of revenue, international foreign aid, presents an interesting challenge to the dynamic between warlords and the state. Donor money is given to the state conditionally. The state must become more streamlined and efficient; it must show results. But, to co-opt warlords in order to gain concessions or access to warlord-controlled areas, the state may offer them some of its foreign aid.<sup>70</sup> Davis relates the statements of an unnamed Soviet diplomat illustrating this.

In 1989 [Dostum] had a budget for 45,000 troops, but we knew he had only 25,000 on his payroll. When our advisers confronted him over it, he'd laugh and say, 'Don't worry, I'll get hold of the other 20,000 if they're needed.' The Soviets kept paying.<sup>71</sup>

Passing along foreign aid to warlords can begin the treacherous process of legitimizing and integrating them into the state system.<sup>72</sup> In 1992, Dostum had foreign benefactors in the border states of Uzbekistan and Turkey. In 1992, Dostum skimmed off \$6 million dollars from a \$10 million dollar Turkish donation to his Junbesh party.<sup>73</sup> From his home base in Mazar, Dostum established his own diplomatic mission to Uzbekistan as well as to Iran, Pakistan, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan. To escape the devastating civil war in Kabul, the UN established its main office in Mazar as well.<sup>74</sup> Aid does not come without some public relations work on the part of the regional warlords, who have learned to use the media and public relations to gain fame and wealth. Dostum became internationally known by cooperating with the UN to assist over 60,000 Tajik refugees in May 1993.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Giustozzi, *Respectable Warlords? The Politics of State building in Post-Taleban Afghanistan*, 15. "Hamid Karzai and his allies within the transitional government opted, in the short term, to create a 'feudal' state, co-opting the warlords into a state structure with a variety of functions, ranging from military commander to minister. At the same time, it's the transitional government's medium and long-term plans are to try to weaken the power of the warlords using a wide range of tools."

<sup>71</sup> Davis, *Makeover for a Warlord*, 46.

<sup>72</sup> Giustozzi, *Respectable Warlords? The Politics of State building in Post-Taleban Afghanistan*, 5. "The central government extended patronage to local commanders to expand political influence and ensure protection. Unfortunately, the central government had little control over what they had created."

<sup>73</sup> Antonio Giustozzi, *The Ethnicization of an Afghan Faction: Junbesh-I I-Milli from its Origins to the Presidential Elections* (London: Crisis States Research Center,[2005]), 4.

<sup>74</sup> Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan: State Formation and Collapse in the International System*, 275.

<sup>75</sup> Rubin, 275.

#### D. GLOBALIZATION

The global marketplace generates demand for a variety of goods and resources. Customers a world away seek ever increasing quantities of oil, timber, drugs, weapons, and diamonds; with global communications and transportation, they have the means to obtain them. For example, Pakistan, India and China all have escalating demands for energy, including gas and oil from the Central Asian Republics. Pakistani gas reserves will be depleted by 2010<sup>76</sup> while Indian gas consumption will double by 2012.<sup>77</sup>

Globalization policies have stressed already weak states. Meanwhile, there has been more activism among international developmental organizations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Development programs increasingly aim to streamline state institutions, making them more efficient, but smaller. In the process, the budget slashing weakens already weak states.<sup>78</sup>

To participate in the global marketplace, a state needs a physical infrastructure. The United States provided assistance to build Afghanistan's major highway, which winds its way between Kabul and Kandahar through five provinces where thirty-five percent of the country's population lives.<sup>79</sup> The route has been plagued by instability, beginning with the Soviet invasion from the north, followed by the Taliban expansion from the south. Post-Taliban, the Karzai government plans to extend the route past Kandahar to Herat and to Mazar-I-Sharif, and then back to Kabul, creating a "ring road" tying the country together. Three quarters of the road has been funded with an estimated completion date in 2007.

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<sup>76</sup> Scott Baldauf, "Afghan 'Pipe Dream' Draws Closer to Reality ; A Proposed Gas Pipeline from Turkmenistan to Arabian Sea could Boost Jobs, Investment." *Christian Science Monitor* May 13, 2005, <http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=838156351&Fmt=7&clientId=65345&RQT=309&VName=PQD>. Pakistan has doubled its energy output from 1999 to 2005. In 2005 it was expending 4 billion cubic feet per day. By 2015, it will need to import 2.5 billion cubic feet per day.

<sup>77</sup> Aaron Chaze, "India Takes the Plunge with Trans-Asia Natural Gas Pipeline," *Global Finance*, no. 9 (Oct, 2006), 10, <http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=1139254301&Fmt=7&clientId=65345&RQT=309&VName=PQD>, (accessed January 30, 2007).

<sup>78</sup> Lezhnev, *Crafting Peace: Strategies to Deal with Warlords in Collapsing States*, 17. "These policies have aimed at creating a "slim, streamlined, ideal" state whose agencies and budgets are cut in the name of fiscal austerity, whose services are privatized and whose direct links to multinational firms are secured (Reno, 1998)."

<sup>79</sup> Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, "U.S. Department of State, Background Note: Afghanistan," Department of State, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5380.htm> (accessed January 30, 2007).

In areas of the world with untapped oil and gas resources like Afghanistan, commercial interests from abroad have begun building roads and lines of communications into interior areas more quickly than the state can expand its ability to govern, which exacerbates the state's already weak condition.<sup>80</sup> Until the U.S. sponsored ring road is complete, Afghan warlords will continue to fill the socioeconomic void by transforming their military control of a region into a system which gives them control of locally-generated revenues.<sup>81</sup>

Warlords capitalize on state weakness. The expansion of commercial enterprises and the arms trade in particular directly benefits from the weakness of the state.<sup>82</sup> However, Mackinlay cautions against easy answers and overgeneralizations, warning of the risk of treating the concept of globalization "as a one-fits-all explanation for all sorts of trouble, removing the need for more wide-ranging research on the internal contradictions of those states which are weakening or collapsing."<sup>83</sup> It can be concluded that while globalization did not give rise to warlordism or the collapse of states, it has likely magnified the reach and wealth of otherwise isolated warlords.

## **E. THE SEARCH FOR OIL**

The global demand for petroleum products has sent nations to politically unstable regions like Afghanistan. Charles Baker, from the USGS team in Sheberghan working to resurvey petroleum fields that were capped after the 1989 Soviet withdrawal, describes

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<sup>80</sup> Mackinlay, John. *Globalisation and Insurgency*. Adelphi Papers., edited by Mats Berdal R. 352nd ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002, 5-6. "There were fewer wild and unreachable areas within a state and, in an intangible sense; there was less cultural space, less separation between states.... A surge of communications of every kind seemed to be dragging individuality away from the state, away from the distinct communities and ethnic groups towards a global culture..."

<sup>81</sup> Lezhnev, *Crafting Peace: Strategies to Deal with Warlords in Collapsing States*, 17. "Those who can take control of diamonds, narcotics, or similar resources—often warlords—can now deal directly with foreign firms for maximum extraction and profit."

<sup>82</sup> Neil Cooper, "The Arms Trade and Internal Conflict" in *Warlords in International Politics*, ed. Paul B. Rich (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 28. Political scientist Neil Cooper notes, "The proliferation of arms within weak states is more likely to produce acute versions of the security dilemma than it is to produce stable deterrence, making conflict more and not less likely."

<sup>83</sup> Mackinlay, *Globalisation and Insurgency*, 5-6.

the area's potential as including "about 142 billion cubic meters ... of proven oil and gas reserves and up to 765 billion cubic meters ... in unproven reserves."<sup>84</sup>

For any resource to be marketable there must be a way to get it from its original location to commercial enterprises that will place it on the global market. Local warlords, with their local or regional monopoly on the use of force, control access to resources and are positioned to work directly with international corporations, with or without the consent of the state. However, the international movement of resources means that the warlord must decide whether to make arrangements with the state to work at the national level, or operate clandestinely and without state cooperation.

Multinational corporations have actively sought out deals with non-state actors in conflict zones. The energy needs of Pakistan, India, and China inspire companies like Argentina's Brindas Petroleum and the U.S.'s UNOCAL to consider developing pipelines from the oil and gas reserves in the Central Asian republics in the Caspian Sea basin through Afghanistan to the Indian Ocean or the Pakistani gas energy grid. The Brindas CEO reportedly met with the Taliban leaders in Kandahar during the civil war, while UNOCAL flew Taliban delegates to its headquarters in Houston, Texas. Brindas subsequently lost a court battle with UNOCAL for the Afghan pipeline rights.<sup>85</sup> However, UNOCAL abandoned its pipeline dreams after the 1998 American missile strikes into Afghanistan.<sup>86</sup> Current efforts to construct energy pipelines are led by the Asian Development Bank with a consortium of multinational oil corporations and the Central Asian Republics.<sup>87</sup> If the pipelines are built, increased jobs, security contracts, infrastructure and local taxes will be a significant boon to local warlords.

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<sup>84</sup> Giustozzi, 68. The Russian government refuses to share the seismic line charts from the 1970s. The USGS team is secured by Australian NATO forces against local armed groups; see "Asia: And there's another Country; Afghanistan," *The Economist* 368, no. 8341 (September 13, 2003), 68.

<sup>85</sup> Fisher, *Kabuled Together*, 34. In a much publicized story, Brindas Chairman Carlos Bulgheroni met with Taliban leaders in Kandahar in early 1997. The Taliban delegates were also treated to a visit of the NASA Space Center in Houston, TX. Brindas sued UNOCAL unsuccessfully in a California court, alleging that UNOCAL had stolen their idea.

<sup>86</sup> Daud Khan, "Afghanistan: Volatile Security Issues Threaten Pipeline Plans," *Pajhwok Afghan News*, sec. Global Information Network, August 30, 2006.

<sup>87</sup> Hueper, *Energy Investment a Priority*, 12

## **F. CONCLUSION**

Warlord economics is about the variety of potential warlord revenues available to finance warlord groups. There are four revenue sources: natural resources, taxes, illicit activities, and foreign aid. Under the communist regime, Dostum ran a militia organization funded reliably by the government. He was able to augment his militia funding through taxation and levying fees. When Afghan central authority disintegrated, the state plunged into civil war in 1992. The opportunities for revenue abounded, but the number of adversaries increased. The new environment could be described as an increasingly complex one. The following chapter identifies the main political resources and population bases that Dostum uses as a source of power to advance his warlord organization.

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## IV. POPULATION BASES WARLORD ORGANIZATION

This chapter analyzes the impacts of traditional social systems on the stability of armed and political groups. Ethnic, tribal, and *qawm*-based organizations are a stable basis of social mobilization only at the grass roots level of the village, family, or valley. As elaborated later in this chapter, *qawm* refers to a local grouping of persons based on location often related to family or profession. The unstable changing alliances and blood feuding in a population with shared values is exactly what establishes order in traditional societies. A traditional society does not naturally extend above the local level. Above the local level, and especially at the national level, kinship organizations are prone to instability, which makes organizations that attempt to mobilize populations based on ideology also prone to instability. A warlord who establishes an organization on a military basis, will have better long-term success at adapting and gaining power.

### A. POPULATION BASES

The Afghans are hardly a people, much less a nation. They are a nation of tribes constantly at war with each other. They are very heterogeneous, with an ethnocentrism which makes them not only hate or suspect foreigners, but Afghans living two valleys away.<sup>88</sup>

Diversity in Afghanistan affects the ability of warlords and the state to mobilize the population. Some warlords have based their bands on traditional tribal or *qawm* sources of manpower. Others have developed multiethnic armed bands. Historically, traditional Afghan monarchs and colonial powers suppressed ethnic bases of population that tried to mobilize at the national and even the regional level. With the fall of the communist regime in 1991, however, warlord politics reemerged, and warlords drew great strength and developed population support from on ethnic movements. Dostum started with his gas field security forces and transformed them into a military-like strike force. With the communist regime's collapse, this force maintained its allegiance to Dostum and became a militia which he could pay and control. This is probably why his militias have been stable in comparison to many *qawm*-based militias. Dostum's

<sup>88</sup> The quote is from Howard Hunt, in George Crile, *Charlie Wilson's War: The Extraordinary Story of how the Wildest Man in Congress and a Rogue CIA Agent Changed the History of our Times* (New York: Grove Press, 2003), 224.

Northern Movement formed a political organization that then mobilized ethnic populations to join his camp.

### **1. Ethnic Distribution**

Afghanistan is composed of multiple minority groups, and no one group has more than 50 percent of the population. The state of Afghanistan elicits no real sense of nationalism that equates to the state itself; its borders were established only to buffer the Russian and British empires of the 1800's.<sup>89</sup> To understand the location of the major groups, one might visualize the Hindu Kush mountains dividing the state from southwest to northeast. The ethnic pockets fall on either side of this natural border, their locations corresponding closely to the surrounding states surrounding Afghanistan.

The Pushtuns, the largest group, live mainly in the south and east in areas bordering Pakistan, although some Pushtuns colonized pockets of the north. The Tajiks live in the northeast, near Tajikistan, while the Turkic groups, the Turkmen and Uzbeks, settled in the northern provinces adjacent to Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan respectively. The last significant minority group, the Hazara, occupy the central highland area of Bamiyan. Experts agree that any simple classification of Afghan society is transient, because the population is historically very mobile.<sup>90</sup>

### **2. Tribes**

The Afghan demographic landscape, while complex, is much like that of other states with traditional societies. People's first and most basic unit of identity is the family with patriarchal lines of descent. What differentiates tribal societies from state dominated societies is that in the former, familial ties translate into political power beginning at the local level.<sup>91</sup> At the grassroots, tribal relations provide a mechanism for

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<sup>89</sup> Ian Bedford, "Nationalism and Belonging in India, Pakistan and South Central Asia: Some Comparative Observations," *Australian Journal of Anthropology*, no. Special Issue 7: The National Artifice (August 1996), 6, [http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m2472/is\\_n2\\_v7/ai\\_18912022/pg\\_6](http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m2472/is_n2_v7/ai_18912022/pg_6) (accessed January 16, 2007). "Although there has never been such a thing as an Afghan nation, there is certainly an Afghan state whose history can be traced . . ."

<sup>90</sup> Nyrop and Seekins, Afghanistan Country Study <http://countrystudies.us/afghanistan/37.htm> . (accessed January 30, 2007).

<sup>91</sup> Nyrop and Seekins, <http://www.gl.iit.edu/govdocs/afghanistan/EthnicityAndTribe.html>. (accessed January 30, 2007).

local service and security through the family. The degree to which tribal leaders can muster tribal members to a cause or to armed conflict is based on blood ties. Violations of tribal rules and values obligate family members to act, often violently, to restore lost honor. Rubin notes that such acts generally characterized as “blood feuds” are the main instruments for control and justice in tribal societies.<sup>92</sup> Agreements and bonds are always tighter among closer blood relations.<sup>93</sup>

### **3. Tribal Factors in Armed Groups**

For a warlord, access to tribal networks for support has advantages and disadvantages. On one hand, tribal bonds are strong because kinship is the basis of identity, political allegiance and predictable behavior. Tribal militias are thus preexisting forces that are inherently cohesive and good at conducting warfare locally. On the other hand, however responsive a tribal armed force is to the call of the local level jirga, it has inefficiencies as well. Tribal organizations do not give allegiance to a central authority for dispute resolution. Ernest Gellner says that “the most characteristic institution of such a society” is feuding among sub-groups.<sup>94</sup> Leadership is inherently weak and discipline is usually controlled by tribal laws, not by leaders. Because a feud could fracture it, tribal organization is inherently unstable. Additionally, tribal militias are not responsive to long-term plans and are more obligated to local needs. Thus, in comparison to secular militias, ethnic militias are generally less effective. For these reasons, Gellner notes, warlords often supplemented their tribal force with outside mercenaries or slaves.<sup>95</sup>

### **4. Khans and Qawms**

Though all Afghans are conscious of their lineage through the father, the *qawm*, the Arabic term for tribe, is another key social grouping for encapsulating local-level

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<sup>92</sup> Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan: State Formation and Collapse in the International System*, 10. As Nyrop observes, “Thus the grandsons of the same grandfather might oppose one another on a certain issue but join together if necessary to oppose the descendants of the brother of their common great grandfather.”

<sup>93</sup> Nyrop and Seekins, <http://www.gl.iit.edu/govdocs/afghanistan/EthnicityAndTribe.html>. (accessed January 30, 2007).

<sup>94</sup> Ernest Gellner, "Tribalism and the State in the Middle East" in *Tribes and State Formation*, eds. Philip Khouri S. and Joseph Kostiner (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 109.

<sup>95</sup> Gellner, *Tribalism and the State in the Middle East*, 109.

society. It clearly entails more than just blood relations. Canfield refers to a *qawm* in Hazarajat as the "common local term for a spatially and socially united group of people ... [whose] members are united by agnatic [patrilineal] kinship, have a common home territory, and enjoy warm social fellowship."<sup>96</sup>

Detachment from the national government is a fact at the local level. The khan, a local landowner, has a normal working relationship with the populace although he may not be a part of the *qawm*. State-appointed local representatives may not belong to the *qawm* either. The khan may use traditional forms of influence like wealth and kinship to maintain political allegiance or may in fact have no family ties to the *qawm* he attempts to rule. Rubin notes:

A khan is not a feudal lord. Power in villages or tribes does not reside in any one person or structure but in fluidly structured networks of influence. These networks are not based on any single principle; neither wealth nor kinship ties alone can assure a man of influence, only the skill with which he deploys both against rivals. The main object of politics as practiced by khans is to be recognized as "bigger" than other khans by both villager and the state.<sup>97</sup>

Depending on the region, a *qawm* may encompass a village or a group of villages of single or mixed tribal membership. Ian Bedford explains that the complexity of the grouping may extend to other areas: "Its sociological basis is tribe, clan, professional group (*qawm* of the mullahs or Barbers), caste (the Bari of Nuristan), religious group (the sayyad), ethnic group (munjani), village community or simply an extended family."<sup>98</sup> For the local khan, this complex arrangement constitutes his local patronage network.

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<sup>96</sup> Nyrop and Seekins, *Afghanistan Country Study*, <http://www.gl.iit.edu/govdocs/afghanistan/EthnicityAndTribe.html>. (accessed January 30, 2007).

<sup>97</sup> Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan : State Formation and Collapse in the International System*, 41.

<sup>98</sup> Bedford, *Nationalism and Belonging in India, Pakistan and South Central Asia: Some Comparative Observations*, 6. Of course, this simplifies Afghan society, and some *qawm* are not in a relationship with a khan. However, these *qawms* pose no significant threat to the central government since they cannot mobilize. Historically, the concern has always been focused on the *qawm* with ties to a khan, a relationship in which, Roy says, "the state was always directed to one end, the neutralization of the *qawm* and, with that, of any autonomous agency-from-below."

Because tribal leaders and elders may not exert absolute authority, tensions arise when a local khan, warlord or state official tries to exert his influence over the tribe. Often, the tribal leaders live in an “acephalous” (“headless”) egalitarian social environment, in which a system of obligations and customs provide order.<sup>99</sup> Important decisions are not directed at anyone to carry out. An understanding of what must happen is agreed upon and that understanding is the way things are in the tribe from then on.

*Qawm* and tribal based organizations are inherently unstable because of the tenuous relationships between khans and *qawms* and because of the *qawms*' and tribes' internal social struggles. Such organizations can offer a base for armed groups, but an unstable one. The source of patronage, whether monetary or family or professional, must remain strong for the leader to control his group.

## **B. ETHNIC FACTORS IN POLITICAL MOBILIZATION AND GROWTH**

The previous discussion implies that ethnicity in itself was never a source of traditional hierarchical authority. Taken to an extreme, ethnic politics involves blood lines and family members extending out to all those in a particular ethnic group, and thus the ethnic group are like an extended family. A political entrepreneur who can gain approval for this idea can claim an ethnic group is obliged to mobilize behind his cause, as brother supporting brother. An example Nyrop notes is the mujahideen phenomenon.

Although there is no belief that Muslims share a common descent, the shared goals, opposition to other groups (i.e., non-believing atheists), affective ties, and group liability of mujahideen are reminiscent of familial, tribal, and ethnic group construction. As such, the appeal of the mujahideen must be strongly familiar.<sup>100</sup>

Mobilization of nationwide tribal and ethnic groups has not been the norm in Afghanistan's history. Realizing the dangers of such a powerful threat to centralized power, the Durrani monarchs always sought to suppress such movements, and state representatives overseeing the traditional *qawm*-based grouping of khans and villagers tried to keep tribal law isolated at the local level. This is also typical of a weak state attempting to retain social control by weakening society through fragmentation. During

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<sup>99</sup> Class notes. Naval postgraduate School SO3750, Anthropology of Conflict, Fall 2005.

<sup>100</sup> Nyrop and Seekins, *Afghanistan Country Study*.

the monarchy, the appointed malik was sometimes not a *qawm* member, but in those cases his power was limited. Responsibility for social services and security remained with the khan or tribal leaders who controlled the *qawm*. Consequently, the state in fact never extended true institutional control out into the countryside to maintain state-to-population control.<sup>101</sup> With no state apparatus to integrate the populace into state run organizations, the people had no effective representation of the state level. As long as the central authority had the wealth or resources to patronize the khans through their malik, nominal acquiescence to the central authority was achieved.

The Durrani monarchy suppressed nationwide ethnic mobilization, because it desired to avert the rise of a warlord environment. Oliver Roy notes that the Soviet withdrawal and downfall of the communist regime opened an opportunity for the warlords.

From the top to the bottom of the complex scale of ethnic identity, that is, from the linguistic group to the village level, the traditional segmentation of Afghan society underlines and reinforces political fragmentation. If *qawm* affiliation is the rule of the political game at the grass roots level, ethnicity might be now the bigger stake in nationwide policy...<sup>102</sup>

Afghanistan expert Thomas Johnson points out the rise of ethno-linguistic politics in Afghanistan's national politics. His analysis concludes that in addition to top-down "constitutionally guaranteed" policies to confront ethnic issues, "bottom to the top" demands will force compromise.<sup>103</sup> How the issues resolve themselves will determine whether the people have faith in the effectiveness of the government.

### C. QAWM BASED MILITIAS

Organizations can expand through ethnic mobilization but such organizations are not always stable. Such is the case in regards to the development of militias. The

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<sup>101</sup> Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan : State Formation and Collapse in the International System*, 25.

<sup>102</sup> Roy, *the Lessons of the Soviet/Afghan War*, 61.

<sup>103</sup> Johnson, Thomas H. "Afghanistan's post-Taliban transition: the state of state-building after war," *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 25 (March-June 2006), 15.

Afghan militias were formed during the Khalq party's communist regime. They reported to the Ministry of the Interior until 1985, and then to the Ministry of Nationalities and Tribes. In both the 1978 coup and the 1992 communist resignation, the regular armed forces seemed to simply disintegrate, garrison by garrison, through defection. This makes it hard to compare commanders of these militias to warlord leaders like Dostum. Many military leaders defected to the emergent militia, ethnic or jihadi leaders, including Dostum, Massood and Hekmatyar. It is important to note that the jihadi based formations survived and became stronger in the collapsed state environment. Dostum's militia based formation also grew in the new environment, but more as a result of his military legitimacy rather than his ethnic or religious appeal.

Of five militias discussed by Rubin, all but Dostum's were based on *qawms* or tribes.<sup>104</sup> The *qawm*-based militias were plagued by infighting and internal discipline problems. Soon after his appointment as commander, Juma Khan of the Andarabi militia was assassinated by Ahmad Shah Massood, a tribal rival from an adjoining valley.<sup>105</sup> Ismatullah Muslim of the Achakzai militia was a smuggler from a smuggling family and tribe. His leadership was very unstable, and he died in 1991 of drug and alcohol abuse.<sup>106</sup> The fate of these tribal-based militia leaders provides an obvious contrast to the survival of Dostum's secular militia.

#### **D. DOSTUM'S MILITIA**

The warlord organization dominates the populace, not to gain legitimacy, but to recruit warriors, extort taxes from local producers in the form of taxes and customs, or simply to mobilize workers or clear away villages for the commercial extraction of globally marketable resources. Its ability to accomplish these goals through force reflects the warlord acknowledged military legitimacy. The warlord *modus operandi* becomes war for money, especially as the wealth generated through these revenues provides the

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<sup>104</sup> Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan : State Formation and Collapse in the International System*, 158.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 158.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.

warlord with sums far exceeding what he requires to support his warrior forces. The wealth generated compares with the commercial activities of some international corporations<sup>107</sup>.

Under the communist regime, Dostum's militia evolved from a security force designed to guard the natural gas fields to a mobile national strike force. Organizationally, it was funded by the national government, salaries paid by Najibullah at twice the rate of regular army soldiers. As the regime's budget began to wane with the withdrawal of Soviet and Eastern Block donor funds, the central government scrutinized Dostum's funding, even to the point of accusing Dostum of reporting false numbers of militia in order to inflate his funding. During this time Dostum already had control of custom duties of the main Soviet port of entry into Afghanistan, which provided the revenue to run his militia, the best equipped in Afghanistan.

After the cessation of Soviet funding to Afghanistan, the Najibullah regime's days were numbered. At this time, Dostum sought to consolidate control over his own forces, which meant cutting off contact with Najibullah since his militia reported to no other higher authority. Dostum took this step, breaking ties with the regime and allying with Massood and the mujahideen forces against the government.

After the fall of the communist regime, Dostum was able to keep together his pool of Uzbek militias and garrisons, totaling 120,000 men.<sup>108</sup> He was able to do this because he could offer "salaries and career prospects." He even was able to recruit members outside his ethnic group. Pushtun army officers, fleeing from other areas of Afghanistan, joined with Dostum as well as Pushtun Mujahideen commanders. With these men, he kept control of airfields, road, and fuel depots all of which he needed in order to maintain his fighting force in the north and in Kabul.<sup>109</sup>

The Jauzjani militia was a secular non-affiliated military division. Unlike most other militias, Dostum's force did not correspond to any traditional Afghani *qawm*.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Mackinlay, *Defining Warlords*, 9, "What was new about these new warlords, and was exhaustively reported by the second phase of writers [economic warlord theory], was that their commercial agenda had become extremely sophisticated, in some cases involving huge international trading accounts."

<sup>108</sup> Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan: State Formation and Collapse in the International System*, 275.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 275.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 161.



However, despite the multiethnic composition of his force, Dostum was effective at utilizing long held Uzbek grievances against the Durrani landlords, recruiting Uzbek soldiers. This gained him greater support from Uzbekistan and standing among the local tribes. The multiethnic character of his forces is significant in that bringing in outside mercenaries no doubt helped check the tribal inefficiencies of purely mono-ethnic forces.

In 2001, Dostum's relations with Uzbekistan were such that Uzbekistan sent troops to serve under Dostum's command. Even today, Dostum gains recruits from Uzbekistan and it is reported that a portion of Dostum's personal bodyguard team is composed of Uzbek Special-Forces.<sup>111</sup>

### **1. Warriors**

In the case of simple warlord organizations, what a warlord says goes. As a warlord organization becomes more complex, the culture changes, often as warriors' goals become more distanced from that of the warlord himself.

The warlord and his warriors do not always operate in hierarchical organizations based on discipline and sound military tactics. John Mackinlay notes that their norms, like the warlord's, are based on self-fulfillment, often instilled as a part of recruitment when traditional ties to family and village are broke<sup>112</sup>. Warriors learn to be motivated by what they can personally get out of the use of force. Getting paid and attending to personal matters are important goals. Outside the training and arms bestowed by the occasional foreign military advisor, warriors are not exposed to nor are they interested in formal military training.

Keeping members loyal is critical. This is often done through fear. It is also done through forcing new recruits/ abductees to shift their tribal obligations. They are forced to kill their friends or relatives as a test. Once such an act is committed, the warrior is outcast from his tribe and thrown back to his only sanctuary, the warlord organization. Other methods of maintaining membership have to do with fostering and satisfying

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<sup>111</sup> *Asia: And there's another Country; Afghanistan*, 68.

<sup>112</sup> Mackinlay, *Defining Warlords*, 8, "Recruits in some West African factions were also forced to reject the influence of their traditional family and village hierarchy. In some cases, indoctrination required them to commit atrocities against their own communities. In many instances, recruits had to be renamed as if to throw off the ties of family tradition and adopt warrior names. This detachment from their social context probably made them more effective as fighters, but less responsible for their terrible conduct."

greed. Members are paid well compared to other employment, if it is even available, and then are often given the chance to take in the spoils of war.<sup>113</sup> As Moreau notes, the warriors live, breath, and eat in an environment of weapons:

The wealth of these guys is tied to their guns. Without guns they can't extort money, collect taxes or customs duties. Their rivers of revenue will dry up.<sup>114</sup>

Warlord tactics are often more akin to demonstrations and deception operations that serve to convey the threat of force in lieu of actually using it.<sup>115</sup> Warlord armies find that such acts invoke terror and are a justified means to achieving their ends.

Dostum's mercenary troops achieved notoriety for ruthless courage on the battlefield and wild indiscipline off it. Bearing a legacy of 200 years near the bottom of a Pushtun-dominated social order, they seemed to take a special delight in evening the historical score, killing Pushtun mujahideen of the south, and looting and terrorizing the civilians.<sup>116</sup>

If terror tactics fail, violence frequently occurs in chaotic, poorly coordinated engagement of untrained, unskilled shooters. Casualties are often low, especially compared to those of non-combatant, unarmed participants. In the instances when warlord armies are well armed and display proficiency in firing their weapons, the reason is usually a past history of training by foreign state or private security organizations.<sup>117</sup> Baryalai, a subordinate warlord, summarizes Dostum's warlord method of social control:

It's this hobby he has. He gives people money, and then he sends them at you, like attack dogs coming at your face.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Lezhnev, *Crafting Peace: Strategies to Deal with Warlords in Collapsing States*, 2-4.

<sup>114</sup> Moreau, *Walking a Fine Line*; "Hamid Karzai is a National Treasure, but can he be President of Afghanistan?" 26. These are statements of Abdul Malik, 40, a former warlord, businessman, and aspiring politician.

<sup>115</sup> Mackinlay, *Defining Warlords*, 8, "They rely instead on their frightening behavior and appearance, and their combat effectiveness is largely symbolic. They are organized around the magnetism of their leaders, which implies that they do not have to rely on a rigorously maintained warfare capability for their survival."

<sup>116</sup> Davis, *Makeover for a Warlord*, 46.

<sup>117</sup> John Mackinlay, "Warlords," *RUSI Journal* 143, no. 2 (April 1998), 24.

<sup>118</sup> Caryl, "The Ways of a Warlord; as Factional Fighting Returns to Afghanistan, at Least One would-be Warlord is Trying to Bring Peace by Taking Away Weapons, Not Wielding them," 10.

## 2. Warlord Leadership

The Uzbek people, the roughest and toughest of all Central Asian nationalities, are noted for their love of marauding and pillaging....Mahmoud Ibn Wali, a sixteenth century historian, described the early Uzbeks as 'famed for their bad nature, swiftness, audacity and boldness' and reveling in their outlaw image. Little has changed in the Uzbek desire for power and influence since then.<sup>119</sup>

Warlord leadership is a product of their history. Sasha Lezhnev notes that warlords were dissatisfied with their previous military lives because of the inherent obstacles of upward mobility conflicting with their desire to seek greater power. Also warlords generally have a narrow view of the world, "believing that one person, rather a complex series of political institutions, can wield power."<sup>120</sup> This is due to a low level of education along with ignorance which breeds a distrust of institutions. The result is a self centered outlook on the world.

However, warlords such as Dostum, though having a narrow world view, know how to deal with the local population. Also, even Dostum knows that his tone must change in the presence of worldwide media coverage. Robert Young Pelton, the only American journalist to have interviewed Dostum [in 2002], observes the level at which Dostum has recreated his image:

People seem to think leaders take power in Afghanistan, but actually they give you power, because they think that you will treat them fairly, listen to their needs. When I saw Dostum talking with his people he was trying to communicate that it was okay for them to talk amongst themselves and dissent and have elections. He was saying that he couldn't fix all their problems for them that they would have to elect leaders and do things for themselves.<sup>121</sup>

In some respects his reputation increased his considerable power and fame amongst the local populations and overseas as well, both key audiences the warlord seeks. Uzbeks are regarded as the most rugged and severe of all the ethnicities of Central Asia. However, as Giustozzi notes, the locals were likely amenable to Dostum's

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<sup>119</sup> Ann Marlowe, "'Warlords' and 'Leaders'," National Review, <http://www.nationalreview.com/comment/comment-marlowe021802.shtml> (accessed January 30, 2007). Ann Marlowe writes for the National Review Online. This is a quote from journalist Ahmed Rashid.

<sup>120</sup> Lezhnev, *Crafting Peace: Strategies to Deal with Warlords in Collapsing States*, 2-4.

<sup>121</sup> Marlowe, *"Warlords" and "Leaders"*, 1.

“Uzbek” ruthlessness so long as the warlord’s warriors were maintaining order in the region as opposed to ravaging the local populace.<sup>122</sup> As a result, Dostum never felt the need to build a significant public relations machine at the grass roots, and did little to counter his ruthless reputation until 2002, when he finally decided to trade in his uniform for a business suit as a member of the future Afghani government.<sup>123</sup>

### **3. Adversaries**

Since warlords themselves use force to deter their adversaries, they must always be wary of potential force used against them. In Afghanistan, a person with Dostum’s history has made plenty of enemies. Among them are the Taliban, who have gone underground since 2001. An incident in 2005 shows how such personal hatreds are dangerous in Afghanistan. Dostum was in the process of recasting his image as a legitimate politician; however, he still traveled with heavy security. The Taliban, whose stronghold is in the southeastern portion of Afghanistan near the Pakistan border, managed a suicide attack on Dostum in Sheberghan, Dostum’s stronghold. Using cunning and deception, the suicide bomber approached Dostum’s entourage dressed as an unthreatening beggar during the Muslim festival of Eid ul-Adha, the celebration of sacrifice. Even a thug such as Dostum could not publicly turn away a beggar during this period. The beggar got close to Dostum’s bodyguards when he set off his bomb. Dostum managed to escape unhurt, but 20 people were injured in the attack.<sup>124</sup>

## **E. CONCLUSION**

An optimal warlord organization is a good fit for the Afghan environment. In simple environments, the warlord exercises direct control over his subordinates. In highly complex environments, the patron network may reach out horizontally to other warlords, state institutions, international actors, illegal-clandestine actors, and any other partners.

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<sup>122</sup> Giustozzi, *Respectable Warlords? The Politics of State building in Post-Taleban Afghanistan*, 8.

<sup>123</sup> Giustozzi, *Respectable Warlords? The Politics of State building in Post-Taleban Afghanistan*, 8.

<sup>124</sup> Shiv Malik, "Warlords' Threat to Secede," *New Statesman* 18, no. 845 (Feb 7, 2005), 2, <http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=793106531&Fmt=7&clientId=65345&RQT=309&VName=PQD>. (accessed January 30, 2007).

Dostum's early organization, the 53<sup>rd</sup> Division, was a pure military organization, with dedicated revenues coming from the state and foreign donors. Therefore the resource environment could be classified as simple. However, even back in the 1980's and early 1990's, Dostum worked in both the legal and illegal environments, siphoning revenue from the state. His operations involved collecting customs fees at Hairatan which should have been forwarded to Kabul. Thus, his organization can be seen as transitioning to operating in a more complex environment.

Due to weakness of the state, Dostum never really felt threatened by the prospect of the state stopping his illegal activities. Thus, the environment in the 1980s could be considered stable. At the time of the fall of the Najibullah regime, he commanded a division-sized element, which was probably the largest organization operating at the tactical level. Dostum established standing operating procedures through fear and ruthless leadership to ensure consistent behavior from his subordinates. Additionally, he received considerable government funding to maintain his well-paid militia.

In conclusion, it is very difficult to sustain a military organization based on an ethnic base, and even more challenging to maintain a political movement based on ethnicity. How coherent a warlord organization is depends on whether it is secular or founded on a specific population base. A warlord who establishes an organization on a stable base, such as secular military one, will have better success. And as the next chapter discusses, if the environment becomes favorable for political change (i.e. the state collapses), a warlord organization with a stable secular base can grow by politicizing ethnic and tribal populations with relatively steady and productive results.

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## **V. WARLORD POLITICAL ORGANIZATION**

Dostum's political rise results from his military legitimacy, which gave him a stable power base. Political mobilization at the national level requires politically trained entrepreneurs with a strategy to establish, build and maintain power. Though Dostum is a canny man with much experience, he would not have been as successful without his military reputation.

This chapter traces how warlords build political legitimacy from their military base. It describes political changes in Afghanistan during Dostum's life, followed by discussion of the origin of his Junbesh party and of the Turkic population base that eventually assumed the party's political leadership. This is followed by a description of Dostum's gradual shift from military to political activities, including consideration of his political campaigning, political demands and compromises, and his difficult public relations. Throughout this transformation, he maintains his warlord characteristics.

### **A. DOSTUM IN THE CONTEXT OF AFGHANISTAN'S CHANGING POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT**

Since 1979, the environment in Afghanistan went through four overlapping periods, alternating phases of coercive centralized control and of warlordism. The four periods are the Soviet occupation, the Afghan civil war, the rule of the Taliban, and the post Taliban environment.

#### **1. Soviet Occupation**

The period of Soviet occupation is marked by jihadi forces' global efforts to expel the Soviets, who occupied Afghanistan from 1979 to 1989, propping up a puppet regime. During this time, Dostum achieved legitimacy as a successful career military man. He was a member of the party and surrounded himself with communist advisors. His militia grew as it guarded the Afghan national gas fields. Dostum himself gained stature among his military subordinates, President Najibullah, and foreign supporters in the Soviet Union, Uzbekistan, and Iran. His defection from Najibullah in 1991 contributed to the collapse of the communist regime.

## **2. Civil War and the Warlord Era**

The period of Afghan civil war saw a struggle for power in the context of a completely ineffective central authority. In 1989, the Mujahideen insurgency finally compelled the Soviet military to withdraw. With the end of Soviet funding in 1992, the communist regime fell and Afghanistan descended into a violent civil war among warlords. During this time Dostum consolidated his human resources by recruiting militia members from among his ethnic tribe, former jihadi commanders and other former communist military commanders. Initially allied with Tajik leader Massood in the struggle to control Kabul, Dostum's allegiances wavered back and forth during the struggle between the Jihadis and the Northern Alliance.

## **3. Taliban Regime**

In 1994, the Taliban defeated the various warlord factions and seized control of most of Afghanistan. Their tenure was marked by a strict Islamist regime. With the support of their Pakistani patrons, the Taliban movement in a few years swept north from Kandahar to Kabul to Mazar-I Sharif, Dostum's stronghold. Abdul Malik, a subordinate commander who offered to deal with the Taliban, betrayed Dostum, causing Uzbekistan to lose faith in Dostum.<sup>125</sup> The coercive nature of the Taliban regime forced Dostum to flee the country. Uzbekistan would not give him sanctuary but did offer him safe transit and he settled in Turkey. The period of Taliban rule ended in 2001 with the intervention of U.S. forces and ouster of the regime.

## **4. American Defeat of the Taliban**

After the Taliban were defeated, the current Afghan central government was assisted back to power by U.S. forces. Dostum returned to Afghanistan in 2001 with Uzbek support as the Northern Alliance revolt against the Taliban gained momentum. It is remarkable how quickly Dostum reestablished legitimacy and leadership. The Uzbeks sent arms and ammunition for Dostum's troops as well as Uzbek soldiers to fight alongside the warlord's warriors. With American Special Operations Forces support,

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<sup>125</sup> Giustozzi, *Respectable Warlords? The Politics of State building in Post-Taliban Afghanistan*, 8.



Dostum reconsolidated his power base in the north while fighting westward towards Kabul. Now a bit older and wiser, Dostum clearly had national level political aspirations. But to understand these aspirations, we must look back over his earlier evolution as a political player.

## **B. POLITICAL MOBILIZATION: MOVEMENT OF THE NORTH AND JUNBESH**

After the Soviets withdrew, a weak central authority opened the opportunity for Dostum's organization to extend its reach in the political arena. The time was ripe for warlord activities. With the fall of the Pushtun dominated communist regime, Dostum did not welcome the resumption of Pushtun dominance under the jihadi groups. He stated early as 1990 that the Pushtun dominance of Uzbeks and Turks in the north would not be tolerated.<sup>126</sup> In effect, he signaled his desire to overturn the status quo power and consolidate his political position as de facto leader of Uzbeks and Turks. His actions in 1992 to repel General Rasul at Balkh demonstrated his ability to back up his political position. His band of military commanders, jihadi officers and warriors became known as the "Movement of the North."

However, the jihadi leaders in power did not recognize Dostum's organization as a political party, so gave it no voice in Kabul. Dostum demonstrated his political ambitions by establishing with his coalition partners in early 1992 the Junbesh-Milli-ye Islami party, an organization consolidating all the political forces in northern Afghanistan. Its executive council comprised ten former communist members, five military officers, and fourteen mujahideen leaders.<sup>127</sup> Because of the group's diversity, its members spent the early years focused on determining leadership and dominance within the organization. Although he was the dominant military commander, Dostum had competition from the other members of the council for political dominance.

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<sup>126</sup> Giustozzi, *The Ethnicization of an Afghan Faction: Junbesh-I I-Milli from its Origins to the Presidential Elections*, 1.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

### C. STRUGGLE FOR POLITICAL LEGITIMACY

Many of the northern warlords gained power in the 1990's. Unlike many militia leaders who found their legitimacy in *qawm* ethnic structures, or the mujahideen who found their legitimacy in Islamic fundamentalist ideology, Dostum did not recruit or lead from an ethnic or religious position. He was for the most part secular, drawing his strength from his military background and reputation. However, since he severed ties with the communist regime and President Najibullah in 1991, he changed his focus from consolidating military legitimacy to political legitimization.<sup>128</sup>

When the central authority collapsed, all coercive measures taken by the state to suppress political ethnic movements disappeared as well. It is not clear if Dostum recognized this immediately. He attempted to proclaim himself leader of the Uzbek and Turkomen ethnicities, where no such relation was conceived of previously. His action was provoked by the competition for national power between Pushtun-led Mujahideen leaders such as Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and Tajik leader Massood. Dostum entered the struggle for the national-level prize by inserting his forces into Kabul, staking his right as a player. His adversaries' more organized political entities gained international recognition and dismissed Dostum's coalition as a non-political militia force that would be closed out of political discussions. After this political maneuver, Dostum returned to his regional power base to establish Junbesh-I Milli-ye Islami, claiming it represented northern Afghanistan.<sup>129</sup>

Dostum was elected Junbesh's leader in June 1, 1992. The executive council clearly reflected the coalition effort in the north. Military reputation and legitimacy seemed to be the main factors in leadership, rather than ethnicity or tribe. Even at the time, Dostum seemed more comfortable with secular arrangements, seeking to base his participation in Junbesh on his military reliability. This military mindset may have precluded serious political organization within Junbesh in the first two years. Without establishing a political or ideological identity, it would be unable to compete for political

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<sup>128</sup> Antonio Giustozzi has produced a well researched analysis of the warlord's deliberate transformation from military leader to political fame and power. Giustozzi, *The Ethnicization of an Afghan Faction: Junbesh-I I-Milli from its Origins to the Presidential Elections*, 2.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

power in Kabul.<sup>130</sup> Lacking political legitimacy, Dostum and Junbesh were viewed only as a regional threat.

Within Junbesh, none of the ethnic minorities initially had more than fifty percent of the leadership positions. To the extent there was an ethnic agenda, the Movement adopted the traditional anti-Pushtun regional stance. However, the leadership's focus was military legitimacy and it even recruited Pushtuns with military competence.<sup>131</sup> Giustozzi says that Dostum did not "treat Pushtuns as enemies."<sup>132</sup> However, by 2002 the Junbesh leadership was 56 percent Uzbek.<sup>133</sup> Giustozzi concludes that in order to find a political identity and legitimacy, the group turned to ethnic consolidation of the leadership and mobilization of the Uzbek ethnic group.

Of course, this transformation took over a decade. Military power struggles had to be sorted out. Dostum proved the most reputable military man, and he controlled the most resources, so he eventually became the clear leader of the movement. The military leadership refined its political base by gradually removing the more leftist communist members, and the leftist intelligentsia began to detach from the party.

#### **D. TURKIC ETHNIC BASE**

Dostum's use of an untapped resource—ethnicity—to advance his political goals, compared with his scant attention to the actual needs of the local ethnic populations, reflect a warlord mindset. Seeking to fulfill his own personal goals of wealth, power, and fame, as the national environment changes has transformed Dostum as well.

With the fall of the Taliban, Dostum stepped up efforts to promote himself as leader of the Uzbek and Turkomen ethnic groups, making deals in Kabul to support various ethnic leaders in the ministries of the national level government.<sup>134</sup> However, his political success was mixed due to politicization. Reports of his operations against Turkomen in the populace contrasted with his lighter treatment of the Uzbek people.

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<sup>130</sup> Giustozzi, *The Ethnicization of an Afghan Faction: Junbesh-I I-Milli from its Origins to the Presidential Elections*, 2-3.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 2-3, 8.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 15-17.

The Uzbeks and Turkomen are part of the Turkic ethnic group from the Central Asian region and same language family. They live in Afghanistan and the former Soviet republics; historically many entered Afghanistan after the Bolshevik revolution and subsequent suppression of the Basmachi revolt in Central Asia. As a result, anticommunism was strong within both groups even before the 1978 communist coup and Soviet occupation. They produce Afghanistan's most valued traditional exports, karakuls pelts and fine carpets, and continue to identify themselves by their Central Asian places of origin.<sup>135</sup>

A good sign of real political representation came after 2001 with the decision to have universal suffrage and open elections for state institutional positions. Giustozzi reports on yet another transformation by the Junbesh (and, by implication, Dostum). Whereas Junbesh's politics originally meant recruiting military leaders into the party, the party subsequently moved to execute a full spectrum of political actions, including attending to electoral issues and political campaigning at the grassroots level.<sup>136</sup> The challenge Dostum now faces is accommodating the sudden politicization of northern ethnic groups, especially in the cities. The transformation of ethnicities in the north is causing Dostum's movement to lose coherence, though he sustains his military appeal. At this time, it is evident by Dostum's reworking of the membership that he is slowly transforming the Junbesh party into a national party.<sup>137</sup>

Dostum continues with the strategy of politicizing the Uzbek ethnic base. He has been positively recognized in Uzbekistan and even Turkey, and has politically elevated the meaning of the traditional term "*qawm*" to include all Uzbeks in Afghanistan. In effect, Giustozzi says, Dostum has branded himself as the most recognized Uzbek throughout Afghanistan.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan : State Formation and Collapse in the International System*, 30.

<sup>136</sup> Giustozzi, *The Ethnicization of an Afghan Faction: Junbesh-I I-Milli from its Origins to the Presidential Elections*, 2. The Junbesh party, having failed in its bid to get Afghanistan to adopt a federalist system that would empower the regional leaders, has turned towards consolidating ethnic groups by redrawing provincial boundaries. Giustozzi cites an example of Ismaili Tajik, Mehr Roen, once allied with Dostum and a leader within Junbesh. He declined an offer to run with Dostum for national level positions due to Dostum's ethnicization of the Uzbek leadership.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, 2. Giustozzi notes that the leftist members continue to be marginalized, mujahideen are valued in the ranks, and secularism continues to attract the intelligentsia.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

## **E. POLITICAL CAMPAIGNING**

Dostum began transforming himself to appeal to a political audience through new rhetoric as early as 2002. Perhaps playing to a global audience, including the U.S., Dostum spoke to the people in northern Afghanistan about Abraham Lincoln, using the words "government by the people, for the people." He has made similar speeches in an effort to reach audiences of Islamic clergy also.<sup>139</sup> As part of his physical transformation, the warlord shaved his beard and traded his uniform for a civilian suit.<sup>140</sup> Clearly, this warlord was seeking more than military legitimacy—he wants political power and fame.

Dostum continued to demonstrate his political acumen by staging a political campaign in the 2004 national election. Dostum's lieutenants brought people from all over the northern region for a political rally at his stronghold in Sheberghan, where, in the traditional Afghan way, games were staged and lavish meals prepared. Dostum and his men, also in the traditional way, patronized the people with gifts and money to generate political support for his presidential campaign. As Afghan reporter Massood Farivar observes, these same Dostum strongmen then provided a subtle if not persistent armed presence until Election Day, reminding the public of who provides local security.<sup>141</sup>

The media attention Dostum generated got the notice of politicians worldwide. Anthony Davis reports one European diplomat's observation that, "Dostum has made the transition to politician far quicker than most Afghan leaders. He's hung up his fatigues for a business suit." Nonetheless, Davis notes, Dostum did keep his 7,000 man army.<sup>142</sup>

## **F. DEMANDS AND COMPROMISE**

The political turf battle between Dostum and Karzai continued into 2005. Dostum, together with one-time ally and fellow northern warlord Atta Mohammad,

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<sup>139</sup> Giustozzi, *The Ethnicization of an Afghan Faction: Junbesh-I I-Milli from its Origins to the Presidential Elections*, 46.

<sup>140</sup> Davis, *Makeover for a Warlord*, 46.

<sup>141</sup> Farivar, *Washington's Blind Spot in Afghanistan*, 19.

<sup>142</sup> Davis, *Makeover for a Warlord*, 46.

demanded that more autonomy be granted to the northern regions from Kabul and that the mainly Tajik and Uzbek north be granted autonomy from the center.<sup>143</sup>

The warlords are probably fighting the ongoing disarmament process, which aims to take heavy weaponry and small arms from the warlords militias. Because warlords' power derived originally from their military legitimacy, as their military legitimacy erodes, their power erodes as well. In 2004, news focused on repeated accusations that Dostum had failed to comply with the disarmament process.

Mr. Dostum's forces had surrendered a dozen tanks and 75 artillery pieces, believed to account for 40 percent of his heavy weaponry. One thousand men from each side have also undergone demobilization, leaving the two commanders with official forces of 4,400 fighters each. However, Mr. Dostum is believed to have 3,000 additional fighters at his disposal and Mr. Atta is believed to be able to call on 2,000 fighters in case of need.<sup>144</sup>

If the reports are accurate, then Dostum's military power has been greatly reduced since he commanded a division in the 1980's, and certainly less diminished from his peak of power in 1992, when he could marshal 120,000 men. There is a tradeoff of political legitimacy for military power, and a tension between the two. It is doubtful that Dostum would totally relinquish his military force. His rise to power, facilitated by ethnic mobilization, has always been based on his ability to coerce with armed force.

## **G. PUBLIC RELATIONS**

When a warlord is in control of a region, legitimacy and justice are relative. For example, the only thing that came out of charges that Dostum was responsible for the mass graves of hundreds of Taliban soldiers in 2001 was a major public relations fiasco. The prisoners had been held in shipping containers and many suffocated to death.<sup>145</sup> The

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<sup>143</sup> Malik, *Warlords' Threat to Secede*, 11.

<sup>144</sup> "Afghanistan Politics: Disarmament Faces Hurdles," *EIU News Wire* (Aug 25, 2004), <http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=701164011&Fmt=7&clientId=65345&RQT=309&VName=PQD>. (accessed January 30, 2007).

<sup>145</sup> Khabir Ahmad, "UN Envoy Urges as Inquiry into Human-Rights Abuses in Afghanistan," *The Lancet* 360, no. 9344 (November 9, 2002), 1486. <http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=236832841&Fmt=7&clientId=65345&RQT=309&VName=PQD>. (accessed January 30, 2007). "In November [2001] US-backed forces of Uzbek warlord Abdul Rashid Dostum, now deputy defense minister, allegedly suffocated to death hundreds of Taliban prisoners in sealed cargo containers and then buried them in a mass grave in northern Afghanistan. Earlier [2002], Washington-based Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) revealed the existence of this grave. Jahangir said she was "disturbed" by these deaths."

media felt the pressure of Dostum's presence and were uncomfortable seeking the truth. According to Kirk Troy,

People in Mazar-e-Sharif are wary of the situation and many were afraid to talk about sensitive issues such as the mass grave at Dasht-i-Leili for fear of reprisals. Journalists are constantly under surveillance by local authorities and worry about their safety when dealing with issues like the alleged massacre. One local cameraman, who has now left the country, was badly beaten after selling documentary footage of the mass graves and interviewing witnesses.<sup>146</sup>

The United Nations also had a hard time investigating the incident, because the instability in the area made investigations "difficult." Many UN officials would not speak on the record about the situation. In the absence of conclusive investigative results, Dostum strongly denied that there had been any sort of massacre. He said that many bodies in the mass grave were prisoners who had died of battle wounds. Dostum's public appeal as a military leader has been buttressed by unanimous hatred of the Taliban. Warlord Atta Mohammed says, "Generally my idea is that those who were killed came here to kill. They were not here to build roads, schools and hospitals."<sup>147</sup>

In conclusion, Dostum has used his military legitimacy to help him in his quest for wealth, fame and political power. His path is unusual because his military power base mitigated the tumultuous issues faced by other armed bands and political organizations whose power is based on ethnic identity. However, when opportunities for political action emerged, Dostum adapted by politicizing his ethnic base. Since the communist overthrow, he has been motivated to seek political fame and power beyond his military base. His part in establishing Junbesh shows his ability to attract ethnic, religious and military allies. His many seemingly contradictory alliances indicate that he has a long term vision of self-fulfillment and manages his patron-client relationships to support his personal goals; he has created a political space in which to pursue typical warlord goals of power, fame and wealth. Davis remarks on Dostum's not-so-benevolent brand of politics.

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<sup>146</sup> Kirk Troy, "Life and Death with Warlords," *Far Eastern Economic Review* 165, no. 49 (December 12, 2002), 24, <http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=261569531&Fmt=7&clientId=65345&RQT=309&VName=PQD>. (accessed January 30, 2007).

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

Just how democratic politics will fare under a man whose portrait hangs in every office, shop and school across his fief remains to be seen. "Dostum fits straight into the pattern of Central Asian authoritarianism that's digging in across the region," says a Western official in Kabul. "Anyone who imagines this is some roly-poly Mr. Nice Guy who understands democratic give-and take is making a mistake." <sup>148</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> Davis, *Makeover for a Warlord*, 46.



## VI. CONCLUSION

### A. THESIS SUMMARY

Warlords are defined by their military legitimacy and their desire for political power, fame, and wealth. Rashid Dostum's rise to his current position as one of the most powerful military leaders in Afghanistan resulted from his desire for power and fame and presents a challenge to the Afghan state as it struggles for peace and stability.

Patronage as a form of state governance inherently weakens states. Patronage politics in Afghanistan has shallow roots, revealed by weak state policies. As long as patronage (supported by monetary disbursement) flows to local leaders, nominal allegiance is paid to the central government and governance is left to traditional organizations and local strongmen. Patronage ties are much stronger at local levels; there strongmen become warlords and seek to widen their political powers, undermining the central government. Foreign patronage of warlords also compromises the state's ability to govern locally.

Warlord economics revolves around a variety of potential revenues for financing warlord groups. There are four types of resources: natural resources, taxes, illicit activities, and foreign aid. Under the communist regime, Dostum ran a militia funded by the government, and resources for operations came from a stable and simple environment. When the Afghan central authority disintegrated and the state plunged into civil war, the opportunities for revenue abounded, but the number of adversaries increased. The new economic environment is unstable and complex.

A warlord organization is a good fit for the environment. In simple environments, the warlord exercises direct control over his subordinates. In highly complex environments, the patron network may extend horizontally to other warlords, state institutions, international actors, illegal-clandestine actors and other partners.

Dostum's early organization, the 53<sup>rd</sup> Division, was a purely military organization, with dedicated revenues from the state and foreign donors. Even in the 1980's and early 1990's, Dostum funneled capital from the state both legally and illegally, as the customs fees he collected at Hairatan should have been forwarded to Kabul. This was a complex situation. But due to the weakness of the state, there was

never really a risk that the state would stop his illegal activities. When the Najibullah regime fell, Dostum commanded a division-sized element, probably the largest organization operating at the tactical level. He established standing operating procedures through fear and ruthless leadership to ensure consistent behavior from his subordinates.

In terms of popular support, because traditional society does not extend beyond the local level, national ethnic organizations are prone to instability and so are the organizations that mobilize populations using ethnic ideology. A warlord like Dostum, with a stable power base, will have better success surviving in the long run given Afghanistan's turbulent political environment.

## **B. CONCLUDING REMARKS**

The way ahead will be a continued contest of wills and compromises between warlords such as Dostum and the central Afghan authority. The warlord's narrow view of the world, a world dominated by individual strongmen who demand and dole out patronage, prevents them from placing faith in a bureaucracy like a national level government. The Afghan parliament indicated acceptance of the gradual reincorporation of warlords. In 2005, the lower house of the Afghanistan parliament passed a bill granting amnesty for all Afghan crimes over the last 25 years.<sup>149</sup> This would exonerate all warlords, to include Dostum, of all the criminal activities that have been attributed to them

By definition, warlords have military legitimacy in the areas in which they operate. Dostum is clearly maintaining his military force despite having publicly announced support for the government's disarmament program.<sup>150</sup> His militia still serves Dostum and executes his version of law and order based on warlord power struggles. In a recent event, former Dostum ally Faizulla Zaki, a current member of parliament from Jauzjani province, was roughed up and sent to Uzbekistan for hospitalization.<sup>151</sup> This incident is reminiscent of when Dostum's forces chased the governor of Faryab province

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<sup>149</sup> Gall, Carlotta, "Afghans Urge Legal Amnesty for Those Involved in Wars," *New York Times*, February 12, 2007, A12.

<sup>150</sup> Morajee, Rachel, "Afghan warlord backs plan to disarm militias," *Financial Times*, February 26, 2006, 2.

<sup>151</sup> Gall, Carlotta, "Ethnic Uzbek Legislator Beaten, Afghans Confirm," *New York Times*, June 30, 2006, A7.

out of that northern province. If Dostum was indeed behind this thuggish act, it would indicate that the member of parliament duty-bound to work for his constituents despite warlord influence. If warlord patronage is losing influence to the central authority is a good thing for the state. This incident suggests violent presence that warlords like Dostum still continue to have, especially in their stronghold areas. The process of transferring power from warlords to the national government will not happen in a single event or ceremony; it will be regime political compromise and the path may not be often symbolic incidents of violence. However, it is doubtful Dostum, having a stake in the central authority, will use his militias to plunge the country back into a civil war such as in the 1990's.

This thesis also characterizes warlords by their desire for power, fame, and wealth. Dostum at this time is clearly the symbolic leader of the ethnic Uzbeks and Turkomen in Afghanistan. He holds the highest military position in the Afghani Armed Forces as the Army Chief of Staff. He will likely use his influence for progress in the northern provinces. However, as a national figure, he has shown signs of extending his party's membership to regions outside of the north. Since the influence of his militia does not extend to regions outside his northern stronghold, to gain a political following, he will have to begin incorporating more non-violent political methods.

Dostum can be a positive force by providing an alternative to the Pushtun and Jihadi political elements in the rest of the country. It will be interesting to see which group is better capable of subduing or integrating tribal society into national level politics. Dostum has shown that a disciplined, secular militia can form a strong base to mobilize ethnic populations. However, since it is not clear that tribal law can work at the national level, what group can better subdue the unstable and violent tribal society? Afghan expert Thomas Johnson puts Afghanistan's current challenges in perspective:

The actual influence and control of the new, democratically elected government of Hamid Karzai extends only weakly beyond the outskirts of Kabul; ethno-linguistic fragmentation is on the rise.... large areas of Afghanistan are still ruled by warlords/ drug-lords.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> Johnson, Thomas H. "Afghanistan's post-Taliban transition: the state of state-building after war," *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 25 (March-June 2006), 1.

Increased government legitimacy can be indicated by diminishing warlord militia activity in relation to increased warlord political activity. Warlords will be brought into the national regime when the government gains control of the sovereign right to the use of force within the state boundaries. This includes the government's ability to regulate and tax the sources of warlord revenue. Taxation and representation are the means and building blocks for a functioning democratic state. Implementing these means is integral to replacing the weak option of patronage style governance. These means allow the state to build institutional bodies that can effectively govern the populace. Until the central authority seizes their role of governing in the countryside, warlords like Dostum will hold tight to their place in Afghan society.

## APPENDIX A. PROVINCIAL MAP OF AFGHANISTAN

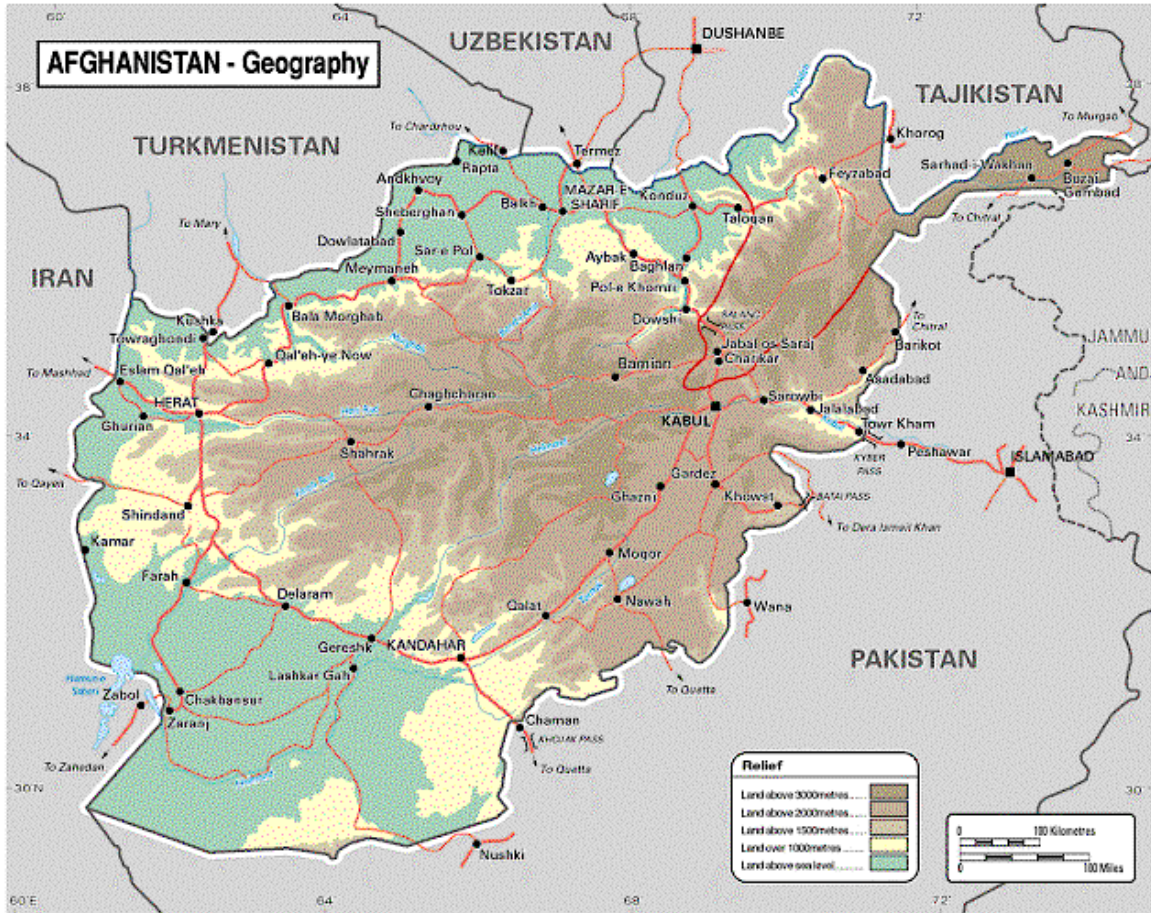


This map provides a clean picture of the provinces and major cities of Afghanistan. <sup>153</sup>

<sup>153</sup> Global Security, "Afghanistan Maps," Global Security, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/afghanistan/maps.htm>, (accessed February 13, 2007).

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## APPENDIX B: RELIEF MAP OF AFGHANISTAN



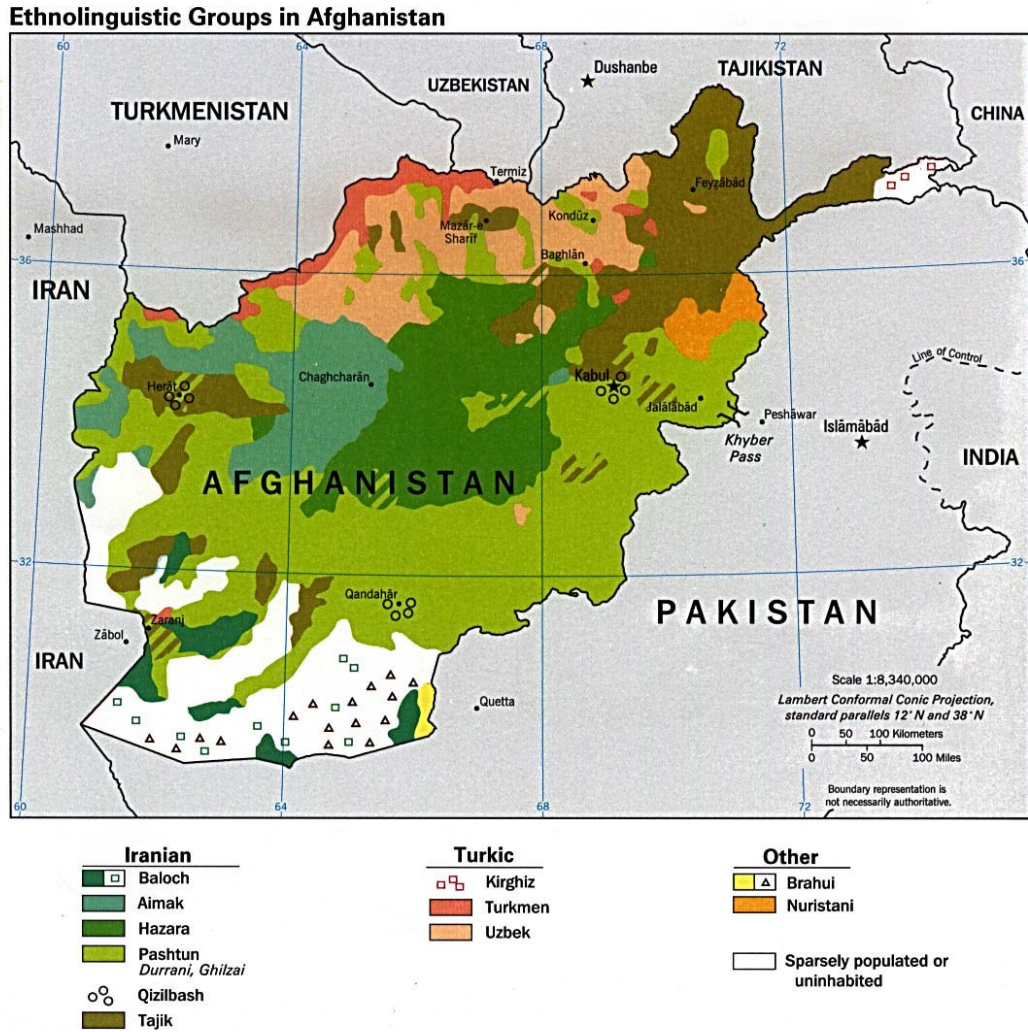
This map provides a general picture of the elevation relief of Afghanistan. <sup>154</sup>

<sup>154</sup> Global Security, "Afghanistan Maps," Global Security, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/afghanistan/maps.htm>, (accessed February 13, 2007).

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## APPENDIX C: ETHNOLINGUISTIC MAP OF AFGHANISTAN



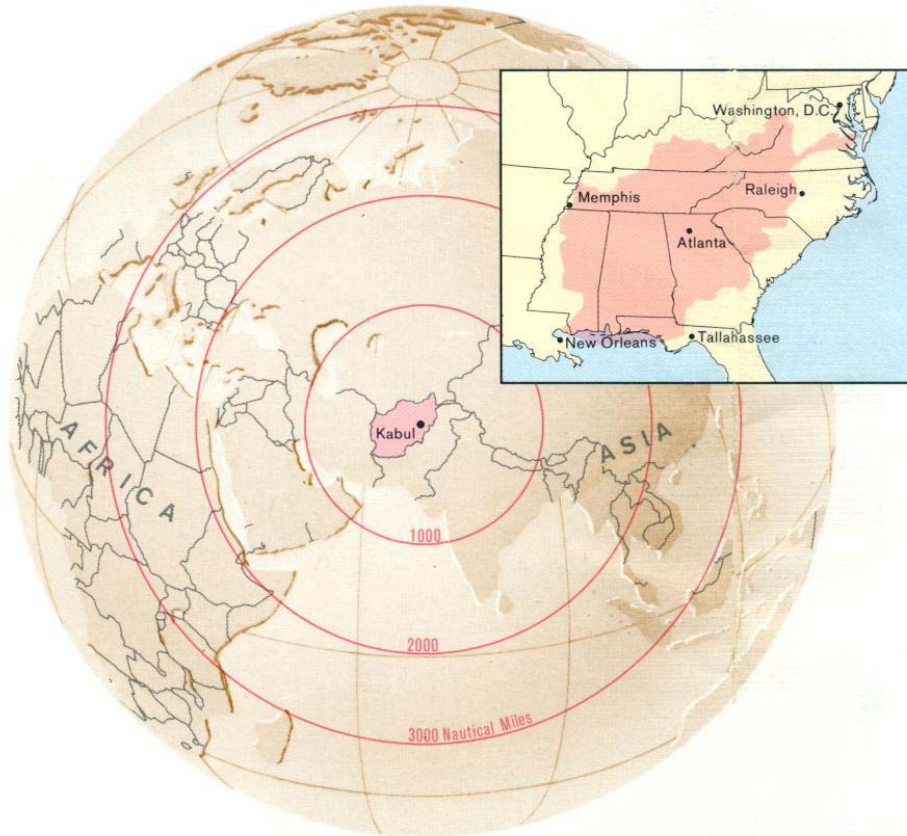
802551 (R00434) 6-97

This map provides a basic picture of the ethno-linguistic groupings in Afghanistan.<sup>155</sup>

<sup>155</sup> Global Security, "Afghanistan Maps," Global Security, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/afghanistan/maps.htm>, (accessed February 13, 2007).

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## APPENDIX D: REGIONAL MAP



This map provides a general size perspective of Afghanistan in relation to the U.S. <sup>156</sup>

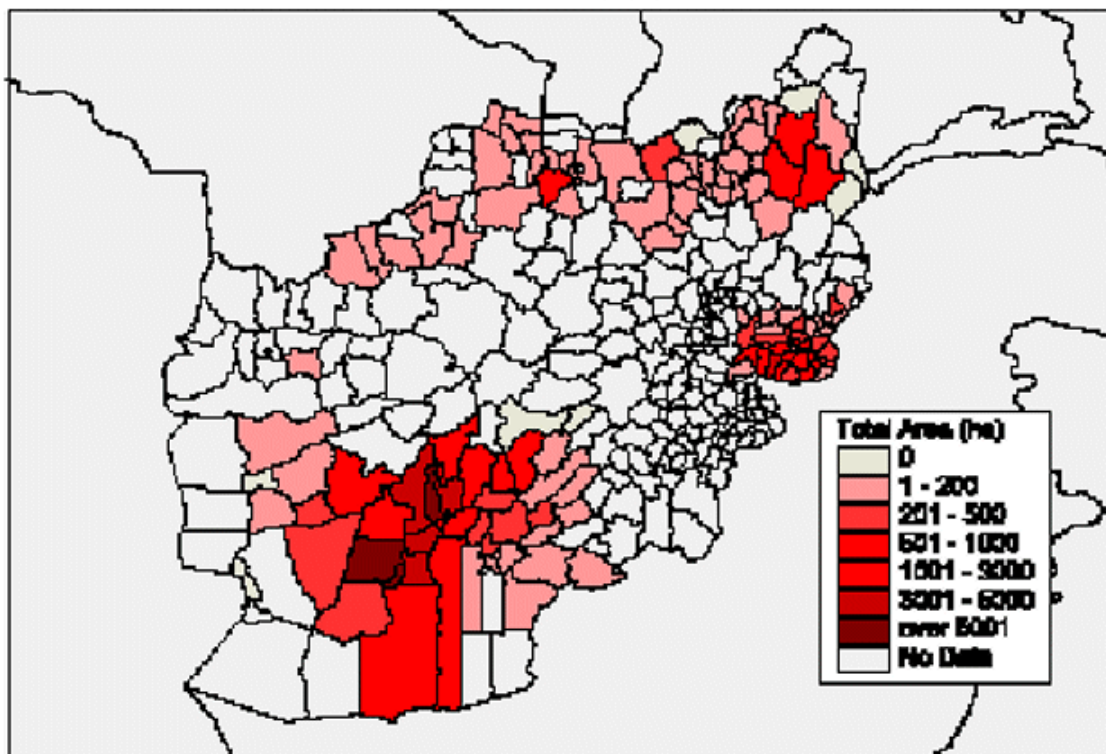
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<sup>156</sup> Global Security, "Afghanistan Maps," Global Security, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/afghanistan/maps.htm>, (accessed February 13, 2007).

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## APPENDIX E: DRUG PRODUCTION MAP OF AFGHANISTAN

### Afghanistan: Opium Poppy Cultivation, 2000



This map provides a general disposition of the regions of the area of poppy cultivation grow during 2000 in Afghanistan.<sup>157</sup>

<sup>157</sup> Global Security, "Afghanistan Maps," Global Security, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/afghanistan/maps.htm>, (accessed February 13, 2007).

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