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State and Society in Afghanistan:
Historical antecedents and contemporary determinants

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C O N T E N T S

Introduction

Any assessments of current developments in Afghanistan reveal that the Afghan state is undergoing a crisis of immense dimensions. While the rapidly changing nature of internal power dynamics in Afghanistan precludes any definitive conclusions on the outcome of the present struggle for power, an assessment of the crisis facing the Afghan state, within a conceptual framework will allow for a greater degree of clarity in analysing the short and long term implications of current developments for the relationship between the Afghan state and society as also for the state itself.

In order to do so it will be necessary to examine the issue within the context of a number of interrelated factors. These will include the significance of internal imperatives in state-building as well as Afghanistan=s historical legacy, regional and geographic peculiarities and its social, political and economic structures. The character of external determinants in shaping the directions of the Afghan state will also be considered, including the role of regional and extra-regional actors, within both the historical and current contexts, in order to ascertain their input in influencing the crisis of state legitimacy in Afghanistan. Finally, an attempt will be made to anticipate the future course of Afghan politics, with the intention of ascertaining the directions of the Afghan state.

State and society in Afghanistan

Contemporary analysis of state-society relations, which determine the nature of the state, has varied considerably. Some authors are of the opinion that social solidarities within the Afghan state, such as tribalism, present Aan alternative to the state@, although paradoxically Athe tribe is also often a mini-state in itself@ and frequently Aaspires to capturing the state and becoming its centre@. Hence while the tribe Ais the anti-state it may be the seed of future states, and it can crystallize mini-state=s internally.@[1] Others however stress that tribalism and other substate identities as such pose no threat to the state in the modern world, where they are Amore often a strategy of state control or social resistance@.[2] There is nevertheless little disagreement with the deduction that although Athere has never been such a thing as an Afghan nation, there is certainly an Afghan state, whose history can be traced@, although this state has always been an Aalien@ presence for the periphery, where governmental presence has remained weak.[3]

Recognising the status of Afghanistan as a member of the international community of states, it has been noted that since the state Ais a territorially bounded polity with a centralised government and a monopoly of legitimate

force, usually including within its boundaries different social classes and ethnic/culture groups@, the Aexistence of territorial frontiers (however vaguely defined), a central government (however weak and limited in its aims) and a heterogeneous population (is) enough to define the (Afghan) state@.[4] Since this observation was made over a decade ago, the crisis of state-building and legitimacy in Afghanistan has intensified considerably and the magnitude of the threats to state power and central authority is far greater.

The nature and extent of the civil war presently being waged in Afghanistan has led a number of analysts to conclude that the current stakes in the country have not only transformed social and political relationships but Acalled into question Ythe composition of the government but (also) the nature - and existence - of the state@.[5] The validity of this hypothesis can, however, only be assessed by examining not only the directions of the current developments in Afghanistan but also by analysing the character and outcome of past challenges to state-building and state legitimacy. It also raises the issue of the validity of the traditional definition of the state for internally divisive, socially fragmented, multi-ethnic Third World countries facing multi-faceted crises of legitimacy and authority.

According to the Eurocentric definition of the nation-state, emerging as a political construct in the seventeenth century as the result of particular social, political and economic experiences, the attributes of the state, in the internal context, include a well-defined territorial entity, centrality of authority, centralised control over the means of violence, and an effective administrative apparatus through which political, social and economic control can be exercised over a body of people. The population moreover shares common historical experiences and common bonds and has internalised and accepted the state=s legitimacy and authority, which now overrides particularist social formations, identities and allegiances. In the external context the state should be in a position to exercise and gain international recognition for its sovereignty, and at least a modicum of autonomy in its dealings with other actors in the international system.[6]

In practice this Eurocentred concept of the nation-state has failed to materialise in most Third World societies, where the nature of the state has been shaped by its interaction with imperial systems and/or through colonial legacies. These have included the creation of arbitrary, albeit internationally recognised territorial borders, often dividing pre-existing social formations, internal fragmentations a result of social, political and economic underdevelopment, as well as inadequate institutions of state power, which have failed to exercise effective centralised economic, administrative, judicial and political control over all peoples residing within state boundaries. Neither

have identities and social formations based on kinship, region, language, tribe and other markers of ethnicity, been successfully integrated or amalgamated into a national identity, drawing its legitimacy from the nation-state since these states did not emerge along the lines of the European experience, where the nation preceded and provided the basis for the legitimacy of the nation-state.[7]

Faced moreover by challenges to the legitimacy of the state=s institutions and authority, a number of weak states have relied on strategies based on the use or threat of force rather than cooption and penetration of civil society, thereby increasing the gap between the state and civil society. Finally, in such fragile states economic underdevelopment and social fragmentation have often led to an over-reliance by state authorities on external actors for recognition of the state=s legitimacy and for assistance in retaining and expanding state power.

As domestic challenges to the state=s legitimacy assume a threatening shape, internal confrontation can either result in a conflict to capture state power within the confines of the internationally and internally recognized state boundaries or the struggle between state and society can lead to the fragmentation of the state and the creation of a new or several new states. The outcome of such contestation of the state=s authority and legitimacy is dependent on a number of variables. These include the ability of the state to exercise centralised control and maintain a least a modicum of legitimacy *vis-à-vis* civil society and retain its autonomy and sovereignty as a recognized actor in the global state system. Conversely, the capacity of substate actors to pose a credible challenge, militarily and politically, to the state apparatus or to present a viable political alternative to the existing state structure will decide the outcome of the struggle. Of equal importance is the ability of the state to attain sufficient external support and recognition. A continuation of internal and external variables will ultimately determine whether the state succeeds in strengthening its authority, becomes even more weak and isolated from civil society, or disintegrates.

Shrinking state power

In the case of Afghanistan, as a result of several years of internal conflict with the active involvement of external powers both within and outside the region, there has been a perceptible shrinking of state power and autonomy. The instruments of exercising and administering state power, including the civil bureaucracy, have been rendered increasingly ineffective in enforcing the authority of the state. The state no longer has a claim to a monopoly and centralised control over the means of violence. A recognised legal framework and a uniform civil code is visible by its absence.

The legitimacy of even the remaining state institutions and structures of governance have come under attack by new socioeconomic and political forces and formations, basing their conflict for power and influence *vis-à-vis* the state and each other on varied and flexible combinations of regional, sectarian, ethnic, tribal, subtribal or clan-based mobilization. While these competing societal groups are in the ascendance, the centre=s control over the periphery continues to shrink. These developments have taken place at a time when the Afghan economy has been devastated as the consequence of several years of conflict. As a result, not only has the state=s ability to penetrate and coopt rival centres of power been adversely affected, but this landlocked state is even more vulnerable to pressures asserted by external actors than in the past.

Although the picture that emerges clearly depicts a state in the midst of a major crisis, the future shape of the Afghan state will depend on many factors. These will include the degree to which Afghan society is alienated from the state. Has internal polarisation and alienation become so acute that Afghan citizens can no longer identify with the state in its presently constituted territorial form? Is the ongoing crisis an attempt by contesting actors to capture state power or for the creation of new forms of political organisation? What, if any, state power remains in Afghanistan and what is the legitimacy of the state based on? Will the state disintegrate or transform internally? Could state sovereignty erode to the extent that it can no longer receive legitimacy and recognition from the international state system? Conversely, will the state regain the ability to withstand external intervention and at the same time sustain and perform its functions by expanding its autonomy in both the internal and external contexts? The answers to many of these questions lie in Afghanistan=s past.

The roots of the present crisis can in fact be traced to the manner in which the Afghan state evolved; the changing nature of the relationship between state and society, as well as the dynamics of societal power balances within the historical context. It is this legacy that continues to determine the state=s capability to administer and govern its territory, and the legitimacy or otherwise of its institutions for its citizens. Past experiences of state building and the types of strategies adopted to exercise centralized control over the territory of the state have clearly shaped the existing challenges to the state=s authority. The internal structure, power distribution and cleavages within Afghan society, the strength and representative nature or otherwise of state institutions and central power, and the nature of contestations of state authority and legitimacy at different turning points in Afghan history also provide some guidance in determining the future outcome of the present challenges facing the state.

Finally, Afghanistan=s geostrategic location and the political and economic linkages formed between the Afghan state and regional and extraregional actors have historically played a major role in influencing the relationship between the Afghan state and society and in determining the course of Afghan politics. While external penetration has been possible because of Afghanistan=s landlocked position, its strategic location has during various historical periods worked either to strengthen or weaken state legitimacy.

In the past external actors played a significant role in influencing Afghan internal power dynamics, including alliance building or the promotion of cleavages between class-based, regional, ethnic, tribal, linguistic and other competing social forces. These linkages between internal and external imperatives will remain equally valid in the current context, where the role of external powers and the divergent political, strategic and economic interests of competing centres of power within Afghanistan will determine the future shape of the Afghan state.

The legacy of the past

The linkages between Afghanistan=s historical legacy, the nature of state-society dynamics and the current crisis of legitimacy faced by the state are discernible in the character of the state created and controlled by subsequent Durrani dynasties since its foundation by Ahmed Shah Abdali in 1747. Until the overthrow of Durrani rule in 1978, the Afghan state was distinguished by the following features.

Firstly, the territorial borders of the state for most of this period, especially since Amir Abdul Rahman Khan=s reign, were clearly defined, encompassing a multi-ethnic and socially fragmented society, divided by clan, subtribal, tribal, linguistic, ethnic and regional cleavages. While some of Afghanistan=s borders were unwillingly recognized under external pressure or disputed by the state authorities themselves when external conditions changed, Afghanistan=s heterogeneous and segmented social formations were inclined to conduct their tussle for autonomy, access to resources and control of state power within its territorial confines.

Secondly, the Durrani state was distinguished by the existence of a weak centre and a relatively autonomous periphery, with the authority of the state circumscribed by an underdeveloped political and administrative infrastructure and inadequate fiscal resources. The state=s failure or refusal to permeate civil society also resulted from its dependence on particular substate formations such as segments of the Pushtun tribal majority to retain

its control and authority. This dependence on the military power and political goodwill of the tribes required the extension of concessions to those very forces which were least amenable to state penetration, further reinforcing their autonomy and influence. At the same time however continuous efforts were made by the state to use the many conflicts and internal divisions within Pushtun tribes, subtribes and clans to gradually and incrementally extend its authority.[8]

Thirdly, the state=s use of Pushtun tribal power to sustain and expand its control and gain internal legitimacy identified it as a partisan actor in the perceptions of Afghanistan=s many regional, ethnic and sectarian minorities, including the Tajiks, the second largest ethnic minority, the Uzbeks and the Shia Hazaras, who were to bear the thrust of state-sponsored Pushtun expansion in the social, political and economic realms. Thus the stage was set for an internal contestation of power, as well as a questioning of state legitimacy, as Afghanistan entered the latter part of the twentieth century.

Fourthly, external actors were to play a vital role in deciding the outcome of this ongoing struggle between the state and powerful substate actors to protect or advance their respective spheres of authority. The vulnerability of the Afghan state to such intervention resulted to a considerable extent from its physical and geostrategic location. Not only was landlocked Afghanistan dependent on its neighbours for access to trade routes, but its location at the crossroads of empires, territorial or ideological, invited external manipulation. This external intervention worked in accordance with changes in the regional and global environments, to either strengthen the Durrani dynasties or to weaken them.

Finally, at different historical turning points the Durrani state faced serious challenges not just to its authority and legitimacy but to its very existence. These challenges had on various occasions either internal or external bases, and very often there was a close linkage between domestic and external determinants. Although the Durrani state managed to survive most of the threats posed to its existence, changes in the internal and external environments finally led to its displacement by a non-Durrani political order in 1978.

Yet over the two hundred years of the existence of the Durrani state and even after its overthrow, the territorial borders of the state of Afghanistan remained unchallenged. Neither was there a withdrawal of external legitimacy for the state ever since its recognition as a sovereign actor by the international state system. Hence, even when the state authorities faced serious internal and/or external threats, undermining the centre=s legitimacy and control over most

of Afghan territory, the state of Afghanistan itself was to survive through external support and by transforming and reordering internal political equations, including state-society relations.

The emergence of the state

The state of Afghanistan dates back to the establishment of the Durrani empire under Ahmed Shah Abdali (adopting the title >Durrani=)in 1747, following the demise of Persian rule. Corresponding more or less with the territory of present-day Afghanistan, the Durrani state took the shape of a Pushtun tribal confederation since Ahmed Shah, who belonged to the Sadozai clan of the Popalzai, an Abdali subtribe, was elected to head the kingdom by a tribal jirga composed of Abdali tribal chiefs. The dominant role of his Pushtun tribesmen in creating his dynasty was to bear several consequences for the future shape of society-state relations.

Lacking sufficient resources, administrative and economic, to assert centralized control over his kingdom, Ahmed Shah relied on the military power of his tribal kinsmen to retain and expand the authority of his empire. This dependence meant on the one hand that the Durrani monarchy was forced to recognise the autonomy of the tribes, in both the sociopolitical and economic realms, including the acceptance of tribal laws and customs and their right to oversee the imposition of taxes, thereby retarding the growth of centralised economic and political power.[9] On the other hand, the position of favoured Pushtun tribes was further strengthened since, in return for their support to the state, they became the beneficiaries of preferential policies such as land grants and favourable taxation policies.

This state patronage not only enabled them to establish political, social and economic dominance over non-Pushtun minorities in multi-ethnic Afghanistan, but also placed them in a favourable position *vis-à-vis* tribal rivals such as the Ghilzai, the other major Pushtun tribal confederacy. Yet conflicts between the Pushtun clans, subtribes and tribes themselves placed curbs on this growing tribal assertiveness. The Durrani tribe itself was divided amongst seven subtribes, as well as several subclans, competing for internal ascendancy. The state under Ahmed Shah=s immediate successors was however unable to take full advantage of these internal tribal rifts since the ruling dynasty itself was rife with internecine strife and dependent on the military support of particular tribal segments.

External factors came increasingly into play in directing the future course and character of the Afghan state and state-society relations during the nineteenth century. Internal divisions and external incursions had led to the disintegration of the Afghan empire while the growth of British and Russian

empires and their regional rivalry soon affected internal power balances in Afghanistan. While internal factors played an equally significant role in determining state legitimacy in Afghanistan, there was a close linkage between domestic and external factors in directing the course of Afghan politics in general, and state building in particular.

Following Ahmed Shah=s demise, weak Durrani rulers had attempted to base the legitimacy of their state on its Pushtun, that is Durrani, tribal identity. Appeals to religion were also made to counter growing external pressure by creating a sense of an Afghan national identity as the British empire clashed with the Afghan state resulting, for example, in the first Anglo-Afghan war and the subsequent exile of the then Afghan monarch, Dost Mohammad.

This dependence on religion as a legitimising tool resulted, however, in providing a power base to the clergy, while the state grew even more dependent on the continued support of tribal Lashkars, since it lacked the necessary resources to create and utilise a centralised military to counter external pressure and contain the threats posed by pervasive internal disunity and conflict. Although attempts were made by subsequent Durrani monarchs to strengthen the political and administrative authority of the state *vis-à-vis* these competing substate tribal actors, the effectiveness of such efforts was adversely affected by the absence of an institutional infrastructure and an adequate domestic resource base.[10]

Under Amir Abdul Rahman, who assumed the monarchy in 1883, an attempt was made to transform Afghanistan into a modern centralised state through the extension of state control over the hitherto autonomous tribes and via a comprehensive and institutionalised administrative framework. To implement these strategies of state building and state legitimacy, however, the state required autonomy from and the ability to exercise centralised military power over the hitherto all-powerful Pushtun tribes. Centralised access over the means of violence was also needed to extract economic resources so as to implement and administer state authority and to control other substate forces, ranging from the clergy to non-Pushtun ethnic and regional minorities.

At this stage of Afghan history external intervention assumed a greater role in Afghan affairs as the British approached the Afghan borders from India and the Russian empire extended its control over the central Asian regions bordering on Afghanistan. British and Russian pressures served to weaken the hold of the Afghan state over the peripheral sections of its territory and population, while at the same time assisting the Muhammadzai dynasty in creating viable state institutions and structures and in simultaneously attaining international recognition for Afghanistan=s territorial borders.

Although encroaching British power gradually incorporated northwestern sections of the traditional Afghan empire and gradually eroded the internal autonomy of Afghan rulers, there was a change in British strategy towards Afghanistan as the extension of Russian control over central Asia led to perceptions of threat from Russia to Britain=s Indian empire. British interests therefore increased in utilising Afghanistan=s potential as a buffer state by gaining control over its foreign policy, establishing recognised frontiers with it and promoting the development of stable state structures in that internally fragmented country.

Lacking the ability to address British and Russian pressures effectively, the Afghan Amir agreed to sign the Durand treaty in 1893. Although the treaty deprived Afghanistan of control over the Pushtun population in the areas which now fell within British India, the treaty assisted Afghanistan in entering the international community of states, with territorially defined borders recognised by the neighbouring Russian and British empires. The state=s sovereignty was, however, only given conditional recognition since the British now controlled the directions of its foreign policy.

An increase in British subsidies to the Afghan monarchy following the signing of the Durand agreement. This provided a reliable and substantial revenue source to Amir Abdul Rahman in his task of state building and regime stability.[11] External military and economic assistance was used primarily for the creation of the state=s first professional centralised military, reducing its dependence on the Pushtun tribes and thereby increasing the latters= vulnerability to state control. Steps were also taken to systematically weaken the tribes by using both cooptive and coercive tactics, including exploitation of their traditional divisions, forcibly resettling tribes, such as the Ghilzai, in the northwest of the country and crushing rebellious tribes, as well as establishing alliances based on patronage with tribal actors willing to accept central control and directives.[12] At the same time Pushtun and non-Pushtun differences were used to contain recalcitrant minorities and expand the state=s presence in the periphery through, for example, the grant of Hazara lands to Pushtun settlers and the settlement of Pushtun tribes in Uzbek and Tajik territories.[13]

Centralised authority was promoted and the autonomy of other contending social, economic and political formations including the clergy was reduced by measures such as state-sponsored Islamic legislation accompanied by the imposition of a civil code and powers over the appointment of clergy. The administrative jurisdiction of the state was extended over all its territory; the beginnings of a unified economy were developed by creating a common

currency; and the existence of a centrally controlled military was used to extract revenue from all landowners, including the Pushtun tribal and feudal elite.[14]

While Amir Abdul Rahman did succeed in unifying Afghanistan politically and to a lesser extent economically, the monarchy=s close identification with its Durrani tribal base and the adoption of deliberate policies to expand Pushtun influence over the non-Pushtun population heightened perceptions of exploitation and alienation amongst the state=s minority communities. Moreover the use of external subsidies mainly for the development of the military arms of the state and a failure to create a self-sustaining economic infrastructure meant that the state remained vulnerable to external pressure due to the need for assistance to sustain this coercive regime. Its inability or unwillingness to transform the socioeconomic foundations of the state also perpetuated its underdeveloped and mainly tribal/feudal socioeconomic structures and hence, to a large degree, the autonomy of the tribes *vis-à-vis* the centre.[15]

Reform and revision

As long as a strong monarch remained at the helm, the state was able to control, if not penetrate, civil society through coercive means and by patronage. After Amir Abdul Rahman=s death, however, the weak state could no longer assert its will over its fragmented and politically assertive social formations, especially when a challenge was posed to these very forces by a reformist monarch, who had the will but lacked the institutional, economic and military means of implementing his agenda for societal transformation.

Following Amir Habibullah=s assassination in 1919, his son Amir Amanullah pursued his grandfather, Abdul Rahman=s efforts to centralise and unify the state, politically, socially and economically, but abandoned the previous Durrani policy of relying on the support of the tribes and Pushtun ethnonationalism to legitimise and secure the dynasty. Using the recognition of the Durand Line as a bargaining tool, Amanullah successfully pressed for and gained British recognition for the sovereignty of Afghanistan, which was also recognised by the Soviet Union, making the Afghan state a fully fledged member of the international community. He subsequently launched a series of radical policies, attempting to provide the feudal-tribal state with the attributes of modern statehood.

Afghanistan was given its first constitution, transforming the monarchy from an absolute to a constitutional form and replacing the special status of the Pushtuns by the concept of national citizenship. Institutionalised

mechanisms were enacted to extend the administrative reach of the state to cover all of its territory and population, hoping to strengthen its authority and, at the same time, to weaken the power and autonomy of substate formations.[16] Attempts were made to modernise and universalise the legal and judicial system by creating a criminal code, thereby bypassing both the code of tribal justice (Pushtunwali) and the interpretation of Islamic legislation by the clergy, while radical social reforms were also launched, including a focus on the emancipation of women.

Amanullah=s economic reforms in particular were motivated by the urgent need to expand the state=s budgetary resources since the British subsidies had been withdrawn after the recognition of Afghan sovereignty. But it was this absence of a reliable external or internal resource base that was to severely hamper the monarch=s attempts to make his reforms a reality, since the state was incapable of effectively asserting its authority over alienated sub-sections of the traditional elite, including the tribes and the clergy. Faced by the combined armed resistance of the tribes and the clergy, Amanullah became even more dependent on the military for survival. But the military, weakened by the absence of its previous access to external assistance, and controlled by a Pushtun tribal officer corps which was largely unsympathetic towards the reform policies, failed to come to the rescue of the king.

As the resistance heightened, the gradual advances in state building and legitimacy made by Durrani dynasties for several decades soon floundered. The administrative control of the central government, which was restricted to the capital Kabul and its periphery became even more precarious, while its legitimacy was rejected by powerful sections of its population. With the support of the clergy, a Tajik bandit Bachai-Saqao captured state power in 1929. In the absence of a sufficiently powerful domestic support-base outside the clergy, Saqao attempted to gain domestic legitimacy on the basis of religion by declaring the supremacy of the Shariah in the country which proved unsuccessful. Civil war engulfed the country and tribal leaders extended their control over areas where the state had at least some presence previously. The manner in which Saqao was dismissed and the events that followed had their own implications for future Afghan politics and state-society dynamics for the next several decades.

Return of Durranis

The dominant Pushtun tribes as a whole, and the Durranis in particular, were disinclined to support a political order which was headed by a Tajik and supported by the clergy. A number of tribes therefore rallied around Nadir Khan, a Sardar of the Musahiban family, descended from Amir Dost

Mohammad. With the support of their tribal levies, Nadir Khan ousted Saqao and became Amir, taking the title of Nadir Shah. After his assassination in 1933 he was succeeded by his son, Sardar Zahir. Nadir Shah and Zahir Shah were to rule Afghanistan with the help of their brothers and uncles respectively, Hashim Khan, Shah Wali and Shah Mahmud, who served as prime ministers during various periods of this re-established Durrani dynasty.

Both Durrani monarchs set in motion a series of state building efforts which were to set the stage for the events of the 70s. To placate the clergy, the Sunni Hanafi code of Islamic law was adopted and Shariah courts established, although civil laws were also codified. This use of religion as a legitimising force, on the one hand, increased the political influence of the clergy; on the other hand, the imposition of the legal code of Sunni Islam increased sectarian tensions as resentment grew amongst the Shia minority population. Similarly, ethnic divisions were promoted as the Duranni monarchs, conscious of their need for continued tribal support, extended concessions to the tribes by tacitly accepting a certain degree of Pushtun tribal autonomy, including the holiday of Jirgas to arbitrate on intratribal disputes and the Loya Jirga (Grand Assembly) to win symbolic tribal legitimacy for the monarchy. This sensitivity towards Afghanistan=s tribal-feudal socioeconomic and political structures did not, however, represent a total abdication of state centralised control and presence in the countryside.

Efforts were in fact consistently made to gradually strengthen the administrative capacity of the state. Although traditional forces such as tribal chiefs, feudal landowners and the clergy were allowed to play the role of arbitrator at the provincial and especially at the district levels, an expanding state bureaucracy oversaw state intervention through the incremental establishment of a legal, judicial and economic framework, posing a counterweight to tribal and regional power.[17] Thus, if the Afghan state was Apreoccupied by a >tribal problem=, the tribes could be said to have had a perennial >state problem=; none was ever Ytotally unaffected by the state@.[18]

In the absence of an actual transformation of traditional political and economic relationships, however, the state was unable to create and consolidate an indigenous economic resource base by extracting sufficient revenues from the tribal-feudal elite or by modernising and rationalising its mainly agrarian economy.[19] It therefore remained dependent, as in the past, on external assistance and support. As communication networks were extended, the local economy was gradually linked to a national grid but the course of the economy remained to a considerable extent externally directed,

since domestic revenue collection relied largely on taxes and revenues collected from foreign trade as well as on external aid.

Since the state mainly concentrated on developing and expanding its control over its urban centres, the urban-rural divide became wider, not just in developmental but also in political terms. In the urban centres an expanding state bureaucracy and an emerging educated professional elite was closely linked to the state and its institutions. In the countryside, deliberate state policies provided a certain degree of autonomy to the traditional elite, which was expected in turn to act on behalf of the state by sustaining the political, social and economic *status quo*.[20]

At the same time, in the absence of unified economy regional differences and divisions also increased. Regions in Afghanistan varied from those where state presence was minimal because of physical inaccessibility, scarcity of resources or the ethnic composition of the population, to those areas which were more closely linked to the centre, whether through administrative structures or the presence of more amenable local arbitrators, influenced either by ethnic ties and/or the advantages of tangible state patronage. Uneven economic, political and social development in turn further exacerbated the divisions within the weak, fragmented state and encouraged the perpetuation of substate identities based on linguistic, regional, ethnic or sectarian factors. Since competition whether in terms of class or social formation, is most intense where there is political and economic development, it was in the urban centres that the absolute control of the Afghan monarchy was to face its first substantive internal challenge. The response of the state was dictated by the political and institutional underdevelopment of the Durrani order.

During Nadir Shah=s reign and even under his son, Zahir Shah, the state=s reaction to such domestic threats focussed on cooption rather than on penetration, while coercion was the strategy of choice when cooptive tactics failed. In line with this approach, the coercive arms of the state were consistently expanded. Since the fiscal resources of the state were limited by its underdeveloped economy, efforts were concentrated on acquiring reliable and generous external avenues of aid and assistance.[21] The directions of this assistance were determined to a considerable extent by Afghanistan=s geostrategic position, bordering on the British Indian Empire and the Soviet Union and by developments in both the regional and international environments. In the 1930s during Nadir Shah=s reign, external assistance was obtained from both Great Britain and the Soviet Union. During the Second World War assistance was obtained from the Axis powers.

Following the withdrawal of British power from the region, a certain amount of assistance was provided by the United States, while the Soviets remained a major source of aid. With the partition of India and the assumption of control of the Pushtun areas by Pakistan, the changed regional environment was to play a major role in dictating both the internal and external directions of the Afghan state. Since Durrani monarchs had over the centuries consistently utilised Pushtun nationalism as a major symbol of Afghan statehood for reasons of regime survival and state legitimacy, Musahiban rulers, after the withdrawal of British power, refused to recognise the Durand Line as the international Afghan-Pakistan border, claiming that the Pakistani Pushtuns had been denied their right to rejoin their ethnic homeland. At the same time, however, the landlocked Afghan state was dependent on its Pakistani neighbour for access to trade and transit routes, vital for a country which depended for the main part on sustaining its economy on revenues from foreign trade.[22]

Ties with the Soviet Union

Tensions with Pakistan arising largely from the Pushtunistan issue became particularly significant as the Cold War encroached on the southwest Asian region. Although the United States (US) was to remain a source of developmental assistance for Afghanistan in the 1950s and 1960s, following Pakistan=s entry into the American sponsored military alliances, US concern about an adverse Pakistani reaction led to the rejection of Afghan calls for military assistance. Since the 1950s therefore, especially after Sardar Daud became prime minister, Afghanistan developed close ties with the Soviet Union in the political, economic and especially military spheres.[23]

The internal impact of these developments on the Afghan polity was substantial. With the assistance of its Soviet ally, the Durrani state concentrated on building, expanding and modernising its military, both to counter external pressure and to enable the state to assert its authority over civil society. Under prime minister Daud in particular, the main thrust of state control and assertion lay in the forcible suppression of dissent. After Daud=s removal by Zahir Shah in 1963, strategies of regime survival and legitimacy became more multi-dimensional in response to changed political imperatives.

Although there was continued emphasis on defence expenditure and the building and modernisation of the security forces, there was also a realisation of the dangers posed by growing discontent amongst sections of the urban population against the authoritarian state-system. Hence structural mechanisms were devised to extend legitimacy to the system of governance

which provided a facade of representative rule, while denying any tangible power-sharing to societal forces other than the ruling family and its tribal-feudal allies in the countryside.

The 1964 constitution, for example, promulgated by Zahir Shah, appeared to transform the absolute monarchy into a constitutional one. A parliament was constituted and elections held in 1965 and 1969. In actual fact, however, the king retained and continued to exercise absolute authority. The formation of political parties was banned, although leftist parties such as the People=s Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) as well as Islamist movements surfaced as the urban centres grew more politicised. The parliament functioned, moreover, mainly as an extension of the existing socioeconomic and political *status quo* since most representatives belonged to the feudal landowning and tribal elites, creating resentment amongst the more politicised sections of urban society.[24]

Discontent was also on the increase in the armed forces, especially amongst the Soviet-trained officer corps, impatient with the monarchy=s inability to transform and modernize the state and its institutions. Taking advantage of this unrest, Sardar Daud deposed his cousin, the king, in a *coup d=etat*, abolished the monarchy and declared himself President of the Republic of Afghanistan.

Demise of the tribal state

Sardar Daud=s *coup d=etat* was to mark a major departure in Afghan politics in ways which had not been envisaged by the Sardar himself. Daud=s bid to oust the monarchy and declare a republic was ostensibly based on his intention to reform the very basis of the Afghan state from authoritarian rule to a constitutional dispensation. His reform rhetoric was to win him the backing of left-leaning sections of the Afghan political elite and state apparatus. Leftist factions of the Soviet trained officer corps were in fact responsible for conducting the *coup*, the first time in Afghan history that a major political change was brought about by other than the traditional forces of the royal family, the tribal-feudal elite or the clergy, even though the main actor belonged to that ruling elite.

The factors motivating Daud to take over power were no different from his royalist kin, neither were his methods and strategies of state building and regime legitimacy any different. Since his main goal was to capture and consolidate absolute state power, his initial pledges to replace authoritarian rule by representative governance were soon replaced by an attempt to impose an absolutist order, in which state legitimacy was based on the long-

standing premise of Muhammadzai, and hence Pushtun, identity.[25] Leftist officers inducted into the government and bureaucracy were dismissed and coercion used to repress dissent. Relying on the support of his kinsmen and sections of the Pushtun tribal elite and landowning classes, Daud reinforced the sociocultural and economic *status quo* in the internal context. In the external sphere, he not only revived the Pushtunistan slogan to gain internal legitimacy, but in the wake of the political crisis arising from the dismissal of the provincial governments of the North West Frontiers Province (NWFP) and Baluchistan in Pakistan, sanctuary and support was provided to Baluch dissidents based on Afghan territory.

The directions of state policy were to have both domestic and external repercussions. In the internal context, the continued reliance on state power to enforce central control resulted in an ever-increasing expenditure on defence, which the state was unable to meet from its domestic revenue base. The regime was disinclined to take the necessary steps to reform the state=s economic structures due to its dependence on the tribal-feudal elites in the countryside and its disinterest in developing an industrial infrastructure. It therefore remained dependent on revenues accruing from foreign trade and the support of external allies such as the Soviet Union.[26]

Yet even the consistent expansion of the military was insufficient to ensure security against the external threat in the light of heightened tensions with Pakistan over the Baluch insurgency, the Pushtunistan issue and the power asymmetries between the two states. Differences with Pakistan also threatened to disrupt essential access to Pakistani trade and transit routes, while domestic sources of opposition to the authoritarian regime came from the leftist, mainly urban but also rural, educated elite.

The Islamic groups, which had emerged in Afghanistan=s urban centres during the Zahir Shah era, were another source of threat since their goals focussed on the replacement of the Durrani tribal state by an Islamic order. As a number of Aghan Islamist opposition leaders, including Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, Burhanuddin Rabbani and Maulana Mohammad Nabi Mohammadi took sanctuary on Pakistani soil, the Bhutto government decided to use them to pressure Daud into abandoning his support for Baluch dissidents and to change his Pushtunistan policy. With Pakistani assistance, Islamic dissidents carried out limited and largely unsuccessful insurgencies inside Afghanistan in areas such as Wardak and Badakhshan in 1975.[27] Although these insurrections did not pose a major threat to regime security, by 1976 Daud began to modify his anti-Pakistan policy in view of the vital significance of Pakistani trade routes and also as a result of Iranian political and financial inducements aimed at bringing Afghanistan into the Western

camp.[28] It was, however, internal determinants which were to lead to the disintegration of the last Durrani tribal state in Afghanistan.

Both the internal and external directions of the Daud regime had led to renewed opposition from leftist forces, especially from PDPA activists, within and outside the state bureaucracy. Throughout the Daud regime, the PDPA had made inroads into the ranks of the Soviet trained and politicised military.[29] While the regime became even more dependent on the military to retain power in the absence of a domestic support base outside the ambiguous support of sections of the Pushtun tribes and rural elite, the military could no longer be relied upon to underwrite its survival. By the late 1970s Daud began restructuring the directions of his foreign policy, from alliance with the Soviets to a rapprochement with the US=s main regional allies, Iran and Pakistan. This only increased the military=s discontent with the regime. In the absence of institutional transformation, economic conditions continued to decline, while socioeconomic disparities correspondingly increased, creating unrest as conditions deteriorated in the countryside. As a result of a sustained feudal-tribal order, for example, out of 28 000 villages, 20 000 were owned by feudal families, while only 12 per cent of Afghanistan=s arable land was placed under cultivation.[30]

In 1977, Daud finally promulgated his constitution and tried to impose one party rule but his support base was too weak for this last bid at re-establishing legitimacy and retaining control of the state. Neither were the coercive methods used by the regime to retain state power any longer effective in containing the upsurge of leftist opposition, particularly in urban centres, including the capital, Kabul. In April 1978, following a clampdown on the PDPA leadership, the party=s supporters in the military conducted a *coup d=etat*, ousting the government and executing the last Durrani ruler. Power was then transferred by the military to the PDPA, marking a fundamental departure from the past, since state power had now been captured by non-Durrani and non-tribal political and social formations.[31]

The crisis of the state

The Saur revolution of April 1978 proved to be a turning point in Afghan history since an attempt was made by the new holders of power to transform the nature of the Afghan state radically, as well as the relationship between state and society. The capture of state power by a non-Durrani, urban based modernising political elite, including sections of the armed forces, with an ideological agenda for change, led inevitably to the rejection of the legitimacy of the new state order by traditional societal forces. They had till then played

an integral role in underwriting the authority of the state in return for an acceptance of their social, political and economic autonomy.

As in the past, the outcome of this crisis of state legitimacy in Afghanistan was to depend on the relative strength of state authorities and institutions *vis-à-vis* competing substate socioeconomic and political formations. As in earlier periods of conflict moreover, the outcome of this struggle for power was also dependent on external variables, such as developments in the global arena and the nature of the relationship between regional actors and the internal contenders for power in Afghanistan.

The Saur revolution

Taking over power from the sympathetic military factions responsible for ousting the Daud regime, the leadership of the People=s Democratic Party of Afghanistan attempted to transform and modernise the tribal and feudal structure of the Afghan state through a series of radical reforms. This experiment in social transformation, which required an increased role for the state in restructuring Afghan society, resulted instead in threatening the very existence of that state. Afghanistan in 1978 was at best a weak state since its authority extended over limited areas of its territory and population while its legitimacy was not based on power sharing and consensual arrangements within a multiethnic, socially fragmented polity. The fragile foundations of the Afghan state rested instead on the deliberate manipulation of internal territorial, ethnic, tribal and clan divisions by absolutist rulers, and authoritarian regimes on the one hand; on the other hand, the authority of the Afghan state was mainly dependent on the central leadership=s capacity to deploy the coercive arms of the state against social and political dissent.

For the Durrani rulers Aa well armed modern standing army was regarded as the key to political stability and political power; economic development was simply a subsidiary benefit of the effort to meet exigencies@.[32] Moreover, in the absence of an internalised acceptance of its legitimacy, the cooperation of the tribal, feudal and regional elites was essential to control Afghanistan=s largely rural population. This cooperation was provided in return for the centre=s acceptance of the political, economic and social *status quo*. While the state=s institutional presence was most visible in the urban centres, it did extend to the countryside, especially in such areas as collection of revenue, conscription of personnel for the armed forces and the administration of justice through state-appointed Islamic judges and courts. AConstant interaction between the two worlds@, the town and the province, therefore took place as a result of Athe gradual weaning away of rural society by the growth of state institutions@.[33]

This did not mean a change in the internal structures of power as the state=s dependence on tribal-feudal structures to sustain its presence meant that its institutions were penetrated and its resources exploited by the traditional holders of power who, at the same time, were permitted a considerable degree of autonomy over their rural constituents. At the level of the subdistrict, for example, the state administration worked through local intermediaries, the Arbabs or Maliks, but actual power remained with the Khans and other representatives of the landed elite, who asserted their influence over their constituents and bargained with the state and its functionaries on the dual bases of wealth and mobilisation of regional, tribal or ethnic identities.[34] As a result of this deliberate state policy of sustaining traditional socioeconomic structures, economic development was neglected while substate actors retained their political domination. This weak and underdeveloped state structure, pervasive ethnic, tribal and territorial divisions and the presence of strong alternative power structures were to pose insurmountable obstacles for the PDPA=s bid to implement its revolutionary agenda.

The main aim of the PDPA=s reforms was Ato abolish and eliminate a feudal and prefeudal social structure and make it fit for a non-capitalist development of Afghanistan@.[35] Aside from its social reforms, which included the emancipation of women, the PDPA launched radical socioeconomic reforms meant to change the patterns of land ownership and control over resources, which would not only restructure internal dynamics within rural society but also reduce the state=s dependence on the support of the tribal-feudal elite by creating an alternative base of legitimacy and support. On the surface, it appeared that conditions were conducive for change and that the central leadership would acquire sufficient support to successfully challenge the traditional power structures. The Durrani tribal state had made little effort to transform conditions in rural Afghanistan, where the vast majority of the Afghan population was composed of tenant farmers and/or owners of small economically untenable holdings, deeply in debt to the politically and socially dominant Khans.

The state=s failure to effectively penetrate the countryside through institutionalised administrative mechanisms, moreover, deprived the average Afghan citizen of any form of redress against the excesses of the feudal-tribal elite. The perpetuation of traditional exploitative relations had increased feelings of alienation amongst the peasantry,[36] and it was assumed that they would be in sympathy with the PDPA=s economic reforms, focussed in particular on the redistribution of land and the abolition of the debts owed to landowners by the peasantry.

The Muhammadzai state=s use of Pushtun ethnonationalism to legitimise state authority and state-sponsored expansion of Pushtun sociopolitical and economic dominance, combined with coercion to contain dissent, had increased a sense of alienation amongst non-Pushtun minorities. Even amongst the Pushtun majority, there were long-standing rivalries along subclan, clan and tribal lines, exacerbated by state patronage of particular regional and tribal communities. For example, the second largest Pushtun tribe, the Ghilzai, were the targets of state-directed coercion and subjected to political and economic dominance of the Durrani and their tribal kinsmen.

The nationality policy of the PDPA was a radical departure from the past since Afghanistan=s ethnic, cultural and linguistic pluralism was given official recognition. In line with this policy, the languages of the various ethnic minorities, including Tajik, Uzbek, Turkmeni and Mooristani, were declared official languages, alongside Pushtu and Dari. Moreover, the Khalq faction of the PDPA leadership, including presidents Noor Mohammed Taraki and Hafizullah Amin, were Ghilzai Pushtuns, while a number of Parcham party officials belonged to the Tajik and Uzbek minorities. In the urban centres, the legitimacy of the Durrani tribal state was disputed amongst sections of Afghanistan=s emergent politicised middle class, which included students, teachers and other professional groups since they were denied any avenues of participation or a decision-making role by authoritarian state structures.[37] With its revolutionary agenda, the PDPA seemed to represent the aspirations of this alienated urban strata of Afghan society.

While it appeared that the PDPA=s policy of restructuring and reconstituting the legitimacy of the Afghan state would acquire popular support, the regime soon faced widespread resistance which was to assume the form of a countrywide civil war. As external factors impinged on the crisis of state legitimacy in Afghanistan, the conflict acquired regional and extraregional dimensions, closely resembling earlier periods in Afghan history when the identity of the state was linked to the vagaries of international politics.

The state versus civil society

The PDPA was to fail in its efforts to base the legitimacy of the state on new foundations, discarding the earlier legitimising tools of tribalism and Pushtun ethnonationalism in favour of a modernising ideology and one party rule. Its inability to restructure the state and state-society relations was the result of both internal weaknesses and external vulnerabilities. The PDPA itself was divided internally along ideological, class and ethnic lines. The dominant Khalq faction had a predominantly Pushtu-speaking, largely urban and partly rural support base. In its ideological content, the Khalq supported a more

radical approach towards socioeconomic and political transformation. The Parcham was composed mainly of urbanised, middle class and Dari-speaking Pushtuns, along with some non-Pushtun, including Tajik, supporters and favoured a gradualist reform programme.[38] These internal divisions not only weakened the party=s support base but also diluted the ideological thrust of its proposed reformist agenda.

Secondly, while the PDPA=s social reforms antagonised the religious establishment, which had so far assisted in underwriting the legitimacy of the Afghan state, the party failed to gain the support of a politically underdeveloped rural peasantry, mobilised by the clergy to resist the proposed changes in the country=s social norms. In the absence of the necessary internal support base and lacking the administrative, fiscal and technological resources to implement its socioeconomic reforms, the centre was incapable of countering the resistance of the traditional tribal-feudal elite in the countryside. They possessed the capacity to mobilise resistance against the state and to protect their internal autonomy, thereby demonstrating the resilience of substate sources of power.[39]

Despite the fact that civil society was unprepared for top-down, state-sponsored policies of modernisation, there was at first little resistance to the change of regime at the centre. A third factor, the divide between urban and rural Afghanistan, however, came into play when the state authorities attempted to penetrate the countryside through a weak bureaucratic apparatus. It had until then functioned through the aegis of local intermediaries in exchange for the state=s acceptance of the autonomy of the substate elites. This autonomy was now challenged by the very nature of the centre=s proposed socioeconomic reforms.[40]

While opposition to the changed structures of governance was to focus not just on the retention of that autonomy but also on its expansion, longstanding regional, tribal, ethnic and sectarian divisions were also to play a major role in determining state legitimacy and regime security. As resistance mounted and the state=s control over its territory and population weakened even further, dominant social solidarities were tempted to reimpose their control over the state structure, while hitherto excluded and peripheral minorities were presented an opportunity of attaining sociopolitical and economic autonomy.

Despite their official policy of multipluralism, the Taraki and Amin governments, composed mainly of Ghilzai, were perceived by non-Pushtun minorities such as the Sheas of the Hazarajat, as Pushtun. Their bid to assert state control over the periphery was regarded as yet another form of Pushtun

expansionism. The infighting between the two wings of the PDPA, which resulted in purges of the more heterogeneous Parcham opposition, both in government and bureaucracy, reinforced this perception of the Pushtun identity of the ruling elite. Regional elites therefore mobilised forces against the centre on the grounds of ethnicity and territorial identity, and the first outbreak of opposition to PDPA rule was to come from non-Pushtun minorities such as the Nooristanis, the Hazaras and the Tajiks.[41] For tribal Pushtuns, however, the PDPA=s nationality policies were seen as a threat to longstanding Pushtun dominance in Afghanistan and to the legitimacy of the state, which in their perception rested on its Pushtun character. Hence, antigovernment insurgencies also broke out in some of the Pushtun-dominated areas, instigated by the clergy and the tribal-feudal elite.[42]

A significant factor which transformed these sporadic and isolated rebellions into widespread resistance was the regime=s use of coercion to counter domestic dissent. This reliance on the coercive apparatus of the state adversely affected the domestic legitimacy of the regime. The PDPA=s policy of forcibly countering threats to its goals of transforming Afghan state and society also promoted divisions along ideological and ethnic lines within the Afghan armed forces and civil administration. Subsequent purges of politically suspect military and civil officials further weakened the state=s administrative machinery, rendering it incapable of implementing the reforms proposed by the centre.[43] The internal fragmentation of the military and bureaucratic apparatus, moreover, made it increasingly difficult for the regime to counter the threats to state authority by dissenting forces, while authoritarian strategies of regime survival also alienated the PDPA=s support-base in the urban centres.[44]

Using ties of kinship, community, ethnicity, religion and territorial identity to mobilise their supporters, the traditional socioeconomic and political forces, including the clergy and the tribal and regional leadership, began to gain ground in their struggle against the regime. But the final outcome of this tussle between reform and reaction was to be determined by the linkages between internal and external variables. As early as 1978 anti-PDPA forces had begun to mobilise within the neighbouring territory of Pakistan. As the state attempted to forcibly suppress and contain domestic resistance, local, regional and ethnic elites began to forge ties with Afghan Islamist groups, such as the Jamiat-i-Islami of Burhanuddin Rabbani and the Hezb-i-Islami of Gulbuddin Hematyar, based on Pakistani territory, while a sympathetic regime in Pakistan began to channel support to particular Afghan political and social solidarities, both within and outside Afghanistan.[45]

Resistance to the Khalq authorities intensified by late 1979. The Soviets, who had since the 1950s played a major role in sustaining subsequent Afghan regimes through military and economic assistance, intervened directly in support of a hitherto sympathetic domestic order now threatened by regionally backed traditional political forces, which could adversely affect the security of the southern regions of the Soviet Union bordering on Afghanistan.[46] This intervention, which was both military through the provision of troops, and political by the Soviet-sponsored replacement of the Khalq regime by the Parcham faction of the PDPA under Babrak Karmal=s leadership, was to play a major role in determining future developments in Afghanistan.

Civil war in Afghanistan

Soviet intervention and the change in regime at the centre led to a heightening of the conflict about state legitimacy within Afghanistan. Following the installation of the Karmal regime and its joint military operations with Soviet forces against the opposition, the entire state was engulfed by a civil war, fuelled by internal and external factors. In the internal context, localised conflict was replaced by widespread resistance. As the strife spread, millions of Afghans, caught in the crossfire between government forces and the opposition, took refuge in the neighbouring states of Pakistan and Iran. This provided the latter with increased influence over domestic Afghan affairs as well as a greater stake in the Afghan crisis. The presence of large numbers of refugees in sympathetic regional states, particularly in Pakistan, also provided a valuable source of recruits for Afghan opposition parties.

Regional factors soon combined with the global imperatives of the >second Cold War=. While the US was at first reluctant to adopt an interventionist role in the Afghan crisis, the deterioration of US-Soviet relations led to a corresponding increase in US involvement in Afghan affairs. Using Pakistan as the main intermediary in their dealings with Afghan opposition parties and groups, and as a conduit for the supply of military and economic assistance, the United States and its western allies, along with China and a number of Middle Eastern states, began to channel vast amounts of military and economic assistance to suitable Afghan organisations.

In view of their geographical contiguity to Afghanistan, its dependence on trade and transit routes through the territories and the presence of large numbers of refugees and contending Afghan actors on their soil, both Iran and Pakistan were to play a crucial role in directing the internal course of the Afghan civil war. This role included the provision of sanctuary and cross-

border facilities and the extension or withholding of patronage to particular Afghan parties, religious groups or personalities in the form of technological, military and economic assistance.[47] While the opposition was dependent on the support of both regional and extraregional actors to sustain its conflict with the Karmal regime, the PDPA government was equally dependent on the continued military and economic assistance of the Soviet Union to retain its control.

With an escalation in hostilities, growing involvement of regional and extraregional actors, and continuous dependence of the Karmal regime on Soviet support, the state in Afghanistan appeared to exist only in form. Not only was the autonomy of the centre reduced (despite Soviet military and material support) to the urban areas alone, in the countryside, which became the main site of the conflict between the state authorities and the opposition, the vast majority of the population withdrew their allegiance from the state. At the same time armed resistance deprived the state of its control over the centralised means of violence and over most of its territory, while constant infiltration across its borders demonstrated the fragility of its sovereign status.[48]

The nature and directions of the civil war were to have repercussions not just for state legitimacy and regime survival but for future state-society relations in Afghanistan. After its installation, the Parcham regime had tried to regain legitimacy and contain the spread of internal conflict by reversing some of the more radical steps taken by the Khalq administration. Efforts were made, for example, to placate the clergy and the tribal elite by reimposing the Islamic legal code and attempting to recreate, to some extent, pre-existing state-society relations in the countryside through the cooption of sections of the tribal elite. Although the Afghan government did manage to obtain the support of some factions amongst the eastern tribes, it was unable to extend its control over most of the country. Underwritten by Soviet military support, the government=s authority remained restricted to the main urban centres where resistance was still minimal, and over the lines of communications linking the cities, as well as military bases. Continual infighting depleted the legitimacy of the PDPA and promoted further factionalism within the military and civil bureaucracies, leading to large scale desertions. The regime=s dependence on Soviet support was therefore used by the opposition to discredit it by evoking nationalistic and religious sentiments.

The PDPA=s vulnerabilities could not, however, be fully exploited by its opponents through the creation of alternative and functioning centres of power in the countryside since the civil war took the shape of resistance organised along lines of ethnicity, territory, tribal, clan, subclan or sectarian

identities. Linkages were established between internal opposition forces and Afghan political parties and religious organisations operating from sanctuaries in Pakistan and Iran.[49] Motivated mainly by the need for access to military supplies and material assistance, these relationships to a large extent were not forged on ideological affinity but on the grounds of particularist identities, or personal ambition and interests. Despite their common goal of overthrowing the central government, the Afghan opposition, therefore, remained internally divided, competing with each other for power and access to external resources. Hence their political influence and military power, as in the case of the Durrani rulers of Afghanistan, remained dependent on the internal dynamics of local and regional identities or sectarian and ethnic affiliations.[50]

Burhanuddin Rabbani=s Jamiat-i-Islami and Hekmatyar=s Hezb-i-Islami, for example, were both Islamist parties, with close ties to the Egyptian Akhwan-ul-Muslimeen (Muslim Brotherhood), possessing similar objectives of restructuring the legitimacy of the Afghan state based on Islamic governance. Yet their support base was ethnic in identity, with Tajiks supporting the Jamiat and Pushtuns the Hezb. During the course of the civil war, despite the substantive assistance received by both parties from external sponsors, little attempt was made for a united attack on the PDPA and Soviet forces. Even within overarching ethnic identities, political entities were divided along tribal or territorial lines or even along the lines of personality. The Pushtuns, for example, the main recipients of Pakistani patronage, were divided into competing factions. This intraethnic competition took the shape of rivalry between Pushtun commanders with Afghanistan and tensions within the six Pakistani-based Pushtun parties.[51] Similarly, the Iranian-based Shia parties and groups in the Hazarajat region were divided into several factions, united for a while under Iranian guidance but only to splinter again into competing groups.

The internal divisions within the forces opposing the Karmal regime heightened social fragmentation within Afghanistan. The failure of the opposition forces to unite in a common cause also meant that the civil war was fought in a political vacuum. The centre=s control was restricted to the urban areas; its claim to legitimate governance was rejected by a majority of the population; and it remained dependent for survival on Soviet military and economic support. The opposition which was internally divided offered no viable alternative basis for state legitimacy, even in the areas under its control, and was equally dependent on continued external support in its struggle against remnants of state authority.[52]

Internal determinants and external imperatives

In accordance with Afghanistan=s past history, developments in state-society relations continued to be determined by both internal factors and external imperatives. Internally, for a short space of time, the centre, with Soviet military and material assistance, appeared to be successful in containing the challenges posed by the diverse forces of opposition operating from within and without the state=s territory. A gradual dilution of its ideological directions, overtures to traditional societal forces including the tribes, internal divisions within the opposition and the latter=s insular objectives, were major factors in sustaining the Karmal regime.

At the same time, however, the Dari-speaking Karmal failed to win over substantive sections of the Pushtun opposition, which continued to strive for the reassertion of the Pushtun character of the state. Across the ethnic divide, the civil war had provided Afghanistan=s non-Pushtun minorities with an opportunity to successfully challenge the control of the state as well as Pushtun dominance. In the Shia dominated Hazarajat, for example, taking advantage of the topography of their region, the Hazaras, the third largest and most disadvantaged of Afghanistan=s ethnic groups, attained political, social and economic autonomy over their own territories for the first time in the history of the Afghan state.[53]

The reassertion of central authority was also hampered by external developments at both the regional and global levels. By the mid-1980s, the supply of more sophisticated arms to the Afghan opposition, including surface-to-air missiles by the West, neutralised the earlier Soviet and PDPA military superiority in aerial warfare. Of even greater importance was a change in the Soviet posture towards continued involvement in the Afghan crisis. Increasing domestic unpopularity of the war and the presence of a new Soviet leadership under Gorbachev, concerned about the adverse impact of the Afghan war on the prospects of improved relations with the United States, led to a revision of Soviet policies towards Afghanistan.[54]

These developments were to change the course of the civil war in Afghanistan. Firstly, under Soviet guidance, there was a change in the leadership at the centre, with Karmal being replaced by Dr Najibullah. Secondly, under Soviet pressure there was a change in central government strategies towards regime survival, and finally there was a major departure in Soviet policy towards the Afghan civil war. The cumulative effect of these developments was to dictate the future course of state-society relations in Afghanistan.

The future: disintegration or transformation?

The course of events since the mid-1980s in the global and regional arenas and inside Afghanistan itself, were to pose the greatest challenge to the Afghan state since the civil war, leading to the ousting of its sole modernising Afghan monarch, Amir Amanullah. Internally the political and military stalemate between the forces of the opposition and the PDPA authorities was to end in such a way as to threaten the remaining vestiges of the state apparatus, posing multifaceted threats to the legitimacy of the state.

In its external dimensions, the changed global scenario led the Afghan administration=s only reliable ally, the Soviet Union, to gradually withdraw its support for the PDPA leadership. This was motivated by domestic constraints and the new imperatives of détente with the United States. Since this vital source of support ceased at a time when its opposition remained the recipients of tangible regional and extraregional assistance, the ruling party became even more vulnerable to internal dissent and external pressure.

When its internal contradictions reached breaking point, the one party state in Afghanistan was to disintegrate. The conditions under which this disintegration took place and the developments since in the internal and external environment, have contributed to an ongoing debate about the future shape of the Afghan state and its relations with civil society, which has focussed on the interrelated issues of disintegration or transformation of the state.

The demise of the one party state

Since June 1982, UN-sponsored proximity talks between the Pakistani and Afghan governments had been under way in Geneva to obtain a withdrawal of the Soviet forces, create conditions conducive for the repatriation of Afghan refugees and end external intervention in Afghan affairs, with guarantees from the United States and the Soviet Union. There was at first little headway as both the central authorities in Afghanistan and the forces of the opposition made no tangible moves to resolve their differences; the Pakistanis appeared uninterested in a peaceful settlement; the Soviets, under Andropov, were unwilling to accept a deal which would not include the PDPA, while the US in fact increased its level of military support for the Afghan opposition.[55]

The internal military balance remained largely unchanged as the regime continued to control the urban centres, their communication links and strategic installations, while most of rural Afghanistan remained under the control of local and regional leaders as well as disparate commanders, political parties or regional and religious organisations. Continued infighting within the two factions of the ruling party, the Khalq and the Parcham, and

the internal divisions within the Afghan military did however erode the centre=s legitimacy and its ability to bargain with the opposition from a position of strength. However, due to the divisive nature of the opposition, the survival of the regime remained unchallenged until changes in Moscow=s perspectives and policies, guided by its own internal exigencies, heightened the internal divide within the PDPA, rendering it more vulnerable to opposition pressure.

In May 1986, power was transferred from Karmal to Najibullah, under Soviet pressure, since the Soviets were unhappy at Karmal=s failure to fully support the policy of national reconciliation. Yet the Soviet decision to press the new Afghan leadership to pursue that policy more vigorously, adversely affected the party=s internal base since it abandoned most of its reformist ideology.[56]

Of far greater significance was Gorbachev=s declared intention, in a speech in February 1986, of withdrawing from Afghanistan, motivated above all by the new Soviet leadership=s desire to improve its relations with the West.[57] Following the change in Soviet policy towards Afghanistan, there was a heightening of international activity for a resolution of the Afghan crisis, leading to several rounds of negotiations, organised by the UN Secretary-General=s Special representative, Diego Cordovez, in Geneva.[58]

Within Afghanistan, the new PDPA leadership under Dr Najibullah simultaneously made overtures to the opposition to reach a negotiated settlement and restructure the party and state apparatus to meet the changed nature of internal and external threats. On the one hand, Najibullah attempted to manipulate tribal sentiments amongst the Pushtuns, appealing to tribal loyalties and making concessions to the tribal elite. On the other hand he followed the policy initially enunciated by his predecessor, Babrak Karmal, of increasing minority representation within the civil and military bureaucracies, so as to counter internal threats from the Pushtun-dominated Khalq faction, especially within the military apparatus, which had been dominated by Khalqi Pushtuns.[59] As an integral part of this policy, the ruling Parcham faction supported the creation, consolidation and expansion of semi-autonomous non-Pushtun militias.

The status of non-Pushtun minorities, whether in opposition or in government, had continued to improve throughout the course of the civil war. Ethnic communities such as the Sheas of the Hazarajat, taking advantage of the topography of their region and the support of external sponsors such as Iran, had finally obtained autonomy over their territory after centuries of state-directed Pushtun penetration. The Tajiks, with Western military and economic assistance, had also successfully confronted the PDPA government

and gained ascendancy in many areas such as the Panjsher valley. Other sections of Afghan minorities, particularly in northern Afghanistan, such as the Uzbeks, had become the beneficiaries of Soviet-supported schemes for economic development in return for their support to the Kabul government.[60]

Apart from their acquisition of military power through the creation of pro-government semi-autonomous militias, increasing numbers of Tajiks and Uzbeks had been inducted within the civil-military bureaucracies. Under Najibullah, the policy of retaining the allegiance of the military apparatus by placing non-Pushtun minorities in senior positions gained further impetus, thereby undermining the longstanding Pushtun dominance of the Afghan state and society. The changed inter-ethnic dynamics and the consolidation of particularist solidarities as a result of the civil war were to gain particular significance as the Soviets withdrew their support for the PDPA government.

The Geneva Accords

In 1988 the Soviets convinced the main internal and external actors in the Afghan war to reach a peaceful resolution of the crisis, leading to the signing of the Geneva Accords on 14 April 1988 between Pakistan and Afghanistan, with US and Soviet guarantees. The Accords did not, however, settle the question of external support for the Afghan government and its opposition, since the agreement on positive symmetry meant the continuation of regional and extraregional military and economic support for their respective Afghan allies; neither was the issue of an interim government resolved since the Pakistanis and the US believed that the Najim government would collapse after the Soviet troop withdrawal and would be replaced by a suitable administration headed by their Afghan allies.[61]

Following the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan in 1989, the Afghan president managed to retain control. He was aided by a divided opposition which in turn was hampered by local, regional, ethnic and sectarian competition and even conflict. Although the government failed to extend its control over most of the territory of the state, the stalemate continued, since the forces opposing the PDPA government presented no concrete alternative political structures or leadership which could serve to unify their disparate bases of support. The Peshawar-based parties, for example, failed to transform themselves Afrom rival armed organisations operating essentially independent of each other to a unified leadership capable of creating a new government@ and Aa new credible state apparatus@.[62]

The greatest challenge to the PDPA=s continued hold over central power was to emerge from internal factionalism within its political and military establishments. Differences between the two wings of the party, the Parcham and the Khalq, had continued to escalate under the Parchamite president. These divisions also assumed the shape of ethnicity as Najibullah=s policy of increasing the military and political presence of the non-Pushtun minorities created resentment amongst the predominantly Pushtun Khalq.

These internal differences assumed a more threatening shape since the Soviet-US agreement on negative symmetry ended the PDPA=s only source of military assistance, while its opponents continued to receive military and material help from their regional allies. The increased vulnerability of the regime led to an escalation of activity both within the internally divided ruling party and the various segments of the Afghan opposition to capture power at the centre. Due to the salience of particularist solidarities, this struggle inevitably assumed an ethnic and regional character.

Although Najibullah had succeeded in defeating the first major challenge to his government, an attempted *coup* in March 1990 by Khalqi defence minister, General Shah Nawaz Tanai, in collaboration with his fellow Pushtun, Gulbuddin Hedmatyar, brought the internal weaknesses of the regime into the open. In a bid to retain a measure of influence in shaping the future course of the Afghan state, Najibullah began to negotiate in earnest, through UN aegis, on transitional mechanisms for a peaceful transfer of power and the creation of a broad based government.

Global developments created their own impact on the course of events in the state. With the decline in the role of the great powers in Afghan affairs, the regional state became even more assertive. These included the intensification of the internal crisis of legitimacy in the Soviet Union, which was to lead to its demise in December 1991, as well as the US decision to drastically curtail and then to end its military involvement in Afghanistan by stopping arms supplies to the protagonists,

Even as US-sponsored negotiations had been under way for the creation of broadly accepted mechanisms of central authority, the Pushtun-dominated parties based in Pakistan, with the support of Islamabad, had devised an alternative structure to replace the Najibullah government. The Afghan interim government, which was subsequently formed in February 1989 comprising seven predominantly Pushtun parties, was to dissolve in 1990 due to intra party feuds and its failure to militarily or politically establish a base within any major Afghan centre.[63] Since it had excluded a number of important minorities such as the Sheas, it was construed as an attempt to

reimpose Pushtun dominance over the state, and thus contributed to inter-ethnic tensions.

The internal struggle for political dominance intensified as the UN-negotiated formula for the replacement of the central government appeared to reach culmination. Pushtun elements of the Afghan military transferred the arms and territories under their control to local Pushtun commanders, while non-Pushtun internal factions amongst the ruling Parcham party began to form alliances with the ethnic kin, who in turn mobilised their resources to protect their autonomy along ethnic and territorial lines.[64]

The formation of the Northern Alliance was one such arrangement. This was composed of defecting Uzbek and Tajik militias, such as Uzbek General Abdul Rashid Dostum=s Jowzjan militia, which had access to the vast military resources placed under its control by the centre; non-Pushtun military officials in the capital, such as Tajik General Abdul Momin; and opposition minority political organisations led by Tajik commander Ahmed Shah Massoud, Ismaili commander Jaffer Naderi and Hazara leader Abdul Ali Mazari.[65]

Najibullah announced on 18 March 1992 his intention to resign in favour of a neutral interim administration which was to be formed on 28 April.[66] The Northern alliance, with the assistance of sympathisers within the capital, then imposed its control over Kabul, forcing the president to step down on 16 April.[67] While the capture of the capital by this combine of defecting PDPA militias and leaders and non-Pushtun opposition parties and personalities did lead to the demise of the one party state in Afghanistan, the civil war was far from over as the quest for state legitimacy continued to elude the many contestants for power and authority in Afghanistan.

Fragmentation of the state

Najibullah=s removal and the capture of the capital by the forces of the Tajik-dominated Jamiat-i-Islami, under Burhanuddin Rabbani and commander Ahmed Shah Massour=s leadership, with the assistance of General Dostum=s Uzbek militia and Tajik general Momin, resulted in the Afinal collapse of the state model@ created by Amir Abdul Rahman, Awhich implied that a Pushtun elite administered a limited control over the area which is Afghanistan@.[68] Four years after the collapse of the PDPA government, internal contestation for state power continues in Afghanistan, demonstrating the failure of the Afghan political leadership to reconstitute and reimpose a central authority which has internalised legitimacy and acceptance.

Since 1992, several internal and external factors have contributed to the continuation of the civil war in Afghanistan. In the internal context, existing divisions along regional, ethnic, sectarian and linguistic lines, consolidated during the course of the anti-PDPA conflict, have gained even more salience due to the imperatives of alliance-making. The initial Rabbani, Dostum, Hizb-i-Wahdat alliance, for example, was based on a commonality of interests amongst non-Pushtun and Shia minorities in preventing the predominantly Sunni and Pushtun-dominated Peshawar-based parties from taking over power.

Over the past decade and a half, the non-Pushtun minorities had succeeded in replacing the vestiges of central control with autonomous rule over their territories, acquiring access to resources and military power. In the internal bargaining and conflict over the state, they were now in a position to defend their particularist interests and to advance them through political organisations based on ethnicity, sectarianism and territory.[69] While their main objectives centred on the consolidation of their military and political gains *vis-à-vis* the Pushtun majority, the latter were unwilling to accept any arrangement which would not give them a dominant voice in the centre.

Unlike the Jamiat=s Tajik supporters, however, characterised by political cohesiveness, or the Uzbeks, united under General Dostum=s leadership and motivated by their newly-found ethnic assertiveness, the Pushtuns were internally fragmented along clan, subtribal, tribal and territorial lines. Within Afghan territory, Pushtun commanders and local and regional leaders were more inclined to protect their respective interests, while their political parties attempted to mobilise support not just against their ethnic rivals controlling the central government in Afghanistan, but also against each other.

These internal divisions within Afghan society were further exacerbated by external factors such as the support for particular majority and minority groups by regional actors, including Iranian support along sectarian lines for the pro-Iranian faction of the Wahdat, Pakistan=s advocacy of particular Pushtun actors and the newly independent Central Asian Republic=s preference for Uzbek leader, General Dostum. Extraregional states also played a role in this tussle for power. While Russia, for example, extended moral and material support to Dostum=s forces, the Saudis backed the more orthodox Sunni Pushtun elements.[70]

Political alliance-building within and outside Afghan territory did not, however, consistently reflect ethnic, territorial or sectarian divisions when opportunities for capturing, retaining or consolidating state power presented themselves.[71] Islamabad sponsored negotiations for a reconstituted central

authority led, for example, to the signing of the Peshawar Accords on 26 April 1992 between the Tajik Jamiat leadership and a number of Pushtun dominated parties. According to the Accords, Sibghatullah Mujaddedi of the Jabha-i-Nijat-i-Milli was to be appointed acting president, to be replaced after two months by Burhanuddin Rabbani who would hold power for four months. After this period, elections would be held for a shura to form an interim government for eighteen months, which in turn would hold national elections.

On 28 April, the Peshawar-based leadership formed the interim administration in Kabul, and thereafter Rabbani replaced Mujaddedi as president. Since Hekmatyar had not been provided a major role in the transitional arrangement, the Hezb launched an attack on the capital, leading to a temporary extension of Rabbani=s four month term until conditions were conducive to formation of the shura. Rabbani did in fact create a shura, but a nominated one, which extended his term as president for two years, leading once again to a stalemate in the moves to create a viable and representative political structure to govern the state.[72] This transitional mechanism proved both short-lived and unrepresentative due to internal competition among the majority parties as well as the exclusion of representatives of non-Pushtun minorities such as the Shia parties. Yet another Pakistani attempt, through the Islamabad Accord of 7 March 1993, to create a workable interim structure, was to fail for the same reasons.

Through the Accord, Rabbani was given an extension in office until June 1994 and was, during his tenure, to hold national elections for a constituent assembly which would frame a constitution and hold parliamentary elections. Once again, however, the Jamiat leader refused to transfer power, while the alliance began to unravel due to a resumption of conflict between its signatories. Although Hedmatyar had been given the post of prime minister in the new government, the rivalry between the Hezb and the Jamiat led to a political deadlock. Similarly, while the Shia parties had been included in the accord, no power sharing role was provided to Dostum=s Junbish-i-Milli, who controlled the resource rich and strategically located northern Uzbek majority areas. This exclusion only increased tensions between the Uzbek leader and President Rabbani.[73]

In January 1994, yet another alliance was formed, based on political expediency, this time between Hekmatyar=s Hezb and Dostum=s Junbish against the Jamiat government. The Pushtun parties, Islamist and moderate, continued to adopt a divergent course, as Syed Gailani=s National Islamic Front of Afghanistan (NIFA) and Maulvi Nabi Mohammedi=s Harkat-i-Islami at first supported Rabbani against Hekmatyar and then withdrew their support from both parties, while Abdul Rasul Sayyaf=s Ittehad-i-Islami allied

itself with the Rabbani regime.[74] As the anti-Rabbani alliance expanded the Hezb, the Junbish, the Wahdat (Karim Khalili) and Professor Sibghatullah Mujaddedi=s Jabha-i-Nijat-i-Milli formed the Supreme Coordination Council of Islamic Revolution of Afghanistan (SCCIRA) to coordinate activities against the central government.

In January 1994, as the Hekmatyar-Dostum combine attacked Kabul, the resumption of large scale conflict led once again to an exodus of refugees into Pakistani territory, retarding UN-sponsored efforts for the reconstruction of Afghanistan=s war torn economy and arranging for the repatriation of the Iranian and Pakistani based refugee population. While the UN Secretary-General=s Special Representative for Afghanistan pursued his efforts to bring about a peaceful settlement of the crisis between the various conflicting Afghan forces, the directions of the conflict continued to be dictated by the internal contradictions in Afghan society and the divergent interests of regional states placing constraints on the reconstruction of viable and legitimate state institutions.

Emergence of the Taliban

In October 1994 there emerged yet another domestic contender for power, the Taliban, a Pushtun group originating from theological schools in Baluchistan and the NWFP, and run by a Pakistani religious party, the Jamiat-i-Ulema-i-Islam (Fazlur Rahman). They teamed up with Pushtun commanders and religious leaders against Rabbani=s forces and took over the western province of Kandahar. They then moved towards the Pushtun-dominated areas in the south, southwest and east, where they mainly coopted or coerced Pushtun commanders into ceding control of their territory.[75] Consolidating their hold over most of the Pushtun dominated areas, and defeating fellow Pushtun and potential rival, Hekmatyar=s troops, the Taliban then made an unsuccessful bid to capture state power by attacking Kabul in February 1995. The Taliban=s failure to defeat the Rabbani forces revealed their internal organisational weaknesses and their military vulnerabilities.[76] Although they continued to make progress, gradually capturing 14 out of Afghanistan=s 32 provinces, most of this territory was brought under their control through the cooption of local and regional Pushtun tribal elite and commanders.

The divisive nature of Pushtun society and its internal political tensions were to place limitations on their bid to base their legitimacy on Pushtun majority. The Nangarhar shura, for example, consisting of commanders and leaders from three Pushtun parties controlling the eastern provinces of Nangarhar, Kunar and Laghman, was reluctant to ally itself with this southern Pushtun

group.[77] Other Pushtun parties such as Sayyaf=s Ittehad-i-Islami continued to side with the Rabbani government against the Taliban.

The organisational structure of the Taliban itself posed problems of legitimacy since the leaders of the various shuras formed in the Taliban controlled provinces had no previous experience of administering territory. Their attempts to govern through the imposition of an orthodox Sunni code superimposed on Pushtun tribal values created tensions in areas such as Herat, where the Dari-speaking urban population had a cultural affinity with neighbouring Iran[78] and had moved away from their tribal roots.

While the threat of the reimposition of Pushtun dominance consolidated the Tajik base of the Jamiat-i-Islami government in Kabul, the Taliban posted neither a political nor a military threat to the powerful non-Pushtun leader, General Dostum. He exercised unquestioned control over his strategic and resource rich territory with the unified support of his ethnic Uzbek constituency and enjoyed the allegiance of Afghanistan=s largest professionally organised military force. For Dostum, the Taliban were at most yet another Pushtun actor to be dealt with in the internal bargaining for future power sharing.

The Sheas of the Hazarajat, though more militarily vulnerable than the Uzbeks, had also consolidated their autonomous control over most of central Afghanistan. They were now equally inclined to exploit the conflict between the Rabbani coalition and its adversaries in return for increased leverage in a future political and administrative setup. Major policy objectives of the Sheas focussed on the consolidation of their socioeconomic and political autonomy and opposition to the imposition of any legal code based on the Sunni Hanafi tradition.[79] The new Pushtun Sunni sectarian claim to central power also had a major impact on the relationship of Afghan factions with external actors playing a role in Afghan affairs. Since the Taliban had emerged out of Pakistani territory and had links with Pakistani political elements close to the central government, they were perceived by the Rabbani regime as another Pakistani attempt to influence internal Afghan power balances, leading to a sharp deterioration in the relations between the two.

For Iran, which had so far limited its support to the Shia Hazara dominated Hizb-i-Wahdat, the bid by the Taliban to overthrow the Rabbani administration posed the dual threat. There was a reconstituted Afghan state founding its legitimacy on a Pushtun Sunni identity *and* the existence of a hostile, sectarian force on Iran=s borders, which could be backed by its ideological Arab rivals, especially Saudi Arabia. To meet these perceived threats and to protect its interests in Afghanistan, Iran changed its previous

strategy of forming alliances on sectarian lines to extension of support for the Rabbani administration. The Rabbani administration also retained the support of the Russians, who were concerned about fundamentalist Islamic penetration of the central Asian republics from Afghan soil, which could be furthered by an orthodox government in Kabul. For this reason Dostum=s northern based administration also remained the recipient of considerable economic and military assistance from the central Asian states, especially Uzbekistan.

In these alignments or realignments of internal and external actors, Pakistan continued to oppose the retention of central power by the Rabbani administration, claiming that the government had little domestic legitimacy since Rabbani=s ordained term as President had long since expired.[80] Pakistan=s attention also focussed on the inclusion of the Pushtun Taliban into any future Afghan central government. It called for the peaceful solution of the civil war through the creation of broad based mechanisms which reflected the demographic composition of Afghanistan as well as the military situation on the ground.

External mediation under UN auspices or through direct Iranian or Pakistani talks with the various Afghan forces, had so far failed to make much progress towards a commonly acceptable formula for peace. This failure can be attributed in part to the divergence in the goals of the external actors and parity to the absence of sufficient incentives for domestic actors to reach an internal accord on power sharing, while the current government appeared inclined to retain power by exploiting the divisions amongst its rivals.

The Rabbani government succeeded in broadening its ethnic base by reaching an agreement on power sharing with Hekmatyar in May 1996. It had even attained a degree of internal legitimacy by warding off consecutive Taliban attacks, while control over the capital gave it the authority to represent the state of Afghanistan in international forums such as the United Nations. It had, however, failed to reach an accord with other important actors such as the Nangarhar shura, Dostum or the Wahdat, which could potentially lead to an internal readjustment for power sharing and the eventual emergence of state structures that would command the allegiance and internal acceptance of a majority of the population.

Transformation of the state

In the absence of peace, the reestablishment of state legitimacy will remain an uphill task as Afghanistan=s many contending forces continue to use force to either consolidate their influence or to expand their access to political power

and resources by capturing the state. In such a situation it is feared that the Afghan state will be permanently dismantled and that its disintegration will lead to the formation of independent fiefdoms, controlled by quarrelling warlords basing their legitimacy on the grounds of ethnicity, sectarian or tribal origin and territorial identities.

That the Afghan state faces unprecedented challenges is incontestable. The present administration which represents the remaining symbols of internal state authority, controls a limited territory. By virtue of its control over the capital, the Rabbani administration possesses the advantage of international legitimacy since it represents the state in its external dealings. Yet the central government has still to acquire the necessary resources, military and materials, to coopt or coerce rival claimants into accepting its legitimacy and authority. The claims of most of the rival claimants to state power equally lack legitimacy since they are internally divided and no one organisation can claim a national standing. Most Afghan political parties remain structurally weak, with their popular appeal based less on ideology and more on the personal interests of the leadership or on ethnic, tribal, sectarian or regional loyalties, thereby reinforcing social cleavages.[81] Their respective standing *vis-à-vis* their rivals has, moreover, depended to a considerable degree on the extent of external military, economic and political support they have been successful in attaining.

The external factor itself creates further complications in the reconstitution of a legitimate state authority in Afghanistan. The withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan and the dissolution of the Soviet Union has not meant a decline in Russian interest in Afghan affairs, fuelled above all by concern that the establishment of an unsympathetic government in the centre could promote instability in the central Asian republics, a concern shared by such republics themselves.[82] Although neighbouring Pakistan and Iran claim that they have no intention of influencing the internal course of Afghan politics, both are keen to protect their respective interests, which have at times coincided and at times assumed a divergent course. Other regional and extraregional actors as diverse as the United States, Saudi Arabia and India have their own interests in Afghanistan.

Since the involvement of regional and extraregional actors has often assumed the shape of supporting internal Afghan factions, the external factor poses its own hindrances to an internal settlement, which would lead to the establishment of a lasting peace. In view of this persistent external involvement in Afghan affairs and the divergent interests of external players, the United Nations has proved ineffective in its mediation efforts aimed at the establishment of a broad based, representative government, through

incremental measures such as the formation of an interim council, the imposition of a ceasefire, demilitarisation and the holding of elections.

A related factor which has perpetuated political instability in Afghanistan is the availability of sophisticated arms, both from internal stockpiles and from external suppliers. During the course of their conflict with Soviet and government troops, opposition factions had in fact stockpiled arms Afor future use in postwar Afghan power struggles@.[83] In the absence of a professional military apparatus to assert the state=s control, an armed and divided people continue to pose a major challenge to the reassertion of state power. This militarisation of Afghan society not only undermines the authority of the current central administration but also of its political rivals who have a fragile hold over the people and territories under their control. Although the many competing Afghan political organisations are attempting to expand or consolidate their standing *vis-à-vis* their rivals by manipulating class-based or ethnic, tribal or regional identities, these loyalties have also been affected by the socioecoomic and political transformation of Afghan society as a result of the civil war. The tribal/feudal elite, for example, has traditionally exercised a considerable amount of influence, based on control over economic resources such as land and water and the use of these resources to establish patron/client relations.

During the course of the last eighteen years, however, Afghanistan=s weak and underdeveloped agricultural economy has been devastated and its inadequate revenue base and administrative structure, which provided some state control over the economy, has since disintegrated. At the same time the narcotics trade, through the cultivation of the poppy crop, has created an economic elite which can appeal to tribal, ethnic or territorial loyalties, but which also provides an alternative to traditional tribal structures and has a vested interest in the perpetuation of a weak state.

Survival not at stake

Afghanistan cannot be governed in any uniform manner, or its national economy reconstructed even in a limited form until its internal dynamics lead to the reconstitution of viable central institutions and a credible central administration. Nevertheless, there is little doubt that the state itself will survive in its present territorial form despite its internal fragmentation and the ongoing crisis of state legitimacy. The future legitimacy of the Afghan state will, however, be conditional on a successful internal transformation rather than on a historical overdependence on external recognition and support.

This is demonstrated by the nature of the civil war and the directions of the present United States tussle for power. No important Afghan actor has questioned the territorial boundaries of the state.[84] The goals of their internal conflict regardless of tribal, class, ethnic, sectarian or territorial identities, have been either to capture the state or to consolidate their access to power and resources within the state. No major Afghan movement has opted for secession and for the creation of a new form of political organisation, such as the carving of a new state out of Afghanistan=s territory. While rival actors have used the state within its existing borders as their reference point, they have attempted to justify their access to political power on differing perceptions of the legitimacy of a future Afghan state.

In the case of the Taliban and many other Pushtun groups and political organisations opposing the Rabbani government, their claim to state power and legitimacy is ostensibly on religious grounds. Not just the Islamic extremists such as the Taliban but even the so-called moderate Pushtun parties have claimed that they would base state legitimacy on Islam. The ethnic character of their support base, however, reveals that there would be a preference for a restoration of state legitimacy on its earlier grounds, namely, the Pushtun character of the state. A Taliban dominated state would be Pushtun, tribal and representative of Sunni orthodoxy, while parties such as Gailani=s NIFA would prefer a more liberal interpretation of Islam in a Pushtun state, based on the lines of earlier Pushtun monarchies.[85]

For central government in Kabul, legitimacy is claimed on the grounds of Afghan nationalism, since it projects itself as the representative of state power, while it also makes frequent appeals to the opposition to cooperate in the formation of a broad based unified state, with Rabbani on several occasions offering to step down and transfer power to an interim government if an agreement is reached on a viable transitional structure.[86] But while the Rabbani administration does possess a considerable degree of external legitimacy as the representative of Afghan sovereignty and autonomy in the international state system, its internal legitimacy is based mainly on the fact that it has managed to ward off threats to the capital. Its control over Kabul does provide it with an advantageous position to bargain with its rivals, offering the attraction of power sharing in the centre.

The Jamiat=s attempt to base the premise of its legitimacy on an Afghan national identity is, in any case, difficult to sustain since nationalism has always been a weak force in that socially and politically fragmented state. Moreover, the Jamiat cannot claim legitimacy for its control over the centre without effectively broadening its ethnic and regional base due to the predominantly Tajik character of the party. For minority ethnic and sectarian

communities in Afghanistan, including the Sheas and the Uzbeks, the goal of future state legitimacy does not lie in an all-encompassing Afghan identity enforced top downwards as in the days of the Durrani monarchs or under PDPA rule, but in the centre=s acceptance of Afghanistan=s cultural pluralism and the provision of tangible socioeconomic and political autonomy for its many regions. For the Sheas of the mountainous and remote Hazarajat region, for example, the legitimacy of any future Afghan state will be judged on a recognition and acceptance of their existing regional autonomy as well as respect for their sectarian identity.

In view of their access to considerable military and economic resources, the Uzbeks, unified under the political leadership of General Dostum, are exercising and will continue to perform an important role in determining the transformation of state legitimacy in Afghanistan. For the Uzbeks, the consolidation of their regional autonomy in the sociocultural, political and economic realms will be a primary determinant in their bargaining with existing and future central authorities. Moreover, due to the resource rich nature of their territory and its geostrategic borders with the central Asian republics, the Uzbeks, if they so choose, would also be in a position to negotiate power sharing arrangements within any future central administration.

While the diverse and often divergent nature of these claims to political power and socioeconomic interests indicate the difficulties in reestablishing state legitimacy in Afghanistan, its history reveals that similar crises in the past were ultimately resolved either by force or a redefinition of state-society relations or a combination of both. Internal rebellions resulting from Amir Amanullah=s modernising policies, for example, engulfed Afghanistan in a state of civil war and a total breakdown of state authority. This threat to the existence of the state was, however, successfully met by a reimposition of state control and legitimacy through a military victory and an accommodation of differences between the state and civil society.

In Afghanistan=s changed conditions, any bid to impose the state=s authority forcibly over its diverse people is unlikely to succeed if the goal of any victorious actor or coalition of actors goes beyond the capture of the capital, and to thereby claim to represent Afghanistan in the international arena of states or in its internal setting. In the present context, the legitimacy of the state can only be reconstituted after a central authority succeeds in accommodating some of the most basic demands of the major elements composing Afghan civil society.

The complexities of this bargaining process cannot be underestimated due to societal changes over almost two decades. Unlike its past, in present day Afghanistan, Pushtun nationalism on its own will prove unsuccessful as a base for legitimising the state since the Pushtuns are themselves riven with linguistic, territorial and tribal divisions.[87] Pushtun dominated state structures such as the monarchy have lost most of their previous relevance. The state can no longer depend as in the past on Pushtun tribal power to buttress its security, neither can the Pushtuns pressure the state for a predominant role in return for services rendered, without considerable opposition from the country=s assertive minorities. It will also not be possible for any one ethnic minority to claim allegiance on the basis of its military or economic resources and/or the support of external benefactors.

The sole factor of religion cannot sustain state legitimacy due to the existence of sectarian rifts even within Afghanistan=s dominant Sunni community, its Shia-Sunni divide, as well as the strength of secular forces represented by minority parties such as the Junbish. Moreover, if Ain the past social organisations, ethnic and linguistic ties and regional economic interests often transcended the importance of religious affinity@, that is likely to be the case even today.[88]

Likely future model

While it is difficult to determine the exact nature of future state-society dynamics, the model of the Afghan state will most likely resemble other multiethnic, socially fragmented and politically weak states, where territorial borders are often provided legitimacy by the international system, but internal legitimacy is threatened by domestic competition and conflict. Like such states, it is doubtful that the Afghan state will be governed by a strong centre, which could effectively control all segments of its population or all parts of its territory. The powers of the state in Afghanistan have in any case never extended to all of its territory, but neither have its rural population and power-elites for most of its history managed successfully to prevent a gradual, albeit limited, extension of the state=s authority. This pattern is likely to repeat itself in the future. Although the civil war has resulted in a complete breakdown of the civil administration, political stability in Kabul would see a gradual reassertion of state control once a civil bureaucracy is built up again and administrative structures recreated. Yet, as in the past, centralised authority cannot be asserted beyond the capital and its periphery until successful accommodation and bargaining allow for an expansion of the state=s functions and gradually permit the state to strengthen its autonomy.

Even after an executive is constituted, which could serve as the reference point for legitimacy in both the internal and external context, and a bureaucracy created which could oversee a future administrative infrastructure, the state=s authority will remain limited due to the existence of parallel power structures. It could, for example, oversee the implementation of fiscal policy, particularly regarding external trade. Yet this activity will not lead to a highly unified centralised economy under state control, since Afghanistan, like other weak states, will continue to have a strong parallel economy competing with its official counterpart.

In the context of social pluralism, the Eurocentric concept of the >nation-state= based on an internalised >national identity= has remained a myth for most multiethnic, politically underdeveloped states. It will be an equally irrelevant concept in a future Afghanistan, where bargaining for political power and resources will inevitably be conducted, as now, on the grounds of competing and at times conflicting substate identities, with this competition dominating all other relationships within civil society. Unlike the past, however, this competition will be conducted more so with reference to the state, since the civil war has increased societal awareness of the utility of state power in gaining advantages and benefits, including access to resources, internal power and external patronage. At the same time the survival of the state=s managers will continue to depend on their ability to oversee and contain this rivalry.

Where Afghanistan differs from most of its Third World counterparts is in its geographical landlocked location, increasing its vulnerability to external pressure and intervention. Since its location is a strategic one, it has also been used to advantage by past Afghan rulers and leaders to obtain assistance from external actors, which has then been used to sustain central authority and state legitimacy. In the future too, it is likely that while this strategic location, astride the land routes to the resource rich central Asian republics, might increase the leverage of the Afghan state, its dependence on external economic linkages to sustain its weak economy will continue to prove a source of vulnerability to external pressure.

In the final analysis however it will be the directions of its internal politics that will determine the legitimacy of the Afghan state. The present crisis arose out of a discord in the dynamics between state and civil society which was intensified by external factors. The legitimacy of a future Afghan state will be dependent above all on the success of its authoritative decision makers in providing a stake in the state for its many distinct socioeconomic and political forces which compose Afghan society.

Notes

[1] Ernest Gellner, AThe Tribal Society and its Enemies@, Richard Tapper (ed.), *The Conflict of Tribe and State in Iran and Afghanistan*, Croom Helm, London, 1983, pp.442-443.
[2] Barnett R. Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan: State Formation and Collapse in the International System*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1995, p.5.
[3] Olivier Roy, *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1986, p.10; pp.12-13.
[4] Richard Tapper, AIntroduction@, Richard Tapper, op.cit., p.10.
[5] Barnett R. Rubin, op.cit., p.5; Rasul Bakhsh Rais, AAfghanistan after the Soviet Withdrawal@, *Current History*, Vol.91, No.563, March 1992, p.126.
[6] See, for example, the definition of the nation-state in F.S. Nortridge, *The International Political System*, Faber and Faber, London, 1976, especially pages 145-149.
[7] Urmila Phandis, *Ethnicity and Nation-building in South Asia*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, (N.D.) pp20-21.
[8] Richard Tapper, *op.cit*., p.52.
[9] Vartan Gregorian, *The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan: Politics of Reform and Modernisation*, *1880-1946*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 1969, pp.39-40.
[10] *Ibid*., pp.39-40; p.89.
[11] The Amir=s subsidy was increased from 80 000 to 120 000 pounds, *loc.cit*., p.158.
[12] Richard Tapper, *op.cit*., p.35.
[13] Nancy Tapper, AAbd Al-Rahman=s North-West Frontier: the Pushtun Colonisation of Afghan Turkestan@, Richard Tapper, *op.cit*., pp.256-257.
[14] Barnett R. Rubin, ALineages of the State in Afghanistan@, *Asian Survey*, November 1988, Vol.XXVIII, No.11, pp.1194-1195.
[15] Vartan Gregorian, *op.cit*., p.161.
[16] Barnett R. Rubin, ALineages of the State in Afghanistan@, *op.cit*., pp.1196-1197. See also Richard S. Newell, *The Politics of Afghanistan*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 1972, pp.72-73.
[17] Rob Hager, AState, Tribe and Empire in Afghan Inter-Polity Relations@, Richard Tapper, *op.cit*., pp.105-106.
[18] Richard Tapper, *op.cit*., p.5. See also Sultan A. Aziz, ALeadership Dilemmas: Challenges and Responses@, John G. Merriam (eds.), *Afghan Resistance: The Politics of Survival*, Westview Press, Boulder, Colorado, 1987, pp.55-56.
[19] During Nadir Shah=s reign, the revenues from 70% of cultivated land went to tribal and feudal chiefs, in a country where 90% of the population was engaged in agricultural production. Vartan Gregorian, *op,cit*., pp.319-320.
[20] Rasul Bakhsh Rais, *War without Winners: Afghanistan=s Uncertain Transition after the Cold War*, Oxford University Press, Karachi, 1994, p.3.
[21] Richard S. Newell, *op.cit*., pp.72-73.
[22] Barnett R. Rubin, ALineages of the State in Afghanistan@, *op.cit*., p.1202.
[23] Bhabani Sen Gupta, *Afghanistan Politics, Economics and Society: Revolution, Resistance, Intervention*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder, Colorado, 1986, p.9.
[24] Sultan A. Aziz, *op.cit*., pp.60-61.
[25] Richard Tapper, *op.cit*., p.39.
[26] With over 80% of its population engaged in agricultural production, only 1% of taxes were received from agriculture, while industrial production comprised only 0.3% of Afghanistan=s exports. Mark Urban, *War in Afghanistan*, MacMillan Press, London, 1988, p.4.
[27] Raja Anwar, *The Tragedy of Afghanistan: A First-hand Account*, Verso, London, 1988, p.80; Diego Cordovez, Selig S. Harrison, *Out of Afghanistan: the Inside Story of the Soviet Withdrawal*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1995, pp.4-5.
[28] The financial incentives offered by the Iranians included a $1 billion aid programme. Barnet R. Rubin, ALineages of the State in Afghanistan@, *op.cit*., pp.1207-1208.
[29] By 1997 over a third of the Afghan officer corps had been trained in the Soviet Union. Raja Anwar, *op.cit*., p.36.
[30] *Ibid*., p.81; p. 129.
[31] Rob Hager, *op.cit*., p.111.
[32] Vartan Gregorian, *op.cit*., pp.393-394.
[33] Olivier Roy, *op.cit*., p.10.

[34] *Ibid*., pp.22-23. Raja Anwar, *op.cit*., p.134.
[35] Bhabani Sen Gupta, *op.cit*., p.48.

[36] Richard Tapper, *op.cit*., p.40.
[37] Olivier Roy, *op.cit*., p.14.
[38] Richard Tapper, *op.cit*., p.40.
[39] Bhabani Sen Gupta, *op.cit*., p.76.
[40] According to Fred Halliday, the Awar in Afghanistan began not as a war between one nation and an external invader but as a conflict between Afghans, a rivalry between an incipiently interventionist state and Kabul and other groups in society@, a conflict which finally Aexploded into civil war in 1979". Fred Halliday, *op.cit*., p.xiii.
[41] Mark Urban, *op.cit*., pp.9-10; pp.27-28.
[42] Diego Cordovez, Selig S.Harrison, *op.cit*., p.31.
[43] Barnett R. Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan, op.cit*., p.121.
[44] Bhabani Sen Gupta, *op.cit*., p.48.
[45] Raja Anwar, *op.cit*., p.153; p.159; Riaz M Khan, *Untying the Afghan Knot: Negotiating Soviet Withdrawal,* Duke University Press, Durham, 1991, p.51.
[46] Diego Cordovez, Selig S. Harrison, *op.cit*., p.4.
[47] The Pakistan government played a major role in transforming dozens of Afghan opposition groups into political parties and then providing them a support base, through for example, legislation which made it compulsory for all rerugees to register themselves with a recognised political party for access to food rations. Brig. Mohammad Yousaf and Maj. Mark Atkin, *The Bear Trap: Afghanistan=s Untold Story*, Jang Publishers, Lahore, 1991, pp.39-40. p.102. See also Lt. Gen. Kamal Matinuddin, *Power Struggle in the Hindu Kush: Afghanistan (1978-1991)*, Wajidalis, Lahore, 1991. P.65.
[48] Barnett R. Rubin, *Lineages of the State in Afghanistan, op.cit*., p.1191.
[49] Rasul Bakhsh Rais, AWar without Winners@, *op.cit*., p.14.
[50] Richard Newell, APost-Soviet Afghanistan: The Position of the Minorities@, *Asian Survey*, Vol.XXIX, No. 11, November 1989, p.1091.
[51] According to Brig. Yousaf, during the eleven years of the conflict against the PDPA and Soviet forces there were hundreds of casualties in intraparty fighting,while Urban puts the numbers of casualties from intragroup feuds at thousands. Brig. Mohammad Yousaf and Maj. Mark Atkin, *op.cit*., p.129; Mark Urban, *op.cit*., p.218.
[52] Richard S. Newell, APost-Soviet Afghanistan: The Position of the Minorities@, *op.cit*., p.1091.
[53] Olivier Roy, *op.cit*., p.145.
[54] Fred Halliday, *op.cit*., p.xiv.
[55] Diego Cordovez, Selig S. Harrison, *op.cit*., pp.98-99; p.101.
[56] Fred Halliday, *op.cit*., p.xvi; Diego Cordovez, Selig S. Harrison, *op.cit*., pp.202-203.
[57] Barnett R. Rubin, *The Search for Peace in Afghanistan: From Buffer State to Failed State*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1995 p.68.
[58] Diego Cordovez, Selig S. Harrison, *op.cit*., pp.4-5.
[59] Anwar-ul-Haq Ahady. AThe decline of the Pushtuns in Afghanistan@, *Asian Survey*, Vol.XXXV, No. 7, July 1995, p.623.
[60] Joseph Newman Jr., AThe Future of Northern Afghanistan@, *Asian Survey*, Vol.XXVIII, No. 7, pp.733-734.
[61] Lt. Gen. Kamal Matinuddin, *op.cit*., p.214; p.231. See also Riaz M. Khan, *op.cit*., pp.243-244 and Diego Cordovez, Selig S. Harrison, *op.cit*., p.253.
[62] Richard S. Newell, APost-Soviet Afghanistan: the Position of the Minorities@, op.cit., p.1105-1106.
[63] Lt. Gen. Kamal Matinuddin, *op.cit*., pp.226-227.
[64] Anwar-ul-Haq Ahady, *op.cit*., p.625.
[65] Ralph H. Magnus and Eden Naby, AAfghanistan and Central Asia: Mirrors and Models@, *Asian Survey*, Vol.XXXV, No.7, July 1995, p.615.
[66] According to Najibullah an Ainterim government@ formed by the UN would be transferred all Apowers and authority@ of his administration. Barnett R. Rubin, *The Search for Peace in Afghanistan, op.cit*., p.10.
[67] Anwar-ul-Haq Ahady, *op.cit*., pp.625-626.
[68] Anders Fange, AAfghanistan after April 1992: a struggle for state and ethnicity@, *Central Asian Survey*, Vol.14, No.1, March 1995, p.18.
[69] Richard S. Newell, APost-Soviet Afghanistan: The Position of the Minorities@, *op.cit*., p.1108.
[70] Anders Fange, *op.cit*., p.22.

[71] Zalmay Khalidzad, AAfghanistan in 1994: Civil War and Disintegration@, *Asian Survey*, Vol.XXXV, No.2, February 1994, p.147.
[72] Barnett R. Rubin, *The Search for Peace in Afghanistan, op.cit*., p.134.
[73] *Ibid*., p.134. See also *Country Report, Afghanistan*, Third Quarter 1994, Economist Intelligence Unit, London, 1994, p.39.
[74] Anwar-ul-Haq Ahady, *op.cit*., p.627.

[75] Ahmed Rashid, AEnter the Taliban@, *Herald*, February 1995; Rahimullah Yusufzai, AHere come the Taliban:, *Newsline*, February 1995.
[76] *The Economist*, 11 March; 18 March 1995. See also Ahmed Rashid, The Debacle and After@, *Herald*, May 1995.
[77] The Taliban leadership is mainly from Durrani subtribes in the south and southwest.
[78] Raja Anwar, *op.cit*., p.159.
[79] Anders Fange, *op.cit*., pp.20-21.
[80] Referring to the terms of the Islamabad accord, Pakistani Foreign Minister, Sardar Assef Ali, declared for example that AAnything that happens in Afghanistan after 28 June has no legitimacy@. On another occasion he described the Rabbani administration as a Ajunta=. *Country Report*, Afghanistan, Economist Intelligence Unit, London, Third Quarter 1994, p.41; Fourth Quarter 1995, p.36.
[81] Gilles Dorronsoro, AAfghanistan=s Civil War@, *Current History*, January 1995, Vol.94, No.588, p.38.
[82] Tajikistan in particular has proved vulnerable to the spread of Islamic fundamentalism from Afghanistan, which is used as a base by Tajik Islamist dissidents with the support of Afghan sympathisers to launch attacks on Tajik government forces and Russian border guards.
[83] Diego Cordovez, Selig S.Harrison, *op.cit*., p.10.
[84] Anwar-ul-Haq Ahady, *op.cit*., p.629.
[85] Rasul Bakhsh Rais, *War without Winners, op.cit*., p.188.
[86] Zalmay Khalidzad, op.cit., pp.149-150. See also *Country Report, Afghanistan*, Second Quarter 1995, Economist Intelligence Unit, London, p.49.
[87] Anders Fange, *op.cit*., p.19.
[88] Vartan Gregorian, *op.cit*., p.39.

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