“Afghan Warlords”

A Study of Their Roles, Relationships, and Power in Pre- and Post-2001 Governance Processes in Afghanistan

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Abstract

Research on post-conflict state-building is grounded in the important theoretical and empirical question of which institutions offer the best opportunities for building effective states in societies emerging from conflict and violence. This thesis examines whether informal institutions, often criticised in academic discourse, can contribute to governance processes for state-building in post-conflict societies. It explores the claims of both supporters and critics regarding the role of informal institutions and identifies substantial conceptual and empirical evidence that informal institutions – Afghan warlords in this case – hold significant potential, both formally and informally, in supporting governance processes for state-building.

The study first examines the role, position, and power of Afghan warlords during the pre-2001 period (1919–2001) before analysing their involvement in post-2001 governance processes (2001–2021). It finds that Afghan warlords, who often dominated large geographic areas and maintained strong social roots through patronage networks and service delivery functions, exercised considerable influence over security, governance, and political decision-making. Throughout Afghanistan's modern history, warlords remained a complex and influential feature of the political landscape. Although their roles evolved over time, their influence continued to shape Afghanistan's political trajectory and state-building processes.

Author's declaration

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for a degree or other qualification at this University or elsewhere. All sources are acknowledged as references.

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Introduction

This research investigates the role of informal institutions – specifically Afghan warlords – in the governance processes of state-building in post-conflict societies. It explores how these informal actors shape governance structures, influence political stability, and contribute to or hinder institutional development. Additionally, it examines the interaction between informal and formal institutions in shaping political authority, social cohesion, and governance outcomes. Furthermore, the study seeks to identify the mechanisms that either facilitate or obstruct warlords' roles in governance, while analysing how historical legacies, cultural dynamics, and socio-political contexts affect their effectiveness in post-conflict reconstruction.

Often state institutions and governance systems in countries that have experienced war and conflicts are ineffective in their core functions of providing security and basic services to their citizens (Tayagi, 2012). Due to absence or poor governance systems, lack of state institutions capacity, lack of state-society relationships and effects of war and conflicts, state institutions cannot offer and manage public services on their own. Although state-building is a domestic process, it involves a wide variety of internal and external stakeholders and partners and external funding since it cannot evolve without the participation of a diverse set of players (Elbasani, 2018). While the delivery of services in such societies would require effective state institutions (Lister, 2007), however, governance functions and procedures do not have to be based on liberal approaches to public administration and governance creation. In such contexts, illiberal approaches to governance building may be more effective in undertaking post war reconstruction operations (Mukhopadhyay, 2013 and Smith, 2014). Such approaches have been experienced in countries such as Afghanistan where informal institutions – established based on local values, and norms and are embedded in traditional culture and social practices – can play a major role in the governance process. Such players can play both positive and negative

roles in the state-building and governance systems. Among other actors, in post-war environments like Afghanistan, warlords – who can be inside and outside government positions – frequently exist and can play key roles due to their social roots, relationship, position, and power. While Afghan warlords have been widely criticised for corruption, domestic crimes, drug, and weapon smuggling (Giustozzi, 2004 and Mehran, 2018), they frequently carry out some of the state's expectations due to their position, power, and patronage networks (Mukhopadhyay, 2009 and Mehran, 2018).

Because of informal institutions' (for example warlords) social, economic, political, and cultural settings, each country and environment might have its distinct methods of state-building, which is a complex process (Lister, 2007 and OECD, 2011). For example, the process of state-building would involve establishing new governmental institutions and strengthening existing ones to boost state actors to solve critical issues (Fukuyama, 2004 and Hofmann and Schneckener 2008). In countries where war and conflict are experienced, one of the main goals of the state-building process is to reform the governance system. Governance, which refers to the rules, regulations, organisations, and processes that control how the state interacts with its citizens (Brinkerhoff, 2007), can be both effective and ineffective (Whaites, 2008). Ineffective governance is when a state fails to provide its people with fundamental public services (UNDP, 2010). As a result, governments and their foreign partners aim to establish and re-establish effective and functioning government institutions to be able to provide people with basic services such as security and socio-economic initiatives (Whaites, 2008).

This is most evident in hybrid political systems, where both formal (government officials and political parties) and customary (tribe and religious elites) actors collaborate to administer governance systems (Smith, 2014). In post-conflict contexts such as Afghanistan, when state administration is ineffective and when centralised political and military power has crumbled,

warlords as informal actors arise and can play crucial roles (Jackson, 2003, Brinkerhoff, 2005 and 2007, Beswick, 2011 and Cunningham, 2017). As a result of warlords' existing authority, social influence, patrimonial networks, and reach, newly formed governments with limited ability, reach, and power, employ them as effective players to fulfil governance systems and act on the government's behalf (Brinkerhoff, 2005 and Lister, 2007). On the other hand, this approach may lead to the institutionalisation of neo-patrimonialism, in which warlords benefit personally while other sectors of communities suffer. This is when official governmental institutions may have limited capacity to meet people's urgent needs or are deemed illegitimate in the eyes of the public following wars and violence in the country (Haider, 2011).

This study, divided into two chapters (literature review and case study), first aims to identify and discuss key themes such as state-building, governance in post-conflict state-building, effective and ineffective governance, warlords as formal and informal authorities, their emergence, and roles - both positive and negative - in post-conflict countries' governance systems, and finally neo-patrimonialism centred on warlords. The second chapter (empirical and case study) is divided into two main sections (pre and post-2001 era) to understand the diverse history, role, power, and positions of Afghan warlords as both formal and informal actors in Afghanistan's state-building process from 2001 to 2021.

Methodology

This research employs a single-case study approach, focusing on the role, power, and relationships of Afghan warlords in governance processes during the period 2001–2021. The study relies exclusively on secondary data, collected through a variety of credible academic and institutional sources.

The primary source for secondary data collection is the University of York Library, utilising its library catalogue (YorSearch) to access electronic and non-electronic books, journal articles, and other e-resources. Given the extensive body of research on this topic, internet search engines are also employed to supplement findings. Additionally, data is drawn from media reports, publications from the Afghan government, international and national organizations, and civil society groups. Since historical data on warlords and Afghan tribal leaders is often limited, British Library sources were also consulted to enhance the depth of analysis.

The decision to rely on secondary data stems from the inability to conduct field research in Afghanistan due to logistical and security constraints. However, the availability of substantial and reliable secondary sources ensured a robust evidence base for the study. No significant challenges were encountered during the research process, and no ethical concerns arose in the course of data collection or analysis.

Chapter I: A review of the main literature debates

This literature review chapter is divided into three main sections. Section one (I.1.) provides a concept of state-building including state functions, as state-society relations and state-building process in post-conflict countries. Section two is primarily about the concept of governance including formal and informal governance structures such as Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), and local community-led schemes. The subsequent part of this section presents governance in post-conflict countries with a focus on both effective and ineffective governance approaches. Given that post-conflict governance systems involve various actors, the subsequent section – section three – chiefly presents key theoretical debates about warlords and their existence and emergence in post-conflict countries. This section's primary aim is to present key arguments for warlords and their benefits in governance systems in post-conflict settings vs key arguments about the disadvantages of warlords' involvement in governance systems of post-conflict countries. To further research and study warlords' engagement in post-conflict governance systems, this section uses neopatrimonialism – a term to describe the idea that government officials are using public resources for their own private benefit (Bratton and de Walle, 1994) and (Francisco, 2009), a framework to further understand the benefits and disadvantages of warlords' involvement in post-conflict countries' governance systems.

The chapter concludes that the state-building process in countries that have recovered from conflicts is complex and multifaceted. Not just official state institutions, but also informal local players such as warlords, who hold positions of authority, power, and resources both within and outside the government, can play a role. Their efforts are substantial and should be acknowledged in the context of post-conflict state formation. Furthermore, these informal players like warlords provide issues and opportunities through neo-patrimonial networks, one way for administering governance systems in post-conflict countries.

I. 1. A concept of state building

I. 1. 1. State-building

The definition of state-building has a long-standing history as it is one of the dominant themes in contemporary international relations (Hehir and Robinson, 2007). Some definitions highlight the authority, institutional presence (through law and order), and territorial boundaries of the state (Weber, 1968 in OECD 2011). It is an interdisciplinary topic, which draws interest and discussion in various fields including social sciences, international relations, political studies, anthropology, economics, international development, and security studies, amongst others (Scott, 2007). According to Fukuyama (2004), state-building is the creation of new governmental institutions and the strengthening of existing ones to meet the needs of local citizens.

Like Fukuyama (2004), Hofmann and Schneckener (2008) also emphasise on strengthening state institutions and enhancing the capacities of state actors. Fukuyama (2004) adds that ineffective or failed states are close to the root of many of the world's most serious problems, from poverty and diseases to drug trafficking and terrorism. Hence, through the state-building process, strong institutions in developing countries and countries after conflict, need to be created and built (Fukuyama, 2004). As such, not only liberal state-building – that is primary focused on state institutions – but also illiberal ways of state-building, which can be state-society relations and inclusion of non-state actors into the processes need to be explored in contested countries (Menocal, 2011). State-society relations is further discussed in the following subsection below.

OECD (2011) states that state-building is primarily a domestic process, which involves local actors (with a limited role of international actors). Menocal (2011) argues that the state-building process is an internal process, which needs to be driven from within, however, the

process cannot develop without international actors' interventions as a wide range of external forces – such as trade, regional integration, international aid, and human rights and democracy – influence the domestic state-building process. This means that the international development community can contribute to supporting the state-building process by facilitating the political and institutional processes aiming to strengthen the foundations of a resilient state and society. Additionally, Ghani et al. (2005) list ten requirements for statehood from a liberal perspective to overcome fragility. The first is a legal monopoly on the use of force, the second is administrative control, the third is thorough public financial management, the fourth is an investment in human capital, the fifth is the creation of citizenship rights and obligations, the sixth is the provision of infrastructure, the seventh is market formation, the eighth is the management of state assets, the ninth is effective public borrowing, and the tenth is the maintenance of the rule of law (Ghani et al. 2005).

Nonetheless, from an illiberal point of view, according to Chandler (2006), historically and broadly considered, state-building refers to the process of "constructing or reconstructing institutions of governance capable of providing citizens with physical and economic security" (Chandler 2006, p1). Similarly, Mann (1984) emphasises the state's infrastructure strength, emphasising the efficacy with which important duties are completed and services offered to citizens as critical aspects for state-building. On the other hand, Migdal (1990) and OECD (2011) place emphasis on a distinct notion of state-building. They contend that the process of building a state entail situating the state in society, paying close attention to the web of relationships between the state and society, how social expectations and state capacity are mediated, how political power is used, and how the public is informed about service delivery and resource allocation by state institutions. Thus, based on the foregoing definitions of state-building, one may infer that state-building is about more than just top-down methods to

institution development; it is also about bottom-up techniques that connect the state and society (Menocal, 2011).

I. 1.2. State-Society Relations in state-building process

Haider and Mcloughlin (2016, p3) define state-society relations as "interactions between state institutions and societal groups to negotiate how public authority is exercised and how it can be influenced by people". In post-conflict state-building, the focus is not only on the state and state institutions, but it is more on the quality and nature of the relationships linking the state and its citizens (OECD, 2010). OECD (2010) stresses the importance of an endogenous process – within a post-conflict state-building – to enhance the capacity, institutions, and legitimacy of the state driven by state-society relations. According to the OECD (2010) definition, to develop the state's capacity and legitimacy, as well as to promote constructive relations between citizens and the state, a responsive service delivery mechanism must be established to facilitate a continuous exchange between the state and citizens by building the capacity of the state's institutions to perform their functions in ways that meet people's expectations (Grävingholt et al. 2009).

To see the state-building process in a post-conflict country from a different lens, the World Bank (2015, p. 5) defines state-building in conflict-affected societies as a "set of systematic efforts to build state capacity and accountability, including strong attention to the most basic state administrative and service delivery systems, complementing capacity investments with robust efforts to improve accountability, and balancing state capacity- building and reform efforts with support for civil society and the private sector". Although this definition of the World Bank does not refer to people and citizens and their relationship with state institutions directly, it does emphasise the importance of accountability and inclusion of civil society organisations, which would represent a wider population in a society.

In many post-conflict countries – under state-building efforts – accountability from the state to citizens and the public is a crucial matter as citizens participate directly or indirectly in holding providers to account (Schouten, 2011). According to Ghani and Lockhart (2008, p. 7), citizens' acceptance of "…promulgation and enforcement of rules and provision of services by the state serve the interest of the majority is crucial to engendering trust between the state and its citizens and giving citizens a sense of belonging". Furthermore, access to services does not necessarily result in increased state legitimacy, it is the effectiveness of the state and the quality of services, which can have a positive impact on perceptions of state legitimacy among people (McCullough, 2015).

I. 1.3. State-building in post-conflict countries

As the process of state-building differs from country to country, the process must be understood against a background of long-term historical and structural factors that contribute to shaping the forms of state formation and the nature of state-society relations (OECD, 2011). State-building is especially challenging when it takes place in post-conflict or conflict-affected societies, where criminal or other forms of violence are prevalent or where the threat of violent conflict appears (Menocal, 2011). In post-conflict countries, which is defined "…as the period immediately after a conflict is over." (Frere and Wilen, 2015, p. 2), one of the main goals of the state-building process is to reform the governance system. The phrase "governance" refers to the laws, regulations, organisations, and procedures that create the interactions between the state and its inhabitants (Brinkerhoff, 2007). This Brinkerhoff (2007) concept incorporates public administration, general governmental institutions, national and international politics, the exercise of power, and the formulation and execution of policies. Ineffective governance is described as the state's failure to provide its inhabitants with fundamental public services (UNDP, 2010). Poverty, lack of job opportunities, instability, and, most crucially, the potential

of war recurrence are all major issues (Glentworth 2002, United Nations, 2007, Fiedler and Mrob, 2016, Yahya et al. 2018 and ODriscoll, 2018).

According to Tayagi (2012., p. 2), "the term weak state is a contentious one and it is generally used to define a state that is weak in its core functions of providing security to its citizens (security gap), providing basic services to its citizens (capacity gap), and having legitimacy among its people (legitimacy gap)". As stated by Glentworth (2002), United Nations (2007), Fiedler and Mrob (2016), Yahya et al. (2018), and ODriscoll (2018), ineffective states have come to be considered a security threat because they are seen as more susceptible to organised crime, privatised violence, arms proliferation, the spread of infectious diseases, environmental degradation, and even civil war. As a result, governments and their foreign partners aim to establish and re-establish functioning government institutions to be able to provide people with basic services such as security and socio-economic initiatives (Whaites, 2008).

Moreover, state-building in post-conflict situations is not always easy, with several stakeholders involved. Individuals and groups with diverse roles and duties, both formal and informal, are considered actors. The involvement, roles, and responsibilities of a diverse range of actors in a post-conflict setting result in a hybrid governance system (Smith, 2014), in which both formal and informal actors - including CSOs, community and religious leaders, and, for the purposes of this thesis literature, Warlords - are involved and play roles at various levels. According to Giustozzi (2009) and Mehran (2018), a warlord is a powerful, independent military leader who rejects central authority and commands armed forces, dominating large-scale violence in unstable or ungoverned states.

Before proceeding to the following area of the literature, one critical assessment from the prior literature is that there are gaps in the literature on state-building. The aforementioned writers, for example, provide no clear direction on the prioritisation and timing of state-building tasks.

Nonetheless, as Smith (2014) points out, there is a focus on local ownership of state-building by integrating the state with society, particularly in post-conflict hybrid governance systems. The necessity of incorporating non-state players such as warlords, elites, and other civil society organisations (from a bottom-up approach standpoint) in the state-building process is emphasised in this concept of hybrid governance systems.

To further discuss key issues of the state-building – particularly in a post-conflict society –, the following section (section two) of this literature review further presents key arguments around governance, governance building process, problems of ineffective state-building, and finally effective and ineffective governance building in post-conflict societies.

I. 2. The concept of governance

I. 2.1. Governance in state-building

As noted above, the term governance is even beyond the role and actions of government or state institutions, policies, and structures in a country. However, it is also about broad conceptions of how states and societies maintain relations and organise actions to pursue collective goals and interests (Brinkerhoff and Mayfield, 2005). This is especially relevant and significant in the case of hybrid governance systems in post-conflict states when both the state and society collaborate in diverse ways, including the presence of non-state actors such as warlords.

Similarly, Keohane and Nye (2002, p12) define governance as "the processes and institutions, both formal and informal, that guide and restrain the collective activities of a group." According to Brinkerhoff (2007), not all these institutions and processes are governmental. Some of them can be nongovernmental as well. According to Carino (2000), the term governance involves a broader set of institutions – beyond formal government structures – and

includes Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and local community schemes through which citizens' voices can be heard and the state's institutions are made accountable. This is especially pertinent for this thesis case since it involves non-state actors such as warlords in a hybrid type of governance in which their roles and effect on public administration activities are important.

These definitions also mean that governments must be able to make and enforce rules, and deliver services, regardless of whether that government is democratic or subject to the rule of law (Fukuyama, 2014). Despite various viewpoints of several scholars and institutions about the term governance, I found the viewpoint of Fukuyama (2014), Brinkerhoff (2007), and Carino (2000) of particular use and relevance in this literature review. From Fukuyama's perspective, one can understand that governance is exclusive to the government's ability to make and enforce rules and deliver services. Nonetheless, Brinkerhoff (2007) and Carino (2000) viewpoints expand the term and include a broader set of institutions – outside formal government mechanisms and structures – and include CSOs and local community schemes through which citizens' voices can be meaningfully heard and the states' institutions are made accountable at various levels.

I. 2.2. Governance in post-conflict countries

In post-conflict settings, while war may have ended, true peace is not always achieved. The cessation of violence creates an opportunity to build lasting peace, but this depends on establishing strong institutions that can provide long-term security for all citizens. (Brahimi, 2007). Scholars such as Collier et al. (2008), Ackerman, (2008), and Hill and Menon, (2013) state that key characteristics of a post-conflict society are the absence of functioning or underdeveloped government institutions to serve the public, informalized economy and public life, significant unemployment and lack of jobs, high level of corruption, and significant lack

of economic recovery and strategies. Therefore, according to Frere and Wilen (2015), a post-conflict country is still in a fragile state, which requires well and systematic attention from both internal government leadership and external partners.

In addition, there are other reasons why post-conflict and fragile states deserve special attention as civil wars do more than impose heavy human and material costs. They also diminish the capacity of a country to deal effectively with its underlying causes, increasing the risk of future, even more, costly and devastating conflicts. States experiencing violent conflict produce instability that most often results in political disorder and the weakening of institutions and governments (Rotberg, 2003). Cunningham, (2017, p1) "states that a post-conflict context can be conceptualised as a transitional period bounded by past war and future peace, a period which introduces several new challenges". Challenges include resource scarcity and poverty, lack of functioning institutions to establish safety and security for citizens, ineffective government capacity, lack of infrastructure, services – including justice –, economic opportunities, corruption, resistance to legality by various actors including illegal armed groups and political parties, tribal and clan animosity, internal displacements and more importantly risks of conflict recurrence (Glentworth 2002; United Nations, 2007; Fiedler and Mrob, 2016; Yahya et al. 2018; and ODriscoll, 2018).

However, the term post-conflict is highly debatable because there is usually an imprecise understanding as to when an environment changes from conflict to post-conflict (Brinkerhoff, 2005). Because of the complexities of countries in which there are still risks of escalating violence after a conflict ends, a post-conflict rarely means that violence and friction have ended at a given moment in all areas of a country's territory (Jackson and Scott, 2007). Brinkerhoff (2005) states that most post-conflict reconstruction projects by governments and their international partners and NGOs take place in situations where conflict has decreased to a

greater or lesser degree, however, is still happening or recurring in some parts of a country's territory. Suhrke et al. (2002), and Odriscoll (2018) understand post-conflict governance as a complex, holistic and multidimensional process encompassing effort to simultaneously improve military (restoration of law and order), political (governance), economic (rehabilitation and development) and social conditions (justice and reconciliation).

For example, in Afghanistan after the Taliban were ousted in 2001 and a massive post-conflict reconstruction and governance effort commenced, the country was still suffering from ongoing armed conflicts – fighting an insurgency – in several provinces, districts, and villages with high civilian and military casualties. As a result, government institutions and governance systems were unable to provide people's urgent demands, such as security and fundamental socio economic services. (Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS), 2008). What is more, the longer conflicts and violence in society persist the greater the danger that they will destabilise, even spill over into, other states (for instance illicit activities, such as the drug and arms trade or terrorism, (Brinkerhoff, 2007), making in the process whole regions vulnerable to inter-communal divisions, violence, and wars (Bertone et al 2014, and Panic, 2009).

As such, post-conflict reconstruction efforts (including building and empowering government institutions to be provide services to public) can be also considered conflict prevention strategies. Having said this, according to Jackson and Scott (2007), a post-conflict country can be an environment that has recently experienced a severe outbreak of violence but is going towards peace through governance system reform (building state and none-state institutions) and socio-economic development interventions. This also means that while post-conflict transitions offer an important window of opportunity for socio-economic rehabilitation and reconstruction in society, they also entail high risks of crisis and recurrence of violence (Menocal, 2011).

In post-conflict states, ineffective governance is recognised as a contributor to conflict and violence (Brinkerhoff, 2007). In the aftermath of conflicts, not all but some societies have low or stagnant economic growth and ineffective governing institutions that are unable to implement policies or maintain autonomy due to corruption and remaining conflict (Transparency International, 2014). By degree, states with ineffective governance systems are separated from failed states. Failed states are said to be non-functional and characterised by a complete lack of legitimacy of the government.

I. 2.3. The debates on ineffective Governance in Post-conflict Countries

Ineffective governance is defined as a state's inability to provide basic public services to its citizens (UNDP, 2010). When state institutions responsible for providing services to its citizens lack transparency, accountability, efficiency, and responsiveness, are considered evidence of ineffective governance systems (Cheema and Popovski, 2010). As such, reformed governance (for example Security Sector Reform) is important to establishing an enabling environment – security and a "solid partnership" – between national and international actors to pursue state reconstruction efforts to avoid violence and conflict from re-escalation (Brinkerhoff, 2007 and Brahimi, 2007, p3).

As mentioned earlier, in the aftermath of a conflict and prolonged violence, state institutions do not exist or are very ineffective (Cox, 2001). They lack leadership and technical capacity to respond to citizens' needs and desires, provide basic public services and assure the public's welfare through normal economic activities (Brinkerhoff, 2005 and 2007; OECD, 2009; and OECD, 2011). In such cases, there are various debates about the engagement and role of donors and Non-governmental Organisation (NGOs) as they often take the lead in decision-making, providing essential services, responding to the immediate needs of the population, and supporting socio-economic reconstruction with national governments (Anderlini and Bushra,

2004), (Brinkerhoff, 2005) and OECD (2011). While “quick-fix” and “rapid-response” approaches by external actors such as NGOs and donors are needed (Bennett et al. 2009, P.61) in the post-conflict rehabilitation process, they also jeopardise governance system building, local government capacity, local ownership, and overall institutional capacity building of concerned government (Saul, 2011, Abiew, 2012 and Donais, 2012). Narten (2008) and Ebo (2006) further argue that continuous approaches as such would be creating dependency, reduce the chances for sustainability, and limit opportunities for newly formed governments to reform their governance systems, establish their legitimacy and societal relationships by reaching out and providing services to their citizens in a meaningful way.

The other challenge in the governance systems of post-conflict environments is when there is lack of leadership and technical capacity, political order, and or power vacuums, local non-state power holders replace governments, providing security and missing government functions (Vergara, 2015). Similarly, in post-conflict environments – like Timor-Leste – hybrid political order is created where multiple sources of authority, both formal and informal/traditional effectively operate at different levels for their populations (Smith, 2014). In the case of Afghanistan's post-2001 governance process, for instance, such power holders have come to be known as warlords (initially traditional tribal leaders), who were integrated within the government structures as politicians (Guistozzi, 2003 and 2005). As result, the government was able to achieve a monopoly of violence and had to rely on the support of these warlords and powerful militia commanders to secure itself (MacGinty, 2010). Nevertheless, despite the negative phenomenon of warlords, they can be also positive figures supporting and encouraging some aspects of post-conflict governance efforts in society at various levels (Guistozzi, 2003). Therefore, among other challenges – including lack of capacity, ineffective institutions, corruption, internal violence, and presence of organised crimes – (Rotberg, 2003,

Jackson, 2005 Pureza, 2006) – the following section presents and discusses warlords governance roles in the context of post-conflict countries.

I. 3. Debates about warlords

I. 3.1. Warlords and their roles in governance and the state

There are different perspectives on the existence of warlords in different environments – particularly in conflict-affected societies. A warlord is a "legitimate, charismatic and patrimonial military leader with autonomous control over a military force capable of maintaining a monopoly of large-scale violence over a sizable territory while the central authority has collapsed, ineffective or has never been present" (Giustozzi, 2009, p5). Alike Giustozzi, Mehran (2018, p92) defines warlords as "strongmen who control territory and resources through their ability to wage war and who do not obey higher (central) authorities". Nevertheless, this is not always the case. Scholars such as Jackson (2003), and Mukhopadhyay (2009) argue that some warlords obey central authority as they can be key figures in local and central authorities.

This is especially evidenced to be an effective approach in hybrid political systems, where both formal (political actors) and customary (tribal and religious elites) merge to manage governance systems (Smith, 2014). For example, in Afghanistan, the tenures of provincial governors Atta Mohammad Noor of Balkh province and Gul Agha Sherzai of Kandahar and later Nangarhar provinces, reflect the costs and benefits of warlord integration into state institutions in the country. While their provinces vary in dramatic ways, both warlord governors are widely known for delivering progress in stability, reconstruction, and counter-narcotics. In so doing, they had become valuable partners of the government led by Karzai and its international partners (Mukhopadhyay, 2009).

From different perspectives, warlords are individuals who control territory through the use of force and patronage (Cassidy 2012, Ciustozzi, 2009, and Marten 2009). Patronage is "a political system in which powerful individuals control the distribution of resources on their territories without being subject to laws…" (Weber, 1987, p5). In other words, they reward their allies and punish their enemies based on personal preference, without any kind of bureaucratic or societal oversight (Marten, 2009). In 1998, Duffield defined a warlord as a leader of an armed band, who can hold territory locally and concurrently act financially and politically without wanting interference from the central government in his affairs (Duffield, 1998). Following the definitions of scholars (as presented above), in this literature review, the term warlord refers to the leader of an armed group, who is financially, and politically strong and at the same time holds a territory locally (Marten, 2006; and Mackinlay, 2000).

Giustozzi (2005) and Mehran (2018) argue that warlords operate outside government structures and governance systems. In contrast, research by Duffield (1998), Mukhopadhyay (2009), and Jackson (2003) supports the view that warlords have not always been excluded from state institutions. This is particularly the case in hybrid political systems (Smith, 2014).

From the above definitions and various arguments, one can understand that in post-conflict countries, where states and people experienced violence, conflicts, ethnic and tribal fractions, lack of services and service providers, and that are still struggling to build and re-build effective institutions to deliver basic needs – mainly through external funding – Warlords emerge and can play an important role in society by serving as local politicians, facilitators of socioeconomic development efforts, and even security providers (Giustozzi and Noor Ullah 2006).

I. 3.2. Warlords' emergence and role in post-conflict state governance

In post-conflict environments, where violence, conflicts, and humanitarian disasters accompany the struggles of societies in transition when state governance might be ineffective, and when centralised political and military control has broken down, warlords emerge and can be key actors (Jackson, 2003, Brinkerhoff, 2005 and 2007, and Cunningham, 2017). Among the numerous problems listed above, such as poverty, a lack of socioeconomic opportunities, unemployment, and others, states in post-conflict nations not always, but occasionally, attempt to strengthen the state's ability to deliver basic services and security to citizens (Beswick, 2011). As such, due to the existing power, influence, and reach of warlords, the newly established governments with limited capacity, reach and power, use them as effective actors to fulfill governance systems (Lister, 2007).

In addition, given that warlords can dominate large geographic areas and territories, and have social roots in post-conflict areas not only via patronage but also as service-delivering facilitators, and politicians, they can act on behalf of the central and local government authorities (Brinkerhoff, 2005 and Lister, 2007). This was proven in Afghanistan in early 2001, when the Taliban were overthrown. Both the international community and the interim Afghan government placed some warlords and former local fighters in crucial governmental posts to carry out their counterterrorism and governance missions (SIGAR, 2016).

The ability to reach out and integrate minorities into government service delivery mechanisms and governance is a key source of state stability and legitimacy. The failure to address these critical issues through various means – including the use of warlords – can have repercussions for governance and state-society relationships through which government and citizens interact with each other (Brinkerhoff, 2007 and Haider, 2011). The role of warlords – as both formal and informal governance body – in post-conflict state governance systems can be beneficial

(Haider, 2011). This is while formal state institutions may have limited capacity to provide immediate needs to their citizens or deem illegitimate in the eyes of the public immediately after conflict (Haider, 2011). These informal local governance bodies can work in synergy with formal authorities and serve as a bridge between the state and society to promote social settlement, community cohesion, and participation in the post-conflict reconstruction process (Haider, 2011).

Since these governance approaches can also create various hierarchies, and power structures to interact with national and international interventions for post-conflict rehabilitation efforts (Haider, 2011), some individuals could extend their power, and expand their financial and political status – by accessing military and financial resources and gaining formal political power – in both positive and negative ways (Lister, 2007). In addition, in these contexts when central control and authority collapses, warlords tend to emerge, gain governance power, and take over government functions including tax and infrastructure (Jackson, 2003).

Likewise, in post-conflict contexts, warlords might also have a degree of societal political legitimacy since they might come from notable families or might claim a traditional role i.e., tribal leader (Giustozzi and Noorullah, 2006). In such environments, historically, warlords have had commitments to their own areas, ethnic groups, and society they have control over. As such, warlords have represented themselves as traditional leaders to gain further legitimacy (Giustozzi, 2004). For example, Abdul Rashid Dostum (Uzbek tribal leader) or Atta Mohammad Noor and General Qasim Fahim, who dominated most of the areas in the north and north-west parts of Afghanistan as Tajik leaders. Similarly, Ismail Khan (a Tajik leader in West of Afghanistan), had tried to appear as a true believer and defender of Islamic values in their areas by building mosques, Islamic centres and supporting religious scholars (Malejacq,

2016 and Mukhpadhyay, 2016). Accordingly, the following section highlights the main arguments for and against warlords and their role within governance systems.

I. 3.3. Governance challenges through involvement of warlords in post-conflict state systems

There are various arguments against warlords in post-conflict countries. Jackson (2003, p5) states that "warlords fight for wealth and position, exploiting personal relationships and their access to arms". In these contexts, warlords use resources gained from informal, personalistic networks and activities such as getting money from intimidated local merchants, profits from smuggling, narcotics, and gun-running, and, most importantly for this argument, payments from foreign allies who buy their support (Matthew, 2010 and W. McCoy 2003). In consequence, the international community and national leaders struggle to control and restrict warlordism and facilitate a transition to a civilian economy (Brzoska and Grüder, 2014). With the existence, power, and influence of warlords, international actors, and partners of a post-conflict country hesitate to commit sufficient resources to governance reform (for example security sector reform) as warlords who are part of the governance systems could challenge and misuse resources (Jackson and Scott, 2007).

In Afghanistan, by end of 2002 (only one year after the Taliban were ousted and a new administration was established), there was more than 50,000 personnel working under the Afghan national police. However, majority of them were untrained, and ill-equipped and more importantly owed their loyalty and commitment to warlords and commanders in their areas and not to the central and local government security authorities (Sedra, 2007). In such instances, Guistozzi (2007) claims that the provision of security services to the public can be seriously impacted and is deemed a major obstacle to security sector reform efforts. Apart from significant negative implications on governance systems, due to a lack of discipline and formal reprisals, small groups of soldiers who are committed to warlords and local commanders could

use the threat of their military equipment – weapons – to loot personal and public properties (MacKinlay, 2000). This particular example is also evidenced in conflict-affected states where poverty and lack of sufficient pay scales for security personnel are major issues (Sedra, 2007). In this way, warlords can also destroy the social values of a community, jeopardise government functions, contribute to instability and eliminate the state's legitimacy at a critical transition period from conflict to peace and stability (Guistozzi, 2004 and Mcloughlin, 2009).

In theory, central governments may attempt to accommodate or include warlords into governance systems if it is unable to control and constrain their dominance within their areas. Warlords would benefit from holding a governmental position since it gives them legitimacy without abruptly and drastically curtailing their actions (MacGinty, 2010). On this occasion, and in contrary, Hendrickson (1999) states that post-conflict states would require systematic approaches to curb warlord's further involvement in deeper governance matters – such as Security Sector Reform – as that could pose serious risks to the process (Guistozzi, 2007). State security forces' primary responsibility of preserving the general welfare will increasingly shift to safeguarding the interests of political figures or warlords (Hendrickson, 1999).

Additionally, in post-conflict countries, the emerging government may end up being held captive by war oligarchs because of their widespread participation in the economies of conflict (Brzoska and Gruder, 2014). The warlords' influence frequently rests more on a financial foundation than a military one. Considering this, arming the new government with economic tools to undermine and dismantle warlord economic networks – for instance, by regulating transit trade, bringing customs under central control, and halting military meddling in political and economic affairs – is an effective way to combat warlordism (Perito, 2009 and Brzoska and Gruder, 2014).

According to Jackson (2005) and Rotberg (2003), in post-conflict settings, warlords' goals revolve around economic concerns, the establishment of alternative governing institutions, the use of violence, and patrimony. This was shown to be the case in Afghanistan that commanders and warlords have de facto influence over local government appointments since most mid and upper-level government employees owe their jobs, and hence their loyalty, to local and regional power holders (warlords) rather than the national government (Wilder and Lister, 2005). This inevitably undermines local government by appointing inexperienced or under-educated personnel to official administrative posts. This has an impact not just on local government capability, but also on developmental activities. Local government policy and practice become influenced by individuals' loyalties to other individuals (warlords) rather than developmental goals or the population (Jackson, 2005).

Relatedly, but from a different lens, key authors (like Giustozzi, 2005, 2007 and Mukhopadhyay, 2009 and 2016) have argued that warlords can be key, influential, and prominent figures within the government institutions in post-conflict countries, who could easily influence, and threaten a central government decision. Warlords, according to Jackson (2005) and Rotberg (2003), would use public resources, as well as their political and financial power, to build alternative and even parallel state governance institutions in their domains. This might imply that warlords' growth and influence can be a by-product of state effectiveness and a lack of an efficient governing framework in a post-conflict country. Furthermore, when one warlord dictatorship exists, there are frequently others. States eventually break into parts when they collapse, often along socio-topographic lines. Local strongmen eventually gain control of these parts. In this regard, a single collapsed state may generate many rump regimes, each led by a different local leader (McCormick and Fritz, 2009).

Furthermore, Malejacq (2019, p46) refers to warlords as "skilled political entrepreneurs" who best use the resources at their disposal to make themselves important and assure their survival. Warlord survival is a game in which political entrepreneurs use a range of resources to demonstrate their authority and increase their chances of succeeding in their political agendas and social affairs. This also suggests that they acquire everything they need to establish their own power bases and carry out their plans. As a result, assuming that a warlord's activities are driven by greed and self-interest is misleading. Warlords are political entrepreneurs in the sense that they acquire and invest in resources that will be valuable to them in the future, rather than running their affairs on a daily basis. This means that the source of power is their skills to mobilise their political community. As a result, it is not surprise that warlords are continuously looking for ways to increase their earnings. In many situations, warlords' desire for wealth stems from their need to reward supporters and retain forces (Malejacq, 2019).

Having discussed the undesirable implications of including warlords in the governance systems of post-conflict states, the following section presents the positive sides and advantages of inclusion and the role of warlords in the governance systems of a post-conflict country. Contrary to the liberal democratic governance process, which criticises the role of warlords, under illiberal peacebuilding, inclusion of such individuals and institutions can have positive impacts as their integration into the governance systems would help post-conflict governance process, hence more stability and government legitimacy in the long term (Curtis, 2012, Mukhopadhyay, 2014 and Smith, 2014).

I. 3.4. Governance advantages of warlords' involvement in post-conflict state-building

As discussed above, in the context of some post-conflict countries – in Afghanistan for instance – not all warlords have been always ineffective. In fragile and conflict-affected states, without their presence and support, the central and local governments and local and international NGOs

and civil society organisations would not be able to implement their plans and projects (Jackson 2003). Similarly, Cerny (1998) views warlords as effective in systems where there is a governance gap. In a situation where the state's functions are ineffective, and citizens are in dire need to receive services – mainly security and humanitarian aid – warlords attempt to serve as a facilitator and to re-establish stability through rebuilding patronage networks (Jackson, 2005).

Through social networks, military, and financial power, warlords (sometimes as influential and tribal leaders too) offer security, and stability in areas they control (Jackson, 2005 Jackson and Scott (2007). Moreover, in the work of Dietl (2004), (2016), Harpviken (2010), Giustozzi (2013), and Mukhopadhyay (2016), warlords are cited for their long tenures and exceptional performances and cooperation in particular political settlement including reconstruction, and socio-economic development. Despite limited literature on warlords' positive role in the state-building process of post-conflict countries, the following section presents arguments around their roles in the provision of security & stability and socio-economic development in post-conflict countries.

I. 3.5. Warlords and provision of security, and stability in post-conflict areas

Warlords, whether operating within or outside governance systems, can wield significant influence in various contexts, particularly in conflict-affected societies. Their roles range from senior political positions such as Ministers, Provincial Governors, and Provincial Police Chiefs to influential tribal or religious leaders (Giustozzi, 2003, 2004). In some cases, warlord-governors in Afghanistan, as examined in the case study chapter, have demonstrated a degree of success in areas such as security, reconstruction, and counternarcotics efforts (Mukhopadhyay, 2009). While their methods and legitimacy remain contested, their ability to govern and maintain stability in fragile states highlights the complexities of their roles.

Governments rely on warlords and ensure survival after conflict although they have not been ideal government officials (Mukhopadhyay, 2009). Appointing warlords in key positions protect their control over the use of violence by patronising those who might otherwise threaten the stability of certain areas. As a result, relative security creates space for commercial activity, reconstruction projects, and the execution of an effective counternarcotics strategy, which are critical for state governance in post-conflict areas (Mukhopadhyay, 2009). In this context, security, and stability – which are gained through warlords – are critical components of the post-conflict reconstruction process; creating a secure environment permits other processes in post-conflict rebuildings, such as macro and microeconomic structures, which frequently benefit society (O'Driscoll, 2018).

As a result, state-society connections can be reinforced, and the state's legitimacy is advanced in the long run (Rubenstein, 2009). As evidenced by the work of scholars such as Duffield (1998), Jackson (2003), Giustozzi (2005), Smith (2014), and Mehran (2018), One can conclude that warlords with extensive patrimonial roles inside and outside state governance systems are not always destructive in their actions. They can be key actors to support socio-economic development interventions, security & stability, and legitimacy of the state in a post-conflict setting.

To further study and understand the governance roles of warlords in state-building in post-conflict countries, the following section uses neopatrimonialism as a framework to shed light on both effective and ineffective roles of warlords in the governance systems of conflict-affected countries. The success and difficulties of neo-patrimonialism (centered on warlords) in providing services to both people within and outside of networks are the main topics of the section that follows.

I. 3.6. The relationship between neopatrimonialism and warlords in post-conflict countries

Understanding the social and political background of state-building initiatives in many developing nations necessitates acknowledging and comprehending neo-patrimonialism (Scott, 2007). Where governmental apparatus appears to be ineffective, power is sometimes concentrated in highly powerful informal networks. According to Reno (2000), what is commonly categorised as indicators of state ineffectiveness are often purposeful efforts by rulers to expand their economic power base. This viewpoint emphasises that there are frequently significant disincentives that discourage developing-country rulers from supporting state-building projects. At worst, attempts to strengthen the state's capability may motivate rulers in neo-patrimonialism situations to actively sabotage reforms, resulting in an even weaker bureaucracy (Scott 2007).

Neo-patrimonialism – which combines not only clientelism but also nepotism and corruption into a single catch-all (Willott, 2009) – is the term to describe the idea that government officials are using public resources for their private benefit (Bratton and de Walle, 1994 and Francisco, 2009). Hess (2010) Cooper (2006) and Masenya (2017) argue that neo-patrimonialism is not only seen and practiced in post-conflict countries. It has widely been – in positive or negative ways – part of liberal and advanced countries and their governance systems as well. In South Africa for example, problems such as local neo-patrimonialism, nepotism, and clientelism have contributed to inadequate service delivery. This has triggered new social movements and violent social protests on the one hand, and social apathy and skepticism on the other. Three reasons demonstrate the country's neo-patrimonial continuity: the consolidation of political power, the awarding of personal favours, and the abuse of state resources by top government officials (Masenya, 2017).

Government officials in a post-conflict country have positions in bureaucratic organisations with nominally specified authorities, but they often use those powers for personal benefit rather than the good of the public, according to Pitcher et al. (2009). Similarly, to these authors, Mehran (2018) defines neo-patrimonialism as the vertical distribution of resources that results in patron-client networks centred on a strong individual or party for the advantage of a few people inside the network while excluding others. These definitions are also relevant to the context of Afghanistan governance systems in which warlords, provincial governors, police chiefs, Ministers, and other senior officials (inside and outside the government) have used the position of authority and public funds for their gain and the gain of individuals in their networks, including family members, militia soldiers and local commanders who are loyal to them (Guistozzi, 2005 and 2007). Drawing from the above-stated arguments by various scholars, neopatrimonialism – a form of agreement between rulers and their followers as administrative staff (Weber, 1978) – has become both beneficial and problematic in the context of post-conflict environments.

Hopper (2016) and Fatafta (2018) and Singh (2022) state that, neo-patrimonial systems aid in corruption, where government institutions, "structures, laws, and regulations are formally in place but overridden by informal politics and networks of patronage, relationship, and tribalism. Instead of being organised according to merit; public functions; or administrative grades, a neo-patrimonial regime finds its glue in bonds of loyalty to those at the top of the political hierarchy" (Fatafta, 2018 p.3). Stewart (2013), on the other hand, contends that the mere existence of rules, institutions, and regulations would not preclude neo-patrimonialism, but rather how they are implemented and who executes them.

In this situation, nevertheless, the advantage of such a patron-client relationship is that formal officials or informal authorities (including warlords) strengthen their social and political

networks and empower their capabilities to maintain relative security, and political order and facilitate service delivery and reach out to people in their areas, which are key matters after a conflict (Mehran, 2018). For example, Englehart and Grant (2015) illustrate that senior government officials (like provincial governors) who are deeply rooted within the patronage networks in their territories are more likely to bring security than more educated and qualified governors or police chiefs who lacked strong patronage networks. Likewise, Mukhopadhyay (2009; 2014) argues that given the historically ineffective central states in many post-conflict countries (Afghanistan for example), a neo-patrimonialism system can be a compromise in delivering services and maintaining security in the periphery where the central government often has limited access. This is a situation where the neo-patrimonial system has benefits for the public - provides services and security where the government cannot.

On the contrary, it undermines state capacity and equal distribution of resources to other segments of communities (Marten, 2009). As stated by Hopper (2016) and Fatafa (2018), neo-patrimonialism aids in corruption, and personal patronage is used by the primary administrative authority to maintain its influence. Under neo-patrimonialism systems, personal connections are used to distribute public resources and positions to small and identified groups and individuals rather than through a merit-based system in which others can fairly benefit as well (Bohara et al. 2014). Individuals with official posts and genuine authority in society do not serve the people as their statutory commitment requires, but rather work for personal gain and status (Adel, 2016). The difference between public and private property is less evident in such patrimonial regimes, and state workers boost their wages by accepting bribes and kickbacks. Some citizens are given greater advantages than others in such institutions, and regulations are enforced with bias (Varraich 2014). In this context where there is increased ineffective governance and lack of rule of law, even senior government officials, Members of Parliament, and legislators – who make laws, systems, and procedures – are big supporters of neo-

patrimonialism as they benefit both politically and financially (Boas, 2001). Hence, it undermines government legitimacy, damages trust with the public (Marten, 2009), and leads to state fragility (Chayes, 2016).

Finally, in post-conflict societies, Barma (2016) states that neo-patrimonialism has been the dominant type of political order that can be overcome in constructing rule-bound, and effective government institutions capable of reaching and delivering services to the population in a meaningful and fair way. However, defeating neo-patrimonialism in a conflict-affected country, which is deeply entrenched within the society and is a widely preferred practice by domestic elites such as warlords, would not be without risks as well. Despite limited arguments and gaps in the literature about potential risks of overcoming neo-patrimonialism in post-conflict countries centred on warlords, one major risk is that warlords with military power for example, who can be supporters of the state, turn out to be determined spoilers of peace, security, stability, and governance building interventions through violence and intimidation (Elmi and Barise, 2006). These elites (with neo-patrimonial roles) would be resistant to governance change and interference in their affairs because they, as well as their followers and allies, would risk losing critical political authority, networks, and financial resources, causing further harm to social order (Brinkerhoff, 2005 and Podder, 2014).

In conclusion, this literature review chapter had four main points. According to Hoffman (1995), the state is a complex organisation. State institutions and governance systems in countries that have recovered from conflicts are inadequate in their primary tasks of providing security and basic services (Tayagi, 2012). Second, post-conflict state institutions are unable to provide and administer public services independently. Participation and involvement of a wide range of internal and foreign stakeholders and partners are required (OECD, 2011). Third, effective state institutions are required for service delivery in post-conflict societies (Lister,

2007); nevertheless, governance functions and processes do not need to be formed upon liberal approaches to public administration and governance. Some post-conflict regimes may find that illiberal methods to governance building are more successful in carrying out post-conflict reconstruction activities (Mukhopadhyay, 2013 and Smith, 2014). Fourth, and probably most importantly, there are key players in a post-conflict society who may play positive as well as negative roles in state-building and governance. This literature review, among others, focused on the role of warlords, who can be inside or outside of government, in the governance process for state-building in post-conflict states. While official state institutions may be ineffective or seen illegitimate in unstable and conflict-affected areas, informal institutions and groups such as warlords exist with power and authority. They frequently carry out some of the state's expected tasks.

Chapter II: A political history of Afghan Warlords in pre- and post-2001 governance processes

II. 1. Introduction

This empirical political history chapter offers two main arguments. Warlords wielded enormous power in Afghanistan, influencing security and government and remaining a complex aspect of the country's political environment throughout history. Second, their responsibilities evolved throughout time, but their influence continues to affect Afghanistan's political direction. Afghan warlords can dominate large geographic areas and territory and have social roots not only via patronage but also as service delivering facilitators. And through their formal and informal roles – inside and outside state structure – they can act on behalf of the central and local government authorities (Brinkerhoff, 2005 and Lister, 2007). By appointing warlords as ministers and provincial governors within governance systems, during 2001 and 2021, the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and its international allies hoped warlords would reform and eventually become bureaucrats (Mehran, 2018). As such, to better

understand warlords and the effects of their role in Afghan governance processes in the contemporary international intervention context – primarily between 2001 and 2021 – it is critical to go back and study the history of warlords in different periods such as during and after Afghan monarch (1919-1973), before and after Soviet Occupation of Afghanistan (1973-1989), and finally during Afghan internal political unrests and civil wars (1989-2001).

The main reason to study the Afghan warlords in different eras is that their roles, leaderships, relationships, hierarchies, and power structures have been different – in both positive and negative ways during different eras (Lister, 2007 and Haider, 2011). As such, it is important to understand their role in governance and state building in a new way as it has been previously misunderstood or overlooked. Furthermore, not only warlords, but it is also critical to study and understand the general patterns of governance, systems, and structure of the Afghan governments (pre-and-post-2001) and the relationship government structures have had with elites, warlords, and other powerholders such as village chiefs, tribal and ethnic leaders, local militias and commanders and the kinds of impact this has had on governance.

Drawing from the literature review chapter, this political history chapter is divided into two main sections. Section one is chronologically structured to explore and explain Afghan warlords' roles, relationships, and power, as well their changes, similarities and continuities of their roles and involvements during pre-2001 period (1919-2001) in the country. Section two's overarching goal is to provide detailed history and information about Afghanistan governance systems post-2001 and primarily to explain how it was linked to the previous periods of history in relation to warlords.

II. 2. A Political History of Warlords in pre-2001 Afghanistan

II. 2.1. The Origins and Social Bases of Warlords in Afghanistan

Warlords (*jang saalar* in the Persian language) long existed in Afghanistan through its history (De Lauri and Suhrke, 2021). Their structures and systems are deeply embedded in the local structures of clans and tribes, with historical social, tribal, ethnic, and dynastic roots (Boege et al. 2008). For instance, as village leaders (in the Dari language they are called Arbabs and Maliks – “chiefs of tribes" – (Habib, 2001, p 305), who controlled water distribution and acted as mediators in the event of a villagers' dispute (Giustozzi and Nur ullah, 2006). Although historically there was major tribal influence on state affairs (Sungur, 2016), there was a major shift with tribal leaders’ power, influence, and relationship with the state during King Amanullah (1919-1929) (Shahrani, 2005). They had various roles such as Khans, Maliks, and Arbabs, also known as "village-lords" (Manchanda, 2017 p23), and religious community leaders with significant power over social norms (Kellogg, 2017). For example, owning slaves from ethnic minority groups (like Hazaras) or polygamy (Hussain, 2003 and Seddique, 2012 and Sher 2012), which was prohibited by King Amanullah (as state leader during 1919 and 1928) through constitutional provisions (Sharani, 2005), but later during the same period resulted in state-tribes confrontation, when tribal and religious groups strongly reacted, refusing to relinquish their ongoing and inherited traditions (Kellogg, 2017).

These dynamics and roles of tribal leaders and their relationships with state institutions, were different after King Amanullah reign. In contrast to King Amanullah's time, the conservative class in society received many privileges and important positions in state institutions during the reigns of King Nadir Khan and later King Zahir Shah (1929 – 1973). Nonetheless, Hussain (2003) and Sher (2012) claim that not all tribes and ethnic groups had equal access to privileges,

support, and well-being, particularly during King Nadir Shah's reign. For example, it was notably apparent for the Hazara ethnic group, which remained marginalised and underprivileged. One of the major similarities and continuities between Nadir Shah (1929-1933) and Zahir Shah's (1933-1973) governance approach was to include traditionalist segments of Afghan communities (tribal chiefs and elites) (Raja, 1996) in state institutions through local systems of Shuras (Councils) and Jirgas (elders' gatherings) (Morrison, 1934 and Miakhel, 2009). This system, which was in contrast with King Amanullah's modern governing style (1919-1928) that also delineated Afghan tribal leaders (Mukhopadhyay, 2009) aimed little central government intervention in tribal systems to encourage them to follow their traditional rules and conduct their social systems as a way to get their loyalty to the state as mentioned by Morrisons (1934) and Miakhel (2009) above.

Unlike during Afghan Royal systems, there were major changes in governance approaches during 1973 and 2001. Although there were some similarities during Presidency of Daud Khan (Afghanistan's first Republic President, 1973 -1978) in maintaining tribal structures to use and gain their support to preserve the economic, social, and political order in the county (Sultana and Azmatullah, 2015), there was a major shift in this style of governance, when political elites who favoured traditional and tribal systems were tortured or removed from official jobs as a result of their prior ties to and support of Daud Khan by the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) between 1978 and 1992 (Sultana and Azmatullah, 2015). This important shift was because of political rivalry – mainly due to power struggles – between PDPA and former President Daud Khan. Due to this shift, according to Beckett (2007), this state governing approach had a significant contribution to the uprising Islamic groups from villages and tribes in the fight against the government. In addition, it enabled the Soviet Union to start bolstering its armed forces near Afghanistan's northern border, political rivalries among PDPA leaders to

fight for power and eventually Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan between 1979 and 1989 (Beckett, 2007) and Sinha (2020).

The same tribal elites, village chiefs, and leaders who had previously supported the previous states became changed their role and power as Mujahideen (holy fighters) and commenced to fight the occupation through raids, ambushes, and insurgent attacks (Jalali and Grau, 2001; Grau, 2004; Hughes, 2008) during Soviet Union invasion of Afghanistan (Newell, 1980 and Karp, 1986). Although the Soviet withdrew from Afghanistan in 1989, the Mujahideen group continued using their power, and military resources in violence and insurgency against the Soviet supported administration led by President Najibullah (1989-1992) (Ghufran, 2001). When Mujahedeen groups took over from Najibullah in 1992, they continued fighting against each other for power for another four years until late 1995 (Liakhovsky, 2000 and Dixit, 1995). As such, in the absence of effective state institutions and continued insurgency and violence, the Taliban movements emerged and took over from the Mujahideen in 1995 (Maley, 2002). During this period, Mujahideen leaders continued a similar role and fought the Taliban under the Northern Alliance. Following the September 11 terrorist attack in New York, Afghan warlords under the Northern Alliance, with US military support and intervention overthrew the Taliban and took control of Kabul in December 2001. According to Fange (1995), Murthy (2002) and Roberts (2009), Afghan warlords gained greater power between 1995 and 2001 as the anti-Taliban fighters at national, regional and international levels. This history concludes that the state's efforts to centralise power and enforce governance rules clashed with local customs, resulting in war and unrest.

II. 2.2. An overview of Afghan Tribes and Warlords

In war- and conflict-affected countries, the state's stability and legitimacy largely depend on its ability to engage and integrate minorities into governance and public service delivery (Brinkerhoff, 2007; Haider, 2011). The failure to address these critical issues through various means – including use of warlords – can have repercussions for governance and state-society relationships through which government and citizens interact with each other (Brinkerhoff, 2007 and Haider, 2011). The role of warlords – as an informal and customary governance body – in post-conflict state governance systems can be beneficial. This is while formal state institutions may have limited capacity to provide immediate needs to its citizens or are deemed illegitimate in the eyes of the public immediately after conflict (Haider, 2011). These informal local governance bodies can work in synergy with formal authorities and serve as bridge between state and society to promote social settlement, community cohesion and participation in post-conflict reconstruction process (Haider, 2011).

As previously mentioned, the term warlord did not appear in Afghan literature prior to 1970 (De Lauri and Suhrke, 2021). However, according to Boege et al (2008), warlord structures and systems in Afghanistan are deeply embedded in the local structures of clans and tribes, with historical social, tribal, ethnic, and dynastic roots. According to Tapper (2009), the term tribe in Afghanistan refers to local communities in which kinship is the dominant mode of organising. In Afghanistan, significant tribes such as Durrani and Ghilzai, which accounted for two-thirds of Afghan Pashtuns, form important confederations (Mili and Tonwsend, 2009). As a result, distinguishing between different types of tribal notables was critical in Afghanistan during the pre-Soviet era, and even previously. The village elders, such as Arbabs and Maliks act as mediators in the event of a villagers' dispute, had limited influence and small clienteles of 5-70 men (Giustozzi and Nur ullah, 2009). The larger notables, known as khans, have far larger followers than the elders and possess enormous economic resources.

One key component of a khan's responsibility was to create and maintain relationships with the government and other khans. They must come from recognised families and be charismatic leaders in order to establish significant local power (Schetter and Glassner, 2011). This is similar to contemporary warlords, who tend to inherit a khan style and be important persons with charismatic leadership (Peake, 2003) in order to hold some local legitimacy - as "big men" - to control means of violence to a sufficient degree (Glassner and Karokhail, 2007, p. 27).

II. 2.3. Tribal leaders and influential figures during King Amanullah reign (1919 – 1929)

Although tribes and tribal leaders had influence on state affairs before as well, during King Amanullah's reign (1919-1929) there was a significant shift in their power and relationships (Shahrani, 2005). Khans, Maliks, and Arbas, also known as "village-lords" (Manchanda, 2017, p. 23), and religious community leaders possessed significant power over social norms and court systems, particularly after King Amanullah declared Afghanistan independent in 1919 (Kellogg, 2017). Wealthy people owned slaves primarily from religious minorities or tribes like Hazara ethnic groups (Hussain, 2003, Seddique, 2012 and Shir, 2012). Other wealthy individuals had married more than one wife. Women and girls were denied the right to an education and employment due to societal conservatism. According to King Amanullah, communal elites had fragmented Afghan society (Shahrani, 2005). As a result, as efforts at uniting fell-apart Afghan societies, King Amanullah prohibited slavery in an article of the 1923 constitution and strongly prohibited polygamy with a rule requiring a man to get court permission to marry a second time. As a result, tribal and religious groups reacted strongly, refusing to relinquish their ongoing and inherited traditions (Kellogg, 2017).

The appointment of officers and soldiers in the Afghan army was the tribal chiefs' second main power within te state machinery. This implied that soldiers typically had a stronger sense of loyalty to their tribes than to the government. This is similar to the contemporary warlord's

neo-patrimonialism strategy in Afghanistan, in which they promoted members of their favoured territories and ethnic groups to positions of authority inside state institutions in exchange for benefits to themselves (Giustozzi, 2004 and Mehran, 2018). This posed a special issue whenever there was a tribal rebellion, which happened more frequently than King Amanullah would have liked (Shahrani, 2005 and Chua, 2013).

King Amanullah implemented significant military changes as part of his "The Road to Modernization" (Chua, 2013, p. 36) plan to combat this. He enacted the universal provision requiring all men to enlist in the army at the age of 21 and serve for three years. As a result, despite their experience, many veterans supported their tribe chiefs and opposed the changes that Amanullah was bringing about. Amanullah reduced their pay in an attempt to get them to resign. For the most part, this was successful, and many of the more seasoned soldiers were discharged (Kellogg, 2017). Even though Amanullah's governing strategies for social and military reforms produced some unquestionably positive changes, the way he went about them created serious issues and enraged and alienated his people, especially the tribal leaders and local religious elites who had a big influence on the rural populace. This was also due to the fact that the state lacked an effective bureaucracy to carry out his reforms, and it was very difficult to implement the new policies outside of Kabul.

Amanullah particularly angered the mullahs by establishing state courts and secularising the laws, which led them to label him an infidel (Raja, 1996). And because of his military reforms, Amanullah's armed forces were unable and unwilling to put down the tribes' 1929 “rebellion” (Leon, B. 1973, p1), which led to his abdication and the reverse of his reforms (Raja, 1996 and Wyatt and Gulzari, 2021). By doing away with the customary tribal levy system, King Amanullah alienated the khans, who had utilised recruitment control to bolster their own authority, and also lost their unwavering support.

Drawing from earlier eras, one can claim that even before, tribal leaders dominated the Afghan military systems (Halliday, 1978). Similar to previous eras, problems as such have been existing in Afghan state governance systems even during recent various eras, including during the Republic (2001–2021) when warlords, emerging as leaders of tribes and ethnic groups, had significant influence over governance systems through their formal or informal roles as ministers, provincial governors, police chiefs, chiefs of villages, and local communities (Giustozzi, 2008, McCormick and Fritz 2009, and Rubin, 2013). For instance, during the contemporary Republic period, warlords or non-state military commanders – through their formal or informal positions – were incorporated into the government security sector systems (Sedra, 2010 and MacGinty, 2010). Afghanistan's actual division into numerous "fiefdoms" governed by different warlords or local leaders made it evident that the country was far from creating a powerful central authority between the state-building process that began in 2001. Thus, the "city council of Kabul" might be used to describe the government. Its power barely extended beyond the confines of the capital. In light of this, even if the creation of a powerful central authority were possible, it would not only take years to accomplish, but would also undoubtedly spark new violent conflicts and possibly throw the nation into chaos (Schetter, 2003, p. 8).

What is significant here is that each country has its own set of social, tribal, cultural, and political traits, and thus replicating other models, such as European and British models which King Amanullah wished to implement, may or may not be applicable in the context of Afghanistan (Shahrani, 2005, and Malik 2012). Due to his failure to supply his new army with the necessary funding and technical assistance, he was left defenceless against the tribal leaders' uprisings in 1924 and 1928, which were led primarily by Habibullah Kalakani, a prominent rebel leader (Halliday, 1978). A Tajik rebel commander Habibullah Kalakani, who with the backing of conservative clerics, staged a rebellion that resulted in King Amanullah's overthrow

in 1929 (Rubin, 2013). Although the term rebel was more often used in Afghanistan at the time than the concept of warlords or warlordism, the two share significant similarities too.

Guistozzi (2009), Mehran (2018), and Malejacq (2016, 2020) characterise the Afghan warlord system as patrimonial and led by non-state military actors, who refuse to obey the central government authority. Similarly Sindre (2014) defines rebels, who are commonly organised around a close-knit leadership group – usually a hierarchical military structure – and patronage structures which go from the central leadership to sub-command levels and all the way down to combatants and civilians. Likewise, the systems of land acquisition, controlling and taxation of lands and established bonds and mutual loyalty and relationships between warlords and civilians (e.g., merchants to collect unofficial taxes) are unique examples and characteristics of warlords or tribal power holders who can manipulate governance systems in Afghanistan (Mukhpadhyay, 2016).

II. 2.4. Tribal elites' power and relations during King Nadir Shah's reign (1929 – 1933)

The war between Tajiks and Pushtuns resurfaced in 1929 after Tajik Habibullah Kalakani proclaimed himself Emir of Afghanistan (Shahzad, 2020). In October 1929, Nadir Shah, the commander of the Pushtuns, overthrew Habibullah Kalakani after nine months of ruling the country, taking over as King of Afghanistan (Shahzad, 2020). Nadir Shah founded his own dynasty between 1929 and 1933 (Begum, 2000). In contrast to King Amanullah, the conservative class in society received many privileges and important positions in the administration during the reign of King Nadir Khan. On a small scale, modern education was reinstated, but female education was purposefully disregarded. A smaller number of constitutionalists and the reformer King's many supporters were put down, while others were jailed, and several were put to death.

Despite the fact that tribal conflicts persisted among Afghanistan's numerous ethnic groups, King Nadir Shah understood his people's, tribes', and social groups' mentalities and had developed trust between the state and its citizens, said Morrison (1948). He was determined to bring the country out of the dreadful condition of turmoil and poverty, and to establish stability and progress (Morrison, 1934). Trible leaders and ethnic elites were supported to practice cultural codes of conduct and local systems of Shuras (Councils) and Jirgas (meetings of elders) to discuss and resolve conflicts (Miakhel, 2009). Through traditional formed Shuras and Jirgas, tribal leaders and elites had established relationships with local and central governments, exercised their power to resolve community-based conflicts, disputes and played their role to communicate and receive support from the state (Baqai, 1948).

Not only did tribes and tribal leaders in Afghanistan form historical bonds and relationships with one another under the reign of King Nadir Shah, they also shared common cultures, languages, and values externally with neighbouring countries such as Pakistan tribal areas as well. Due to the significance of tribes and their impact on state operations at the time, it was critical that the state respect the autonomy of the tribesmen, have trust in their loyalty, implement development plans for their areas, and strive towards their socio-economic advancement (Baqai, 1948). This is also similar to contemporary warlords (2001-2021) who were given resources, power, and support to obey central authority (as key figures), liaise between the state and citizens, and use their influence, power, relationships and roles to facilitate government socio-economic projects, primarily in rural areas (Jackson, 2003; Mukhopadhyay, 2009).

Nonetheless, Hussain (2003) and Sher (2012) argue that not all tribes and ethnic groups, as well as their leaders, had equal access to privilege, support, and well-being throughout King Nadir Shah's reign. This was especially true for the Hazara ethnic minority, who remained disadvantaged and economically deprived. Unlike during King Amanullah's reign (1919-

1929), when wealthy people were constitutionally prohibited from owning slaves from ethnic and religious minorities such as Hazaras (Hussain, 2003, Seddique, 2012, and Shir, 2012), Hazara minority groups were misrepresented, abused, and underserved under King Nadir Shah.

Major government appointments were made by Pashtun tribes, and Hazaras in the military and security sectors were not promoted above the ranks of colonels and directors in public offices (Razaiat and Pearson, 2002). According to Razaiat and Perason (2002), governmental processes effectively undermined Hazara authority, resulting in additional imprisonment and harassment of Hazara intellectuals and leaders during King Nadir Shah's reign. As a result, more people – mainly from Hazaras and Tajiks – hated King Nadir's administration and governance systems because a portion of Afghan society was harassed, disregarded, and disadvantaged. As a result of the Hazaras' oppression and systematic suppression during the monarchy, a young Hazara man assassinated the King in 1933 (Morrison, 1934).

This is a clear indication that strongmen (either state or non-state actors of another tribe or kinship) have used their power, relationships, and influence over another segment of Afghan society for their personal or tribal interests throughout history, much like modern warlords who do the same through patronage systems (MacGinty, 2010). This also signifies that, as a result of prior suppressions and deprivations of specific tribal and ethnic groups, warlords not only emerged among the suppressed groups, but also they emerged among other ethnic and tribal groups, taking advantage of the oppression of others to safeguard their identity and tribal interests under various political parties. For example, the Islamic Unity Party of Afghanistan (Hizb-e-Wahdat Islamic Afghanistan in Dari) was founded by Abdul Ali Mazari in 1989 during the turbulent period of anti-Soviet resistance movements in Afghanistan, with the goal of uniting all Hazara and Shiite leaders (Hashimi, 2009). Following Nadir Shah's assassination in

November 1933, his only son, nineteen-year-old Mohammad Zahir, ascended to the throne between 1933 to 1973 (Magnus, 1976).

II 2.5. Afghan Tribal roles and power during King Mohammad Zahir Shah's reign (1933 – 1973)

Similar to his father, King Nadir Khan's reign, Mohammad Zahir Shah's approach to governance involved relatively little interference from the central government in the lives of its people (mainly tribal elites), in contrast to King Amanullah's modern style of governance and the reforms he instituted in the 1920s that delineated Afghan tribal leaders and elites (Raja, 1996 and Mukhopadhyay, 2009). In order to minimise the state's involvement in issues of social or private concern, such as conflict management and dispute settlement, Zahir Shah adopted a limited state-building policy. Two of the more invasive state instruments, direct taxation and troop conscription, either disappeared or were mediated by local power brokers (tribe and religious leaders). Therefore, maintaining peace, administering justice, facilitating easy recruitment, and collecting minor taxes were all necessary for the state to be legitimate as government (Mukhopadhyay, 2009 and Yanda, 2011). Afghan community leaders and elites had the authority and responsibility to limit the state's influence in their lives and to retain control over it. The people's social and political lives were nevertheless greatly influenced by these unofficial power brokers (Cassidy, 2009). This also indicates that at times it was the state that was illegitimate and needing controlling by non-state actors, rather than the other way around.

Cassidy (2009) also claims that during Zahir Shah's reign (1933-1973), there was relative peace and prosperity, which was attributed to a style of governance that carefully balanced the needs of the central government to operate the state in a way that corresponded with the character desires and expectations of the populations residing in the periphery, people who exhibited a proclivity for unencumbered local rule. This was most evident in the central government's

cautious and limited imposition of taxes, conscription, and social engineering. This emphasises that, despite the fact that local power holders (tribal leaders) described by Manchanda (2017) as village lords, maliks, khans, and Arbas were given power, trust, and state resources, the notion of warlordism and rebellion did not exist in Afghan society at both national and sub-national levels during Zahir Shah's reign (Marcelo, 2010). This was part of King Zahir Shah's strategy of limited and gradual social change, which was "pursued with the hope of avoiding internal rebellion based on the preservation of Afghan conservatism." (Marcelo, 2010, p41).

This does not imply that tribal elders and village lords were powerless to resist the state; rather, it was because the state had maintained relationships with religious leaders (including religious minorities) and established mechanisms to prevent chaos and anger among communities and tribes. Major mechanisms included maintaining peace, justice, no direct taxation on tribal communities and fair representation and recruitment in state institutions – especially in the army – as well as including Afghan community members and elders through traditional consultations (Shuras and Jirgas) to exercise their power and maintain communication and relationships with the stat (Yanda, 2011, Miakhel, 2009).

In addition, and more importantly, corrupt tax officers, who frequently stole more than their fair share, became less relevant as the state's reliance on rural tax collection declined. As the monarchy became less reliant on taxing tribal communities directly, tensions between Kabul and rural populations diminished, reducing the central government's involvement in these people's issues. This was the mode of governance until Mohammad Duad Khan overthrew the King of Afghanistan on July 17, 1973 through a military coup and became the first republican president of Afghanistan between 1973 and 1978 (Ridout, 1975 and Mukerjee, 1975). Essentially, the argument here is that from 1933 to 1973, Afghanistan experienced a period of relative stability under a decentralised governance system that granted substantial autonomy to

local leaders while maintaining national unity. This system relied on traditional power structures and local legitimacy, allowing for governance that was more attuned to regional needs. In contrast, the centralised model adopted between 2001 and 2021 concentrated power within the state, frequently side-lining local leadership and customs. This approach resulted in administrative inefficiencies, rampant corruption, and opposition from local actors, ultimately fuelling instability and conflict.

II. 2.6. Pre- and post-Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan (1973 – 2001)

Due to local autonomy, ineffective state-society relations, political unrest and rivalry were persistent in Afghanistan, and King Zahir Shah was overthrown by his cousin and Prime Minister (Sardar Daud) in 1973 (Sultana and Azmatullah, 2015). Former Prime Minister Mohammad Daud Khan led a coup against Afghanistan's last king, Mohammad Zahir Shah, on July 17, 1973, eliminating the monarchy and establishing the Republican administration (Halliday, 1978). Duad Khan was Afghanistan's first republican president from 1973 to 1978 (Zirak, 2020). Throughout this time, tribal leaders and village chiefs continued to lead village and local area management and administration on behalf of the state, as they had throughout King Zahir Shah's reign (Baqai, 1948). Daud Khan, like before, preferred to maintain tribal structures in order to use and gain their support to preserve the economic, social, and political order in the county (Sultana and Azmatullah, 2015).

However, many political elites who favoured traditional and tribal systems were tortured or removed from official jobs as a result of their prior ties to and support of Sardar Daud Khan after Daud Khan was overthrown as president in 1978 (Sultana and Azmatullah, 2015). This strategy had a significant role in the uniting of Islamic groups in the fight against the government. As a result, this enabled the Soviet Union to start bolstering its armed forces near Afghanistan's northern border. Despite adopting a policy of neutrality, Daud Khan's

government and the "Peoples Democratic Party of Afghanistan" (PDPA) diverged mostly because of this. Noor Mohammad Taraki established the PDPA, a political organisation that fostered communist ideology and viewpoints and was affiliated with and funded by the USSR, in 1965. 1978 witnessed Daud Khan killed by the PDPA, which was led by Noor Mohammad Taraki. After Taraki was elected prime minister, Hafizullah Amin, one of his most devoted and close allies, succeeded in killing him in 1979. However, neither Amin nor Barbak Karmal, who was supported by the Soviet Union, were able to keep Afghanistan peaceful; ultimately, the Soviet Union invaded the nation in December 1979 and remained there for around ten years between 1979 and 1989 (Sinha, 2020).

Afghanistan suffered further political issues and instability during the Soviet Union's invasion, including the rise of militias, warlords, and local armed groups (Karp, 1986 and Newell 1980). The same tribal elites, village chiefs, and leaders who had previously supported the previous states and acted neutrally underwent a significant shift in their roles, power relations, and dynamics when they began organising armed groups, militias, and rebel units to fight the occupation (Grau, 2004 and Hughes, 2008). Their roles were chiefly planning and executing raids, and ambushes against Soviet and local government officers (Jalali and Grau, 2001).

Following the Soviet Union's withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989, the established government led by President Najibullah (1989-1992) continued to receive USSR backing, funding, and political influence. While warlords, also known as Mujahideen “Freedom Fighters” (Ghufran, 2001, p469), were not yet part of the government, they were fighting for full power when the Soviets withdrew the country. These warlords founded their own political and military groups, which were mostly centred, operated, and funded along the Afghan-Pakistan border. Their role and power were mainly centred to engage in military brutality and

violence, and they acted as anti-Russian and communist elements in the country (Marten, 2006).

As a result, in 1992, President Najibullah handed over government administration to Mujahedeen leaders, and the Afghan government survived until April 1992, when the mujahedin assumed complete control of the country (Smith, 2014). Despite an interim administration in Kabul led by Burhanuddin Rabbani between 1992 and 1995 (Kundi, 1995) other Mujahedeen leaders, primarily Gulbuddin Hekmatyar (Pashtun Tribe), Abdul Rashid Dostum (Uzbek/Turkmen Tribe), and Ahmad Shah Masood (Tajik Tribe), had sputtered into increased levels of fighting for power (Dixi, 1995). During 1992 and 1995, Mujahedeen leaders continued military violence among themselves for power and control of the country. Their previous roles as village leaders, tribal chiefs and community elites shifted to military leaders, heads of militias and commanders fighting for power and resources (Liakhovsky, 2000). Four years later, the Taliban took control of Afghanistan's capital, Kabul, from Mujahedeen commanders, forcing former President Najibullah out of a United Nations facility and assassinating him on the streets (Maley, 2002).

II. 3. Broad patterns of Governance in post-2001 Afghanistan

II. 3.1. Warlords' roles and relationships in governance systems

The Afghan state-building process (post-2001) led by Hamid Karzai aimed to establish/re-establish, reform, and strengthen Afghan institutions so that they could efficiently offer services - security and welfare - to its people and social and political groups (Edwards, 2010). In Afghanistan, supporting and maintaining rule of law, as well as fostering trust between the state and its population – state-society relations – have been argued to be essential for its development (Sedra, 2010; Lister, 2007).

As discussed in section one of this chapter, since the 1973 *coup d'etat,* which resulted in the overthrow of the Afghan monarch and the establishment of a republican form of government led by former Prime Minister Muhammad Daud (Mahapatra, 1997), Afghanistan has experienced decades of turmoil, political instability, and humanitarian crises. Since 1973, the country has deteriorated as a result of internal conflicts, political differences, cultural and ethnic rivalries, and other factors. Furthermore, global politics, regional interferences and ill relationships, as well as interference in Afghan affairs by surrounding nations such as Pakistan and Iran, have had an impact on the country (Hussain, 2002).

After the Taliban's collapse and US military intervention, Afghanistan entered a new era in 2001. The international community's immediate post-war reconstruction initiatives in Afghanistan were confirmed by the Bonn agreement in 2001 (Brown, 2021). The Bonn conference, which resulted in the Bonn Process, sought to establish a stable and democratic administration in Afghanistan. The Emergency Loya Jirga (Afghan traditional Grand Assembly), the establishment of the Afghan Interim Administration, the adoption of a new Constitution in 2004, and the holding of Presidential Elections in 2004 and Parliamentary and Provincial Council Elections in 2005 formally marked the successful conclusion of the Bonn Process (Nijat, 2014).

Hamid Karzai led an Interim Government from late 2001 to mid 2002, and a Transitional Government from 2002 to 2004. The Afghan Loya Jirga - which was a crucial part of the legitimation of the new government - established and enacted the Afghan Constitution in 2004. Following the 2004 Presidential Elections, Hamid Karzai was elected President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (Norway, 2004). He was in charge of the office till September of 2014. After a disputed election, Ashraf Ghani was elected President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in September 2014. He ran the Office until 15 August 2021, when his government

was overthrown by the Taliban (Murugiah and Mills 2021, Murtazashvili, 2022). After more than two decades of war and turmoil, a democratic process began in 2001 provided Afghanistan with the opportunity to regain political stability, construct a functioning state, and begin an economic recovery. To address these issues in Afghanistan, the international community and Afghan leaders began to build government capacity in a way that strengthens Afghan leadership while respecting Afghan traditions and values (Stanikzai, 2011).

II. 3.2. The establishment of new government in Afghanistan: a break from the past Afghanistan Compact (2006)

The Afghanistan Compact (started in January 2006), the successor to the 2001 Bonn Agreement, was the result of the 2006 London Conference on Afghanistan, aimed at building a framework for international collaboration and marked by a greater reliance on Afghan institutions. The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the international community - donors and funding agencies - agreed in the Afghanistan Compact to strengthen their partnership in order to improve the lives of Afghans and contribute to national, regional, and global peace and security (The Afghanistan Compact, 2006).

The Compact laid out building governance as one of the important pillars of activity for Afghanistan's state-building process, alongside security, economic, and social development. The Compact envisaged that the Afghan government would prioritise merit-based recruitment of competent and credible professionals, the establishment of functional institutions with effective, transparent, accountable administration at all levels of government, with appropriate legal frameworks and appointment procedures, trained staff and adequate remuneration, infrastructure and auditing capacity, reforming the justice system, and the protection and promotion of human rights. These were goals for the Afghan government and its international partners in order for the Afghan government to swiftly develop its capacity to offer basic services to Afghans across the country (The Afghanistan Compact, 2006 and Nijat, 2014).

According to the United Nations (2007), which was overseeing the implementation of the Afghanistan Compact through a Joint Monitoring and Coordination Board (JCMB), despite the efforts of the Afghan government and its international partners, the Afghan Compact goals and commitments remained ambitious, with no significant commitments made. The Afghan government failed particularly in governance (public sector reform, poor public sector capacity, widespread corruption) and security (primarily disbandment of illegal armed groups and state capture by power-holders such as warlords).

Studies by scholars such as Weinbaum (2006), Lister (2007), and Katzman and Thomas (2017) reveals that uncoordinated efforts and conflicting interests of international actors, centralised mood of governance and "growing fragmentations" (Katzman and Thomas, 2017, p10) within the government, large scale corruption at different levels of the government – national and sub-national – patronage networks, institutionalised nepotism within government agencies and widespread ethnic favouritism created a complex environment, which prevented systematic reforms to take place as agreed in the Bonn process and the Afghanistan Compact (2006). As a result, among other setbacks in that period (2001 – 2007) the political and security situation started worsening in many parts of the country as the centralised mood of governance neglected the role and importance of local government and community actors (Lister, 2007). Furthermore, it failed to provide services and reach to its citizens most in need due to deteriorating security situation – growing insurgency by the Taliban – and deepening grassroots dissatisfaction with the overall political, economic and security environment due to people not feeling represented and served by the government (Theros, 2012).

Figure 1 below indicates the number of attacks between 2002 and 2020. Between 2002 and 2007, the number of attacks increased from 372 to 6,993. Subsequently, the number of attacks

increased with insignificant decrease in 2014 and 2015 to 40,535 in 2020 – one year before a full-scale US and NATO withdrawal from Afghanistan.

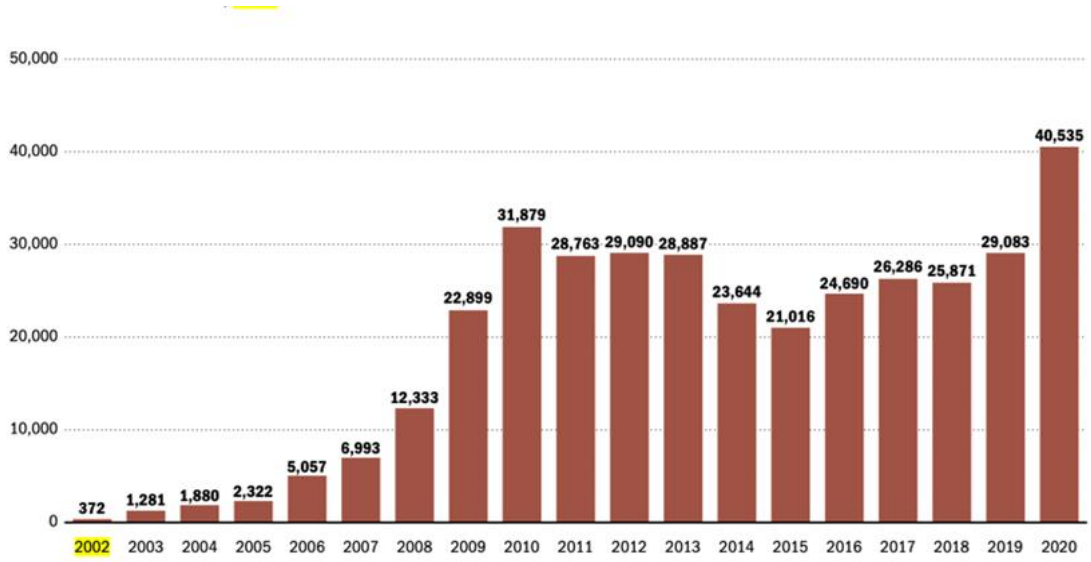

Figure 1. Taliban, AlQaeda and Islamic State initiated attacks (2002 – 2020) (SIGAR, 2021).

Because the relationship between the state and its citizens, as well as service delivery at the sub-national level, was significantly lacking in Afghanistan due to a lack of political will and determination to decentralise the mood of governance (Their, 2020), this environment – the government's failure to fulfil its functions, and thus citizens' mistrust – provided an opportunity for local powerholders and warlords to gain more autonomy (Thier, 2020).

As a result, illegal armed groups, warlords, and corrupt officials inside national and sub-national government agencies have obtained access to public resources (Jackson and Scott 2007). They affected decisions and jeopardised public service delivery and change by acquiring more power and autonomy over resources. Furthermore, the unfavourable environment fostered mistrust and increased divides between the general populace and the government, fuelling conflict and insurgency in many parts of the country (Lister, 2007, Bizhan, and Emil, 2016). Taking into account these major setbacks and obstacles, the Joint Coordination and

Monitoring Board (JCMB) urged the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the international community in 2008 to renew their commitments and efforts to continue their extensive work and achieve the Afghanistan Compact benchmarks under the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) (ANDS, 2008).

II. 3.3. Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS)

A thorough understanding of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) and other governance frameworks introduced after 2001 is essential for examining the role, influence, and status of warlords in Afghanistan's state-building efforts. The ANDS, formulated as a blueprint for governance, economic growth, and institutional reform, offers valuable insights into the formal processes of state-building (ANDS, 2008) and their interaction with informal power structures, particularly warlords.

As key figures with military, economic, and political influence, warlords often operated within or alongside formal institutions, shaping governance in ways that either reinforced or weakened state-building initiatives. Analysing the implementation and challenges of the ANDS allows this research to assess the extent to which warlords impacted political stability, security arrangements, and institutional development. Moreover, understanding governance structures post-2001 provides a deeper perspective on how warlords negotiated power within the state, the strategies they employed to sustain authority, and their long-term implications for governance and stability. This analysis is crucial for exploring the broader relationship between informal institutions and formal state-building, offering a clearer understanding of Afghanistan's complex post-conflict governance landscape.

The overarching goal of the ANDS was to significantly reduce poverty, enhance the lives of Afghans, and lay the groundwork for a secure and stable society in a country that desperately needed rehabilitation and reconstruction from every angle (SIGAR, 2021). The ANDS functioned as the country's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, establishing a collective commitment to poverty reduction by the government and the international community. While the ANDS outlined the strategic priorities in three broad pillars: (i) security; (ii) governance, rule of law, and human rights; and (iii) economic and social development, this subsection will focus solely on governance.

The ANDS Governance objective set by the Government of Afghanistan for state-building, was to promote democratic processes and institutions, public service delivery, and government accountability. The ANDS stressed the significance of improved governance in achieving the Government's national objective and establishing a stable and functioning society. The ANDS identified the government's guiding principles for better governance as transparency, participation, accountability, effectiveness, efficiency, inclusiveness, justice, and the rule of law, which were to be applied at all levels of government (ANDS, 2008). The main priorities for the governance sector under ANDS were (i) to accelerate and improve the quality of public administration reform; (ii) to strengthen sub-national governance structures; (iii) to reform legal and judicial processes; and (iv) to strengthen parliamentary and legislative processes, including free and fair elections. Based on the Afghanistan Constitution (2004), which established three divisions of authority. Afghanistan had a normal three-tiered government as a republic: executive, legislative, and judicial. The government ministries and independent organisations were established under the executive branch, led by the President, to enact and implement key laws and amendments to establish the basic legal and regulatory framework that will promote social and economic development in an unbiased and predictable manner throughout the country (ANDS, 2008). Government Ministries are central government bodies

led by a cabinet member or a minister. They are without a distinct corporate identity and are subject to the basic provisions of civil service and public finance law. These characteristics set them apart from the numerous commissions and independent bodies that are also considered government entities, as well as the numerous government enterprises (ANDS, 2008 and Evans et al. 2004).

To put these structures into context, centralised governments with significant power concentration can yet have some administrative and fiscal decentralisation (Evans et al. 2004). Afghanistan, on the other hand, was highly centralised administratively and fiscally. The fact that a large proportion of the public sector workforce was located within Kabul emphasises this centralisation. The following section provides an overview of the Executive branch of government, its power dynamics, interactions between central and local government, and the challenges that surround them. Consideration the governance structures outlined in the new constitution provides insight into the formal and informal relationships that regional powerholders and warlords established with the central government.

II. 4. The Executive Branch of Government, its power dynamics, and its interaction with sub-national levels, as well its issues

II. 4.1. President

The president is an individual who has been elected. He or she appoints cabinet members/ministers as well as the heads of independent government agencies. Ministers/Heads of Agencies are formally introduced before the Afghan Parliament in order to obtain votes of confidence from lawmakers. If a minister does not receive Parliamentary approval, the President issues degrees and appoints the minister/head of agency as acting for a maximum of three months (The Afghanistan Constitution, 2004). The power dynamics for the President position is that the President appoints ministers in consultation with two Vice Presidents,

religious and tribal leaders, Chief Justice and Head of Supreme Court, Attorney General, and other key figures.

This consultative procedure is carried out in order to retain political relationships and support (Nijat, 2004). Nonetheless, the President authorises provincial Governor nominations. He does not, however, have a formal administrative link with provincial authorities. In Afghanistan (2001-2021), the President or designated Vice President had to begin direct relationships with some provinces due to political dynamics and the prominent positions of provincial governors in their territories, which can affect central government politics and decisions. As a result, the President and designated Vice President led the annual Governors' conference/meeting in Kabul in order to maintain their support (Mukhopadhyay, 2016). Having stated that, the President faces a number of critical difficulties in administering national and sub-national government, which are briefly summarised below.

Because most governors are appointed based on their political and tribal affiliations rather than on their aptitude and ability or through elections, they violate government principles and rules (Guistozzi 2004). The regulation directs provincial governors to lead on strategic planning and overall leadership, as well as overseeing provincial line ministries' departments' service delivery, provincial security, conflict resolution among communities/tribes, and administrative supervision of the province's and associated districts' affairs. Provincial governors will likewise play a leadership role, with the exception of managing municipal and custom revenues and expenses (Afghanistan Subnational Governance Policy, 2007). Because of their extensive political contacts with central government officials and access to public resources, powerful and warlord governors pose major challenges to central government and sub-national government institutions. As a result, it undermines the legitimacy of the government and the President in the eyes of the public (Bryld and Polastro, 2014).

II. 4.2. The official function of Ministers and Cabinet Members

The Afghan Parliament elects ministers and cabinet members, including the Ministers of Defence, Interior, and Intelligence. A Minister is a political person who heads a Ministry or an independent government agency. A Ministry or an autonomous agency can have thousands of employees, depending on their functions and internal structures. A Minister appoints Deputy Ministers and General Directors, with the President's final approval. Other individuals and staff are recruited, appointed, and finally confirmed by ministers or designated deputy ministers in Kabul and provinces (The Afghanistan Constitution, 2004). A minister and a cabinet member's power dynamics are as follows: prior to elections, a minister may try to create some type of relationship with MPs in order to get votes of confidence. According to major investigations such as the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR, 2021), covert bargains were struck between prospective Ministers and MPs. Depending on where the potential minister comes from, he or she may have a pre-existing relationship with a member of parliament. For example, they were both former Mujahiddin combatants during the 1980s battle with the Soviet Union (Larson, 2015). Ministers had an uncertain relationship with warlords, militias, and local commanders, given their continued influence in local areas. An example may throw more light on this situation. Mohammad Qasim Fahim (Minister of Defence from 2001 to 2004) had personal relationships with warlords and local commanders in northern provinces, and Ismail Khan (Minister of Energy and Water from 2005 to 2013) had personal connections and relationships with local commanders and militias in western provinces of Afghanistan (Guistozzi, 2004).

Although Ministers and Cabinet Members were based in Kabul, they maintained essential working and political contacts with sub-national governance systems (Brown, 2014). Each province's Director of Provincial Department was appointed by a Minister, with final approval from the President. Despite the fact that Provincial Directors of a Ministry are meant to be hired

through a fair recruitment procedure supervised by The Independent Administrative Reform and Civil Service Commission (IARCSC), Ministers could nevertheless bypass the process and install their own personnel because of the ineffective role of law and institutional checks. Provincial Directors are reported to the Provincial Development Councils (PDCs) and Ministers in Kabul (Hakimi et al. 2004). The majority of senior level selections in Kabul and provinces were influenced by MPs, provincial governors, tribal important people and warlords, and local commanders. Many appointments and recruitments were made through patrimonial relationships (friendship, personal connections) and networks with Ministers, Deputy Ministers, and General Directors, or by the use of coercion by political elites and warlords. This problem happened in the security – police and military – sector as well (Hakimi et al. 2004).

According to Integrity Watch (2018) and Bak and Kukutschka (2019), in this context, service delivery at the national and sub-national levels suffers from a lack of predictability, dedication, and capacity on the part of those in authority. As a result, provincial recruitment suffers as well. Bribes were paid by an estimated 4.6 million Afghan adults in 2018 (bribes are frequently part of the process of seeking for jobs, engaging with Ministries, provincial governor's offices, and line ministry divisions). Akbar in (Authority of the House of Lords, 2021, p4) states that the system was "underpinned by patronage as the central government paid off warlords and power brokers by tolerating corruption and not enforcing the rule of law".

II. 4.3. The role of Provincial Governors

Provincial governors must be elected by all eligible citizens through elections, according to the Afghanistan Constitution (2004). This Constitutional provision, however, was never implemented due to electoral limits, and lack of funds. As a result, the Independent Directorate for Local Governance (IDLG) was founded in 2007 by a presidential decree. IDLG was an

independent government institution appointed to lead and organise sub-national administration in Afghanistan.

It was also tasked with assisting provincial administrations, building provincial and district capacity, enforcing laws and regulations, and improving service delivery by enhancing monitoring, accountability, and transparency of local governments at the local level through strong and capable subnational government administrations in 34 provinces, approximately 400 districts, and 153 municipalities (ANDS, 2008). Among other things, the IDLG was responsible for appointing provincial governors, deputy governors, and provincial mayors by presidential order.

According to scholars such as Bijlert (2009) Thier and Worden (2017), there are various political dynamics around provincial governors in Afghanistan. Based on what Mukhopadhyay (2014) states, different types of Governors in Afghanistan – a "heavy-handed strongmen and technocrats"' have different ways of leading and administering the work of a provincial office (Mukhopadhyay, 2014, P.1). Dealing with existing local tribes, commanders, and warlords in their domains was frequently a challenge for technocratic governors. Governors, both technocrats and non-technocrats, are expected to maintain a variety of contacts with other governors, particularly those in nearby provinces, line ministry department directors in each province, provincial police chiefs, and military chiefs. They also deal with ministers and cabinet members, as well as the president's and vice president's offices, in various ways. Given Afghanistan's diverse and challenging political, cultural, and ethnic situations, provincial governors must deal with and serve a variety of functions that do not exclude establishing provincial control or providing public goods and services. Given that provincial Governors are based at the sub-national level, each provincial capital has a headquarter (ANDS, 2008). In each province, the provincial governor is expected to have formal relationships with the

provincial police chief, provincial council members, district governors, and directors of line ministries (AREU, 2013).

IDLG has been an entity strongly linked to the Office of the President since its inception as an independent body in Kabul in 2007/08. Provincial governors, deputy governors, and mayors were identified, coordinated, and submitted to the President as a facilitating organisation. Although the IDLG's duty was to oversee the performance of sub-national governance - the offices of provincial governors - some governors who had long presence in their provinces, such as Governor Atta of Balkh, never followed the IDLG. Other governors or deputy governors, like Ismail Khan of Herat and Gul Agha Sherzai of Kandahar and subsequently Nangarhar, who saw themselves as the empires of their regions and had close ties to the President and Vice Presidents, were also hindering IDLGs roles. Interestingly, in a post-war society with limited central capability and oversight, such as Afghanistan, various governors had power over customs and revenues. They also had direct ties to the drug trade (Mukhopadhyay, 2014). They were also warlords or have significant ties to local commanders and warlords who do not follow the rules of the central government. A provincial governor would not be able to run a province without such contacts with local elites, leaders, and prominent persons (Guistozzi, 2004).

II. 4.4. The role of Provincial Police Chiefs

The Ministry of Interior (MOI) Tashkeel included Provincial Police Chiefs. Tashkeel is a term used by academics and scholars to describe the formal structure of the Afghan government (Brown, 2014). A provincial police chief is in charge of commanding the whole Afghan National Police (ANP) force in a province. The Afghan National Police (ANP) is made up of Afghan Uniform Police, Afghan Border Police, and Secret Services. ANP is in charge of citizen protection, public assets, infrastructure, including highways, and border security (ANDS,

2008). A Police Chief interacts with many agencies and individuals both within the province and in Kabul, the capital. Their primary interactions are with the provincial governor, members of the provincial council, and district police chiefs. Given that each province in Afghanistan includes local commanders, ethnic, tribal, and religious leaders, the police chief is expected to manage several power dynamics. He or she must be able to communicate and network with various power holders. Because provinces, particularly border provinces such as Herat, which shares a border with Iran, have large customs and revenue, police chiefs have direct relationships with Custom House Directors as well as city mayors. This is because there is trade and business, which can be used for personal benefits (USIP, 2004). Tribal and ethnic leaders, communal and religious powerful elites, and police chiefs are all key people to know. Relationships with local leaders, paramilitary groups, other armed groups, and warlords are regarded as critical. Taking into account these complex, sensitive, and challenging relationships, the following is a brief summary of significant issues that a police chief must deal with.

The assignments of police officers are heavily politicised. Police chiefs are appointed based on political bargains and illegal interventions by warlords and elites in each province, rather than prior performance, abilities, capacity, and dedication (Guistozzi, 2007). Police forces are assigned and recruited based on tribal, ethnic, and personal links with local commanders, religious elites, and warlords (RUSI, 2015). As a result, there is a pervasive lack of training, chain of command, pay scale, police criminality and abuse of power, bribery, favouritism during recruitment, and lack of dedication during duties (Giustozzi, 2004, Goodhand and Hakimi, 2014, RUSI, 2015, SIGAR, 2021). Given that this section primarily focused on the role of warlords in Afghanistan's governance process between 2001 and 2021, and that warlords' engagement and influence have been greater in the security sector, the following sub-section of this chapter provides an overview of Afghan security sector governance.

II. 5. The dysfunction of Afghanistan Security Sector Governance during 2001 and 2021

It is argued that during 2001-2021, government institutions in Afghanistan governance framework were frequently ineffective or unreliable, and civil society was frequently marginalised (Wang et al. 2005). According to the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF), 2009, this exacerbated the governance issues, particularly in countries that might have had little or no experience with democracy and the rule of law. The provision of basic security was a prerequisite for the implementation of post-war rebuilding efforts in order to enable the equitable but prompt supply of socio-economic services (DCAF, 2009). As a result, it was crucial that the security sector is capable, transparent, and accountable, that democratic institutions had the right tools at their disposal to analyse and change security policy and practice, and that individuals had the ability to communicate their security needs to those in charge of providing that security (DCAF, 2011). Issues of equity and sustainability will be crucial, including to allow security to work as a basis for longer-term development, as what constitutes progress in war-affected environments is likely to be highly debated (Valters et al. 2014).

NATO partner countries have considered the development of Afghan security institutions a key component of aid provided through the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) (ANDS, 2008). As such, Afghanistan's state-building project was centred on the creation of the Afghanistan National Defence and Security Forces (ANDSF) (ANDS, 2008). The development of Afghan security institutions was viewed by NATO, the Afghan government's most significant ally, as an essential component of its counterinsurgency strategy (Ishizuka 2007, and Sedra 2014). According to NATO (2010), ANDSF must have the capacity to secure and stabilise their nation on their own in the long run. In order to gradually transfer control of

security to the Afghans, NATO training programmes in Afghanistan focused on building the capabilities of Afghan security forces.

These units were part of the Afghan National Army (ANA), Afghan Air Force (AAF), Afghan National Police (ANP), and National Directorate of Security (NDS), which was all part of the Ministry of Interior Affairs (MOI). These entities did not, however, make up the entire Afghan Security Sector. The Afghan National Security Council, the Ministries of Defence and Interior Affairs, the National Directorate of Security, the Ministry of Justice, and the Human Rights Commission are among the important organisations that make up Afghanistan's security sector, according to the ANDS (2008). Although these institutions are primarily in charge of preserving security and upholding the law in Afghanistan, they must undergo a reform and reconstruction process known as security sector reform (SSR). Following the Bonn Agreement in 2001 and the country's steadily deteriorating security situation (shown in figure 1), the Afghan government and the international community put SSR at the forefront of developing Afghanistan's security sector governance process (Hodes and Sedra 2007).

The presence of warlords and their attempts to interfere with the Afghan security sector have been major hurdles among many others, such as a lack of resources, a lack of political will, corruption, etc. As a result, the next section will discuss Afghan warlords (with examples of prominent individuals), including who they are, how they affect the political system, and what functions well and poorly under their authority primarily during 2001 and 2021.

Warlords can play a significant role in contested societies, where states have struggled to establish effective institutions - primarily through outside funding - despite having experienced wars, conflicts, violence, internal disputes, and ethnic and tribal fractions (Giustozzi and Noor Ullah 2006). I concur that warlords in Afghanistan had to be a part of the governance structure since they represented particular ethnic, and tribal groups. In terms of establishing security,

stability, and governance during this time, the government and the international community have made only little progress (ANDS, 2008). As a result, warlords with extensive battlefield experience (SIGAR, 2016) had a significant role to play in maintaining relative security in some provinces and districts, so the Afghan government and its international partners started and carried out development interventions and security sector reform projects (Glentworth 2002, United Nations, 2007, Fiedler and Mrob, 2016, Yahya et al. 2018, and ODriscoll, 2018). Although there were limited alternatives, the initial inclusion of warlords in the governance system laid the groundwork for the neo-patrimonial system (which is explained in detail below) in the entire governance system of the Afghan government institutions, much like Mehran (2018), who labels the inclusion of warlords with excessive access and power on public resources in the Afghan governance process as a mistake.

The following example further demonstrates the need to include, empower, and validate warlords despite numerous criticisms by Esfandiari (2005), Edward (2009), Adamec and Clements (2003) about warlord inclusion in the Afghan governance system and misuse of their political positions and public resources. In 2004, Hamid Karzai (as Head of Interim Government) won the nation's first presidential election. President Karzai understood that bringing former mujahideen leaders and commanders into the government and politics and giving them power and important positions would help to foster some sense of national unity and weaken potential rivals (Peake et al. 2004, Murtazashvili, 2022).

For example, Ismail Khan, and influential Tajik tribal leader in the West of Afghanistan - also named as "Amir of West" (Giustozzi, 2003, p. 4 and Giustozzi 2006, p. 6) was appointed as governor of Herat Province and then Minister of Energy and Water, a position he had held from 2005 to 2013; Ismail Khan, a prominent tribal commander, has been continuously accused torturing thousands since Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (Hoodbhoy, 2005). In 2001, Abdul

Rashid Dostum, an Uzbek tribal leader and military general from the north, was appointed as deputy defence minister. From 2014 to 2020, he served as vice president under Ashraf Ghani (Murtazashvili, 2022). He is known as "The Warlord of Mazar" (Williams, 2013, P.16). While some warlords initially rose from their local communities to protect their tribes, territories, and lands from rival groups in Afghanistan (Giustozzi, 2005), many later extended their influence beyond local defence. They consolidated power by establishing militia networks, forming political alliances, and controlling economic resources, often either integrating into or contesting formal state institutions.

While various definitions by various scholars such as Giustorzzi (2009), Mehran (2018) and Marten (2006), which were explained in detail in the literature review chapter, indicate that warlords are out of the government structures/governance, however, warlords have not been always excluded from the state institutions. The government structures in Afghanistan are a prime example of this. Atta Mohammad Noor of the Balkh province and Gul Agha Sherzai of the Kandahar and later Nangarhar provinces served as provincial governors during periods that illustrate both the drawbacks and advantages of warlord incorporation into Afghanistan's emerging state institutions (Ozdemir, 2008). While their provinces vary in dramatic ways, both warlord-governors are widely known for delivering progress in stability, reconstruction, and counter-narcotics. In so doing, they had become valuable partners of the government led by Karzai and its international partners (Mukhopadhyay, 2009).

As discussed in the work of Dietl (2004), Ozdemir (2008), Harpviken (2010), Giustozzi (2013), and Mukhopadhyay (2016), the said warlords were popular in their extended rule and outstanding accomplishments in areas including reconstruction, socio economic development, and public service reform. Similarly, notable scholars have stated that in Afghanistan, warlords have been significant, important, and prominent figures within the government institutions,

who may easily influence and threaten governmental decisions (Giustozzi, 2005, 2007, and 2013; Mukhopadhyay, 2009 and 2016). In many areas of Afghanistan, warlords threatened and undermined the function and authority of governmental security agencies with their parallel structures, according to Mukhpadhyay (2009) and Goodhand and Sedra (2007). In some areas they acted as government (Giustozzi, 2008).

Another notable instance occurred in 2017, when Governor Atta Mohammad Noor of the Balkh province, who had been fired by President Ghani due to internal disagreements, threatened President Ghani with violent protests, the closure of highways, and demonstrations to shut down government offices in Mazar-e-Sharif city (Mashal and Rahim, in the New York Times, 2017). This example thus illustrates how a warlord was first introduced to politics as a provincial governor for more than a decade with excessive power, resources, and military capabilities, who could easily challenge central government decisions and risk safety, security, and the well-being of citizens by his armed militia forces (Mukhpadhyay, 2009 and 2016).

By appointing warlords as ministers and provincial governors within governance systems, the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and its international allies hoped warlords would reform and eventually become bureaucrats (Mehran, 2018). This relates to the idea of "inclusion-moderation" put forth by Larkin and Nasasra (2021, p. 743), which contends that radical groups can be restrained by taking part in the democratic process. However, primarily, this concept is repeatedly applied to Islamist movements in the Middle East to study Israel/Palestine crises and post-Arab Spring political landscape (Koprulu, 2020).

The appointment of warlords by the new Afghan government as provincial governors and provincial police chiefs despite serious claims of human rights violations (abuses, including torture and extrajudicial killings) somehow assisted in restoring security but harmed good governance and the rule of law (SIGAR, 2022). Their militias were housed in, given legal

standing by, and eventually paid for by provincial and district police units. The warlords who captured the government had autonomy from the people and were not reliant on the Afghan economy to maintain their hold on power. They occupied the majority of state positions in the Ministry of Interior, provincial, and district police offices, undermining initiatives to reform the security sector by systematic recruitment and excluding many Afghans from the general population who wanted to join the police and security forces (SIGAR, 2022). As a result, the warlords were able to monopolise authority in many parts of Afghanistan due to the lack of an independent and capable security force as well as enough leadership and supervisory ability (Human Rights Watch, 2002).

II. 6. An analysis of Warlord as Political Elite in Afghanistan governance system (2001-2021)

Understanding warlords as political elites in Afghanistan's governance system from 2001 to 2021 is crucial for evaluating their impact on state-building, political stability, and institutional development. While they were traditionally viewed as military leaders and power brokers, many later assumed formal political roles, using their influence to shape governance, policymaking, and security structures.

This analysis examines warlords as key figures in Afghanistan's hybrid political system, where formal state institutions coexisted with deeply embedded informal power networks. By exploring their interactions with the central government, foreign stakeholders, and local communities, this section highlights how they either strengthened or destabilised governance processes.

This discussion is integral to the broader argument, as it illustrates that warlords were not simply remnants of past conflicts but active players in political decision-making, resource distribution, and institutional governance. Their incorporation into formal structures – whether

through parliamentary roles, ministerial positions, or military influence – reflects the complexities of post-conflict state-building. Understanding this dynamic provides deeper insight into the interplay between informal power structures and formal governance, offering a clearer perspective on the challenges and contradictions within Afghanistan's political landscape. Political elites in Afghanistan are referred to as cabinet ministers, provincial and district governors, directors general, provincial police and military chiefs, and members of parliament in Rubin (2013); Sharan and Bose (2016); and Sharan (2011). Community leaders, important religious figures like Imams, heads of community councils and shuras are examples of non-political and tribal elites.

Due to the ineffective central government, non-political elites held significant power at the local level, putting even the state's key institutions under their control. For instance, while considering Afghan local dynamics, strong tribal individuals dominated the means of violence. They had extensive land holdings, connections to insurgency organisations, and drug networks, all of which have aided in the rise of warlords (Schetter and Glassner, 2011; Giustozzi and Noorullah, 2006). Additionally, Afghan warlords and strongmen were divided into several tiers by Giustozzi and Noorullah (2006). They contend that although both strongmen and warlords are charismatic leaders who develop a personal following, warlords are distinguished by their strength in arms. This indicates that their military legitimacy was their strength. In turn, this granted them a political position and legitimacy along with their control over an area. Strongmen, in contrast, lack a military history despite having armed followers that they primarily employ to compel loyalty from the local population.

Since they may come from prominent families or may claim a traditional function (such as tribe leader, etc.) and accept at least some of the social limitations that go along with it, warlords may also have some degree of political legitimacy (Giustozzi and Noorullah, 2006). Warlords

have historically had loyalties to the regions, ethnic groups, and communities they rule over. As a result, warlords have also posed as traditional leaders like Atta Mohammad Noor, who controlled the majority of the north and north-western regions of Afghanistan as Tajik leader, or Abdul Rashid Dostum, an Uzbek tribal leader. Similar to these case, Ismail Khan, made an effort to project himself as a devout Muslim and protector of Islamic principles by building mosques, Islamic study centres, and assisting religious figures in their communities (Malejacq, 2016 and Mukhpadhyay, 2016). One can assert and apply it to the subject of neo-patrimonial leaders in an Afghan society by taking these distinctions into account.

II. 7. The relationship between Neo-patrimonialism and Warlords during 2001 and 2021 in Afghanistan

Despite numerous criticisms by Esfandiari (2005), Edward (2009), Adamec and Clements (2003) about inclusion of warlords in the Afghan governance system and their misuse of their political positions and public resources, the following example further illustrates the need to include, empower and legitimise warlords. In 2004, Hamid Karzai (as Head of Interim Government) won the nation's first presidential election. During President Karzai it was proved that bringing former mujahideen leaders and commanders into the government and politics and giving them power and important positions would help foster some sense of national unity and weaken potential rivals (Peake et al. 2004; Murtazashvili, 2022).

According to McCormick (2009) and with aforementioned examples, there was a fragmentation of central authority as well as complicated interactions between politics and traditions. Government appointments were politicised due to tribal interests (or the interests of specific tribal members), not due to what was in the interest of the country. According to SIGAR (2022), due to the complicated social issues in Afghanistan, it was necessary to give resources and authority to a tribal leader, warlord, or strongman. However, giving out large amounts of resources without adequate oversight, reporting, transparency, or accountability

was a major contributor to the growth of warlords. Other social and political actors, such as civil society organisations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and government ministries, who can in some way oversee the performance of service providers, have had limited access to monitoring and intervening in the work of warlord politicians due to a lack of resources, security, and protection (ANDS, 2008). Warlords used resources obtained from informal, personalistic networks and activities to win the support of their supporters. These activities include extorting cash from local business owners who are intimidated, making money from smuggling, trafficking in illegal goods like drugs and weapons, and, crucially for this argument, accepting payments from foreign allies who buy their support (SIGAR, 2018).

In this context, warlords' reliance on financial support from foreign allies is particularly significant, as it underscores their role as political intermediaries rather than merely local power figures. Unlike other illicit activities such as extortion, smuggling, and trafficking, which primarily serve personal or factional economic interests, external funding links warlords to broader geopolitical agendas and state-building processes.

This dynamic is crucial because it reveals that warlords were not operating in isolation but were actively engaged with international actors, using their influence to secure financial and military backing. Such external support often reinforced their authority within Afghanistan's governance system, enabling them to either integrate into formal institutions or challenge central authority more effectively (Migdal and Schlichte, 2005). Therefore, in this argument, foreign patronage is key, as it illustrates that warlords sustained their power not only through coercion and illicit enterprises but also through strategic alliances with external forces, shaping both domestic governance and international intervention efforts in Afghanistan.

The focus on the divisions between tribes and ethnic groups is amply demonstrated in Afghanistan, where, as a result of tribal and ethnic rivalries, tribal leaders have emerged to

defend their lands, assets, and, most crucially, their identities. In Afghanistan, several tribal leaders, including Abdul Rashid Dostum, an Uzbek tribal leader, Ismail Khan, a Tajik tribal leader, Gul Agha Sherzai, a Pashtun tribal leader, and Mohammad Mohaqeq, a Hazara tribal leader, were previously described as warlords due to recent local politics and tribal conflicts (2002-2020) (Bleuer, 2014).

As militia commanders exercising control over areas of varied extent and importance, tribal leaders/chiefs have essentially evolved into regional power brokers during republican government (2001-2021) (Adamec and Clements, 2003). In tribally distinct regions like Bamyan province, where the Hazara tribe makes up 95% of the population, this is occasionally effective as a system of governance (Wily, 2004). Even though the name warlord is generally regarded negatively, not all warlords have always been bad in the context of some post-war countries, such as Afghanistan. The central and local governments, local and international NGOs, and civil society organisations had not been able to carry out their plans and projects – for example community-based health, education, or livelihood projects in remote Afghan communities – without the presence and support of warlords, despite the fact that they have been accused of corruption, domestic crimes, and the smuggling of drugs and weapons (Giustozzi, 2004). Warlords and the members of their militias had a safeguarding agreement with the aforementioned organisations. On the other hand, they also used their authority to hire their own employees, reroute some projects, and extort money from local farmers and truck drivers on the motorways (Giustozzi 2008; Ghiasy et al. 2015).

To further study such cases, the Uzbek commander and leader, Abdul Rashid Dostum, is singled out and portrayed as a warlord out of all proportion to his share of the 'warlord' ranks or participation in war crimes despite the vast cast of strong-armed commanders in Afghanistan (Bleuer 2014, Feroz 2020, and Williams 2008). Dostum was accused of violating human rights

ever since Afghanistan's civil war in the 1990s, according to writings by Esfandiari (2005), Edward (2009), Adamec and Clements (2003), and Giustozzi (2009). Dostum has a long history of violence and is one of the most powerful and divisive commanders in the country. Furthermore, it is alleged that upon their capture in Mazar-e-Sharif in late 2001, his men and militias allowed hundreds of Taliban fighters to suffocate to death. Additionally, he continued to violate human rights and abuse his position of political authority even when he held a prominent military position, such as Vice Minister of Defence in 2005 and country's Vice President in 2014.

In order to consolidate their power and generate income through their official positions as governor and police chiefs within post-2001 Afghanistan governance systems, local commanders, or tribal leaders, Afghan warlords had strong interest in violence and political instability, as stated by Adamec and Clements (2003) about them and the importance of their varying power and influence over various territories. In addition to collecting local government taxes, warlords frequently imposed additional charges on merchants and companies in order to raise resources. They might have participated in illegal activities, such as the drug trade (Eventon 2016). Good examples include the provinces of Herat, which Ismail Khan controls, Balkh, which Ata Mohammad Noor controls, and Nangarhar and Kandahar, which Gul Agha Sherzai controls (Mukhpadhyay, 2009). These mentioned provinces, which border Iran, Pakistan, and Uzbekistan, were strategically important for illegal operations from a commercial standpoint. According to Adamec and Clements (2003), tribal chiefs and leaders have essentially evolved into warlords, regional power brokers, and militia commanders claiming control over regions of various sizes and importance.

Although this is a form of local governance that can be useful in opening the door for interventions in socioeconomic development, as was mentioned in the previous discussion,

there would be opportunities for warlords to abuse government property and engage in illicit activities (such as the production and trade of drugs) that would damage the state's reputation and credibility on a national and international level.

In conclusion, the main objective of this chapter (divided into two distinct sections) was to identify and discuss the role, responsibility, power, and relationships of Afghan warlords in pre- and post-2001 governance processes in Afghanistan. The main reason to study warlords' power and relations in the Afghan governance systems was because warlords can have power and influence, which have been argued to fulfil governance systems in countries like Afghanistan (Lister, 2007). The central argument was that not all warlords (in both eras – pre-and-post-2001) are negative, and ineffective in governance systems of countries after conflicts and wars. As stated by Guistozzi (2004 and 2008) and Wily (2004) that historically, despite Afghan warlords are generally regarded negative as they have been accused of slavery, polygamy (as tribal leaders during 1919s for example) (Hussain, 2003 and Shahrani, 2005), corruption, domestic crimes and smuggling of drugs and weapons (Gistozzi, 2004), the central and local governments, local and international NGOs, and civil society organisations have not been able to carry out their plans and projects without the presence and support of warlords.

Historically, Afghan warlords have often been viewed negatively due to their involvement in slavery, polygamy (as seen among tribal leaders in the 1919s) (Hussain, 2003; Shahrani, 2005), as well as corruption, domestic crimes, and the smuggling of drugs and weapons (Giustozzi, 2004). However, as noted by Giustozzi (2004, 2008) and Wily (2004), both central and local governments, along with international and local NGOs and civil society organizations, have struggled to implement their plans and projects without the presence and cooperation of warlords.

Despite their negative influence/impact, they have a central role to play in governance (in part due to their important historical role, and in part due to the fact that they continued to wield power across large parts of Afghanistan in post 2001 period). For example, in some remote villages and districts of Afghanistan, warlords and the members of their militias had a safeguarding agreement with the said organisations (Giustozzi 2008) and (Ghiasy et al. 2015). This is an example of how important they were in playing governance role.

Furthermore, the second key argument is that warlords have always had influence and power, but their roles have evolved. Although tribes and community leaders, and warlords have had influence, relationship, and power over state affairs, however, their roles, responsibilities and power have not always been the same as they have experienced changes and shifts during different eras. Tribal leaders at that time used these systems to resolve community-based problems, such as community disputes, communicate with state agencies and use their power to receive state services and support. Two key arguments are here that tribal leaders used these systems because they preferred them as they were better than the formal government systems. Second, it was because the formal state systems had not reached remote village communities yet.

Unlike during Monarchical systems of governance, there were major shifts and changes during Afghanistan's first Republic Presidency under Daud Khan (1973-1978) (Zirak, 2020) and later during Peoples Democratic Party of Afghanistan (DPDA), which was predominantly supported by Soviet Union (Beckett, 2007). Although Daud Khan preferred to maintain tribal structures like before to use and gain their support to preserve the economic, social, and political order in the county (Sultana and Azmatullah, 2015), PDPA leaders removed and tortured many tribal and religious leaders who were formally or informally part of Daud Khan's government. As such, it had a significant contribution to the uprising of Islamic groups from villages and tribes

in the fight against the government (Beckett, 2007), (Sultana and Azmatullah, 2015). This governing approach and shifts in power dynamics, roles and relationships of tribal leaders contributed to further political instability, emergence of rebels, and insurgencies and finally Soviet Union invasion of Afghanistan from 1979 to 1989. Although they had a more positive role in governance in previous periods, during 1979 and 1989, warlords played a destabilising role.

The invasion had further exacerbated the situation including the rise of militias, warlords, and local armed groups and Mujahedeen factions who took over in 1992 after continued insurgency and fight for power for another 4 years (Jalali and Grau, 2001), (Grau, 2004), and (Hughes, 2008). The same Mujahedeen leaders took an active role in ousting the Taliban who ruled Afghanistan between 1995 and 2001 (Liakhovsky, 2000 and Maley, 2002). Although warlords were majorly regarded negatively during 2001 and 2021 under different roles and responsibilities, not all warlords have always been ineffective. The central and local governments, local and international NGOs, and civil society organisations have not been able to carry out their plans and projects without the presence and support of warlords - an illustration of warlords positive role to play in governance - despite the fact that they have been accused of corruption, domestic crimes, and the smuggling of drugs and weapons (Giustozzi, 2004). Finally, considering various historical eras in Afghanistan (1919-2021), warlords' roles, responsibilities, power, and relationships as tribal leaders, village chiefs, religious elites, leaders of armed groups, rebels and militias, and/or members of government institutions such as ministers, provincial governors, and police chiefs have been constantly changing. Their involvement in state matters, both formal and informal, was not always detrimental; they also played positive roles. This was evident when Afghan central and local governments, local and international NGOs, and civil society organisations were unable to carry out their activities, such as community-based health, education, and livelihood projects, without the presence and

support of warlords (Giustozzi, 2004). Warlords and members of their militias had a safeguarding arrangement with the aforementioned organisations (Giustozzi 2008; Ghiasy et al. 2015).

As a result, in societies like Afghanistan, which have witnessed a variety of governance models, warlords can play diverse roles and control power in both positive and negative ways in relation to building the state. Finally, warlords exercised tremendous power in Afghanistan, had impacts on security and governance, and remained a complex part of the country's political environment throughout history. Their roles evolved throughout time, but their influence has continued to shape Afghanistan's political directions.

Conclusion

This thesis which was divided into two main chapters – a review of the main literature debates, and a political history of Afghan warlords in pre- and post-2001 governance process –, had four primary arguments. First, a state is a "complex and elusive institution..." that is difficult to define in simple terms" (Hoffman 1995, p. 19). Many state institutions and governance systems in countries that have experienced wars and conflicts are inadequate in their primary tasks of providing people with security and basic services (Tayagi, 2012). Second, often, post-conflict state institutions are unable to provide and administer public services independently. Although state-building is a domestic process, it involves a wide range of internal and foreign stakeholders and partners since it will fail without the engagement of a wide range of players and stakeholders (OECD, 2011). Third, effective state institutions are necessary for service delivery in post-conflict countries (Lister, 2007); nevertheless, governance functions and processes do not have to be founded on liberal approaches to public administration and government development. In certain post-conflict states, illiberal methods to governance building may be more effective in carrying out governance operations (Mukhopadhyay, 2013; Smith, 2014). Fourth, actors – both formal and informal – in a post-conflict society can play both positive and negative roles in state-building and governance systems.

This study, among various other actors, focussed on the role of warlords, who can be both inside and outside of many governments, in the state-building process and governance systems of post-conflict states. While official state institutions may be ineffective or deemed illegitimate in various unstable and conflict-affected contexts, informal institutions and groups such as warlords frequently exist and maintain legitimacy. They typically carry out part of the duties expected by the state. It is now clear that liberal-style state-building initiatives have usually prioritised formal institutions and their powers at the central level, while ignoring sub-state and informal organisations. This has impeded the formation of an organic reform process

driven by local actors, which might have resulted in increasing significance, credibility and acceptance, and legitimacy among citizens. The findings suggest that there is a growing awareness of the need of focussing on existing informal institutions through an illiberal style of governance, which might be attributed to practical acceptance of their presence, recognition that they represent local custom and practice, and/or the conviction that they can operate as an intermediary between the state and society. Informal institutions with broader cultural backgrounds have the ability to improve public service delivery, increase investment, facilitate the transition to more inclusive, rule-based governance, and promote social reconciliation in conflict situations (Brinkerhoff, 2005).

Furthermore, local and informal institutions may perform better than the state (Mehran, 2018). In some cases, informal local government institutions (like warlords in the case of Afghanistan) may complement established formal institutions. In other cases, they may compete with and undermine formal institutions in negative ways, including neo-patrimonialism and patronage networks, which may undermine governance standards. However, the strategy for defending neo-patrimonialism may be ineffective because many warlords and their followers are considered to be greedy and loyal to their leaders.

Furthermore, in a country like Afghanistan, neo-patrimonialism is institutionally established, and any eradication campaign would cause social and political instability, jeopardising post-conflict reconstruction efforts. For instance, Afghan community leaders and elites had the authority and responsibility to limit the state's influence in their lives and to retain control over it. The people's social and political lives were nevertheless greatly influenced by these unofficial power brokers (Cassidy, 2009). This also indicates that at times it was the state that was illegitimate and needing controlling by non-state actors, rather than the other way around.

Some scholars have often depicted warlords as opponents of the state, viewing them as destabilising elements within governance. However, this thesis adopted a different perspective, emphasising the adaptive and evolving nature of their roles. Warlords do not necessarily oppose the state; instead, they act pragmatically, forming alliances with various stakeholders – including the government – when it serves their interests, benefits their tribes, or supports the broader political landscape.

Thus, labelling warlords as purely positive or negative oversimplifies their role. Their influence is shaped by a range of factors, such as historical context, social and cultural affiliations, economic resources, political status, and ambitions for greater authority. Their involvement in governance is not defined solely by resistance or conflict but by strategic power negotiations, allowing them to navigate and adapt to shifting political environments.

This complex relationship between warlords and formal state institutions exemplifies a hybrid governance system, where formal and informal power structures intersect, overlap, and influence one another. Within this framework, warlords can serve as power brokers, enforcers, or even policymakers, illustrating that governance in post-conflict Afghanistan is not exclusively shaped by official institutions but emerges through fluid and negotiated power-sharing arrangements.

Analysing the competing perspectives in this thesis and examining the role of Afghan warlords in the state-building processes from 2001 to 2021 reveals their significant impact on both the short-term and long-term outcomes for the Afghan government and its international partners. In the short term, warlords – especially the former Mujahideen commanders – played a crucial role in the US-led military operation that ousted the Taliban in 2001 (Rubin, 2002). Given their contributions, the international community and the newly formed Afghan government viewed

it as essential to incorporate these warlords into government roles, particularly within the security forces.

However, the decision to include warlords in governance came with substantial trade-offs. While it ensured immediate stability and military backing, it also created long-term challenges that ultimately weakened governance and decision-making. The power dynamics instigated by warlords, who often prioritised their tribal, regional, or personal interests over national unity, led to state fragmentation and corruption. This eroded the legitimacy and authority of the central government, making it difficult to develop functional and unified institutions. Additionally, the warlords' informal networks continued to wield significant power, often undermining government policies and security efforts.

Finally, this compromise between the Afghan government and the warlords contributed to the collapse of the Republic of Afghanistan in 2021, when the Taliban regained control (Sharma, 2021). The hybrid governance system, where warlords operated within and alongside formal state structures, weakened state capacity, destabilised security, and fostered political disunity. This dynamic hampered state-building initiatives and strengthened the influence of informal power networks, which played a key role in facilitating the Taliban's return to power, despite the extensive resources and efforts invested by both the Afghan government and its international partners.

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