States, Societies, Resistance, and COIN

Samuel Abrams

RAJIV CHANDRASEKARAN'S *LITTLE AMERICA: THE WAR WITHIN THE WAR FOR AFGHANISTAN,* is about NATO's counterinsurgency campaign in Afghanistan since 2009. Published in 2012, it is one of the few works that links high-level policy to on-the-ground realities of a far away war. As the United States determines a role for its military after 2014, it is worth looking back. Many have focused on the book's portrayal of personal infighting, bureaucratic sclerosis, and parochialism.[1] Perhaps more interesting is that he shows how Western ideas about state-society relations led NATO to conduct a campaign that has cost trillions of dollars, has had at best limited successes, and may have simply armed an array of factions for civil war when NATO leaves.[2]

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(U.S. Army)

"We're bringing the government of Afghanistan back here," Lt. Col. Cal Worth explained to a resident of Marja in Afghanistan's Helmand Province.[3] He was explaining not just his immediate objective, but also the underlying logic of NATO's counterinsurgency campaign. This logic is found in U.S. Army Field Manual (FM) 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*, which was written as the U.S. military fought insurgencies in Iraq. The logic holds that insurgencies require support from the population, and if the state reaches the people, popular support for the insurgency withers away. While insurgencies require support from populations because insurgents cannot draw on state resources, the idea that "more government" will attenuate this support is not necessarily true. This idea is based on a Western-centric definition of the state as a sovereign, autonomous entity that determines social relations throughout its territory.

Yet, this Western-ideal type of state has never existed in Afghanistan. Those who have tried to build such a state have incited violent resistance and either chose an alternative model of governance or were deposed. When the U.S. military and civilian agencies endorsed the Western-ideal type of state, they too encountered violence. This was not because the insurgency felt threatened by the state, but because Afghan society rejected the Western-ideal-type model of state-society relations. As a result, the U.S. national security apparatus—from the White House to civilian and military organizations in the field—could not develop an effective stabilization strategy. This is not to say that Afghanistan has never been stable; rather, that stability has been closely associated with a minimalist state that is distinct from the Western model.

Going forward, this means that NATO should be prepared to accept, if not encourage, the government of Afghanistan to seek a political solution that decentralizes political authority. This would center around reducing responsibilities of the central Afghan state and enforcing particular "redlines" for its subnational components, such as prohibiting threats to the state or launching attacks on other countries. Peripheral governing authorities would determine other issues for themselves. This could leave room for a Taliban-affiliated political party to assume some authority, the promise of which could be part of a negotiated settlement to the conflict.

This analysis is also relevant for Syria, Libya, Yemen, Somalia, and elsewhere. In these unstable places, the time and resources required to build a Western-type state are simply not available and the appropriateness of the Western model varies widely. The U.S. national security apparatus will need to deal directly with nonstate actors, tribal leaders, religious figures, warlords, militias, etc.—not only as conduits of information and temporary leaders, but as primary actors in a complex but stable political tapestry. This approach is not without risks, but after more than ten years, trillions of dollars, and thousands of lives, the United States cannot afford to approach the rest of the world like it has Afghanistan.

Understanding the Western-ideal-type State

The Western-ideal-type state is a product of a specific political and intellectual history, and for many people around the world, its benevolence is not self-evident.

Starting with Hobbes' conception of the state as a "leviathan" that provided individuals security from "a war of all against all" in exchange for submission, the Western intellectual tradition has conceived of the state as the single dominant social actor within its territory and the primary agent of social organization. More specifically, the state has been assumed to have a monopoly over violence in its territory, be autonomous from other social actors, have differentiated components to enable specialization in specific tasks, and coordinate among its components.[4] Today, although Western states may seem drastically different to those who live within their territories, they all—North America to Scandinavia to continental Europe—conform to this model.

International norms and institutions have reinforced this ideal. The Treaty of Westphalia codified the supremacy of the state within its internationally recognized borders. Three hundred years later the founding charter of the United Nations, as an organization comprised of states, institutionalized state sovereignty and articulated a set of expectations for state-driven economic and social change.[5] In this conception, outside the realm of the state lay disorder, barbarism, and danger: unacceptable conditions that required redress. Throughout the 1950s

and 1960s people believed, especially in the United States, that states, as uniquely powerful entities, would be able to bring development and modernity to backward populations through policy and planning processes. As such, the Western-ideal-type state not only had a particular set of characteristics, it also had a specific economic development agenda.

Yet, states of this type are not universal, nor do they necessarily represent a stable, peaceful, equilibrium. A critical examination of states shows that their functions, structures, and relationships with the societies vary greatly. J.P. Nettl describes the state as a "conceptual variable" by identifying four variables with which to compare states: sovereignty, or the ability of the state to impose its will; recognition in international affairs; autonomy, or the existence of a sphere of state affairs distinct from other social activity; and national sociopolitical consciousness, or popular ascent to the state as a legitimate social actor.[6] Douglass North, John Wallis, and Barry Weingast compliment Nettl.[7] They describe "limited access orders," in which the state is an arena for elite competition over rents. Because elites depend on their social networks to compete with others, states in limited access orders are an extension of, not autonomous from, society. When political and economic power align, such states may nevertheless be stable and peaceful.[8] Moreover, limited access orders historically far outnumber "open access orders," which are roughly analogous to Western liberal democracies. In other words, the Western-ideal-type sovereign, autonomous, complex, and internationally recognized state is an exception.

Joel Migdal describes state capacity in terms of "capacities to penetrate society, regulate social relationships, extract resources, and appropriate or use resources in determined ways."[9] The idealized state monopolizes these functions, rendering it the sole agent of social control. For Migdal, social control is a byproduct of coercion-induced compliance, voluntary participation, and legitimate or internalized belief in the "rightness" of state authority. Although the Western-ideal-type state

U.S. and Afghan soldiers deliver school supplies to Aliabad school during a humanitarian mission in Nahr-e Shahi District, Afghanistan, 26 September 2010. The U.S. soldiers are assigned to the 10th Mountain Division, which donated several chalk boards, writing paper, and pencils. (Air Force)

monopolizes these functions, in many places other social organizations perform them as well. Migdal suggests a model of a "mélange of social organizations" as opposed to a "dichotomous structure" of a state ruling over the people in its territory. In the mélange model, the state is one of a variety of potentially autonomous groups, including families, religious structures, or tribes, that exercises social control. The exact characteristics of social control in turn depend on the group exerting it.[10] In what we now call developing countries, this is common: a "strong society" performs many of the functions Westerners associate with the state, while a "weak state" is one of a number of agents of social control.

The point is not to identify a model that precisely reflects Afghanistan's political and social landscape, but rather to show that "the state is," in Nettl's terms, "a conceptual variable." As such, the form and function of a state is a question to be studied: it is not a given and deviations from the Western-ideal type may not be deficiencies.

FM 3-24: State Building and Counterinsurgency

The counterinsurgency field manual advances the Western-ideal type. The manual explains that insurgents do not need to control territory, as in a conventional war. Instead, insurgents need support from the population, which is easiest to obtain in the absence of state authority. The task for the counterinsurgent is to reduce support for the insurgency and increase support for itself. Counterinsurgents therefore face a state-building imperative in which success is reached when "the government secures its citizens continuously, sustains and builds legitimacy through effective governance, has effectively isolated the insurgency, and can manage and meet the expectations of the nation's entire population."[11] This concept of the state is distinctly Western: sovereign, autonomous, and responsible for regulating social relationships and resources. Because the Western state is responsible for economic and social development, service delivery is also an essential characteristic of a successful end state and a technique to win popular support.[12]

The counterinsurgent operationalizes the state-building imperative through a process of "clear-hold-build," such that "government presence is established to replace the insurgents' presence."[13] In the *clear* phase, the counterinsurgent removes insurgents from an area. Then in the *hold* phase, the counterinsurgent establishes state presence and security. In the build phase, the counterinsurgent develops popular support through providing services. This process usually begins in population centers and is repeated in adjacent areas, and thus, like an "ink blot," the state becomes dominant throughout its territory.

The "logical lines of operation" concept groups the types of operations that comprise this process. The concept model shows the state expanding its authority and subjecting the population to its rule, which includes service delivery and economic growth—explicit missions of the Western state. In turn, the population's support for insurgents decreases, and its support for the state increases. Field Manual 3-24 concludes that, "in the end, victory comes in large measure by convincing the populace their life will be better under the host nation government than under an insurgent regime."[14]

The "clear-hold-build" operational sequence and the logical lines of operation framework require the state to be the single dominant actor in the environment, and neither leaves room for nonstate social actors. These frameworks assume a binary conflict between the counterinsurgent state-builders and insurgents. They do not recognize local interests as sources of conflict, nor do they permit nonstate actors to manage social relations and resources, as, for example, Migdal's mélange model does. Field Manual 3-24 only fleetingly mentions "community leaders." While they may be good sources of intelligence, conduits for spreading information to the public, or even worth empowering temporarily, ultimately, "increasing the number of people who feel they have a stake in the success of the state and its government is a key to successful COIN operations."[15] Consistent with this approach, FM 3-24 defines legitimacy in terms of state approval: "Illegitimate actions are those involving the use of power without authority." Examples include "unjustified use of force, unlawful detention . . . and punishment without trial."[16] While the initial theoretical definition is generic, FM 3-24's examples suggest that the state, through law and formal legal systems, is an exclusive source of legitimacy, leaving no room for nonstate institutions.

Overall, FM 3-24 says the state is intrinsically good, and more is better; that which is outside the state and those disinclined to submit to the comprehensive rule of the state deviant. In the absence of any qualifying commentary, FM 3-24 adds up to a directive to pursue the Western-ideal-type state: maximal sovereignty and autonomy, and deeply penetrative, solely responsible for managing social relations and resources. Sociopolitical consciousness and international recognition are assumed.

State and Society in Afghanistan

According to FM 3-24, violence and instability in Afghanistan is a product of the Afghan state's deviation from the Western-ideal type. Yet, despite significant periods of stability, Afghanistan has never had this type of state. Anthropologist Thomas Barfield compares the Western-ideal type to American cheese: consistent and dominant throughout all of Afghanistan's territory, without gaps. Successful Afghan states, such as Musahiban dynasty's from 1929 to 1978, Barfield observes, have been more akin to Swiss cheese, where gaps and inconsistencies are essential features of the product.[17] Attempts to construct an American cheese-type state have not stabilized the country. Rather, they have met resistance and have more often than not failed.

This Swiss cheese model scores differently than Western states among Nettl's conceptual variables. It resembles Migdal's mélange, where his basic state capacities—social penetration and regulation, and resource extraction and appropriate—are much reduced or distributed across nonstate actors. The state, as Barfield explains, traditionally has been the domain of particular elite lineages and not accessible to the masses. Authorities and territory could be transferred through inheritance, gifts, and peace agreements. The periphery did not participate in the contest for control over the state. The local leaders could keep local power so long as they submitted to the center.[18] Although limited participation in the state amounted to a certain amount of state autonomy, the state was not entirely sovereign over remote areas.[19] It minimally penetrated society in these parts, and allowed others to regulate social relations and extract and appropriate resources. In Barfield's words, these areas did not need to be "ruled directly or subjected to the same style of government" as more productive areas. The state could use economic, political, and coercive inducements to keep these areas inline without administering them directly. This is precisely the opposite of the counterinsurgency field manual's recommendation to extend the government. Rather than bringing the state to the people, each left the other alone.

The relationship between stability and limitations on state authority is traced to Ahmed Shah Durrani, who in 1747 became the first person to rule the territory that is now Afghanistan. Although Durrani spent lavishly on his military, his state was not the single dominant actor throughout Afghanistan. For example, he was obliged to supply leaders of his own Durrani tribe with cash or land in exchange for about two-thirds of his troops. These irregular troops were loath to spend more than a year in service.[20] In addition to tax exemptions, the state did not interfere with Durrani tribal social practices or other resources. In non-Durrani areas, the state extracted heavy taxes but no troops. As in Durrani areas, it left social regulation to others.[21] In sum, the

Ahmed Shah Durrani, 18th century illustration.

provinces functioned as "virtual mini-kingdoms," where, "provincial governors handled local administration and were practically independent . . . in most nonmilitary matters."[22] In Migdal's terms, the state extracted and appropriated certain kinds of resources, but did not penetrate society very deeply and was not the only agent of social regulation.

If Durrani is remembered for establishing an independent Afghanistan, Amir Abdur Rahman, who came to power in 1880, is considered to have created the modern, centralized Afghan state. Yet even his success showed the limits of the Western-ideal type in Afghanistan. Abdur Rahman filled many subnational state positions with his own people. Rather than deriving their authority from tribal or religious standing and/or retaining their own revenue sources and armies as they had in the past, these officials owed their authority to the state. At the same time, Rahman implemented unprecedented direct taxation, most of which was on land holdings, and control over trade. This revenue funded his army and bureaucracy.[23] These endeavors required persistent violence, forced relocation of whole communities, and intense internal surveillance. And yet, despite even these efforts Rahman did not convert the Afghan state from Swiss to American cheese. Rahman's state did not assume complete, consistent control over resources and social relations. While he extracted more taxes, increased control over trade, and sharply reduced the autonomy of subnational leaders, the primary result was his own security, not a transformation of state-society relations. Rural society remained largely unchanged. Rahman resisted transportation and communications technology, while rural economies remained subsistence-based and *qawms* (local solidarity networks) remained the primary structure of social organization.

Amanullah Khan, Rahman's grandson, took power in 1919 and attempted to create the Western-ideal-type state in Afghanistan. Whereas Rahman extended the state but left rural society more or less alone, Amanullah sought to supplant traditional agents of social control and resource management. Amanullah's 1923 constitution, for example, included extensive new taxes, a unified legal system, an expanded education system (including for women), and a variety of provisions affecting Pashtun family customs.[24] Tax collectors, already extensions of the central state rather than local intermediaries, became increasingly corrupt. Conscription, in contrast to the traditional ratio of one out of every eight eligible males chosen by communities, became mandatory and universal. The Khost Rebellion followed in 1924, ignited by a new poll tax and an increased tax on irrigated land that had been constant since the middle of the 19th century. The revolt ended when Amanullah backed down from some reforms. Amanullah's trip to Western Europe from late 1927 to 1928 inspired additional modernization efforts. Amanullah demanded Western suits in government sections of Kabul, instituted gender coeducation in elementary schools, prohibited polygamy by government officials, and replaced local religiously trained local judges with secular, government trained judges. He also pushed to end seclusion of women, including the abolishment of the veil. Amanullah only implemented a few of these policies, but the state's encroachment on local society threatened many. Uprisings quickly spread beyond the Pashtun areas of the Khost rebellion as clerics declared jihad.[25] Just as Amanullah's reforms were distinct in kind, not just degree, from those of his predecessors, so was the rebellion that would oust him from power. Rather than various groups of elites fighting each other to control the state, entire ethnic groups rallied against the state.[26]

Nadir Shah took power in 1929, beginning what became known as the Musahiban dynasty, which lasted until 1978.[27] For the Musahibans, internal stability was paramount. In the past, the Musahibans believed, unbridled state-centered modernization agendas catalyzed an antistate alliance of conservative rural populations and Islamic structures.[28] These ill-considered efforts were, in Migdal's terms, attempts to penetrate society, regulate social relationships, and extract and manage resources. The problem had been too much government, not too little. As such, the Musahiban sought to contain local political structures, not transform them. In rural areas, the local word for government referred to the building that contained official offices, since the government did not extend beyond it.[29] Qawm structures still determined many aspects of daily life. Local notables, empowered by political connections, social status, or wealth, were the preferred source of dispute resolution, since the state system was corrupt and slow. Local officials, in turn, chose

to accept this informal system for the sake of stability.[30] The Musahibans exempted favored tribes from conscription and reduced rural taxes, turning to trade tariffs, aid, and loans to raise revenue.[31] Education reform was a priority, but the magnitude of reforms was limited. Reforms often started in Kabul and other more liberal areas and were slowly extended. Most of these changes did not happen until the Musahibans had been in power for three decades. Rather than issue a decree outlawing the veil, for example, Prime Minister Daud had the wives of the royal family and senior government officials sit without veils at the National Day parade in 1959. Clerical resistance did not translate to popular rebellion since the government had restricted its reforms to the urban elites and had avoided interfering in rural Afghanistan.[32]

This is not to say that rural society did not change during this period and that this change was not destabilizing. American and Soviet aid funded a variety of economic development initiatives—improving roads, improving agricultural, and introducing radios and other technologies. While not particularly burdensome—hence the lack of violence—these changes nevertheless chipped away at social structures.[33] The inevitable enriching of particular social actors, for example, displaced other traditional authorities. The growth of Kabul University incubated both Islamic radicals and the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), Afghanistan's communist party.

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When Daud moved against the PDPA in the spring of 1978, the PDPA struck back through allied military officers and ousted Daud. The PDPA's Kalhq faction moved quickly to implement economic and social reforms. Resistance emerged shortly thereafter. The most inflammatory reforms included land and debt reform and requirements to attend literacy classes, which compelled unmarried male and female participation. These reforms portended a disintegration of traditional qawm-based communal social support structures.[34] As was the case for Amanullah, it was the Khalq policy interventions in rural Afghanistan, including mandating equality for women, a secular legal system, and interference with the customary legal system, that brought resistance.

Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan

In the spring of 2009, President Barack Obama appointed Gen. Stanley McChrystal to reinvigorate the American effort in Afghanistan. When McChrystal completed a strategic review that summer, he advocated for a robust counterinsurgency strategy and requested additional troops. This request set off a tense and prolonged debate through the fall of 2009. By the time it ended with Obama's December commitment to "surge" over 30,000 American troops into Afghanistan, the administration had examined not just McChrystal's resource request, but also U.S. interests, objectives, and rationales for the American commitment to Afghanistan.

Field Manual 3-24 framed the terms of the fall 2009 debate. The discussion, as Chandrasekaran explains, centered around two options: the military's counterinsurgency strategy or a narrower strategy of counterterrorism plus support for the Afghan security forces. Because the military considered the Taliban to be an insurgency that needed to be defeated, the problem, as FM 3-24 indicated, was the absence of the state. If only the state could penetrate Afghan society to deliver services and provide for economic development, the insurgency would wither. By this logic, the government of Afghanistan could not survive if it did not resemble the Western-ideal type. In this view, the alternative counterterrorism approach did nothing to address the insurgency's sources of strength. Yet, the opposite may have been true. Rather than sapping the insurgency of its strength, pursuit of the Western-ideal type may have actually provoked it. Even if the campaign plan prioritized particular areas, the

Jessica Patterson, center, with the U.S. Department of State, speaks with the subgovernor and Afghan elders before a shura, or meeting, in the village of Spina, Omna District, Paktika Province, Afghanistan, 28 October 2011. (U.S. Army, Spc. Jacob Kohrs)

state's functional role in each of them—its degree of penetration and the proposed extent of managing social relations—was more expansive than previous states. In addition, many priority areas of operation were far more remote than those previous Afghan states had controlled directly.

When marines cleared Nawa in the summer of 2009 in what McChrystal saw as a "proof of concept" for the counterinsurgency campaign, service delivery came in the form of schools, jobs programs, and other services. This service delivery was identified as a key factor to ensure that, even if Marines moved on to clear other areas, the Taliban would not be able to return.[35] One of the most prominent manifestations of this "extend the government" ethos was the spring 2010 operation to take Marjah, "a farming community," in Chandrasekaran's words, in Helmand Province. After an initial "clearing" phase by U.S. marines, in which Lt. Col. Cal Worth was quoted at the beginning of this piece, a "government in a box" arrived, led by a new district governor. About a month after the operation began, Hamid Karzai personified undesired state reach by touring Marjah with abusive former Governor Sher Muhammad Akhundzada and former police chief Abdul Rahman Jan.[36]

American civilians thought in terms similar to the military. Chandrasekaran writes, "What the Afghans really needed, in the view of almost every U.S. official involved in the war were more Afghan civil servants at the local level. They wanted . . . reopened schools, a functioning health clinic, a clerk to issue identification cards, and agricultural assistance."[37] In drafting a list of initiatives that it wanted to see from the central government, the U.S. State Department was explicit in the need to appoint officials to local-level appointments and to deliver services.[38] Although few civil servants showed up, the United States worked assiduously to empower those who did. Haji Abdul Jabar, for example, was Kandahar Province's Arghandab district governor and served as the main conduit for American development assistance to Arghandab.

Funds for development assistance increased dramatically. President Bush's last annual reconstruction funding request was for $1.25 billion. In 2010, Obama requested $4.3 billion.[39] Contracting firm International Relief & Development was charged with spending $300 million for USAID in a single year. This was enough, by some estimates, to triple or quadruple the economy of individual districts. Often this money went through district governors or governors in an attempt to build state legitimacy and authority. In Nawa, the influx of money transformed activities like ditch cleaning from unpaid obligations to lucrative jobs. Chandrasekaran reports that this financial incentive attracted teachers from schools. A construction industry emerged, and electronics from Pakistan were sold on the main road. Farmers sold excess fertilizer and equipment to buyers in Pakistan. Plastic sheeting did not support agriculture as intended, but was either thrown out or became windows.[40]

Chandrasekaran reports that utility of the Kajaki Dam project was similarly unclear. American forces fought tenaciously to clear the areas north of Kandahar City not only to deny the Taliban a stronghold, but also to secure the half-built Kajaki Dam. The addition of another turbine, it was thought, would allow Kandahar City uninterrupted electricity. This service, in turn, would ensure loyalty to the state. After repeated attempts, including U.S. government contracts with American and Chinese firms, support from British troops, and a Commander's Emergency Response Program-funded initiative, USAID began work on a $5 billion plan. In the end, though, the project may have exacerbated conflict rather than ameliorate it by indirectly providing resources, such as materials and construction contracts, to fight over. It furthermore revealed the government's feebleness, as the Taliban siphoned electricity off of power lines and provided it to locals.[41]

Attempts to operationalize the Western-ideal-type state often propped up official but predatory and/or weak actors while ignoring informal centers of power. Residents of Marja reacted unfavorably to Karzai's tour with the disliked former governor and police chief. "We will tell you that the warlords who ruled us for the past eight years, those people whose hands are red with the people's blood—those people who killed hundreds—they are still ruling over this nation," thundered Haji Abdul Aziz, a prominent elder. "For so many years, there were only promises . . . The people have run out of patience."[42] When a car bomb killed Arghandab district governor Jabar in June 2010, it was not a Taliban assassination. Rather, it was in response to his pilfering of reconstruction and development funds. To those on the ground, it was not clear that U.S. support of Jabar degraded the insurgency; it is clear that it created new challenges.

Because doctrine and strategy did not provide a platform for dealing with politics, FM 3-24 advocates simply increasing the size and responsibilities of the state. It is not surprising that the United States had no coherent political strategy. For example, by the end of 2009, McChrystal stopped trying to oust Abdul Razziq, the commander of the border crossing for the main route for U.S. supplies from Pakistan. While Razziq was believed to be massively corrupt, the U.S.-led coalition decided that border security was paramount.[43] Later in Marja, Haji Zahir was appointed district governor despite having spent

U.S. Army Brig. Gen. Lewis (left) and U.S. Deputy Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter (right) on a visit to the Kajakai Dam, Helmand Province, Afghanistan, 24 Febuary 2012. (Royal Air Force, Corporal Paul Oldfield)

four years in a German prison for attempting to kill his stepson. When Ambassador Eikenberry visited Marja in the aftermath of the clearing operation, Eikenberry avoided Zahir, the man the operation had just installed as the area's leader, and instead greeted a former police chief known locally as a corrupt pedophile. At the same time, the Major Crimes Task Force (MCTF) in Kabul investigated corruption allegations with vigor. The task force, established by Karzai after his 2009 reelection, was trained and mentored by DEA and FBI agents. As the military began working with unsavory actors as they confronted the consequences of trying to avoid them, the Major Crimes Task Force advisors pushed the unit forward, eventually arresting a top aide to Karzai. Karzai secured the release of his aide, who was held for less than a day.

Conclusion

The problem in Afghanistan, many Western military and civilian officials believe, is that the Afghan government is not strong enough. Usually what these people mean is that the Afghan state has not established a monopoly over violence throughout Afghanistan, has not sufficiently penetrated society, and has insufficient control over social relations and resources. This analysis comes principally from two places. First, Western intellectual history contends that sovereign, autonomous states that deeply penetrate society to control social relations and resources are normal and good—and that deviations should be redressed on both moral and security grounds. Second, military doctrine derived from this intellectual tradition proposes state building in the model of the Western-ideal type to reduce popular support for insurgencies.

Peaceful and stable Afghan states have not adopted the Western-ideal type. Ahmed Shah Durrani, Abdur Rahman, and the Musahiban Dynasty all fell woefully short of its standards. Even Rahman, who ruled Afghanistan more directly and grew the Afghan state to a greater degree than the others, did so at tremendous cost and with unprecedented amounts of violence. Amanullah and Communist attempts to emulate Western models backfired as neither was prepared for the difficulty of fundamentally transforming state-society relations. While this analysis does not offer a specific model to apply to Afghanistan, it does suggest that the Western-ideal type is not as natural as Western intellectual history and military doctrine imply. As such, answers to questions about both the scope of the state and military operations to sap support from an insurgency are not self-evidently the answers that worked in the West.

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For Afghanistan, this means reimagining the role of the Afghan state. Rather than expecting and trying to help the Afghan state to deliver services and make its citizens happy, the international coalition should look to the Afghan state to manage foreign relations and enforce broad limits on its periphery, such as prohibiting threats to the state or launching attacks on other countries. This framework could facilitate a negotiated settlement with the Taliban since it allows for variation in subnational governance and would be a potential prize for a Taliban affiliated political party. Such an arrangement would likely require persistent efforts, supported by the United States and others, to enforce boundaries. This approach entails its share of uncertainty as the subnational political arrangements cannot be preordained and will consistently change. It also jettisons a great deal of the human rights objectives for which many have worked. Nevertheless, a state-centric, resource-intensive approach does not offer a path to an acceptable conclusion.

More broadly, the United States faces important questions of social order and state building in the Middle East and elsewhere, but is not prepared to conduct another costly, troop-intensive military campaign. ***MR***

1. See, for example, "'Little America": Infighting in the Obama team squandered chance for peace in Afghanistan," *The Washington Post*, 24 June 2012 (the excerpt from the book that *The Washington Post* printed in advance of publication), or Linda Robinson's *New York Times* review, "Long Divisions: 'Little America,' by Rajiv Chandrasekaran," *New York Times*, 7 September 2012.

2. Dexter Filkins, "After America: Will Civil War Hit Afghanistan When the U.S. Leaves?" *The New Yorker*, 9 July 2012.

3. Rajiv Chandrasekaran, *Little America: The War Within the War for Afghanistan* (New York: Knopf:, 2012), 135.

4. Joel S. Migdal, *Strong Societies and Weak States: State-Society Relations and State Capabilities in the Third World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), 19.

5. Ibid., 13.

6. J.P. Nettl, "The State as a Conceptual Variable," *World Politics*, July 1968.

7. Douglass C. North, John Joseph Wallis, and Barry Weingast, *Violence and Social Orders* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

8. North, Wallis, and Weingast call this "the double balance: a correspondence between the distribution and organization of violence potential and political power on the one hand, and the distribution and organization of economic power on the other hand." If, for example, a group has a lot of political/military power but has very little economic power, it will fight to get economic power. If political/military and economic power resides predominantly in one group, fighting will be less likely to break out.

9. Migdal, 4.

10. Ibid., 28.

11. Field Manual (FM) 3-24 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office [GPO], 2006), 5-2.

12. Another line of reasoning, often summarized in the phrase "winning hearts and minds," holds that people value economic development and social services and will support whichever party provides it.

13. FM 3-24, 5-18.

14. Ibid., 1-25

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid., 1-14

17. Thomas Barfield, *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), 67-68.

18. Ibid., 72-73. Winning control over the state did "not so much wipe the board clean as redistribute the existing pieces." Because these were elite conflicts rather than mass population conflicts between peoples, Barfield compares them to corporate mergers and acquisitions, where management would change.

19. The internal variability of the Afghan state stems in part from urban-rural disparities. From a Western background, it may be difficult to appreciate the magnitude of the distance between Afghanistan's urban center and its rural periphery. For example, Barfield tells of a conversation with a merchant: "He explained that villagers had goats with so little local value that they were eager to barter them for his imported goods. As an example, the trader showed me a box containing a half-dozen unbreakable tea glasses he had purchased for one hundred afghanis in a city bazaar that he would barter for a goat valued in the village at five hundred afghanis. . . . When his flock returned to the lowlands, each Tajik goat would then be worth fifteen hundred afghanis in the local bazaar, meaning that his initial hundred afghani investment would yield a fourteen hundred afghani profit per animal."

While Afghanistan's urban center and its rural periphery are connected by a complex and porous boundary, differences in customs and knowledge as well as distance requires a specialized group of nonstate social actors to traverse the boundary.

20. Barfield, 101.

21. Ibid., 103-105.

22. Ibid., 102.

23. Ibid., 166.

24. Ibid., 183

25. Ibid., 190.

26. Ibid., 191.

27. Ibid., 191-195. When Nadir Sha was assassinated in 1933, his son Zahir Shah became a figurehead king. Hashin Khan, Nadir's brother, was the true leader until 1946, when he became ill and was succeeded by his brother Shah Mahmud. Daud Khan, Shah Mahmod's nephew, took the reins of power as prime minister in 1953. Zahir Shah assumed power in 1963, but was ousted by Daud in a 1973 coup. The Musahiban dynasty ended in 1978 with Daud's murder and Afghanistan's communist party ascension to power.

28. Barfield, 198.

29. Ibid., 220-221.

30. Ibid., 223.

31. Ibid., 204-205. While seeking foreign aid, first from Axis powers prior to World War II and later from the United States and Soviet Union during the Cold War, taxes declined from being most of the state's revenue in 1920s to 30 percent in the 1950s to less than 1 percent in the 1970s.

32. Barfield, 199-202.

33. Ibid., 220.

34. Ibid., 231.

35. Chandrasekaran, 70-4.

36. Ibid., 144.

37. Ibid., 166.

38. Ibid.

39. Ibid., 108.

40. Ibid., 191-97.

41. Ibid., 301-306.

42. Ibid., 143.

43. Ibid., 262.