

Dynamics of Contentious Politics in Afghanistan, 2001-2016

By

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A thesis submitted for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

of The Australian National University

October 2017

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Declaration

I, Niamatullah Ibrahim, hereby declare that this thesis is my own original work and based on primary data I have collected during field work I conducted as part of my doctoral programme. To the best of my knowledge, it contains no material from published or unpublished work by other persons, nor any material that I have submitted for award of a degree to this or any other institution, except where they were duly acknowledged and fully referenced.

Niamatullah Ibrahim

3 October 2017

Acknowledgements

The past four years have been an incredible journey of learning, amazing conversations and friendships with many amazing scholars and practitioners. During this period, I have accumulated more debts of gratitude than I can register here.

I would like to express my heart-felt gratitude to members of my Supervisory Panel. The journey that led to writing of this thesis began with a conversation with my supervisor, Professor William Maley, in 2010 in Kabul. Throughout the four-year period, Professor William Maley was extremely generous with his time, wisdom and his invaluable private collection of books. I cannot imagine having a better supervisor and mentor for my PhD study. I am also extremely grateful for the support and guidance I received from Dr. Susanne Schmeidl, Professor Jonathan Goodhand and Professor Edward Aspinall for this thesis and related research.

Professor, the Hon. Gareth Evans, Joanna Nathan and Mr. Nick Grono supported my application for an Endeavour Award. I would like to thank them sincerely for helping make the opportunity available to me.

At the Asia-Pacific College of Diplomacy, Andrea Haese, Craig Hanks, Gordon Hill, Hisako Yamauchi, Di Storey, Kerrie Hogan, Dr. Pauline Kerr, Dr. Jeremy Farrall, Associate Professor Greg Fry, Dr. Jochen Prantl, and Professor Geoffrey Wiseman provided an invaluable supporting environment that made this study possible.

I would also like to register my gratitude for my peers and friends Dr. Srinoy Bose, Dr. Haroro Ingram, Dr. Nematullah Bizhan, Dr. Nasir Andisha, Dr. Nishank Motwani, Mr. Ali Reza Younespour, Ms. Farkhondeh Akbari, Mr. Amir Haidari, Ms. Annebelle Davis, Ms. Astari Daenuwy, Mr. Gerard McCarty, Ms. Carly Gordyn, Mr. David Oakeshott, Mr. Shamim Nazari, and my other fellow doctoral scholars at Coral Bell School of Asia Pacific Affairs at the ANU for their friendship and intellectual companionship. I would

like to specially thank Ms. Timothea Horn and Giridharan Ramasubramanian with whom I shared my office during this period. They were incredible friends and colleagues. On 21-23 July 2017, Ms. Horn and her family hosted us at their family farm for a writing retreat with great generosity and warmth. In addition, I would like to thank my dear friends Mr. Arif Saba, Mr. Abbas Farasso, Mr. Sakhi Darwish, Mr. Hadi Marefat, Mr. Khudadad Bisharat for their friendship and support over many years.

In November 2015, I served as Pan-Asia Institute Doctoral Fellow at the Indiana University. I would like to thank Professor Nazif Shahrani for hosting me and providing me access to his class on Islam and Politics. Ms. Melissa Biddinger and Hamidullah Qiayam from Indiana University and Dr. Nicholas Farrelly for their support during the fellowship.

I wish to acknowledge the generous funding that I received from the Department of Education and Training of the Government of Australia through a Postgraduate Endeavour Award. This study would not have been possible without the generous support that was made available to me through the Award. My case managers at the Scope Global provided invaluable support throughout this programme.

I cannot thank enough my parents and siblings for the support and inspiration they have given over the years. My parents ensured that I receive an education, despite very difficult circumstances in Afghanistan. Gul Begum, my wife, has been the source of endless love and support I needed throughout this study, and our children, Hazhir and Shahir, have been amazing sources of motivation and energy.

During my field work in Kabul from August to December 2015, many friends and institutions provided me with incredible support. The Afghanistan Centre at Kabul University (ACKU), Bassa Film, Rasad News Agency, Afghanistan Peace Initiatives (API) and Afghanistan Human Rights and Democracy Organisation generously allowed

me to use their resources and offices to conduct interviews. I cannot thank enough the many men and women in Afghanistan who participated in my research and shared their views on their struggles for a stable and peaceful Afghanistan. I dedicate this thesis to the 86 peaceful protestors who died in the suicide terrorist attack on their rally on 23 July 2016 in Deh Mazang Square of Kabul and their ideals of justice and equality in the country.

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Abstract

This thesis examines dynamics of statebuilding and social mobilisation in Afghanistan from 2001 to 2016 and seeks to contribute to two sets of scholarly literature. First, it aims to contribute to better understanding of the complexity of the post-2001 international intervention and statebuilding in Afghanistan. Second, it aims to contribute to broader literature on contentious politics by extending its theoretical insights to explore dynamics of social movements in the context of a fragile state

The thesis investigates how state fragility, characterised by weakness in extending its authority, in providing public services, and in developing effective and legitimate institutions, can shape contentious politics, and whether state weakness creates conditions that benefit some movements over others. It combines a relational and mechanism-based approach with a multi-institutional view of politics and society, and highlights the nature and dimensions of change and conflict. This is achieved by studying four groups and three protest events in Afghanistan.

Through detailed analysis of the four groups, which provide examples of broadly liberal, left-leaning and Islamist movements in the country, as well as analysis of three mass protest events, the thesis argues that the character and strength of the state has a number of important implications for contentious politics. First, while the institutions of liberal democracy, and parallel processes of exposure of Afghan society to globalisation between 2001 and 2016, helped give rise to a new generation of activists, the highly-centralised institutional structure combined with institutional discouragement of political parties and predominance of patron-client relations drove a new generation of activists towards street politics. Consequently, the neopatrimonial character of the state and dominance of patron-client relations discouraged a younger generation of activists from directly participating in the affairs of state. Second, based on the type and level of statebuilding programmes

and policies, the thesis identified four responses by the case study groups towards the post-2001 international intervention and statebuilding process: reformist, transformationist, rejectionist and partial rejectionist.

These case studies show that while these groups tend to be ideologically oriented towards certain strategic responses, in general policy-level contention and social movement formation were undermined by deeper programmatic and foundational conflicts. Furthermore, these group-level responses were the outcomes of collective attribution of threats and opportunities in a strategic environment that was shaped by a multitude of actors, including non-state and anti-state actors. Mass protests were closely linked to a period of particular decline in state authority and capacity to provide security and services from 2014 to 2016. The three protest events, the largest of their kind during this period, were collective responses to state failures to provide security and basic public services. Finally, while the Islamists have tended to be more successful in building organisations and reaching out to masses and even assuming some state-like functions such as providing services, it was not clear that these organisational gains would necessarily lead to political advantages as in winning elections. Furthermore, the more successful Islamist organisations also appropriated a wide range of secular socio-economic and political responses which may shape their long-term political orientations.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction

In mid-April 2016, Khan Wali Adel, a 24-year old man from the southern province of Paktiya, pitched a tent in Kabul to protest against a traditional practice known as *bad* in Afghanistan. *Bad* is a traditional conflict resolution mechanism that involve exchanges of women as compensation to aggrieved families to resolve blood disputes between families, clans and tribes. In his tent, Adel put up a banner in which he listed his seven main specific demands for abolition of the tradition, five of which were directed towards his own family, and the other two demands from the provincial council of Paktiya and the central government's Ministry of Haj and Religious Endowments and the state-sponsored Ulema Council (Nawandish, 2016; Faramarz, 2016). Adel's own two sisters had previously become victims of the tradition. He was outraged and began to protest after his family began negotiating to receive ten women in compensation for the murder of his two brothers. In response, Adel's father claimed that the family's local enemies were not ready to make peace and that his son, Adel, was not psychologically in a natural state (BBC Farsi, 2016; DW Dari, 2016).

Until mid-October, when Adel ended his protest, his story was captured by a number of major national and international media outlets and news agencies. The sole protestor sparked debates about the situation of women rights in the country's media, civil society and some governmental departments His tent near the parliament building on the Darul Aman Road, was visited by a significant number of people, including members of the Afghan parliament, prominent civil society activists and journalists (Bashardost, 2016; Archiwal, 2016). Despite these important successes, Adel's protest quietly ended with no tangible policy change or action by state authorities against traditional practices that violate women's rights.

The apparent success and then sudden demise of Adel's protest underscored broader dynamics and challenges of protest movements in Afghanistan's post-2001 social, political and security environment. While during the Taliban rule (1996-2001) these forms of politics were virtually unthinkable, after the international intervention, social movement tactics such sit-ins and street demonstrations gained unprecedented popularity among a wide range of social and political groups. Protestors took to the streets to make claims against the state, traditional authorities, non-state militias and warlords, anti-state insurgents, the US and NATO forces and a number of other actors. In their efforts to mobilise support behind their claims, protesters worked to attract attention of media, civil society, traditional religious and cultural authorities, international supporters, and opposition political leaders and parties.

However, the context in which these protests took place was radically different from that of western liberal democracies, often seen as the birthplace of modern social movements. The state institutions that were the target of many of these public and competitive claim-making exercises were facing multiple challenges. After nearly four decades of continued instability, war and mass violence, and despite massive international efforts after 2001, the Afghan state faced serious challenges in enforcing its authority across its territory, in providing basic public services, and in developing effective and legitimate institutions. After nearly 16 years of international efforts at reviving the state capacity and credibility, the Afghan state was heavily dependent on international support, suffered from chronic problem of corruption and inefficiency, and faced an existential threat from a violent insurgency.

Research Aims and Questions

In this thesis, I aim to explore the dynamics and challenges facing social movements and contentious politics in Afghanistan from 2001 to 2016. More specifically, I seek to answer two interrelated questions: First, *how might state fragility shape contentious politics?* And second, *do state fragility and disruption create conditions that favour particular groups or forms of contention?* The first question seeks to contribute to the contentious politics literature by examining mechanisms and processes of contention in the context of a fragile state disrupted by wars and foreign invasions. The second question aims to examine critically an emergent claim in recent years that in Muslim-majority countries ‘Islamists’ enjoy an advantage over their rivals in mobilising the masses.

By studying Afghanistan’s contentious politics, I also aim to contribute to two bodies of scholarship. First, I seek to contribute to a better understanding of the complexity of the post-2001 international intervention and efforts at construction of a more liberal democratic state in Afghanistan. Existing scholarship extensively covers both the high politics of the statebuilding process and the problems and the challenges it encountered, including the violent insurgency by the Taliban and other militant groups. The former body covers different aspects and challenges of the statebuilding process, such as elections (Coburn & Larson, 2014; Goodhand, Suhrke, & Bose, 2016), political parties (Ruttig, 2006) and networks (Sharan, 2013), elite corruption and patronage-based politics (Partlow, 2016), and the threats and challenges presented by warlord resistance or integration into the state structures (Mukhopadhyay, 2014; MacGinty, 2010). The latter body focuses on dynamics of the insurgency (Giustozzi, 2008; Giustozzi, 2009) and the role of foreign powers (Motwani, 2018). I aim to complement these two strands of scholarship by underscoring the rise of social movement activities and peaceful contention and its implication for broader issues of statebuilding and political stability in the country.

Second, I aim to contribute to broader literature on social movements and contentious politics by employing its theoretical insights to explore dynamics of social movements in the context of a fragile state. In this respect, I build on the existing application of the social movement theories to studies of social movements in weak states and transitioning societies. In this respect, I specifically build on the broader approach and concept of social movements as developed by McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly (2004), and the application of the Social Movement Theory to the studies of the Islamist Movements (Wiktorowicz, 2004; Beinin & Vairel, 2011), and social movements in divided societies (Nagle, 2016) and developing countries (Ellis & van Kessel, 2009).

Research Gaps

This thesis builds on the axiom with the assumption that state fragility and disruption caused by protracted violence have profound implications for theories of social movements and contentious politics. Many of the movements in fragile states emerge, evolve or decline in highly-violent and conflict-prone environments. Consequently, war and violence and their consequences are important, and sometimes defining, elements of the social, economic and political environment in which they occur.

As will be elaborated in chapter 2 of this thesis, the theories of social movements as they developed after the 1960s are built upon empirical foundations and particular conceptions of state and society of western societies. Consequently, when applied to contexts characterised by state disruption and fragility these theories, as they stand, suffer from three important shortcomings. First, it is a state-centric literature in that it focuses on the state to account for the rise and variation of contentious politics. Second, it assumes an interest-based model of politics in which actors engage in politics, including contentious politics, to secure or defend their interests. Consequently, it overlooks and underestimates value-based and symbolic drivers of contention. Third, when applied to societies outside

the liberal-democratic countries of the West, it is driven by an implicit preference towards the study of liberal and western-style forms of social movements.

These normative assumptions and preferences underpin a debate about the role and desirability of social movements in fragile and conflict-affected countries. Studying illiberal movements such as the Islamists, some scholars have viewed the long-term role of these movements with scepticism. For example, a working paper of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (Ousman, 2012, p. 36) contends that radical Islamist movements in fragile states of Sub-Saharan African operate as ‘exit movements’, ‘delegitimises state institutions’ and ‘weakens the social infrastructure’. By contrast, another strand of scholarly and policy debate focuses on the positive impacts of political activism and protest movements. Social movements of various ideological and political orientation are seen as the driving forces of the revolutionary wave of protests that became known as the Arab Spring and brought down a number of autocratic leaders across the Arab world in 2011-12. The initial success of these protests in overthrowing well-entrenched autocratic regimes gave rise to hopes that new generations of horizontal and non-ideological movements were opening new windows for social and political reform in the Middle East (Durac, 2015; Durac, 2013).

These divergent views regarding the role of social movements’ political stability in these contexts are most pronounced in the studies of Islamist movements. Two aspects of this debate are worth highlighting here. First, Olivier Roy, the French scholar of political Islam, famously argued that political Islam was failing by the 1990s. He argued that groups that sought to establish Islamic states had ‘social-democratized’, transformed ‘into a type of neofundamentalism, concerned solely with re-establishing Muslim law, the Sharia, without inventing new political forms’ (Roy, 1994, p. ix). In a similar way, describing the evolution of the Iranian Islamic Republic after the 1979 Islamic

Revolution, Bayat (1996) argued that as a result of critiques from within and without, the Islamists were metamorphosing into a post-Islamist phase.

By “post-Islamism” I mean a condition where, following a phase of experimentation, the appeal, energy, symbols and sources of legitimacy of Islamism get exhausted, even among its once-ardent supporters. As such, post-Islamism is not anti-Islamic, but rather reflects a tendency to resecularize religion. Predominantly, it is marked by a call to limit the political role of religion (Bayat, 1996, p. 45).

In contrast to Roy and Bayat, other observers have pointed to persistence, durability and even advantages of the Islamists over their rivals. As summed up in a review by Cammet and Luon (2014), these scholars point to ideological hegemony of the Islamists and their ability to provide social services and greater organisational capacity as sources of the Islamists’ advantage in mobilising the masses and winning elections. Without rejecting these presumed sources of the superiority of the Islamists, Cammet and Luong add that Islamists also enjoy greater advantages that result from their reputation as being competent and trustworthy.

The presumption of an Islamist advantage is all the more surprising given their poor records in winning elections or maintaining power. The outcomes of the Arab uprisings in 2011-12 point to a more complex struggles for political power with uncertain outcomes. Instead of democratic transition, either the old guards re-established their political dominance, or the fall or weakening of authoritarian regimes was followed by chaos, uncertainty, civil wars and humanitarian emergencies. In most of the countries, instead of the young activists, the old and well-organised traditional movements such as the Islamists won the elections. In Syria, Libya and Yemen, the uprisings were followed by civil wars with disastrous humanitarian consequences. In Egypt, in July 2013, General Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, a former army general came to power after overthrowing Muhammad Morsi, the Muslim Brotherhood politician who had been elected as president a year earlier. The failure of the Muslim Brotherhood to maintain power in Egypt, and

the rise of the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), in the course of the chaos and breakdown of state's in Iraq and Syria, introduced 'twin shocks' to the dominant thinking students of Islamists movements as well as the mainstream Islamists themselves (Hamid & McCants, 2017, pp. 1-2)

The complex and uncertain outcomes of the mass mobilisations in the Arab countries illustrate some of the dynamics of how state capacity or weakness interact with social mobilisation to produce divergent outcomes across the Muslim world. Strong states can resist challenging groups through repression or co-optation and weak states succumb to challenges of popular uprisings and disintegrate into civil wars. In these processes of movement emergence and state response, movements, including the Islamists movements, can evolve in a number of directions. By responding to national social, cultural and political environments, the Islamists also appropriate grievances and concerns that are at their core secular and political.

Key Concepts and Research Approach

Key Concepts

At the outset, it is important to define concepts of state fragility and contentious politics as they are used in this thesis. While the notion of state fragility has been subject to intense debates in recent years (see chapter 3), for the purpose of this thesis, state fragility consists of weaknesses in extending its authority uniformly across its territory, in providing public services, and in developing effective and legitimate institutions. In this thesis, I ask how these dimensions of state weaknesses shape contentious politics as defined by McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly (2004, p. 5),

Episodic, public, collective interaction among makers of claims and their objects when (a) at least one government is a claimant, an object of claims, or a party to the claims, and (b) the claims would, if realized, affect the interests *or values* of at least one of the claimants (2004, p. 5) [Emphasis added].

However, this thesis also highlights the significance of symbolic and value-based forms of politics. Consequently, it is conceived that claim-making might be driven by a combination of interests and values. Social movements are a subset of a broader category of contentious politics. What constitutes a social movement has been defined in various ways. Goodwin and Jasper (2015, p. 4) define social movement as a ‘collective, organised, sustained, noninstitutional challenge to authorities, power holders, or cultural beliefs and practices’. Della Porta and Diani (2006, p. 20) emphasise informal networks and collective identity as the defining features of social movements. In their view, social movements are distinct collective action processes in which actors:

- are involved in conflictual relations with clearly identified opponents;
- are linked by dense informal networks;
- share a distinct collective identity.

Snow, Soule and Kriesi (2004) also add that social movements may emerge in defence or challenge to an extant authority. As a result, unlike what is often assumed, in fact movement may emerge in defence of existing authorities. They define social movement as:

Collectivities acting with some degree of organization and continuity outside of institutional and organizational channels for the purpose of challenging or defending extant authority, whether it is institutionally or culturally based, in the group, organisation, society, culture, or world order of which they are a part (p. 11).

While each of these definitions emphasises some particular dimensions of social movements, in this thesis, the concept of a social movement is used in its broader sense to refer to extra-institutional and challenging protest against formal and informal authorities and power holders. As such, while firmly embedded in democratic orders, protest movements are distinctive from institutionalised forms of politics such as political parties and elections.

Multi-Institutional View of Politics and Society

While this thesis is underpinned by the perspective that social science theories and concepts developed in western societies can fruitfully be applied to study fragile states and societies, it is informed by an understanding that uncritical application of these theories to these contexts can miss some of the complexities and nuances of these societies. To strengthen the applicability of the social movement theory to the context of Afghanistan, in this thesis I draw on a number of other literatures to account for the roles of state weakness in shaping the context for social movements. In its broad theoretical orientation, this thesis is informed by dynamic, processual and mechanism-based approaches advanced by McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly (2004). To explore interactive relations between environmental changes and group-level responses, I focus on mechanisms of *collective attribution of threats and opportunities*, *social appropriation*, and *boundary activation* to explore how the four groups and events emerged in response to changes in the social and political environment of Afghanistan between 2001 and 2016. However, I complement this approach in two other ways. First, drawing on Schmidt's (2008) distinction between three levels of ideas and discourses, I make a distinction between three levels of social change and conflict: policy, programme and foundations. Second, drawing on 'the state-in-society' approach of Migdal (2004) and building on Armstrong and Bernstein's (2008) critique of the contentious politics approach, I take a multi-institutional views of politics and society in which power and domination is 'organized around multiple sources of power, each of which is simultaneously material and symbolic' (Armstrong & Bernstein, 2008, p. 75). Although the state as a creator and enforcer of the rules of the game is extremely important, the nature and extent of its power and influence are both historically and spatially variable and contingent. The simultaneous material and symbolic dimensions of institutions mean that successful challenges against institutions also combine material mobilisation of resources and people

with challenging the cultural hegemony of existing authorities and producing new meanings and messages that resonate with social groups. Consequently, culture and social and political narratives are constitutive of institutions and as such the objects of contestation between diverse social and political groups.

An approach based on a multi-institutional view of politics and society and the state-in-society perspective combined with the distinction between levels of changes and conflict has four major implications for the study of social movements. First, while it places the state at the centre of analysis, it recognises it as one of multiple actors involved in a broader struggle for change and domination in the society. Furthermore, the actual practices of the state and its constituent parts may vary significantly from the image it seeks to project of itself, domestically or internationally. Consequently, state institutions are not the only targets of protests as most scholars of contentious politics and social movements assume. In fact, state institutions may themselves be the site of contestation for political control by various social groups, and some parts of the state may join movements challenging other state institutions and actors.

Second, assuming that society as 'composed of multiple and often contradictory institutions' (Armstrong & Bernstein, 2008, p. 82) means that the state is not the only determinant of opening and closure of opportunities for the rise of movements. Change in the environment for the emergence, evolution and impact of movements occurs as a result of shifts in broader configurations of power relations that span formal state institutions and informal political alignments. In fact, some movements may choose not to engage directly with the state and instead focus on social and cultural activities which may only have long-term implications for politics and the state.

Third, movements do not respond to all types of social changes and conflicts equally. While some movements seek programmatic and policy-level changes, others reject the very foundation of the nation-state system.

Fourth, institutions and opportunities for challenging the status quo are not static entities and conditions. Social and political outcomes and changes occur as a result of interactions and competition of states and other players over social control. As argued by McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly (2004, p. 22) as part of the critique of classical social movement theories, recent theorising see ‘social interaction, social ties, communication, and conversation not merely as expressions of structure, rationality, consciousness, or culture, but as active sites of creation and change’. This means that the goals and identities of actors, and the outcome of their actions may change and evolve in the course of contentious politics.

Methods and Case Studies

I examine the dynamics of contentious politics in Afghanistan through detailed study of four groups and three events. I follow a qualitative approach, using detailed interviews with organisers of protest movements, government officials, members of parliament, religious scholars, academics and journalists. In addition, I use formal statements and online and offline materials produced by organisers and leaders of movements to complement data collected during my interviews.

The following are the main case study groups:

- **Hezb-e Hambastagi Afghanistan** (Solidarity Party of Afghanistan), a political party registered in Afghanistan in 2004. What is distinctive about Hezb-e Hambastagi is that while it is formally recognised as a political party, in practice it functions as a social movement organisation. It does not compete in elections,

and focuses on organising regular protest activities against the political elites who dominated the political process and state institutions after 2001.

- **Afghanistan 1400**, a civil and political movement that was launched in 2011 by a group of middle class professionals. It is not formally registered with the government but because of the social profile of many of its individual members, the movement has attracted significant domestic and international attention.
- **Jamiat-e Eslah wa enkeshaf-e ejtimai Afghanistan** (Society for Reform and Social Development of Afghanistan), a flagship organisation that was registered as a social organisation with the Ministry of Justice in 2003. It includes a number of other educational, media, charity and cultural organisations. While Jamiat-e Eslah focuses on peaceful educational and cultural programmes and there is no evidence to link it to violent activities, many are concerned that the organisation is behind a wave of ‘soft radicalisation’, training a new generation of radical Islamists.
- **Hezb ut-Tahrir** is the national branch of global Islamist movement that is active in many countries across the world. It has been active in Afghanistan since 2003 and considers the country as one of the provinces for caliphate, or a global Islamic government, which it seeks to establish.

In addition to these groups, the thesis examines the following three protest events.

- Three separate protests events that followed the killing of **Farkhunda Malikzadah** on 20 March 2015.
- The 11 November 2015 protest in response to the killing of the **Zabul Seven** by insurgent groups in the province of Zabul.

- **The Roshanayee (Enlightenment)** protest movement that was formed in protest against an April 2016 government decision to change the route of the TUTAP power transmission line from the province of Bamyan to the Salang Pass, and was subject of a suicide bombing during a peaceful demonstration on 23 July 2016.

The Findings and Argument of the Thesis

By using a mechanism-based approach to the study of these groups and events, and by identifying the particular types of social and political change to which they responded, I found that these groups are deeply shaped by the weaknesses of the Afghan state. First, the four groups are products of the statebuilding and social changes it triggered following the overthrow of the Taliban regime in 2001. Each of these groups benefited from the relative political and social opening of the post-2001 period, and the broad social transformation that Afghanistan experienced during this period. Consequently, to varying degrees the rise and evolution of these groups also signifies an emerging generational break in Afghanistan's politics. In this respect, as harbingers of broader social and political change, these groups reflect the discontent of a new generation of Afghanistan's social and political activists with the patronage-based and divisive politics of the dominant elites between 2001 and 2016.

Second, each of the four groups represents a particular response to the 2001 international intervention, subsequent practice of liberal statebuilding, and to the continued weakness of the state. Hezb ut-Tahrir represents a *rejectionist* position by clearly repudiating the foundational, programmatic and policy orientations of the Afghan state. It rejects both the idea of the nation-state system and the principles of electoral democracy on which the post-2001 statebuilding enterprise was based. Jamiat-e Eslah has taken a *transformationist* position by accepting the formal legitimacy of the state system but engaging in a transformationist strategy of bottom-up social and cultural change and

assuming some of the functions of the state such as delivering educational and health services and providing charity to the poor. In the meantime, it stops short of fully participating in the political process. Afghanistan 1400 has taken a *reformist* position that is premised on the acceptance of the principles of the post-2001 liberal democracy but is concerned with corruption, and elite division and inability of the state to perform its functions. Internally, the movement is divided over whether to participate in formal politics directly, or pursue strategies of a civic and social movement. Hezb-e Hambastagi underscores a *partial rejectionist* position, in that it accepts basic premises of the nation-state system and electoral democracy but expresses deep programmatic opposition to the US's political and military presence and the dominant role given to the former mujahedin groups in the state institutions. It is formally registered as a formally political party but does not compete in elections. Instead, it focuses on organising protest against the US-led intervention and the elites who have dominated the state institutions and distribution of state and foreign patronage. The rise and evolution of these groups illustrate the dynamics of mutual interaction between statebuilding and group formation in Afghanistan.

In contrast to the four groups, which represent more organised and strategic responses, the three protest events mark the ability of the new generation of activists to mobilise through loose and mostly informal social networks that bring together a wide range of grassroots activists, aspiring politicians, students, and leaders of civil society organisations and small businesses. Taken together, the three protest events, which became the largest and most dramatic events of their kind between 2001 and 2016, are responses to government failures to provide basic security and public services. Importantly, the protest events emerged at a time of particularly steep decline in government capacity and credibility following the 2014 fraudulent presidential elections and concurrent deterioration of security and economic conditions. As responses to the

state's failures to perform its basic functions, these events also underscore the rise of a new generation of social and political elites for whom effective and credible state institutions have gained paramount significance. Consequently, these grassroots protest against state failures also underline the deepening of the roots of the post-2001 state among Afghanistan's rising social and political elites.

Third, each of the groups and events reflect a combination of *interest-based* and *symbolic* forms of politics. In other words, each group and event is simultaneously symbolic and material. In fact, despite significant differences, the organisers of these groups and events are united by underlying value-based and symbolic motivations. An important aspect of the state's weakness is its poor capacity in discursive and symbolic fields which allows for highly competitive forms contention over legitimacy and credibility of state authority.

Thesis Outline

In the following chapters, I will proceed to examine the dynamics of social movements and contentious politics in Afghanistan in greater details. In chapter 2, I critically engage with various strands of social movement theory, asking how they might help explain social mobilisation in a fragile state. In chapter 3, I narrow down the focus of the thesis through a detailed examination of drivers and consequences of state fragility and disruption. In chapter 4 and 5, I set the context for the discussion in Afghanistan by providing an historical overview of Afghanistan's social and political movements and the institutional and political context between 2001 and 2016. In chapters 6, 7 and 8 I use *mechanisms of collective attributions of threats and opportunities, appropriation of resources and boundary activation* to examine both the group-level dynamics of the four main case-study groups as well as their interaction with the state in Afghanistan. In chapter 9, I continue with the mechanism-based analysis to examine the three protest movements before drawing some general conclusions in the final chapter of the thesis.

Chapter 2: Social Movement Theory: From the Irrationality of Collective Behaviours to Rationality of Collective Actions and Ambition of Global Applicability

Introduction

It is not surprising that social movements have appeared in Afghanistan in recent years. Except under some extremely repressive regimes such as the Taliban in Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001, protest movements are recognised as routine forms of politics and as major drivers of social and political change around the world (Meyer & Tarrow, 1998). People organise collectively to protest against programmes and policies of states and international institutions, and the behaviour of non-state actors such as large multi-national corporations. Some movements are defensive in the nature of claims they make. They protest against policies or social, cultural or political changes that they believe threaten the status quo and alter extant power relations. Others are offensive in their goals and strategies. They demand that the state institute new policies and promote or institutionalise social, political or cultural changes that involve some alterations in existing rules of the games which determines distribution of resources or symbolic and political representation. As a result, social movements are closely linked to dynamics of power relations as well as processes of social change.

Social movements, however, were not always recognised as legitimate social and political actors. In fact, up to the 1960s, a number of influential scholars studied social movements as part of broader collective behaviours that included mobs, riots, and fads. Seen as the result of social breakdown and the strain it created at the individual level, these behaviours were regarded as disruptive and irrational tendencies that were harmful to the normal functioning of social and political processes (Smelser, 1962; Buechler, 2004). In this chapter, I discuss this shift of opinion about protest movements from their characterisation as irrational outbursts to their acceptance as rational, from being seen as

disruptive collective behaviour to being recognised as normal elements of a democratic process. I present and critically review the main theoretical traditions that have dominated research about collective actions and social movements since the 1960s. The overall purpose of this chapter is to provide a general context for the theoretical and empirical discussion that follow in the subsequent chapters.

The first section of this chapter begins by asking the basic question of how a social movement might be defined. The second section discusses the main theoretical perspectives that emerged between the 1960s and 1990s. The third discusses efforts at reformulation and synthesis of the classical theories since mid-1990.

Changing Theory and Practice of Social Movements

A social movement is a distinctive form of collective action which brings together a group of individuals in collective efforts in pursuit of some shared interests or values. Tilly (2004) argued that social movements as a form of public politics were a modern phenomenon that emerged during the eighteenth century Europe as a consequence of four broad social transformations: war, parliamentarisation, capitalisation and proletarianization. Simply put, Tilly argued that wars forced ruling elites to expand state structures, which then increased government expenditures. To cover the costs of increased expenditures, state elites needed to extract greater volumes of resources and mobilise people from the territories they controlled. The increased costs of war also increased the power of parliaments, which were becoming important loci of power struggles among various groups as well as targets of popular mobilisation as parliaments gained greater power in relations to monarchs and state elites. In the meantime, the expansion of agrarian, commercial and industrial capital weakened the power of the feudal aristocrats, and the dependence of increasing numbers of the population on wage

labour freed more people from dependence on landlords to engage in political action.

These broad changes resulted in the invention of social movements as

contingent alliances between dissident aristocrats and bourgeois (who lacked the numbers for independent action against the bulk of ruling classes) and dissatisfied workers (who lacked the legal and social protection supplied by patrons) (Tilly, 2004, p. 27).

Consequently, social movements are modern phenomena that came into being with processes of political and economic modernisation in Europe. However, movements can take diverse forms, depending on the social and political contexts in which they emerge.

The diversity and complexity of movements have also meant that there are competing definitions of what social movements are. Two main sources of such disagreement are worth highlighting here. First, social movements, as a subtype of collective political struggle, may significantly vary in the collective claims they make, the targets against which they mobilise, and the strategies and tactics they use to achieve their goals. For example, the 2012 Occupy Movement in the United States differed significantly from the global environmental movement. The former targeted specific institutions, which were the large financial corporations in Wall Street, adopted a specific tactic sit-in and occupation public spaces, and lasted for a relatively short period of time. By contrast, the latter consists of a diverse range of groups which are active across countries, promote claims that affect governments, businesses and individuals, and are likely to be sustained over decades to come.

Second, the conceptual definition of social movements is also influenced by scholars' own broader assumptions that may not be made explicit in theorising about social movements. Scholars may assume particular models of society and politics and human motivations that affect the way in which social movements, their participants and outcomes are conceived (Armstrong & Bernstein, 2008). As a diverse field, the theorising efforts have been influenced by both the broader trends in the social sciences and

changing nature of social activism as the object of its study. As Buechler (2004, p. 47) puts it,

The story of social movement theory is not just a function of movements themselves, but also of the social and intellectual histories of the countries and disciplines in which the theories evolve.

The impact of these two sources of disagreement over conceptual definitions and theoretical approaches can be usefully illustrated by the distinction that is often made between ‘collective behavior’ and ‘collective action’ traditions in the study of social movements. Prior to the 1960s, social movements were often studied as a subtype of ‘collective behaviour’, which included a range of disruptive phenomena such as riots, crowds, panics and crazes. At the core of the collective behaviour tradition was an overriding concern about the impact of modernising changes such as the emergence of ‘mass society’ (Buechler, 2013) on social bonds and integration. In its various versions, it viewed collective behaviour as a consequence of breakdown and disruption of social norms and routines and the strains they caused on individuals through creation of a sense of anomie and alienation. Consequently, collective behaviours were also usually viewed negatively and associated with irrational, emotional and thus dangerous and disruptive tendencies (Smelser, 1962; Marx & Wood, 1975; Buechler, 2004).

During the 1960s, the literature underwent a paradigm shift with major qualitative and substantive implications. Henceforth, movements became a subtype of ‘collective action’ that gradually became accepted as a normal and routine aspect of democratic politics. The rise of mass protest movements led by middle class professionals and a generation of scholar/activists during the decade meant that the view that the protest movements were temporary and irrational social outbursts was no longer tenable. As a result, a new generation of scholars turned their attention to explaining how rational individuals engaged in collective actions and strategise and respond to their social and political environments.

Despite significant differences, a few shared characteristics can be found in most of these definitions. First, a social movement is a distinctive form of collective action that challenges existing political, economic and cultural authorities. A social movement challenges existing power relations, and is constituted by groups that have limited or no access to institutional politics. Consequently, social movements are different from interest groups, political parties and electoral politics that advance socio-political interests within extant institutional arrangements.

Second, while the tendency of social movements to engage in protest activities tends to attract most of the headlines, it is important to recognise that public protests such as rallies represent but one of several courses of actions that are available to a challenging movement. Challenging groups employ a wide range of strategies and tactics in pursuit of their collective strategies, public protests and marches being just one, even if the most visible of them. In addition to protests, movements form organisations, build coalitions and explain their ideas and employ cultural symbols to justify and legitimate their causes. Having said that, it is important to remember that the tendency towards non-institutional tactics distinguishes social movements from political parties and interest groups.

Third, social movements are sustained, and as such are different from single acts of protest. Movements may experience periods of decline and fragmentation but in general sustain the commitment of their members to their causes for extended periods of time.

Fourth, any single movement operates in a broader strategic 'field of social movements' and their character, strategies and outcomes are shaped by their interaction with the dominant authority and one another. Consequently, as Calhoun (1993, pp. 386-387) argues, in any given historical era or situation, individual social movements are parts of broader 'fields of social movements' and as such are characterised by 'inherent plurality of their forms, contents, social bases, and meanings'.

The Rise and Evolution of Social Movement Theories

As an established field of social science inquiry, social movement studies are a products of the shift from the collective behaviour tradition to the collective action theories of the 1960s. Over the past half century, the field has continued to evolve, producing a multi-disciplinary body of scholarly literature that brings together political scientists, sociologists, anthropologists and social psychologists (Snow, Soule , & Kriesi, 2004; Della Porta & Diani, 2006; Klandermans & Roggeband, 2007). Central to understanding the post-1960s theorising is *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups*, a 1965 book by Mancur Olson. The book represented a break from the collective behaviour tradition by placing a rational and calculating individual at the heart of any collective action. Olson began with the assumption that individuals who participate in any collective actions are rational actors who make decisions on the basis of an assessment of the costs and benefits of their participation. However, the assumed rationality of the actor in his approach resulted in an unexpected conclusion: Olson challenged the widely-held view at that time that individuals and groups would act collectively to further their common interests. On the contrary, he argued that

Unless the number of individuals in a group is quite small, or unless there is coercion or some other special device to make individuals act in their common interest, rational, self-interested individuals will not act to achieve their common or group interests (1971, p. 2).

What led Olson to such a conclusion was the assumption that the incentive of self-interested individuals to participate in collective action declined as the size of the group that shared the interest grew larger. Larger groups such as groups of firms in a competitive industry might share an interest in lobbying a government for assistance but it would be irrational for an individual firm to contribute to the collective effort to attract government intervention. The individual firm lacks the incentive to contribute because, regardless of its own contribution, it will also benefit if efforts by other members of the groups secure

the collective interest. Furthermore, its individual contribution will be so marginal in larger groups that its withdrawal from the collective effort will be unnoticeable to other members of the group. In Olson's view, this created the problem of 'free riders', that is, group members who benefit from the effort of others without making any contribution. In large groups, Olson argued, the problem could be overcome through coercion or provision of additional incentives to members in addition to the shared interest in achievement of the collective goal.

The irony of Olson's thesis was that it predicted that collective action was running into difficulties at a time when the US and many other countries were bursting with activism. As a result, while the 'free rider problem' became central to the analysis of group theories, scholars shifted their attention to broader social, economic and political environments that encouraged or hindered formation of social movements. In a broad overview, the field as it developed between the 1960s and the 1990s was dominated by three theoretical perspectives: the Resource Mobilisation Theory, which was inspired by insights from economics and rational choice theory; the Political Process Model, which was structuralist in its orientation; and finally, the social constructivist perspective which reflected a 'cultural turn' in the study of social movements.

Rational Choice: The Resource Mobilisation Theory

One of the most influential theories of the after 1960s was the Resource Mobilisation Theory, a perspective which drew heavily on concepts and insights from economics and rational choice theories. The economic approach of the theory was most evident in the use of such concepts as 'social movement sector', 'social movement industries', 'social movement organisations' and 'social movement entrepreneurs'. The conceptual lenses created by these concepts highlighted both the significance of material and social

resources to the emergence of movements, and the competitive nature of movement organisation and social mobilisation.

Zald and McCarthy (1977), two of the main proponents of the Resource Mobilisation Theory, questioned what they regarded as the traditional literature's emphasis on the existence of grievances and on generalised beliefs about the causes of those grievances as key to the emergence of social movements. They argued that 'grievances and discontent may be defined, created, and manipulated by issue entrepreneurs and organizations' (p. 1215). Instead of grievances, they pointed to the significance of availability of resources for the rise of social movements. In particular, they emphasised the significance of availability of discretionary resources in a society as a precondition for the development of social movements. By discretionary resources, they meant time and money that individuals and groups could afford to reallocate to respond to different demands. In broad terms, the theory holds that social movements are products of preference structures towards particular social change in a given society. They argued that the ability of a group of people to turn their shared preferences into social action depends on the existence of organisational structures that can be utilised to form Social Movement Organisations and mobilise resources. The individual Social Movement Organisations combine to form a social movement industry, in which, similar to the role of firms in an economics industry, they engage in competitive mobilisation of resources.

During the 1970s, the Resource Mobilisation Theory was the dominant approach to the study of social movements in the United States. It offered an important corrective to the previous theories that saw social movements as simply products of grievances and ideologies. It drew attention to the crucial roles that availability or scarcity of resources played in making collective actions possible in pursuit of collective goals. However, by the early 1980s, some of the major weakness of Resource Mobilisation Theory were becoming apparent as other scholars began to scrutinise its key conceptions, in particular

the concept of 'resources' and its applicability across different situations: some described it as 'one of the most primitive and unspecified terms in the theoretical vocabulary' of social movement literature (Edwards & McCarthy, 2004, p. 125).

Notwithstanding these criticisms, the importance of resources for initiation and continuation of collective action could hardly be underestimated. Consequently, in response to these criticisms, Resource Mobilisation Theory scholars began to specify various types of resources and their significance for social groups to form and engage in protest activities. Edwards and McCarthy (2004) formulated the most detailed typology of resources that they believed were critical to social movements, and the manner in which they could be aggregated and accumulated by various social groups for collective action. They broadened the concept beyond its original economic conception by drawing on theories of social capital advanced by Bourdieu (1986) and Putnam (1995) to incorporate other forms of resources. They made a distinction between five types of resources: moral, cultural, social-organisational, human and material. Furthermore, they emphasised that not all resources are equally helpful for collective action. They emphasised that use-value of resources for social movements depend on their 'fungibility' and 'proprietary'. The former indicates the extent to which resources can be transferred from one group to another and the latter the extent to which groups have access to and control of their resources. In such broad formulations, distribution of resources was part of broader social stratification processes, which among other things, determined differential access to resources among various social groups.

The Political Process Model

Another influential approach explained social movements in terms of the political environment and institutional structures of a given society. Central to this approach was the idea that 'exogenous factors enhance or inhibit prospects for mobilization, for

particular sorts of claims to be advanced rather than others, for particular strategies of influence to be exercised, and for movements to affect mainstream institutional politics and policy' (Meyer & Minkoff, 2004, pp. 1457-1458). Central to the approach is the concept of 'political opportunity structures', which is used to explain a relationship between political behaviour, including protest, and the political environment in which it takes place. The concept was first systematically developed by Eisinger (1973) who studied incidents of political protests in relation to institutional environments of municipal governance in 43 American cities. Viewing protest as a product of cost-benefit calculation about the signalling of impatience and frustration, Eisinger argued that there was a curvilinear relationship between opening of political opportunities and the prevalence of protests. This meant that protest was least likely in extremely open (mayor-council systems) and extremely closed environments (council manager systems) but was most frequent in cities that were characterised by a mix of open and closed systems. One of the main points he made was that opening of political opportunities in mixed systems was creating expectations which they were unable to meet.

Charles Tilly was the most influential proponent of the political process model. In *From Mobilization to Revolution* (1978), Tilly developed a theoretical model in which actors were constantly struggling for positions of influence in the polity. Depending on their interests and varying capacities for organisation, mobilisation and collective action and availabilities of opportunities, the contenders for government power are divided into two camps: *members* and *challengers*. Thus, whether a group becomes a member of the polity or remains outside it and thus becomes a challenger depends on its ability to mobilise resources in the process of interaction with other groups and the government. Challenging the government and polity members through mobilisation and collective action requires resources, and variation in the ability of groups to pool resources places them in different positions in relation to the polity. In Tilly's own words:

They vary in the success with which they get back resources in return; the biggest division in that regard separates the high-return *members* of the polity from the low-return *challengers*. Among other things, all contenders (members and challengers alike) are struggling for power. In the model, an increase in power shows up as an increasing rate of return on expended resources. All challengers seek, among other things, to enter in the polity. All members seek, among other things, to remain in the polity. Changes in the resources controlled by each contender and by the government, changes in the rates at which the contenders and the government give and take resources, and changes in the coalition structure add up to produce entries into the polity, and exits from it. The model conveys a familiar image of interest-group politics (p. 54).

In his treatment of the Civil Rights Movement in the United States, McAdam (1999) specified the causal sequences of changes in opportunity structures and protest movements. McAdam synthesised the political structure model with existing literature on organisational structure and collective consciousness of groups to link broader environmental changes to group level processes. How do structures of political opportunities change? First, McAdam pointed to broad processes and events such as ‘wars, industrialisation, international political realignments, prolonged unemployment and widespread demographic changes’ (p. 41) as sources of periodic disruption of the *status quo* and changes in structures of power relations. In other words, these broad shifts were indirectly influencing social insurgency through disrupting prevailing power relations. But these structural shifts and their effects on power relations were not enough. Second, McAdam emphasised the importance of organisational resources for the ability of groups to exploit favourable opportunities and organise campaigns of social protest. Central to the ability of an aggrieved community to make use of opportunities is the existence of organisational networks and associational structures that can facilitate collective action through enabling communication and ‘block recruitment’ of activists, and serve as structures of ‘solidarity incentives’ and interpersonal rewards for participation in the movement. Thus, availability of favourable opportunities and organisational resources is necessary but not sufficient for the rise of social protests. The third necessary factor was the subjective meaning people attributed to their abilities and

external conditions, a process to which he referred as ‘cognitive liberation’. He argued that the Civil Rights Movement was the outcome of the confluence of three factors: political opportunities, indigenous organisational strength and cognitive liberation.

The generation of insurgency is expected to reflect the favourable confluence of three sets of factors: expanding political opportunities combine with the indigenous organization of the minority community to afford the insurgents the ‘structural potential’ for successful collective action. That potential is, in turn, transformed into actual insurgency by means of the crucial intervening process of cognitive liberation (p. 51).

In subsequent decades, as Giugni (2009) argues, American and most European scholars focused on two different aspects of structures of political opportunity. The former tended to study changes in the structures of opportunities, and specifically the opening and closure of windows of opportunity, which could encourage or discourage the rise of a particular movement or cycles of protest movements. By contrast, most European scholars focused on the more stable and durable aspects of opportunity structures. By explicating such stable characteristics of political structures, they attempted to account for variations of movements across the continent.

By the 1990s, the Political Process Model had become a dominant approach in the study of contentious politics. However, the divergent practices in the application of the theory overstretched its key concepts, most notably Political Opportunity Structure, and made it the object of a number of criticisms and critical reflections, including by original proponents of the theory. Perhaps the most serious critique of the Political Process Model came from Goodwin and Jasper (1999), who argued that overstretching of its key concepts and its structural bias made the approach ‘tautological, trivial, inadequate, or just plain wrong’ (p. 28). Gamson and Meyer (1996) complained that the concept of political opportunity was becoming a ‘sponge that soaks up virtually every aspect of the social movement environment – political institutions and culture, crises of various sorts, political alliances and shifts’. They warned that ‘used to explain so much, it may

ultimately explain nothing at all' (p. 275). Depending on what the scholars sought to explain, they argued that the concept has been used as an independent, dependent or intervening variable. To overcome these problems of conceptual imprecision, they argued that distinctions should be made between cultural and institutional environment on the one hand, and the stable and volatile dimensions of those opportunities, on the other.

Cultural Turn: The Social Constructionist Perspective

Reflecting the broader 'cultural turn' in the social sciences, a number of scholars of social movements turned their attention to the role of meaning, emotion and identity in social movements. Rooted in a social constructionist ontology, cultural analysts highlight the significance of meaning, culture, identity and emotions in collective action (Jasper, 2007). They investigate how ideologies, belief systems or cultural communities shape contentious actions (McAdam, Tarrow, & Tilly, 2004, pp. 21-22). As a result, they attribute causal powers to ideology, values, norms, beliefs and norms. Two aspects of the culturalist perspectives are worth highlighting here: New Social Movements Theory and Framing.

New Social Movements Theory were formulated by a number of European scholars to analyse social and political movements that diverged from the logic of economic production and class relations, which were presumed to be the source of politically-significant political actions in classical Marxism. These scholars departed from Marxism by identifying new logics of collective action and dynamics of social and political conflicts that were being excluded from the economic lens of classical Marxist thinkers. The central premise of the various theories was that during the second half of the twentieth century, capitalist societies were transitioning to new forms of social formation, which they variously described as advanced or mature capitalism, programmed, post-industrial and post-modern societies. The transitions were creating new sources and sites of conflict,

engendering new relations of domination and resistance, and thus giving rise to new forms of movements such as feminism, ecology, peace and animal rights movements. In contrast to industrial society, where class relations and material distribution were the primary sources of social conflicts and struggles, and labour was the main force in social struggles, in the new post-industrial societies, quest for identity, autonomy and life-style were becoming the fulcrums of collective action (Buechler, 1995). In other words, the sites of social conflicts were moving from the arena of production to consumption.

The New Social Movements theorists have been subjected to a barrage of criticisms. Two aspects of these criticisms are worth highlighting here. First, many scholars have taken issue with the notion of the 'newness' of these movements. For example, Calhoun (1993) argued that the quest for autonomy and identity and other defining features of new social movements can be traced even to some movements of the early nineteenth century. Consequently, these are features of movements at the early stages of their development. Furthermore, these theories may be limited in their applicability to developing and fragile societies that are lagging behind in capitalist development. For example, in Africa while identity issues have become more salient, struggles over distributive issues remain central to most social movements across the continent (Habib & Opoku-Mensah, 2009). Second, these theorists also excluded and marginalised other forms of social movement that did not fit with what they considered as new faultlines of post-industrialist societies. As Pichardo (1997, p.413) notes, 'as the Marxist theories tended to marginalize protest that did not stem from the working class, so too have NSM theorists marginalized social movements that do not originate from the left'. Consequently, the new movement theorists assume a particular model of society, which privileges what they regard as progressive and emancipatory movements, excluding reactionary, conservative and right-wing movements.

Besides the New Social Movements theory, another group of mainly American scholars used insights from linguistics and social psychology to develop their own conceptual repertoires to understand how social movements construct collective identities, formulate narratives, and interpret their social, cultural and political environments (Jasper, 2007). Central to this perspective is the concept of framing, which was drawn from the work of Goffman on how people make meaning of, and organise, their social environments. In his influential book, *Frame Analysis* (1986), Goffman argued that to understand everyday social occurrences people hark back to primary frameworks or schemata of interpretation to 'locate, perceive, identify, and label a seemingly infinite number of concrete occurrences' (p. 21). The concept was subsequently developed and applied to social movement analysis by Snow and his collaborators in a series of theoretical papers (1986; 1988; 1992). At the core of their effort was a desire to understand the complex and transformative processes of social mobilisation and participation in social movements. These processes, which Snow identified in his ethnographic study of the Buddhist Nichiren Shoshu movement in the United States, often entailed a rebirth and thorough biographical transformation of individual participants. In Snow's (2014) own words,

I was intrigued by how individuals who initially had little to no understandings of the movement would come not only to embrace its beliefs and practices, but also to redefine who they were in terms of those very beliefs and practices. Time and again, apparent cultural strangers would come to a meeting, agree to experiment with the practice, and, several months later, not only avow previously foreign religious beliefs but use them and the practices in which they were embedded as the bases for constructing a new or revitalized sense of their biography and self (p. 24).

These scholars argued that central to such transformation at the individual level was frame alignment, which they used to refer to a process of linking of an individual's meaning construction to that of social movement, as a result of which 'some set of individual interests, values and beliefs and SMO activities, goals, and ideology are congruent and complementary' (Snow, Rochford, Worden, & Benford, 1986, p. 464). The congruence

of individual and collective interpretive processes occurs in four ways: (a) frame bridging, (b) frame amplification, (c) frame extension, and (d) frame transformation.

Following the initial introduction of the concept, Snow and his colleagues further expanded the concept by making a distinction between three main forms of frames: diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational (1988). In other words, a successful frame should diagnose a particular problem, offer a solution and motivate supporters and the public to participate in collective action. By delineating various types of frames and the processes of their articulation, these scholars highlighted the active role and agency of social movements in production and diffusion of meanings.

Over time, students of framing processes also shifted their attention towards interactive processes of articulation of meaning and the response they invoke from broader socio-cultural environments. In a review of the literature, Snow and Benford (2000) identify the variable features of social movements that account for their differential impact on their target audiences. The variables that affect the degree of resonance of a frame include problem identification or locus of attribution, flexibility and rigidity, interpretive scopes and influences of those frames. To put it simply, the manner in which a problem is identified as a locus of action and the responsibility for the problem is attributed to certain actors, and the ways in which those problems are framed - rigidly or flexibly - and whether the frames are wide or narrow in their scopes, determine their impact on the target audience and the broader public. The wider, more flexible and inclusive frames that can resonate with broader social and cultural milieus are often referred to as 'master narratives'. In addition to these generic frames, more specific frames are produced at the level of particular movements or individual organisations that constitute a movement.

A useful way to capture the variability of framing processes and their differential impacts is to identify the sources of collective action frames and the levels at which they are

developed and contested. The existing literature converges on the idea that framing is a contested process and its impact on its audience is mediated by the material and institutional context in which it is formulated. Chong and Druckman (2013) highlight the significance of understanding the responses by adversaries in challenging and undermining the effects of frames in electoral mobilisation. The social movement literature also identifies two sources of frames: discursive and strategic. The former refers to meaning-making processes by individual movement members as they connect and align events and experiences through conversation and written communications about movement activities. In this process, ‘slices of observed, experienced, and/or recorded “reality” are assembled, collated and packaged’ (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 623). At the strategic level, collective action frames become more goal-oriented, utilitarian and deliberative and are produced, contested, reinterpreted and transformed by social movement organisations and entrepreneurs as they respond to their adversaries, seek to mobilise supporters, and acquire resources.

Table 1: Theories on Participation and Emergence of Social Movements, Van Stekenburg & Klandermans (2009, p. 20).

	Classical approaches	Contemporary approaches		
	Mass Society Collective behaviour	Resource mobilisation	Political process approach	Social constructivist approaches
Why people protest	Grievances, discontent, anomie, class conflict	Resources, opportunities, social networks efficacy	Political opportunities (cognitive liberation)	Social construction of reality: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - (meaning) construction - identity - emotions - motivations
Who protests	Alienated, frustrated, disintegrated, manipulated, marginalised people	Well-organized, professional, resourceful social networks; embeddedness	Coalitions between challengers/political elites; embeddedness	Countercultural groups, identity groups; embeddedness

Forms of protest	Spontaneous, irrational, expressive, violent (panics, fashions, mobs, crime)	Rational, planned, instrumental (institutional politics, lobbying, interest groups)	Rational, instrumental, polity oriented (elite contention, lobbying, indigenous minorities, disruption i.e. sit-ins, strikes)	Ideological, expressive, identity-oriented (cultural and religious organizations, self-help groups, alternative lifestyles)
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The original formulation of the framing perspective gave rise to a prolific literature on various forms of collective action frames and the processes of their articulation and diffusion. As with other theoretical perspectives, the proliferation of the literature also exposed it to some important criticisms. Benford (1997), one of the original formulators of the perspective, pointed to a number of shortcomings of the literature towards the end of the 1990s. The shortcomings included lack of systematic empirical studies, a descriptive tendency that Benford thought trivialised the perspectives by producing a long list of collective action frames, a propensity to reify frames as things and static constructions rather than dynamic processes, a tendency to focus on frames that are articulated by movement elites at the expense of rank and file members, the broader public and the adversaries, and finally a reductionist ‘proclivity to reduce collective action and interaction to individual level explanation, to psychologise what is sociological’ (p. 420).

Benford’s warning against reductionism and the danger of psychologising complex social, economic and political aspects of collective action also pointed to the limits of the framing perspective. As may have become clear so far, the framing scholars have invested considerable efforts to explain the conditions and mechanisms that increase or hinder the effects of collective action frames. The effects of frames are mediated, moderated and even neutralised by socio-cultural, economic and political environments in which collective action takes place. As Snow and Benford (2000, p. 626) put it, ‘one thing we do know, however, is that these framing contests occur within complex,

multiorganizational – and sometimes multi-institutional arenas’. The question then is to what extent do frames matter? While stressing the significance of frames in highlighting collective action claims and focusing messages towards target constituencies, Ryan and Gamson (2006) warned against treating frames as ‘magic bullets’, a different version of the idea that ‘the truth will set you free’. They pointed out the significance of structural inequalities in power relations and uneven playing fields that often determine outcomes of collective action. They criticised a social marketing approach to framing that presumes its audience are individual citizens with individually-held views and voting rights. Instead, they proposed what they called a participatory communication approach, in which citizens are conceived as collective actors and framing is integrated to broader social movement building efforts, which among other things, include extensive social organisation and resource mobilisation. In this approach, they proposed a three-stage process towards successful framing:

The first step is to map the power relations that shape structural inequalities in a given social and historical context. This strategic analysis informs the next phase, in which communities, directly affected by structural inequalities, cooperate to bring about change. This is empowerment through collective action. Finally, participatory communication models, including a third, recurring step – reflection. (p. 16).

The importance of power relations and structural inequalities in mediating the effects of framing processes brings us back to the material institutions and conditions that are emphasised by the Political Process Model and the Resource Mobilisation perspectives. As Table 1 shows, the critique of the collective behaviour paradigm that began in the 1960s paved the way for fruitful discussions of various dynamics of protest movements, including intra-movement dynamics as well as a movement’s interaction with its broader social, political and economic contexts. The upshot of these new conceptualisations was that social movements were no longer conceived as deviant and disruptive forms of

politics, and that movement participation was no longer viewed as driven by anomie and social alienation. To the contrary, what brings these various strands of theory together is the recognition that movement participants are rational and socially-integrated individuals who respond to opportunities, mobilise resources and tailor their messages to appeal to their target audiences.

Synthesis and Extension of Empirical Foundation of Social Movement Theories

As may have become apparent from the discussion of classical social movement theories, despite these major shifts since the 1960s, the field suffered from intellectual, geographical and disciplinary compartmentalisation. In the words of Edelman (2001, p. 286) the debates ‘tended to occur along parallel and disconnected tracks, reflecting different disciplinary personal networks, and forms of socialization and inquiry and a major divide separating case study and grand theory practitioners’. In response to these criticisms, a number of scholars began to build on collaborative efforts between various strands of thought and critiques of each perspective to synthesise them into more coherent theoretical frameworks. In a review of the synthetic efforts and dialogue between various scholars, Oliver, Cadena-Roa and Strawn (2003) identified four emerging trends. First, the empirical base of the literature was being expanded from its traditional base of Europe and North America to cover more regions and cases of protest movements under different types of regimes, with important theoretical and methodological implications. Second, theoretically there was a shift from studies of cause and effect in particular protest movements as units of analysis to exploring broader processes and mechanisms that are at the core of complex interactions between collective action and their broader political contexts. Third, methodologically scholars were increasingly shifting from studies of particular groups to event analysis to capture the dynamic interactions and mutual adaptations by the movements and the states. Fourth, as a result of the above three, the literature was moving past the structuralist versus constructivist debates, and ‘false

dichotomies such as rational versus emotional, political versus psychological, material versus cultural and growing appreciation of the underlying unities' (p. 215).

To date, the most ambitious and influential such synthetic agenda is put forward by Tilly, McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly (2004), the original proponents of the Political Process Model. In *The Dynamics of Contention*, the authors began by identifying and criticising four major intellectual traditions that underpinned classical social movement research since the 1960s. In their own words, these are:

- a. structuralists that 'in their purest form, impute interests and capacities to whole collectivities – communities, classes, sometimes even those vague collectivities people call societies' (p.21).
- b. rationalists that 'impute direction to collectivities such as firms and states, but mostly focus on deliberate choices made by individuals in the light of previously defined interests, resources, and situational constraints' (p.21). They sought to explain contention through studies of decisions and choices made by groups and individuals and their presumed interests, resources and constraints;
- c. phenomenologists that 'concentrate on individuals (although sometimes individuals writ large), plumbing their states of awareness for explanations of involvement in contentious politics' (p.21).
- d. and culturalists that 'attribute causal power to norms, values, beliefs and symbols that individuals experience and absorb from outside themselves' (p. 21).

The authors propose a *relational* approach that depart from the classical approaches in three ways: First, it begins with a new ontological assumption that 'treat social interaction, social ties, communication, and conversation not merely as expressions of structure, rationality, consciousness, or culture but as active sites of creation and change' (McAdam, Tarrow, & Tilly, 2004, p. 22). Second, epistemologically, the relational approach moved

from the ambition of reaching covering-law explanations of previous approaches towards ‘identification of causal chains consisting of mechanisms that reappear in a wide variety of settings but in different sequences and combinations, hence with different collective outcome’ (McAdam, Tarrow, & Tilly, 2004, p. 23). Third, the relational approach incorporated elements of the social constructivist theories by recognising that actors engage in contentious politics in historically embedded social settings, in which accumulated historical experiences, past symbols and narratives make certain actions and outcomes appear more plausible than others.

Table 2 Comparing Political Process and Multi-Institutional Politics Perspectives (Armstrong & Bernstein, 2008)

	Political Process	Multi-Institutional Politics
Models of society and power	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Domination organized around the state b. Culture as secondary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Domination organized around the state, other institutions and culture b. Culture as constitutive
Definition of social movement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. State as target b. Seeks policy change, new benefits, or inclusion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. State, other institutions, and/or culture as targets b. Seeks policy change, new benefits, inclusion, cultural change, or changes in the rules of the game
Definition of politics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Related to governance, formal political arena 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Related to power, as it manifests itself in the state, other institutions, or culture
Social movement actors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Those excluded from the polity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Those disadvantaged by rules organizing any institution b. Distinction between members and challenges breakdown c. Actors constituted in part by the institution(s) challenged
Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Seeks policy change, new benefits, or inclusion b. Grievances taken-for-granted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Seeks material and symbolic change in institutions or culture; identity may be a goal b. Grievances in need of explanation

Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Outside of conventional political channels b. Considered “instrumental” if seeking policy change, “expressive” if seeking cultural change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Depends on logic of institutions: dominations reinforced by multiple institutions is difficult to challenge, and institutional contradictions can be exploited b. Instrumental/expressive distinction irrelevant
Key research questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Under what conditions do challenges originate, survive and succeed? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Why do challenges take the forms that they do? What does the interaction between challengers and target tell us about the nature of domination in society? Under what conditions do challenges originate, survive, and succeed?

The contentious politics approach has come under new criticisms. Critics have argued that the approach has sought to do too much, that it suffers from a state-centric bias and that its emphasis on mechanisms and processes was leading to ‘mechanisms talk’, with the proliferation of too many mechanisms that lacked conceptual clarity and empirical foundation (Norkus, 2005; McAdam & Tarrow, 2011) One of the most significant criticisms came from Armstrong and Bernstein (2008) who also used the existing critiques to formulate an alternative approach which they called Multi-Institutional Politics. As Table 2 shows, Armstrong and Bernstein expose some of the underlying assumptions of these approaches more broadly by questioning the most basic assumptions held by their proponents about the models of society, nature of politics, and definition of social movements, and the implications they have for a movement strategy, tactics and goals.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have provided an overview of the rise and gradual evolution of the scholarly literature on social movements. In its historical shift from the collective behaviour paradigm to collective action theories, research and analysis of collective action were guided by a set of factors. These include (a) the changing nature of social and political movements as subjects of scholarly research; (b) rise, decline and synthesis of broader social science theories and approaches; and (c) the personal experience of the scholars who studied social movements, including many who were themselves activists of protest movements in Western countries during the 1960s.

The historical trajectory of the literature offers a few important lessons. First, the various theoretical traditions provide a wide range of theoretical tools, concepts and methods for understanding extremely complex and constantly-evolving social phenomena. Protest movements are often at the heart of more complex struggles for social control and change and as a result may take different forms depending on both the time and specific context in which they emerge.

Second, at its core a social movement is a form of collective action. The ability of people to engage in collective endeavours is constrained or enhanced by their social and political contexts, the volume of resources they have at their disposal, and their ability to craft a unifying and persuasive message. To put it simply, politics, material resources and culture affect and shape prospects for such collective endeavours.

Third, that collective actions are deeply influenced by their contexts raises a more fundamental question about the applicability of social movement theories to enormously different social, political and economic conditions outside the liberal democracies of Western Europe and North America. In other words, the question is whether theoretical tools and concepts developed on the basis of the experiences of movements in liberal

democracies can offer any lessons for understanding collective actions in undemocratic, illiberal contexts that may be characterised by low levels of socio-economic development, authoritarian political rule, or weak or non-existent authority.

Fourth, social movement theories are also the products of experiences of Western scholar activists, many of whom were activists of the movements they studied and held strong political and cultural preferences. This gave rise to a strong isomorphic tendency in the literature, which led to a disproportionate focus on what were regarded as progressive and liberal-democratic movements. Consequently, movements that demanded changes that were considered illiberal or unprogressive were sidelined and continue to be poorly represented in the literature.

Chapter 3: Research Scope, Approach and Methods

Introduction

The previous chapter provided a general overview of the historical trajectory and the main theoretical traditions of the literature on social movements and contentious politics. In this chapter, I narrow down the scope of the thesis by clarifying and delineating its main focus, identifying a gap in the literature and explaining my own theoretical and methodological approaches. The next section sets the broad context of the study by presenting a brief overview of existing perspectives on fragile states and deeply divided societies. It concludes that a state's inability to enforce its authority over its population and territory uniformly, to provide basic services, and to develop effective and legitimate institutions provides important opportunities and constraints for social movements. The second section explains the main gaps in social movement theories as employed in the contexts of fragile and disrupted states. The third section provides a critical overview of the existing scholarly work on social movements and contentious politics in developing countries and fragile states. The fourth section specifies in more details the research question and methods of the thesis. The fifth section describes the overall explanatory and research approach of the thesis before offering some concluding remarks.

Setting the Context: Contentious Politics in Fragile States

To narrow down the focus of this thesis, it is useful to draw on the title of a book by Sidney Tarrow (2012), *Strangers at the Gate*, which he uses to describe the positions of contentious actors in relation to institutional politics. Tarrow argues that these challengers occupy a distinctive position on 'the boundaries of constituted politics, culture, and institutions' (p. 13) on the one hand, and extra-institutional, unconventional and thus challenging forms of politics, on the other. Despite their strange positions, these actors play important roles in processes of political change and stability. Towards the end of the

1990s, some scholars suggested that at the turn of the century these strangers were being integrated into routine politics. For example, Meyer and Tarrow (1998) argued that protests and social movements were ‘becoming largely institutionalized in advanced industrial democracies – so much so that classical social movement modes of action may be becoming part of the conventional repertoire of participation’ (p. 4). Hence, the strangers were being recognised as normal social and political actors.

The institutionalisation and integration of protest movements were occurring in the liberal democratic countries of the West (Soule & Earl, 2005). Characterised by high levels of economic development, liberal-democratic political orders, and strong state institutions capable of providing security, rule of law and basic services to their citizens, these societies were also home to the intellectual resources that shaped social movement research and theorising. To use the key notions of Social Movement Theory, these societies offer structures of political opportunity, socio-economic resources and cultural environments that may be lacking or different in non-Western societies. Societies and states outside the liberal-democratic West cannot be placed in one camp. Depending on weaknesses and strengths of states, types of political regimes, levels of socio-economic development, nature of social conflicts, and cultural and historical experiences, these societies present different types of opportunities and constraints, socio-cultural environments, and different types and levels of resources (Boudreau, 1996). Consequently, it is important to ask whether and how social movement theory might be used to understand and explain similar collective actions in different contexts.

In practice, while the scholarly literature on social movements tends to be informed by Western movements and societies, the idea and tactics of social movement as a form of social and political mobilisation are not. Yet research on non-Western social movements remains sporadic and limited. Outside Europe and North America, there is a strong tradition of research on Latin American protest movements established by scholars in

universities in the region as well as Western scholars (Oliver, Cadena-Roa, & Straw, 2003). Studies of contentious politics in other regions tend to be sporadic and inconsistent, and where they are conducted, the research is often concerned particular protest movements that attract international significance such as the Islamist movements in the Islamic world or the 2011 Arab Spring protest movements in the Middle East and North Africa (Wiktorowicz, 2004; Beinin & Vairel, 2011).

In this thesis, I focus on contentious politics in a particular non-Western context: Afghanistan, a fragile state, disrupted by external invasions and manipulation, and struggling to overcome nearly four decades of armed conflict, foreign intervention and massive social, economic and political dislocation. Afghanistan offers an illustrative example of states that are often described as weak, fragile or disrupted, and its society as violently divided along entrenched ethnic, religious or linguistic lines. In other words, these catchwords of the international relations, political science and development lexicon describe some of the poorest, least stable and most conflict-prone states. These states face some of the most difficult developmental challenges. The developmental challenges facing some of these states were most powerfully highlighted by Collier in his seminal book, *The Bottom Billion* (2007). Collier argued that about one billion people in 60 states have been falling behind the rest of the world on all development indicators since the 1980s. He argued that these states are stuck in four development traps of conflict, dependence on natural resources, poor governance, and being landlocked with bad neighbours. According to the OECD, more than 1.6 billion, or 22 percent of the world's population, live in fragile states. By 2050, the number of people living in fragile situations is expected to reach 3 billion, or 32 percent of the world population (OECD, 2016, p. 24).

State Fragility

Although most fragile states are poor, state fragility does not necessarily correlate with the level of income of countries. The usual list of fragile states includes countries of different income groups. From among 56 fragile states in 2016, 27 are lower income, 25 are lower middle income, and 4 are upper middle income countries (OECD, 2016, p. 24). Nevertheless, about half of the world's poor are living in fragile states, and while the number of people living in extreme poverty elsewhere is decreasing, conflict and violence continue to keep large sections of these societies in extreme poverty. By 2035, it is expected that 80 percent of the world's poorest population will live in fragile states (OECD, 2016, p. 79)

To understand how contexts of political contention might differ in these societies in comparison to developed Western societies, it is useful to review briefly two major debates. First, a more dominant strand of thinking among Western scholars and policy makers has focused on the weakness and precariousness of state institutions in these countries. The exact nature, causes and consequences of state fragility are widely contested. Developmental economics often emphasises economic indicators such as the rate of economic growth and level of poverty. By contrast, international relations scholars, often concerned with regional and international security and security consequences of state weakness, tend to focus on the ability of states to secure their borders and territories. Still others have focused on internal socio-political dimensions of states as the primary drivers of crisis and state weakness (Rotberg, 2004; Hannan & Besada, 2007; Mcloughlin, 2016).

Emphasising the complexity and variation in forms of state disruption, Saikal (2003) make a distinction between five separate types of disrupted states: (1) states that experience open conflicts but remain recognised as distinct entities within the

international system; (2) states that have failed to achieve consolidated control over their territories and are contested by their neighbours; (3) embryonic states in which the ruling authorities are challenged by local populations; (4) states that have been isolated by the international system as a result of their violation of international laws and norms; and (5) states that do not experience open conflicts but are experiencing deep undercurrents of instability which are kept under control by powerful military institutions.

The notion of fragile states has been criticised on a number of grounds. Critics have argued that it assumes a particular model of Weberian state and consequently focuses on the executive institutions of centralised states and as a result fails to capture the social and political complexity of these societies (Grimm, Lemay-Hébert, & Nay, 2014). Others have criticised it as a donor-serving notion that fails to take into consideration the role of donor countries in fragilities of many states around the world (Barakat & Larson, 2014). Still others, have argued against the terms of state failure and state collapse that result from the literature. Maley, Sampford and Thakur (2003, p.3), emphasising the international community's role in and responsibility for disintegration of such states, argue that the 'terminologies of failure or collapse sound rather too absolute and/or judgemental, and run the risk of detracting from the complexities of the problems with which it may be necessary to deal'. Instead, they suggest that these states be described as 'disrupted states' to account for the role of the international community and other states in disintegration of these states through open military invasions or more subtle political meddling in their domestic affairs.

Regardless of scholarly or policy focus on its particular dimension or causal factors, fragility has important implications for the capacity and legitimacy of the state and its role in shaping collective action. Stewart and Brown (2007) define fragile states by triple failures: (i) authority failure which results from inability of state institutions to protect and secure their citizens and territories; (ii) service failure: the state fails to provide basic

services to most of its citizens; (iii) legitimacy failure: because of its inability to defend and serve most or large sections of its population, the state enjoys little and limited legitimacy.

Deep Social Divisions

Another strand of scholarship since the 1970s focus on the nature and conflict-proneness of social divisions in these countries. In contrast to the literature on state fragility that emphasises an inability of state institutions to protect and provide services to their citizens and territories, this literature emphasises rigidity of social divisions and the implications they may have for the state and political order in these societies. The phrase ‘deeply divided societies’ gained widespread currency after it was used by Nordlinger in *Conflict Regulation in Deeply Divided Societies* (1972) to describe societies that are divided by communal rifts and vertical segmentations. Subsequently, Lustick (1979, p. 325) argued that in such societies,

ascriptive ties generate antagonistic segmentation of society, based on terminal identities, with high political salience, sustained over a substantial period of time and a wide variety of issues. As a minimum condition, boundaries between rival groups must be sharp enough so that membership is clear and, with few exceptions, unchangeable.

The literature on so-called deeply-divided societies began with the assumption that social divisions of various kinds are common in all societies, but in deeply-divided societies some, often primordial, divisions are deeply entrenched. The significance of ascriptive ties as sources of social antagonism and segmentation means that in these societies, group memberships are mostly involuntary, and ascriptive sources of identity such as ascribed ethnic identity, religion and language form the basis of vertical social differentiation among ethnic, religious, or linguistic communities. Guelke (2012, p. 30), who offers a recent survey of the literature, argues that in such societies, ‘conflict exists along a well-entrenched fault line that is recurrent and endemic and that contains the potential for

violence between the segments'. Under such circumstances individuals have limited opportunities to define their identities on the basis of their acquired ties such as their occupation and socio-economic status. Consequently, group-based and ascriptive identities assume greater roles in shaping social and political relations. Nonetheless, the level of significance of ethnic identities in political conflicts varies over time and from country to country. In extreme examples of deeply-divided societies the predominance of ethnicity as a fault-line of conflict and division creates 'ethnic seepage', a tendency to view and assess all social and political changes through an ethnic lens. In other words, ethnicity becomes the main organising principle of social, political and economic life (Horowitz, 1985, pp. 7-8).

At the extreme, ethnic identities become sources of competing or exclusionary conceptions of statehood and political legitimacy and lead to protracted conflicts and civil wars. Such situations result from a combination of historical processes and configurations of ethno-political power that can divide a society between a dominant ethnic group and dominated ethnic groups. Yiftachel and Ghanem (2004, p. 649) argue that such countries constitute 'ethnocracy', which they define as 'a regime facilitating the expansion, ethnicization and control of contested territory and state by a dominant ethnic nation'. These regimes are the products of three political and historical processes: 'settler colonialism', either from one state to another or by members of the dominant ethnic group from within the country; ethno-nationalist ideologies which provides political legitimacy to the expansionist and territorial claims of the dominant ethnic group; and 'a conspicuous "ethnic logic" of capital, which tends to stratify ethnic groups through uneven processes of capital mobility, immigration and economic globalization' (2004, p. 650). These processes introduce a fundamental difference that distinguishes ethnocracies from other regimes:

A central point is that in ethnocratic regimes, the notion of the 'demos' is crucially ruptured. That is, the community of equal resident-citizens (the demos) does not feature high in the country's policies, agenda, imagination, symbols or resource distribution, and is therefore not nurtured or facilitated (Yiftachel & Ghanem, 2004, p. 650).

Consequently, an ethnocracy is, by definition, an ethnically-stratified society in which ethnicity rather than citizenship is used as a basis for distribution of resources and power. The distribution of power and resources on the basis of ethnic identities privileges group identities as the main source and driver of political conflicts. The type of ethnic and other forms of deep social divisions also matter. Guelke (2012, pp. 1,10) makes a distinction between vertical divisions that separates groups that are roughly equal in status and power, and horizontal divisions, in which members of one community are dominated by another. Both types of divisions tend to generate particular patterns of violence and instability. Vertically divided societies tend to generate 'tit for tat' violence, involving communities that are roughly equal in status and power. By contrast, in horizontally-divided societies, the dominant groups can preside over long periods of stability but once their dominance is challenged, these societies are also likely to experience particularly intractable crises. In both contexts, the propensity towards violent conflicts remains high, making security the most perennial concern for all.

The challenges of state fragility and social divisions become all the more obvious in societies such as Afghanistan that have gone through protracted violence and instability and struggle to manage complex transitions from war to peace. While it can be debated whether social divisions are responsible for weak political institutions or the other way around, it is evident that prolonged violent conflict has profound implications for the both the state and the society. At the societal level, while some social divisions may precede violent conflict, others follow or become more potent after it. Wood (2008) highlights the importance of understanding what she calls the 'social processes of civil war'. In her study of civil wars in Peru, El Salvador, Sri Lanka and Sierra Leone, she argues that civil

wars polarise social identities, fragment political economies, and militarise state authorities. These changes, she argues, ‘reconfigure social networks in a variety of ways, creating new networks, dissolving some, and changing the structure of others’ (p. 539).

War and violence can severely weaken or even destroy formal state authorities and produce long-term social consequences that are significant for the ability of movements to emerge and sustain challenges against state authority. As Maley (2006) argues, in Afghanistan decades of war and instability disrupted the Afghan state and left it with the dual problems of capacity and legitimacy. The state lacks the capacity to exercise effective authority over its people or its territories which then diminishes its ability to claim popular normative support. In societies so disrupted by war and state failure, trust in state institution, particularly in matters of security and survival, is a common casualty. In such situations, non-state social formations such as tribal or ethnic groups may gain more significance by taking on a role of ‘mutual-support association, bound together by strong norms of reciprocity based on shared lineage’ (p. 19). As Paris and Sisk (2009, p. 1) have argued a post-war statebuilding usually ‘combines three separate yet simultaneous transitions, each posing its own tremendous challenges: a social transition from internecine fighting to peace; a political transition from wartime government (or the absence of government) to postwar government; and an economic transition from war-warped accumulation and distribution to equitable, transparent postwar development that in turn reinforces peace.

To recap the discussion here, state fragility and disruption in this thesis is defined in terms of triple weaknesses in enforcing its authority over its people and territory uniformly, in providing basic services, and in developing effective and legitimate state institutions. These weaknesses present highly complex situations that present social movements with important constraints and opportunities.

Stating the Problem: State Weakness and Contention

As may have become clear so far, state fragility, deep social divisions or disruptions of states by exogenous forces have important implications for contentious politics. As Meyer and Tarrow have argued, modern social movements are closely linked to strong and capable nation-states.

Movements became a viable way of making claims in national politics when the consolidated nation-state assured its citizens regular means of communication, created standard but fungible identities, provided challengers with uniform targets and fulcra for acting collectively (Meyer & Tarrow, 1998, pp. 4-5).

In fragile states, state institutions that were conceived to be central in shaping political opportunities and discourses in Western societies may have weak and sporadic capacities to exercise their authority. Similarly, in deeply-divided societies, predetermined ethnic, religious and other forms of collective identities may subsume and overshadow the multiple, voluntary and overlapping social ties that are essential to the emergence and durability of cross-cleavage social movements in Western societies. When applied to fragile states, three particular shortcomings of the literature are worth highlighting here.

Ideological and geographical limitations

Despite the broadening of the conceptual and theoretical framework of social movement theories that were developed from the 1960s, empirically the literature is based on movements in western liberal democracies. The empirical base of theoretical efforts has created a strong normative and ideological preference: scholars studying western social movements have mostly focused on what are usually considered as liberal and progressive movements such as the New Left, civil rights, women rights, anti-war, environmental and more recently sexual minority rights movements. The normative preference partly results from the fact that scholars have tended to study movements with which they sympathised. In the words of della Porta (2014) 'This has often brought about a normative urgency towards a knowledge oriented towards not only scientific theorisation, but also towards a

societal intervention' (p. 3). Consequently, the theoretical efforts are also deeply embedded in the history of Western intellectual traditions and as such reflect normative and intellectual inclinations of their main proponents and shifting ideological trends of their societies.

In an analysis of geographical and topical focus of the two leading social movement journals, *Social Movement Studies* and *Mobilization*, Poulson, Caswell and Gray (2014) found that between 2001 and 2010, 77% and 72% of the contents of the two journals respectively concerned the study of Western societies and movements. While the authors noted that in comparison to similar other fields of inquiry, social movement research was worldlier and less West-Centric, they argued that a combination of *isomorphic normative* and *parochial* tendencies meant that most scholars often study societies with which they are familiar and movements in which they were themselves active. Consequently, many movements that appear awkward, including conservative movements in the West, remain understudied. The isomorphic and parochial tendencies are also evident in the relatively limited application of Social Movement Theories in developing and fragile states. Even when social movements of developing countries are studied, the focus tends to be on what are regarded as progressive movements such as women, youth, peace, and socio-environmental movements (Earle, 2011). Such isomorphic tendencies lead to an implicit assumption that the processes and mechanisms of formation and evolution of progressive movements are different from the more awkward one that promote more conservative values or shifts towards violent strategies.

Western-Style Conception of State-Society Relations

What follows from the ideological preferences and Western-centric empirical foundation is a particular conception of state-society relations in the contentious politics literature (Armstrong & Bernstein, 2008). The role of the state, more specifically government

institutions, remains central to most conceptions of the political process and contentious politics theorists. The assumption of a territorially-bounded Weberian-style state, exercising ultimate authority over its people and territory, is particularly strong in the Political Process Model and the Contentious Politics approach that followed it. What follows from this basic assumption is that actors, including challengers and polity members, rise and decline primarily in response to the opening and closure of opportunities through institutional changes or shifts in power relations.

While governments certainly remain a powerful actor, as discussed above, in many societies government institutions lack both the capacity and democratic legitimacy to exercise effective control over all their territories and populations. Furthermore, while the dominant theories of contentious politics tend to analyse contention in relation to Western-style strong states and highly diverse socio-economic differentiation, in practice all forms of contention, including social movements, occur in a diverse range of societies. In particular, the diffusion of social movement tactics and activities in fragile states such as Afghanistan raises a number of critical questions for the academic literature on contention. In contrast to Western liberal democracies, Afghanistan and many similar states around the world remain weak and fragile, presiding over fragmented and divided societies.

The Puzzle of Political Islam

The relationship between state weakness or failure and social movements is nowhere more evident than in the debates on the nature and evolution of Islamist movements. The rise and spread in recent decades of the movements that use Islam as an ideological framework for political change have been the object of intense debates among scholars and activists and their opponents alike. While the rise and spread of political Islam has been extensively debated (Rubin, 2010; Akbarzadeh, 2012), a particular dimension of the

debate needs to be highlighted here. The debate concerns the impact and internal evolution of the Islamist movements. As noted earlier, Olivier Roy (1994), famously argued that political Islam had failed by the 1990s. For Roy, the causes of the failure were intellectual as well as historical. Historically, he argued that the Islamists had proven unable to invent a new political order, including in countries where they had gained power such as Iran after the 1979 Islamic Revolution. The intellectual source of failure was even more important:

The failure is primarily an intellectual one. Islamic thought rests on an initial premise that destroys its own innovative elements: on the one hand, as the logic goes, the existence of an Islamic political society is a necessary condition for the believer to achieve total virtue; but on the other hand, such as society functions only by virtue of its members, beginning with its leaders (Roy, 1994, pp. ix-x).

In a similar way, encouraged by the reformist movements in Iran during the 1990s, Bayat (1996) advanced an argument that postulated that in the course of their experimentation with top-down Islamisation, Islamist movements were metamorphosing into a post-Islamist phase.

By “post-Islamism” I mean a condition where, following a phase of experimentation, the appeal, energy, symbols and sources of legitimacy of Islamism get exhausted, even among its once-ardent supporters. As such, post-Islamism is not anti-Islamic, but rather reflects a tendency to resecularize religion. Predominantly, it is marked by a call to limit the political role of religion (1996, p. 45).

Despite these predictions, across the Muslim-majority countries, in recent decades secular nationalist, leftist and liberal forces have been in retreat and Islamists have remained as highly formidable forces. In 1979, several decades of Iranian modernist and constitutionalist movements culminated with the Islamic Revolution which replaced a modernising monarchy with an Islamic theocracy that has since effectively repressed and marginalised its secular competitors. In Afghanistan, as will be discussed in chapter 4, the Islamists moved from their marginal position in the 1960s to become dominant political forces. More recently, the initial euphoria of the Arab Spring that promised the

spread of liberal democracy to the Middle East quickly subsided as Islamist groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafists proved to be more effective in appealing to the masses and winning elections than their liberal competitors. In short, political Islam which once appeared to have failed is on the rise, raising the longstanding question of whether Islam is compatible with liberal democracy (Hamid, 2014; Esposito, Sonn and Voll, 2016)

Does the apparent victory of Islamists in Afghanistan prove that Islamists have a political advantage over their secular rivals? This seemingly straightforward question that Cammett and Luong (2014) ask in their review of the literature on Islamic movements is a central question of this research. If there is such a thing as an Islamist advantage, what are its sources? Cammett and Luong identify three major explanations for the alleged superiority of Islamic movements. First, Islamic movements are believed to gain an edge through provision of social services. The key premise behind this explanation is that Islamists win the hearts and minds of local Muslim communities through provision of important welfare services, particularly in areas where the state is weak and ineffective in offering such services. Second, Islamic movements enjoy greater organisational capacity since they are endowed with effective and easily-available mobilising structures such as mosques, charities, human capital in the form of devout followers, and independent sources of financing such as religious donations. Third, Islamists are thought to enjoy an ideological hegemony which they derive either from the particular characteristic of Islam as a total system of social organisation, or from the failure of competing modern ideologies such as nationalism, socialism and liberalism to take root in the Muslim world. Without disputing the importance of these factors, the authors add reputation of Islamists as ‘competent, trust worthy and pure’ as proximate cause of the Islamists’ superiority.

It is, however, important to acknowledge one major risk of this debate in general and this research in particular. As Roy (2007) has shown, the debate over secularism and Islamism can inadvertently contribute to an essentialising and generalising dichotomy between Islam, on the one hand, and a secular modernity as it developed in the Europe, on the other. Such an overly-simplified view that treats Islam as a timeless and unique system of thought and practice, and Western secularisation as one single process incompatible with religion and religiosity, can obscure the diverse historical pathways and significant variations between and within both Islamist movements and Western secularisation experiences.

Theorising Contention in Fragile and Divided Societies

The three main shortcomings of social movement theories, described above, raise the question: Does the theory need to be modified before it can be applied in the contexts of fragile states? Some scholars have attempted to do precisely this. Over the past two decades, a number of scholars have attempted to theorise how divergent contexts of weak or authoritarian states or deep social divisions shape the context for contentious politics.

Asef Bayat and Life as Politics Approach

In the course of many years of continuous research on movements in the Middle East, Bayat has critically engaged with the Western theories of social movements, asking whether scholars who applied social movement theories to non-Western contexts, ‘borrow’ from rather than critically and productively engage with and thus contribute to social movement theories’ (Bayat, 2005, p. 892). For example, in emphasising the internal fluidity and dynamism of Islamist movements and thus their variation, Bayat (2005) argues that Islamist movements have been constructing ‘imagined solidarities’. This, he argued, was the key to the ability of Islamists to gain unity of action and purpose in spite of their significant internal differences.

Perhaps, the most significant outcome of Bayat's years of critical engagement with the social movement theories is his book, *Life as Politics, How Ordinary People Change the Middle East* (2010). The book critically engages with social movement theories by questioning uncritical application of the theories beyond their Western and liberal-democratic contexts. The main point of departure of the book is the assumption that Middle Eastern societies offer a particular context for collective action. Bayat begins by analysing the impact of neoliberal socioeconomic reforms such as the Structural Adjustment Programs of the 1980s. He argues that these reforms deregulated markets and cut spending on limited public welfare programmes that existed in the Third World countries and consequently led to erosion of a social contract between state elites and society. The effects of gradual removal of state welfare programmes were subsequently amplified by globalisation, with its double process of integration and social exclusion and marginalisation. These broad processes of political and socioeconomic change created new solidarities, reproducing social identities and creating new spaces for political struggle, for which existing theories cannot account. How do the subaltern and the urban grassroots respond to the global processes of restructuring? Bayat argues that the urban poor respond through a policy of quiet and gradual encroachment. He defined quiet encroachment as

...noncollective but prolonged direct actions of dispersed individuals and families to acquire the basic necessities of their lives (land for shelter, urban collective consumption or urban services, informal work, business opportunities, and public space) in a quiet and unassuming legal fashion (p. 45).

While similar to James Scott's (1985) notion of everyday resistance, the concept of everyday encroachment offers an innovative way of looking at forms of resistance against oppression in authoritarian states of the Middle East; it is more applicable to countries with strong and authoritarian states that effectively close opportunities for more organised and public forms of contention. Furthermore, as events of the Arab Spring in 2011-12 showed, quiet encroachment is only one aspect of what the poor and subaltern groups do

in these societies. Thus organised and strategic forms of contention must be considered in any theoretical accounts of contention in the region.

John Nagle's Approach to Study of Social Movements in Divided Societies

Nagle (2016) is among the few Western scholars who have attempted to theorise the role of social movements in divided societies. In his studies of protest movements in Lebanon and Northern Ireland, he found that the particular division of political power and resources between what are considered salient ethnic groups tends to exclude groups that do not identify with any particular ethnic identity. Furthermore, consociational arrangements also encourage top-down, elite-driven forms of politics that limit the space for non-ethnic forms of politics and reduce civil society groups to auxiliaries of ethnic parties. Despite these major structural impediments, Nagle (2016, pp. 9-41) finds that non-sectarian social movements play important roles in divided societies. He identifies four types of non-sectarian movements: Transformationist, pluralist, cosmopolitan and commonists. Transformationists seek to transform group identities by actively discouraging identity politics and presenting an alternative to the sectarian system. Pluralists seek to encourage recognition of more diverse forms of identities in addition to the main ethno-national identities. These include sexual minority groups and other group-based identities that are excluded from the ethno-national configuration of power. Cosmopolitans are more concerned about global issues such as environmental degradation, war, and financial risks that they think are more important than the parochial questions of domestic ethno-national politics. Finally, commonist movements focus on issues and concerns that resonate across the social cleavages. Such mobilisations are often momentary and do not last long after the specific goals for which they had mobilised had been achieved.

Tilly, and Regimes and Repertoires of Contention

What accounts for variations in forms and intensity of contention across time and space? Tilly, who was the leading and most influential proponent of the Political Process Model, dedicated a substantial amount of time in his later years to theorising the variation of contention across time and space (Tilly, 2006; Tilly, 2008). Tilly used the metaphors of *performance* and *repertoire* to analyse both the stability and variation of claim-making across time and space. Performances are collective actions that link ‘at least two actors, a claimant and an object of claims’ (Tilly, 2006, p. 35), and clumped together, they constitute repertoires, defined as ‘claim making routines that apply to the same claimant-object pairs: bosses and workers, peasants and landlords, rival nationalist factions, and many more’ (Tilly, 2006, p. 35). The claim making performances and repertoires are loosely scripted theatres of collective action that are born out of historical experiences and learning and change and alter through internal improvisation or major environmental changes.

Tilly sought to locate the source of change in repertoires in a dynamic causal relationship between political regimes and political contention. He believed that contention and political regimes interact and influence one another over a wide range of circumstances. He adopted a broad definition of political contention that ‘*includes any individual’s or group’s making of consequential claims on another individual or group. “Consequential” means the claims, if realized, affect their object’s interests*’ (Tilly, 2006, p. 20). Such broadly defined, contentious politics include a wide range of collective political struggles, including revolutions, insurgencies, strikes and social movements. It is evident that making of consequential claims can take highly diverse forms, ranging from submitting formal petitions to relevant authorities, through protesting peacefully in the streets, to violent confrontations as in coups, revolutions and armed insurgencies. Tilly argued that three factors interact to shape the prevailing repertoires of claim making

in any particular context: (1) structures and organisation of everyday social life, (2) cumulative experience and collective learning, and (3) types of the prevailing regime (Tilly, 2006, p. 42). From among the three, Tilly explains changes and variations in repertoires of contention in terms of political regimes, which he used to refer to broader political environment. He defines the regime as ‘the set of relationships among a government and the major political actors within the government’s jurisdiction that interact routinely with each other and the government’ (Tilly, 2008, p. 148).

Whether political struggle takes the form of violent conflicts or peaceful social movements depends on the types of regimes. Tilly developed a basic taxonomy of political regimes based on two dimensions of *governmental capacity* and *democracy* to account for a dynamic and mutual interaction between change in regime types and repertoires of contention. He defined capacity as ‘the extent to which rulers’ deliberate actions affect distributions of people, activities, and resources within the government’s territory’ (Tilly, 2006, p. 16). A regime can also fall on a democratic-undemocratic continuum depending on ‘the extent to which persons subject to the government’s authority have broad, equal rights to influence governmental affairs and to receive protection from arbitrary governmental action’ (Tilly, 2006, p. 16).

How does the level of capacity and democracy in a regime influence the character of contentious political performances? Tilly argued that depending on their capacity and level of democracy, regimes influence the repertoires of contention through prescribing or tolerating some forms of political behaviours, and forbidding and punishing others. It is obvious that democratisation reduces the ranges of prescribed performances and increases the range of tolerated forms of political behaviour, and despotic and authoritarian regimes prescribe particular public performances and tolerate few forms of opposition and challenge to their rule. Regime capacity matters too for the simple reason that it is about the ability of a regime to enforce what it prescribes or proscribes on its

citizens. Historically, high-capacity regimes were rare and high-capacity democratic regimes are even rarer. This leads Tilly to the following four-fold typology of regimes with different patterns of contention (Tilly, 2006, p. 81)

Low-Capacity Nondemocratic: few prescribed performances; medium range of tolerated performances; much of contention via forbidden performances; low involvement of government agents in contention; high levels of violence in contentious interactions.

High-Capacity Nondemocratic: many prescribed performances; narrow range of tolerated performances; almost all contention by means of forbidden performances; high involvement of government agents in contention (often as principals); medium levels of violence in contentious interactions.

Low-Capacity Democratic: few prescribed performances; broad range of tolerated performances; extensive overlap of contention with both prescribed and tolerated performances; medium involvement of government agents in contention (often as principals); medium levels of violence in contentious interactions.

High-Capacity Democratic: few prescribed performances; medium range of tolerated performances; contention overlapping somewhat with prescribed and tolerated performances; high involvement of government agents in contention (often as third parties); low levels of violence in contentious interactions.

To put it simply, in high-capacity and undemocratic regimes, contention tends to take the forms of clandestine opposition, brief direct confrontation which often ends with repression. In high-capacity, democratic regimes social movements become the predominant forms of contention. By contrast, low capacity undemocratic regimes tend to encourage civil wars and low-capacity democratic regimes are susceptible to coups and ethno-religious conflicts.

Although Tilly uses the broader concept of regimes, when he specifies the causal links between regime type and forms of contention he focuses on governments' capacity to enforce, encourage, or ban certain forms of contention. As he puts it:

Schematically, every government distinguishes among claim-making performances that it prescribes (e.g., pledges of allegiance), those it tolerates (e.g., petitioning), and those it forbids (e.g., assassination of officials). The exact contours of the three categories vary from regime to regime as a result of accumulated bargains between rulers and their subject populations (Tilly, 2008, p. 149)

Government capacity indeed shapes the prevailing forms of contention in many societies. However, Tilly (Tilly, 2006) also notes, if not applied carefully, the analysis of the connection between regime types and forms of contention becomes almost tautological as in pointing to ‘prevalence of strikes under industrial capitalism or the concentration of peasant revolts in large-landlord systems’ (Tilly, 2006, p. 3). As the previous section on fragile states demonstrated, in many countries governments lack the capacity and legitimacy to exercise their authority uniformly across their territories. Although Tilly’s typology of regimes includes countries with weak governments, it still remains a government-centric analysis. Consequently, the model fails to capture the role of non-state actors in prescribing, proscribing and as a result shaping forms of social and political struggles. Furthermore, the model also assumes a territorially-bounded state in which regime type and contention interact with one another independently of external influences. As the case of Afghanistan will demonstrate, in states disrupted by foreign interference, foreign actors, including other states, exercise heavy influence on the capacity of governments to exercise their authority and the ability of challenging groups to mount and maintain successful challenges to state authority.

Research Question and Method

As mentioned in the Introduction, in its broad scholarly orientation, this thesis focuses on the intersection of literatures on fragile and disrupted states and contentious politics, and seeks to answer two primary questions: *First, how might state fragility shape contentious politics?* And second, *do state fragility and disruption create conditions that favour particular groups or forms of contention?*

What methods are appropriate for answering these questions? Methodologically, the field of study of social movements and contentious politics is marked by a high degree of pluralism. As Donatella della Porta (2014) argues in her introduction to the

Methodological Practices in Social Movement Research, driven by a lack of reliable databases of contentious politics and scholars' own theoretical and disciplinary backgrounds and normative preferences, students of contentious politics have been highly pragmatic and problem-oriented in their approach. As a result, the field is characterised by diverse practices in methodological approach and data collection and analysis.

Notwithstanding this methodological pluralism, the existing literature tends to focus on one of three cores units of analysis. First, scholars who focus on individual participants in contentious politics tend to employ surveys and in-depth interviews as their main research methods. Surveys allows the possibility of generalising from a sample population. A quantitative survey of individual participants can be complemented by in-depth interviews to capture more complex mechanisms and processes (Klandermans & Staggenborg, 2002, pp. xv-xvi). Scholars who seek to go beyond individual participants have focused either on groups, organisations that lead and organise protests, or particular events or networks of organisations and organisational fields. As Oliver, Cadena-Roa and Straw (2003, pp. 220-223) show, by the turn of the century many scholars were shifting their focus to protest events as the main units of analysis. There were several reasons for the shift from groups to events. First, events could demonstrate dynamics of mobilisation across movements. Second, events analysis has the advantage of showing mutual causality between challenging groups and political regimes as they interact with one another over time. Third, events analysis came to be recognised as more effective in understanding the rise and decline of particular protest movements and how one events shapes the outcome of subsequent events.

Taking into account these advantages of studying of events and in view of its focus on the meso-level dynamics, this thesis focuses on groups and protest events to capture the interactive dynamics between state fragility and social mobilisation. I approach these groups and events, described in the Introduction, as case studies of broader patterns of

social and political contention in Afghanistan between 2001 and 2016. As Snow and Trom (2002) remark, groups as case studies are best conceived as ‘embedded within a “multi-organizational field” consisting of at least three sets of actors or subfields: supporters or protagonists, antagonists, and bystanders or an audience’ (p. 154). To locate the research questions and methods of this thesis, it is useful to draw on Tilly’s (2008, pp. 8-10) distinction between three classes of political activities: (1) routine social life and the activities that take place at this level (e.g. employment, family structures, and daily economic activities); (2) contention-connected social interactions (e.g. organised activism such as awareness raising among women by feminist groups); and (3) public collective claim-makings (e.g. protests, strikes and rallies). As the previous chapter showed, much of the social movement theory and contentious politics literature conceives contention as part of the third of these classes of activity and then seek to explain its rise and decline, and evolution and variation in terms of changes and dynamics in level 2 and 3.

Tilly (2008, pp. 8-9) also makes a distinction between thick and thin types of explanations. A thick explanation focuses on level (2) and (3) as objects of explanations and then includes variations in level (1) as part of the explanation. Tilly argues that a thick explanation of the feminist movement’s contentious politics in the United States during the second half of the twentieth century (a level 3 activity), may pinpoint to changes in the second level (e.g. consciousness-raising activist groups) but locate the causes in the first level (e.g. changes in routine social life such as women’s employment). By contrast, a thin explanation may analyse changes in level 3 in terms of changes in the levels 2 and 3. Either way, the causal logic of explanation remains the same: public contention is interpreted as consequences of changes in the broader social, cultural, economic and political environments.

For this thesis, the four groups represent dynamics of activism and consciousness-raising (i.e. level 2 activities) and the events offer insights into public claim-making (i.e. level 3

activities). The groups represent examples of a wide range of social and political activities that tend to occur in a large grey area between formal institutionalised politics and the extra-institutional and anti-state politics such as the armed insurgency against the internationally-sponsored statebuilding enterprise in Afghanistan between 2001 and 2016. As a result, these groups, represent and are enmeshed in broader fields of social and political activism that demonstrate challenges and models of social and political strategising towards the internationally-sponsored statebuilding enterprise. The events can offer a unique opportunity for exploring actual process of social and political mobilisation in the country. While the group case studies demonstrate patterns of organisational, political and socio-cultural strategies of the more organised activist groups, the events demonstrate how formally-organised groups interact with broader processes of citizen mobilisation and the challenges that group formation and citizen mobilisation entail in the particular context of Afghanistan.

Data Sources

To examine these groups and events, I adopt a qualitative approach. I use a combination of in-depth qualitative interviews with analysis of online and offline materials and direct observation. Broadly speaking, the primary data used in this thesis have been collected through three sources. First, I have conducted a total of 51 in-depth interviews and informal conversations with organisers of these events and groups as well as independent observers such as journalists, academics, government officials and members of the Afghan Parliament. The bulk of these interviews were conducted during my field work in Kabul from August to December of 2015. The initial field work was complemented by subsequent interviews and conversations in 2016 and 2017. These interviews form the backbone of the empirical chapters of the thesis and are cited according the numbers in chronological order (See the full list attached at the end of the thesis). Second, I have observed the rise and evolution of these groups and the social networks that organised the

protest events first as a researcher in Afghanistan from 2002 to 2013, and second and more directly, during my field work in Kabul in 2015. During my field work, I attended public events organised by the groups, and the protest against the killing of Zabul Seven on 11 November of that year. Third, I use books, brochures and formal statements issued by the organisers of the groups and events to complement the data I have gathered through interviews and direct observation. The latter includes articles and statements published online.

Research and Explanatory Approach

In my overall explanatory and analytical approach, I follow the mechanism-based and relational approach as formulated by McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly (2004). However, I seek to complement the approach by taking a multi-institutional approach and highlighting the nature and type of social and conflict. In this section, I will explain the three elements of my approach briefly.

Relational and Mechanism-based Analysis

The relational approach as formulated in *Dynamics of Contention* by McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly (2004) was discussed in chapter 2. For the purpose of this thesis, it is important to restate here that the proponents of the approach sought to draw on the previous traditions of social movement research and theory to construct a more synthetic, dynamic and broader approach to account for a wide range of contentious politics. Central to the new approach was the concept of social mechanism and process, which they used to account for rise and evolution of contentious politics and environmental changes. They defined the terms as follows:

- Mechanisms are a delimited class of events that alter relations among specified sets of elements in identical or closely similar ways over a variety of situations.
- Processes are regular sequences of such mechanisms that produce similar (generally more complex and contingent) transformations of those elements (McAdam, Tarrow, & Tilly, 2004, p. 24).

In this thesis, I focus on the following three sets of mechanisms: collective attribution of threats and opportunities, social appropriation and boundary activation.

Multi-Institutional View of Politics and Society

As stated above, in this thesis, while I emphasise the role of the state, I seek to go beyond the state-centric view of the political process model and the contentious politics approach. Following Migdal's (2004, pp. 249-261) concept of 'limited state' and building on Armstrong and Bernstein's (2008) critique of the contentious politics approach, this thesis begins with a multi-institutional view of politics and society in which power and domination are 'organized around multiple sources of power, each of which is simultaneously material and symbolic' (Armstrong & Bernstein, p. 75). Conceiving the state as 'limited state' means that although the state as the source and enforcer of the rules of the game is highly important, the nature and extent of its power and influence is both historically and spatially variable and contingent. The simultaneous material and symbolic dimensions of institutions mean that successful challenges against institutions also combine material mobilisation of resources and people with challenging the cultural hegemony of existing authorities and producing new meanings and messages that resonate with social groups. Consequently, culture and social and political narratives are constitutive of institutions and as such the objects of contestation between diverse social and political groups.

I draw on the pioneering work of Migdal (2004) to view the state as part of a broader social 'melange in which multiple sets of rules struggle for predominance and the state is seen both as an idea and as diverse practices that maybe at loggerheads' (p. 57). In this approach, the state is one among many actors, although a more powerful actor that is in constant interaction and competition with other social formations and institutions for setting and enforcing rules of social control. Consequently, neither the state nor the

society which it seeks to control are fixed entities; they constantly change and evolve as a result of ongoing interaction between multiple actors and their competition for social control.

The Type and Levels of Change and Conflict

Groups and individuals might respond to different types of social and political changes differently, and their responses might be shaped by underlying dynamics of social conflict. In formulating a new institutionalist approach, which emphasises the role of ideas and discourses as drivers of change, Schmidt (2008) makes a distinction between three levels of ideas:

The first level encompasses the specific policies or “policy solutions” proposed by policy makers. The second level encompasses the more general programs that underpin the policy ideas. These may be cast as paradigms that reflect the underlying assumptions or organizing principles orienting policy (p. 306).

The policy and programme-level ideas are nested even in deeper structures that have been described as ‘public philosophies’, ‘deep core’ or ‘worldviews’ (p. 306). In this thesis, I draw on Schmidt’s formulation to make a distinction between three levels of social and political change and conflict. The first level concerns the formulation and implementation of policies. Second, policies are part of broader programmes of states that might underpin a range of policy solutions to a series of interconnected problems. Third, both state policies and programmes are founded on the system of nation-states as the basic foundation of the international order.

Relational and mechanism-based approaches combined with a multi-institutionalist view of politics and society and the distinction I make between three levels and types of change have four specific implications for the purpose of this thesis. First, institutions and opportunities for challenging the status quo are not static entities and conditions. Social and political outcomes and changes occur as a result of interactions and competition of states and other players over social control. As argued by McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly

(2004, p. 22), as part of the critique of the classical social movements theories, recent theorising sees ‘social interaction, social ties, communication, and conversation not merely as expressions of structure, rationality, consciousness, or culture, but as active sites of creation and change’.

Second, while the state as the ‘field of power’ occupies the centre of analysis it is recognised as one of multiple actors involved in a broader struggle for change and domination in the society. Consequently, state institutions are not the only targets of contention as most scholars of contentious politics and social movements assume. In fact, state institutions may themselves become the main sites of contestation between various social groups and some parts of the state may join challenging groups against other state institutions and actors. The change in environment for the emergence, evolution and impact of movements occurs as a result of shifts in broader configurations of power relations that span formal state institutions and informal political alignments. In fact, some groups may choose not to engage directly with the state and instead focus on social and cultural activities which may only have long-term and indirect implications for the politics and the state.

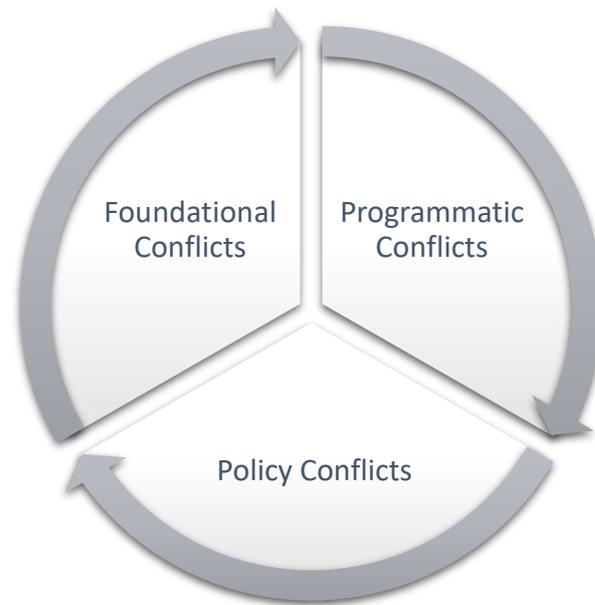


Figure 1 Levels and Types of Change and Conflict

Third, the manner in which actors respond to the type and level of social and political change shapes their overall position and strategies towards a national political order. Groups that organise around policies and programmes are more likely to adopt reformist stance and choose methods of claim-making that are prescribed by the state. In contrast, groups that reject the basic foundation of a nation-state might have greater propensity to engage in subversive and anti-systemic strategies.

Fourth, the distinction also helps to illuminate the role of state weakness in shaping social movements and contentious politics. In strong states with deep solid foundations and strong capacity to formulate and implement policies, movements are more likely to respond to state policies and suggest their own policies for change. By contrast, as shown in figure 1, in weak states that suffer from weak authority and capacity, policy-level contention might intensify deeper programmatic and foundational conflicts or even create new ones.

Conclusion

This chapter sets out to advance two goals. First, it serves to narrow down the focus of the thesis by elaborating its primary research questions and the research gaps and problems it intended to address. It defines state fragility as characterised by triple weakness in extending its authority, providing basic public services, and developing effective and legitimate institutions, and argued that these weaknesses shape contentious politics by creating a specific set of constraints and opportunities. Second, it sets out the overall theoretical approach and research methods of the thesis. In the following chapters, I will further contextualise the argument of the thesis by engaging in in-depth analysis of the broader political and historical context of Afghanistan before turning to detailed examination of the four groups and three events.

Chapter 4: State Formation and Contentions Politics in Afghanistan, 1901-2001

Introduction

In comparison to most post-colonial states that emerged during the twentieth century, Afghanistan has had a relatively longer history of statehood. It emerged as a country with delineated boundaries and a relatively centralised system of government towards the end of the nineteenth century. However, the existence of a centralised authority did not lead to a process of political or socio-economic modernisation. State institutions remained weak, presiding over a largely agrarian economy and fragmented society and political elites, experiencing recurrent crises and cycles of contention. In its attempt to impose and maintain a centralised system of government, the Afghan state faced two types of challengers: (1) rural and agrarian-based traditional revolts led by traditional landed elites and the religious establishment, and (2) urban-based and usually educated groups that were exposed to external modernising influences. The two groups represented different approaches towards political authority and social change: the former sought to limit the administrative and extractive power of the state, whereas the latter sought to influence state policies and gain power to implement broader socio-economic and political changes.

These two forms of challenges also focused on different sets of issues and showed different dynamics and models of social and political mobilisation. The traditional rebellions were mostly reactive in character, and were often launched in response to policies of centralisation of power and/or extraction of resources by the central authorities. These revolts were organised mostly around local solidarity networks or a coalition of such networks, and as a result were poorly equipped for sustained social and political action on a national scale. By contrast, the urban-based challenges tended to be proactive, driven by broader ideas and images of modernisation and progress, and sought to employ and invent modern forms of social and political organisation.

The combination of traditional and modernist challenges posed a conundrum for state-society relations and policies of modernisation and social and political change: state policies of political and socio-economic modernisation were encouraging the rise of urban-based challenging groups, and provoking revolts by the traditionalist segments of the society. The former demanded often quite radical changes, which required even more activist state intervention in the society, and sharing of political power with activist groups. The April 1978 coup by the pro-Soviet People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan represented a turning point in the political development of the country as it represented the triumph as well as polarisation and radicalisation of the urban and modernist groups. The communists who came into power were confronted by traditional revolts from the countryside, and by Islamists who assumed leadership of the opposition from bases in neighbouring countries, most importantly Pakistan (Roy, 1990).

In this chapter, I aim to explicate the historical dynamics of state formation and social mobilisation in the country. The first section provides a broad overview of the trajectory of political regimes during the twentieth century. The second section offers a broad typology of challenging groups. The third describes the transformation of Afghanistan's social and political movements as a result of war, foreign invasion and mass violence after 1978. The final section draws some general conclusions.

State Formation and Contention in Afghanistan

Afghanistan is often recognised for its fierce resistance to foreign domination. Official histories of the country and the language of its political elites are often replete with the rhetoric of independence and struggles against foreign domination. There is a certain element of truth in this collective pride for independence. The country was never directly colonised by any major colonial power, and during the nineteenth century two major British attempts to occupy the country, known as the first and second Anglo-Afghan

Wars, were defeated by popular revolts and uprisings. In the first Anglo-Afghan War (1839-1842), the British invaded and occupied much of Afghanistan, and overthrew Amir Dost Muhammad Khan. However, the occupation ended with mass revolts and the military defeat of the British, which was forced allow the eventual return of Dost Muhammad Khan to the throne (Noelle, 1997).

Beneath the history and myth of resistance to foreign colonialism generated by the Anglo-Afghan Wars, however, the ruling elites were profoundly contradictory and ambivalent towards external influences, particularly socio-economic modernisation that would change the balance of power in the country. The contradictions have meant that despite a long history of statehood, the country failed to achieve any significant levels of socio-economic differentiation that are hallmarks of modern societies. Until the outbreak of the conflict in 1978, the country was largely agrarian, dominated by small family-owned and subsistence farming, and with 80 percent of its population depending on the rural economy. The failure of any major capitalist development meant that the country did not experience socio-economic differentiation along the lines of individual citizens' socio-economic status, and hence labour as a socio-economic and political constituency did not emerge. Prior to 1978, the number of industrial workers remained below 40,000 (Dorrnsoro, 2005, p. 64).

The modern Afghan state emerged from the remnant of the traditional Durrani Empire established by Ahmad Shah Durrani in 1747. During the so-called Great Game in the nineteenth century, the territories of the Durrani Empire became the centre of rivalries between Tsarist Russia and Great Britain, which had colonised the Central and South Asian regions respectively. In their expansion northwards, the British took control of important territories that used to be part of the Durrani Empire. Similarly, Russian expansion limited the influence of the Afghan rulers to the Oxus River, which now

separates Afghanistan from the Central Asian Republics. What was left in between became modern Afghanistan, a buffer state between the two world powers.

State Disruption and Contention in Afghanistan

As a country with clearly-delineated boundaries, and controlled by a centralised government, Afghanistan was formed after the end of the second Anglo-Afghan War (1878-1880). The creation of the first centralised state by Amir Abdur Rahman Khan (1880-1901) was made possible by a combination of British assistance and the Amir's own tactics of manipulation, as well as heavy-handed repression (Gregorian, 1969). To impose his authority over the country that became Afghanistan, the Amir fought a series of wars against dynastic rivals and local elites as well as popular revolts and mass uprisings. The Amir entered into an alliance with British India at the end of the Second Anglo-Afghan War, which brought him generous British aid in the forms of annual financial assistance and military weapons and ammunitions. These included 2 million rupees paid to him as he was enthroned in 1880 (Griffin, 1888), and beginning from 1882, an annual subsidy of 1.2 million rupees, which was increased to 1.85 million in 1893 (Rubin, 2002, p. 49), and thousands of guns and tens of thousands of rifles with their ammunitions (Ghani, 1982, p. 391). In return, the Amir gave control of Afghanistan's foreign policy to the British and accepted the international boundaries that were largely drawn by the British and Russian officials, including the now contested 2,640 kilometre Durand Line, now separating the country from Pakistan.

The centralised and repressive state built by Abdur Rahman Khan contained the seeds of future rebellions and opposition against the state (Kakar, 1979). Ever since its creation, recurrent instability has been a constant feature of the politics and society in Afghanistan. Endemic instability and periodic ruptures in the political history of the country have involved tensions between centralising elites seeking to impose a centralised system of

control, and various social forces that have mounted resistance against the centralising tendencies. The pattern has often been analysed as a symptom of strong centrifugal tendencies on the part of social formations such as tribes, and weak centripetal forces on the part of the central elites. However, as will be shown below, the dynamics of political stability have been much more complex, and some of the most disruptive periods of instability were spawned by contradictions and power struggles within the political regimes.

Between 1901 and 2001 Afghanistan experienced the following main political regimes:

- Monarchy (1901-1973)
- Authoritarian one-party republic of Daoud Khan (1973-1978)
- Socialist style one-party regimes of the PDPA (1978-1992)
- The Islamic State of the mujahedin (1992-1996)
- The Islamic Emirate of the Taliban (1996-2001).

Afghanistan was a monarchy until 1973, although from 1963 of a 'constitutional' variety. Consequently, an important part of Afghanistan's political history can be analysed by the internal dynamics of the institution of monarchy. The character and role of the monarchy was shaped by the intra-dynastic rivalries as well as the governing approaches and policies of individual rulers (Saikal, 2006).

However, some of the most significant threats against the stability of the system came from competition for power within the ruling dynasty. In 1901, when Amir Abdur Rahman Khan died, he was succeeded by his son, Habibullah Khan who ruled the country until he was assassinated during a hunting expedition in the Eastern province of Laghman in February 1919. Habibullah Khan was succeeded briefly by his brother Nasrullah Khan

(21-28 February 1919) who was ousted and imprisoned by Amanullah Khan, Habibullah's younger son who ruled the country until 1929.

As a system of rule, the monarchy required a difficult balancing act between domestic forces and the influence of foreign powers. The most significant vulnerability of the monarchies and subsequent regimes in Afghanistan resulted from the political economy of dependence on foreign aid, which limited their ability to initiate any major programme of socio-economic transformation. This became most obvious during the reign of Amanullah Khan, who secured the country's independence from the British in the Third Anglo-Afghan War of 1919, but then saw the loss of British subsidies weaken the state's capacity to withstand rising challenges against his modernisation policies. In 1929, mass rebellions forced Amanullah Khan to abdicate and flee first to India and then Europe (Poullada, 1973).

The rebellion against Amanullah Khan initiated a highly tumultuous and contentious politics in the history of modern Afghanistan. The revolt brought to power Habibullah Kalakani, a Tajik from a humble social background from the Shamali Plains north of Kabul. Kalakani ruled the country from January to October 1929. In October 1929, Kalakani's short reign came to an abrupt end as a result of tribal mobilisation led by Nader Khan who forced him out of Kabul and hanged him on 1 November 1929.¹ Nader Khan had served as Minister of War and Ambassador to France under Amanullah but was not a descendent of the family of Amir Abdur Rahman Khan. Instead, he came from the Musaheban branch of the Muhammadzai ruling dynasty that had ruled the country since 1826. The family had been forced into exile in India by Amir Abdur Rahman Khan

¹ Kalakani's remains were re-interred in Kabul 1 September 2016 on a day of high drama marked by the presence of hundreds of armed Shamali residents.

and only allowed to return by Habibullah Khan. As a result, Nader Khan's rise to power represented a transfer of power from one branch of the dynasty to another.

On 8 November 1933, Nader Khan was assassinated during a visit to a school by Abdul Khaleq, a Hazara student. Nader Khan was succeeded by his 19-year old son Zaher Shah who reigned the country for a period of nearly 40 years, the longest period of political stability in the country's modern history. The Musesaband dynasty did not pursue Amanullah's social transformation agenda, which had entailed rapid Westernisation in the style pursued by Ataturk in Turkey. Instead, they restricted the modernising agenda to Kabul and a few urban centres, thereby creating what has been described as 'enclave state', which exercised its authority over the periphery through traditional intermediaries (Rubin, 1988; Sedra, 2016, pp. 160-161). As it will become clear, over time the monarchy faced greater pressure for modernisation from below.

The young Zaher Shah was only a symbolic ruler for the bulk of his reign. Until the early 1960s, real power was exercised by two of his uncles whose personal approaches to government also shaped the degree of government openness to social and political liberalisation. Between 1933 and 1946, the government was in fact run by Sardar Muhammad Hashim Khan, Nader Khan's younger brother. Hashim Khan ruled the country with a firm hand. In 1946, Hashim Khan was replaced by Shah Mahmud Khan who pursued a relatively more liberal policy until 1953. In 1953, Daoud Khan was appointed as Prime Minister. Daoud Khan was the son of Muhammad Azim Khan, a half-brother of Nader Khan. He attempted to break the peace of the 'enclave state' by pushing for modernising policies and state intervention in the society and the economy.

It was only in 1963 that Zaher Shah took actual control of the government by initiating a period of political liberalisation and the adoption of a new constitution in 1964 that declared the country a constitutional monarchy. The liberalisation of the 1960s backfired

in the form of a backlash from members of the royal family who were marginalised by the new reform. On 17 July 1973, Daoud Khan seized power in a coup while King Zahir Shah was in Italy. Daoud Khan reversed the political reforms of the 1960s and declared the country a republic with himself as president.

Daoud Khan's republic was short-lived. On 28 April 1978, another coup, by members of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan, killed him along with most members of his family. The new coup leaders declared the country a 'Democratic Republic' with commitment to social, economic and political reforms. The PDPA coup began a process of gradual unravelling of the state through several episodes of contention that involved foreign actors more directly in the politics of the country. Its socialist-style social and economic reform agendas unleashed a series of uprisings across the country in 1979. In December 1979, the Soviet Union invaded the country, which further galvanised opposition to the PDPA regime. Leaders of the initial uprisings fled to Pakistan and Iran where they formed several Tanzeems, or organisations, and received financial and military assistance from the West and Muslim countries. Henceforth, the country became a major battlefield of Cold War rivalries between the West and East, with the Soviet and regime forces challenged by the so-called 'mujahedin' (Bradsher, 1983; Hyman, 1984; Braithwaite, 2011).

The Soviet Union withdrew its forces from Afghanistan in February 1989, and hence left the pro-Soviet regime exposed to a myriad of armed mujahedin organisations that were bent on toppling it militarily (Saikal & Maley, 1989). On 28 April 1992, the government of Dr. Najibullah collapsed in Kabul and the mujahedin entered the city without any resistance from the government security forces. The mujahedin takeover of Kabul was the beginning of a vicious cycle of armed conflict among several mujahedin organisations who were unable to form a new government and fought one another as they jockeyed for

power and control of territory (Fotini, 2013, pp. 57-100). In the environment of generalised insecurity and anarchy that characterised the mujahedin rule, the Taliban emerged in 1994 from the Southern province of Kandahar. The Taliban claimed to be pursuing a temporary mission of restoring peace and facilitating the formation of a national government, but in seeking to impose their control over territories they became another warring faction. The Taliban also hosted a number of foreign jihadist groups, including Al-Qaeda, which aided it in its relentless war against the former mujahedin whilst pursuing their own agendas elsewhere. The danger of the Taliban alliance with extremist groups such as Al-Qaeda became clear when the latter planned the 11 September attacks on the United States in 2001.

Institutional Underdevelopment and Contention in Afghanistan

As this brief overview of the political history of the country during the twentieth century shows, the state in Afghanistan underwent recurrent cycles of contention which disrupted the political development of the country. Having said that, in comparison to many countries that gained their independence after the First or Second World Wars, Afghanistan had a relatively longer history of statehood. However, from the outset, foreign patronage had contradictory effects on the nature of the state-society relations. British subsidies enabled Abdur Rahman Khan to build the coercive capacity of the state, which he used to expand central authority across the country. In the long-run, however, foreign patronage had a detrimental effect on the nature of the state and its relations with society: a highly authoritarian state built on patronage of a foreign power lacked the structures and incentives to negotiate a durable social contract with its society. Furthermore, British aid ironically did not lead to the integration of Afghanistan with broader processes of socio-economic and political modernisation. On the contrary, it enabled the Amir to isolate Afghanistan from the rest of the world. He refused to connect

Afghanistan to international telegraph and railway networks and described British efforts to extend the railway into southern Afghanistan as ‘just like a knife pushing into my vitals’ (Khan, 1900, p. 159). This meant that while the state was inserted into the international state system and its elite benefited from it, it was determined to prevent the society from developing direct links to outside forces. As will be shown below, the drive towards modernisation remained strong and some of Abdur Rahman Khan’s successors embarked on radical projects of modernisation, but only to face violent opposition.

The tension between domestic and international postures of states is not unique to Afghanistan. As the political scientist Joel Migdal (2004, pp. 58-94) argues, states operate in two intersecting arenas: the first is the international arena in which the state interacts with the international state system and myriad non-state actors. The second is the domestic arena where the state aims to exercise its authority. As Migdal argues, both arenas present the state with multiple constraints and opportunities. The international arena, characterised by alliance and conflict between states, constrains state behaviour through threats of conflict and shifting power alignments, and presents opportunities through alliances and international recognition. However, Afghanistan suffered from a more fundamental disjuncture between its international recognition as a modern state and its underlying socio-economic weakness. The fears and anxiety of the ruling elites about joining the international rail and telegraph networks were symptoms of a broader determination at that time to isolate the country from external modernising influences. Hence, there were simultaneous processes of inclusion in, and exclusion from, the international system; this meant the country embarked on the path of political centralisation, funded by foreign patronage, without the accompanying processes of capitalist and industrial development.

The simultaneous processes of inclusion and exclusion created a complex social and political environment that continues to puzzle students of the country. Many scholars have attempted to identify the faultlines that explain the complex politics of the country. As Dorronsoro (2005) argues, the tendency leads to reductionist and essentialist explanations that see the country in terms of fixed and rigid dichotomies: the state versus tribe, the urban elite versus the rural countryside and the modernisers versus the conservatives. Such accounts cannot do justice to the complexity of dynamic struggles between the modern state and rival social forces in the country. In the context of Afghanistan, the key task then is to identify the range of institutions and organisations that co-exist and compete with the state. In a review of the Western scholarship on Afghanistan, Dorronsoro (2005) also makes an important distinction between two forms of analysis: one that sees Afghanistan's politics in the light of international geopolitical rivalries and another that focuses on domestic drivers of political violence and conflict. By focusing on international geostrategic factors such as the so-called Great Game in the nineteenth century and the Cold War rivalries during the 1980s Soviet occupation of the country, the former refuses to acknowledge domestic dynamics, and hence fails to take into account the agency and role of domestic actors in sustaining and perpetuating conflicts. By contrast, the latter group of scholars who analyse domestic politics of the country risk essentialising the politics of the country along three major lines of explanation: tribe, ethnicity and Islam.

The Evolution of Contention in Afghanistan

Assuming a two-tiered social and political environment, in this chapter I make a distinction between two ideal-type forms of political contestation that were historically prevalent in Afghanistan. On one hand, there were traditional forms of political mobilisation that emerged in response to local issues and were underpinned by traditional

social networks of solidarity and identity. On the other, there were urban political groups that were the product of Afghanistan's exposure to external modernising influences. At the core of contestation between the state elites and their challengers is a struggle over social control. In these struggles for control, the actors, both the challengers and the state elites, drew on a number of mobilising frameworks that ranged from family and kinship networks, through tribes and local solidarity networks, to ethnic and religious identities at the national and international scales. The main difference between traditional and modernist forms of mobilisation lay in the capacity of the latter for sustained and proactive mobilisation on a national scale. This distinction remains pertinent to this day. In an important respect, the political history of Afghanistan has been shaped by contestation between traditional, mostly local and kinship-based networks of solidarity, and modern, usually-urban principles of social divisions that are created as a result of the rise of, and are articulated by, educated urban elites.

The Traditional Rebellions

Afghanistan's history is replete with recurring rebellions against state authority. In the process of centralisation of power in the last decades of the nineteenth century some regions became known as Yaghistan, or the land of rebels. These included the Southwestern region of Hazarajat, consisting of the present-day Uruzgan province and districts in Zabul and Qandahar provinces (Ibrahimi, 2017, pp. 53-85), and the tribal areas now in the Northwest of Pakistan (Younus, 2015). Although such labels given to particular regions often came with negative connotations that associated their inhabitants with xenophobia and resistance to modern civilisation, rebellion was an historically-prevalent form of protest against excesses by the ruling authorities.

These rebellions were typically organised around the networks of *qawm*, local solidarity relationships that can range from kinship ties, through tribes, to larger geographical, tribal

and ethnic identities. These mobilisations also tended to be reactive in nature as they occurred in response to intrusion of state authorities in local affairs. As a framework for political mobilisation, these solidarity networks have major limitations, as such networks are by definition local in nature and as a result their mobilisational capacities remain limited in scope. This meant that even large scale mobilisation against foreign powers as in the Anglo-Afghan Wars did not result in the emergence of national political movements, As Rubin (2002, p. 20) argues,

The Anglo-Afghan Wars, fought by tribal coalitions, left no organizational legacy. Rather than incorporating the various sector of the population into a common national political system, the political elite acted as an ethnically stratified hierarchy of intermediaries between the foreign powers providing the resources and the groups receiving the largess of patronage.

Furthermore, given the fragmented nature of Afghanistan's economy, such networks were also formed around local socio-economic issues and as a result were poorly equipped to offer ideological and programmatic basis that are necessary for sustained mobilisation. Rubin (2002, p. 20) adds further that the monarchies pursued a deliberate policy of promoting social fragmentation through promoting the solidarity networks at the lowest level,

Most of the population related to the government by using kinship to obtain patronage. Each solidarity group (qawm) remained isolated, linked to the nation-state only through personal ties to individuals in the government; the qawm did not need to form nationwide alliances to capture and exercise power. Indeed, the government had for decades pursued a policy of breaking larger tribes into smaller groups and recognizing only the village-level qawm (p. 20).

In the course of his twenty-one year campaign of brutal centralisation, Amir Abdur Rahman Khan faced a series of rebellions across the country. In his own biography, the Amir recounts that during his rule he was faced with forty revolts, including four major wars that he describes as civil wars (Khan, 1900, p. 249). In the twentieth century, rebellion as a form of protest continued to be employed across the country. Amir Habibullah faced rebellions from the Loya Paktya region in 1912-13 and in Qandahar in

1912. These rebellions were put down by a combination of negotiation and repression (Ghubar, 1997, pp. 1125-1131). However, rebellions against his successor, Amanullah, took more serious dimensions. Amanullah's radical modernisation agenda, which turned the state into a vehicle of social and economic transformation, was opposed by traditional and conservative sections of the society (Nawid, 1999). The first major revolt broke out in 1924, one year after the adoption of a modernist constitution, but his poorly-paid army failed to withstand a more widespread mobilisation which began in November 1928.

The mobilisational capacity of localised rebellions increased if they aligned themselves with networks of the *ulema* (religious scholars) who were spread across different regions of the country and hence could offer platforms for coordinated action on a larger scale. However, as a social group the ulema were dependent on the patronage of the state or the traditional landed elites. Consequently, the ulema were seldom able to initiate mass mobilisation without the patronage of rural elites or Afghan rulers. The success of the anti-Amanullah rebellion in coordinating a large scale revolt that involved several provinces and forced abdication of the king came from an alliance of several localised rebellions with leaders of religious networks that spanned across provinces and districts. In this alliance, the mobilisational capacity and passion of tribes was combined with a national discourse for defense of religion and traditional values. However, as Shahrani (2005) argues, the rebellion failed to mobilise supporters on a national scale. In fact, both the mobilisation against Amanullah and the counter-mobilisation against Habibullah Kalakani were limited to the almost exclusively or predominantly Pashtun provinces of Eastern and South-eastern Afghanistan. Habibullah Kalakani, who came to power as a result of the initial rebellion, reduced the role of the state in society by discarding the modernist constitution of 1923, banning the wearing of European clothes, and making it mandatory for women to travel with a male companion (Dorransoro, 2005, p. 284).

The success of the rebellion convinced Nader Khan and his successors to abandon the agenda of social transformation and opt for creating an 'enclave state' that sought to promote limited modernisation in the urban centres, and rule the country through traditional intermediaries known as khans and maliks. In the words of Rubin (2002, p. 20), 'rather than try to penetrate the countryside and govern it, the Afghan state continued to pursue a strategy of encapsulating traditional local institutions'.

The consolidation of state authority from 1933 to 1973 did not put an end to rebellion as a form of protest. Local resistance against excessive state extraction, and centralisation by the state, continued, albeit on relatively smaller scales. Among the Hazaras, who were subjected to extremely exploitative socio-economic relations to the advantage of Pashtun nomads, popular discontent gave rise to *yaghi* individuals (literally meaning rebels) who after having troubles with government officials fled to the mountains and championed the rights of the exploited against repressive governments. The best-known examples were Yosuf Beg in the 1930s, and Ibrahim Khan Gawsawar in the late 1940s. Yosuf Beg escaped government attempts to arrest him but was eventually captured and executed. Gawsawar, who even overthrew the government administration in the district of Shahrstan (formerly Uruzgan province and now Day Kundi) was pardoned by King Zaher Shah after a delegation of Hazaras convinced him to give up resistance (Edwards, 1986, pp. 208-211; Yazdani, 2007). Another major tribal revolts of the Zaher Shah period include the rebellions by Safi tribes in Kunar province in 1945-1946 and the Durrani tribes in Qandahar in 1959. While some of these such as the Safi rebellion posed significant challenges to state authority at the local level for several months, in general the state had acquired the military capability to put down localised rebellions (Dorrnsoro, 2005, p. 42)

The localised rebellions shared important features. As Edwards (1986) argues, the *yaghi* Hazaras were representatives of a broader social phenomenon, described by Eric Hobsbawm as ‘social banditry’ (Hobsbawm, 1971) that can emerge in processes of social change where small communities are absorbed into larger socio-economic systems. Despite significant differences, the localised Hazara rebellions shared important characteristics with the dynamics of the anti-Amanullah rebellions. In fact, Habibullah Kalakani represents another example of ‘social bandit’, an outlaw who became the voice of expression of protest against exploitation. As Olesen argues ‘it seems plausible to assume that he [Kalakani] and his short-term reign represented yet another case of ‘social banditry in the Hobsbawm-ian sense’ (Olesen, 1995, p. 149).

The Modernist Movements

In stark contrast, Afghanistan’s urban-based modernist groups were products of exposure of the country to modernising influences from the outside world. These groups nonetheless followed a historical trajectory in parallel to the localised rebellions. Broadly speaking, these groups were pursuing a different mobilisational strategy, and drew on broader discourses of modernisation, progress and universal ideas for social and political changes. Prior to the outbreak of armed conflict in 1978, three distinct phases can be identified in the historical trajectory of these movements.

Afghanistan’s first modernist political movement emerged during the first decade of the twentieth century. The movement was based on a network of three groups of people: (1) the teachers and students of Habibiah High School, the first modern school of the country established in 1903; (2) Madrasah Shahi-e Kabul (Kabul Royal Madrasah); and (3) a particular category of servants at the rulers’ courts who were known *Ghulam bachaha* (literally meaning servant boys) (Habibi, 1985). The *Ghulam bachahas*, usually young men from traditional elite families of various parts of Afghanistan, were either sent to the

court by their families as gifts to the rulers or were demanded from the families by rulers who sought to maintain an instrument of pressure against rebellious rural elites and saw an opportunity to socialise new generations of elites into the political culture of the ruling elites.

The Kabul Royal Madrasah originated from *Jamiat ul-Ulema*, an institution of ulema established by Amir Abdur Rahman Khan that included selected pro-government ulema from across the country and was tasked to translate texts from Arabic and other foreign languages into Dari and Pashto, and draft and disseminate financial, judicial and administrative documents. During the mid-1900s, the centre was named the Kabul Royal Madrasah and included 50 prominent ulema who also laid the foundation of the country's first printing press and library (Rasouli, 2012, pp. 246-248).

In 1905, the group coalesced around an association that published the country's second print paper, *Seraj ul-Akhbar Afghanistan* (Torch of News of Afghanistan), a biweekly newspaper in Kabul.² They received an official license for the biweekly through an official request from Amir Habibullah in 1905 before publishing its first and only issue on 11 January 1906. Afghan historians mostly attribute the closure of the paper to pressures exerted by British India but Sims-Williams (1980, p.118) believes 'it seems more likely that internal pressure was responsible for its closure'.

In 1909, the reformist circles faced severe repression after the group presented their demands through a formal petition to Amir Habibullah Khan (Arizah). The petition written collectively in Kabul was presented by a delegation of the constitutionalists to the Amir in Jalalabad. It read in part:

In some countries, people use compulsion and overwhelming power to force their governments to make the administration according to the wishes of the nation and

² Afghanistan's first newspaper was *Shams Al-Nahar* which was published in 1872.

make it constitutional and law-based. In others, enlightened kings take their own decisions and initiative to enforce laws and principles of constitutionalism in their countries. Since Seraj Al-Mellat wal-Din is a progressive and informed king – as the formation of Habibiah High School and Military College, publication of Seraj Al-Akhbar, printing of books, importation of modern printing press, construction of roads and buildings and etcetra are signs of kindness and kingly attention and in the direction of greatness and exaltation of the homeland – it is expected that [His Highness] base the conduct of affairs of the government on laws of constitution (Habibi, 1985, p. 17) [My translation].

According to Habibi (1985), the petition infuriated Habibullah Khan who ordered four members of the delegation to be executed in Jalalabad. By contrast, Ghubar (1997, p. 1134) argues that repression began after a government informant reported to Amir Habibullah that the movement leaders had decided that each member carry a pistol. Regardless of what triggered the repression, it is clear that during 1909 the movement was dissipated as a group. Seven of its members were executed in Jalalabad and Kabul and about 35 others received long-term prison sentences (Ghubar, 1997, pp. 1134-1137).

The repression of the first constitutionalist movement was followed by a decade of abeyance. The execution and long-term imprisonment of leaders of the movement destroyed the organisational structure of the movement. However, although the movement was suppressed, the modernist tendency continued to survive in the court. A second phase came from 1911 when *Seraj ul-Akhbar Afghaniya* was launched by Mahmud Tarzi a member of a family of the Muhammadzai clan who were exiled by Abdur Rahman Khan in the 1880s. In exile, in Damascus and Istanbul, Tarzi was exposed to ideologies of nationalism and Islamic revival. After returning to Afghanistan, Tarzi became a key figure of what became known as ‘Young Afghans’, a modernist and pro-independence faction in the royal court. His daughter, Soraya, was married to Amanullah Khan and thus his connection to the royal court provided him a greater degree of protection against government repression. He used the biweekly paper to introduce new ideas to the country, formulate basic tenets of Afghan nationalism, and call for complete independence of Afghanistan from Britain (Gregorian, 1967). In September 1918, the

biweekly was shut down, and two of its key editors were jailed. When Habibullah was assassinated in February 1919, some blamed the modernist faction of the monarchy for his murder. Although the exact details of the death of Habibullah never became known, it was clear that repression and the authoritarian approach of the last decade of his rule had radicalised the opposition to his rule. Consequently, the first modernising effort was undone by a tribal and conservative rebellion decades before groups such as the Taliban posed similar challenges (Stewart, 1973).

When Amanullah came to power, he appropriated the demands and aspirations of the modernist circles of Kabul, initiating the third phase. In his coronation speech on 1 March 1919, he announced three major goals: independence of Afghanistan; punishing those who murdered his father; and the abolishing of *begari*, forced labor practised by landlords and possibly government authorities (Fletcher, 1965, p. 57). By asserting Afghanistan's independence in foreign affairs from Britain and by embarking on a path of radical modernisation, he became the first ruler to champion modernisation of the country. Achieving Afghanistan's independence was surprisingly easy. After a series of skirmishes in May 1919, known as the Third Anglo-Afghan War, the British accepted Afghanistan's independence in a peace treaty signed on 8 August 1919 in Rawalpindi, a city now in Pakistan. The independence of Afghanistan significantly increased the power and popularity of Amanullah. In 1921, he signed a treaty of friendship with the Soviet Union and entered into diplomatic relations with many other countries (Adamec, 1974; Adamec, 1967).

The rise to power of modernist and nationalist forces under Amanullah changed the dynamics of contention in the country. As discussed above, whereas previously modernist elites were agitating for modernising changes against a conservative monarchy, under

Amanullah conservative elites felt threatened by his reform programmes and thus revolted against his programmes of modernisation.

The Emergence of Proto-Political Parties during the Liberal Period of 1946-1953

Following the defeat of Amanullah's modernisation programme, the constitutionalist movement went into a prolonged period of abeyance. The killing of Nader Khan at the hands of a high school student in 1933 increased the suspicion of the Musaheban rulers towards the intelligentsia. As Mobarez (1996, p. 115), who grew up during this period, remarks, the relatively small education sector in the urban centres was tightly controlled by the government:

After the assassination of Nader Shah by Abdul Khaleq, student of Nejat (Amani) High School, the education sector was turned into centres of spying and petty despotism; students were taught under very strict conditions; sincerity among students had totally disappeared as one feared the other would be a spy [My translation].

The Musaheban could not entirely eliminate the intelligentsia or close the modern education system. The state needed to provide modern education to train educated cadres for the state bureaucracies. As Shahrani (1984, p. 39) argues, the non-interventionist Musaheban rule gradually gave rise to a small and yet assertive educated class that began to agitate for change besides two other major social and political groups,

During much of the Musahiban rule there had been only two major political forces: foremost the royal household and new ruling elite, and second the nonofficial, community based traditional leaders who for the most part avoided contact with the authorities and were concerned with the welfare of their own communities above all else. Relations between the two were not confrontational; they involved keeping at a distance and maintaining a degree of mutual suspicions. A third element was added when the educated youth became alienated and began to call for radical social, economic and political changes. Beginning in the mid-1960s, they increasingly formed the primary political opposition in Kabul and other urban centres.

After more than 17 years of repressive and authoritarian rule by Hashim Khan, who had first become Prime Minister in 1929, Shah Mahmud (1946-1953), another uncle of King

Zaher Shah, was appointed as Prime minister in 1946. Shah Mahmud opened the political space to broader political participation. Although Afghanistan had had a form of parliament from 1933, it was never free from government interference. Shah Mahmud changed this in the 1949 parliamentary elections. The liberal and reformist circles enthusiastically participated in the elections, electing 50 of the 120-member assembly. In 1951, the liberal parliament passed new legislation, permitting freedom of the press, which opened the opportunity for launch of new newspapers and proto-political parties.

During the reign of Shah Mahmud the intelligentsia coalesced around the following groups:

- In 1947, a group of mainly Pashtun intellectual and cultural figures formed *Wishzalmayan*, or Awakened Youth (Bezhan, 2014). Most of its members came from the Southern province of Qandahar and the Eastern province of Nangarhar. As its name indicates, at the core of the group's objective was the notion of awakening of youth, which implied active social and political engagement. The extent and form of youth engagement as envisaged by the group is not very clear. Whilst mostly noted as a forerunner of modern political movements in the country, the group is also noted for its close ties with the establishment and Pashtun-nationalist tendencies. Emadi (2001, p. 430) argues that *Wishzalmayan* was dominated by Pashtun intellectuals and its 'main objective was to introduce some cosmetic changes in the system without provoking the incumbents'. Mobarez (1996, pp. 116-119) has pointed to rivalries between a pro-establishment and a more independent faction within the group as the cause of its changing and sometimes contradictory approach towards the government
- *Hezb-e Neday-e Khalq* (Party of the Voice of People) was founded by Abdur Rahman Mahmudi, one of the first graduates of Kabul University's Medical

Faculty. Mahmudi edited an independent publication also called *Neday-e Khalq*, which adopted a critical approach towards the government. Mahmudi was certainly the most radical of the activists, writers and politicians of this period. He was so critical and vocal in his ‘people’s politics’ approach that some have seen him as precursor of the Marxist groups that emerged in Afghanistan during the 1960s (Shafaye, 2015, pp. 130-133). Pointing to his religiosity and knowledge of the Quran, Mobarez (1996, p. 133) rejects the proposition that Mahmudi was a Marxist but described him as a ‘parliamentary leftist’ for his radical pro-poor politics.

- In 1951, Ghulam Muhammad Gobar established *Hezb-e Watan*, a party of the relatively moderate urban intelligentsia and also edited *Watan*, an associated publication.
- An important and yet often overlooked social and political movement in this period was orchestrated by Sayed Ismail Balkhi, a Shi’a scholar activist who launched a protest movement outside the institutional structure of the state. Balkhi was one of the first Islamist activist ulema to have championed the cause of the poor and demanded radical social and political transformation in the state level (Edwards, 1986). In March 1949, Balkhi and a number of members of his circle were arrested after their plan to launch a coup was leaked to the government; and they were given long-term prison sentences.

The liberalisation of political space and formation of radical opposition groups created a backlash among some members of the ruling dynasty. In 1950, Daoud Khan also established a group which became known as *Klup-e Milli* (National Club), a pro-establishment party with strong Pashtun-nationalist ideology. Daoud Khan became the main champion of Pashtunistan, a claim by Pashtun nationalist groups on Pashtun territories that became part of British India and subsequently Pakistan after the Durand

Line was drawn in 1893. Pashtun nationalists led by Daoud Khan demanded that these territories be either annexed to Afghanistan or declared as a separate Pashtunistan state. In 1947, Afghanistan became the only country to vote against admission of Pakistan to the UN. In Kabul, the government announced 14th of August, the day of independence of Pakistan, as Pashtunistan day and named a major square in the centre of Kabul as Pashtunistan Square.

The Pashtunistan issue had significant impacts on the emerging political and cultural groups in the country. As Bezhan (2014) shows, *Wishzalmayan* adopted Pashtunistan as its core platform, a move which limited its appeal among non-Pashtun communities. By contrast, the idea of Pashtunistan was viewed with suspicion among non-Pashtuns, many of whom saw the ethno-national expansionist claim as an instrument of supremacy of Pashtuns. As a result, Bezhan (2014) argues that most of these other groups were primarily concerned with domestic socio-economic and political reforms and viewed Pashtunistan as a distraction from domestic struggles.

In 1953, Shah Mahmud was asked to resign by the King. He was replaced by Daoud Khan who ruled the country with an iron fist for the next ten years. Most of the key leaders of the reformist circles were put in prison, and the independent press was closed as Daoud Khan initiated another cycle of centralisation of power and state-led development programs.

In many respects, Daoud Khan disrupted the domestic and international foundation of the stability of the Musaheban dynasty. The Pashtunistan issue became a source of recurrent friction with neighboring Pakistan, and the need to finance ambitious five-year development programs broke the policy of neutrality in the context of Cold War rivalries. Daoud Khan became dependent on Soviet developmental and military aid. Ironically, Daoud Khan's modernising and state-led development played a major role in the upsurge

of radical protest groups during the 1960s. He contribute to radicalisation of the intelligentsia in at least two ways. First, he entered into a series of developmental relationships with a number of other countries, which included the Soviet Union, the US, and a number of Islamic countries. These agreements included scholarships for Afghan students to study in the Soviet Union, Egypt and elsewhere, and provided for large number of foreign advisors to be deployed in various sectors of government bureaucracy. Second, as the Table 1 (Samady, 2001, p. 29) shows, the national development plans quickly expanded the education sector across the country, from 121,090 students in 1955 to 664,270 in 1972.

Table 3 Student Enrolment, 1955-1972 Source: Samadi (2001)

Year	1955	1960	1967	1972
Primary	111,650	213,100	444,240	540,700
Secondary	5,730	14,100	54,400	107,600
Vocational	1,950	2,500	5,700	5,200
Teacher Ed.	1,000	3,900	5,600	4,170
Higher Ed.	760	1,700	4,320	6,600
Total	121,090	235,300	514,260	664,270

Democratisation and Contentious Politics during the 1960s.

In March 1963, Daoud Khan was forced to resign. In 1964, King Zaher Shah promulgated a new constitution which declared the country a constitutional democracy and barred members of the royal family from holding executive offices. Widely described as a *Dahe Demokrasi*, or Decade of Democracy (Koshkaki, 1986), the decade witnessed the emergence of a significant number of political and ideological currents that engaged in competitive social mobilisation and recruitment among the country's educated class. Thus, the adoption of the new constitution ushered in a period of highly contentious politics in the history of the country. Ruttig (2006) classifies these groups into three major currents: the Marxists, the Islamists and the ethno-nationalists.

The Marxist groups evolved from radical activist circles of the previous decades. The movement was dominated by two major rival political and ideological groups that espoused separate versions of Soviet and Chinese approaches to socialist revolutions, reflecting in turn the intense rivalries in the communist world following the 1960 Sino-Soviet split. In January 1965, supporters of Soviet-style Marxism formed the *Hezb-e Demokratik-e Khalq-e Afghanistan* (People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan, PDPA). Towards the end of the same year, supporters of the Chinese-style communism announced *Sazman-e Jawanan-e Motaraqqi* (Progressive Youth Organisation, PYO), a separate organisation that became a fierce rival of the PDPA and followed an entirely different strategy for realisation of their own version of socialist social and political changes.

Although transnational political Islamism has a longer history in the country dating back to the work of the Sayed Jamaluddin Al-Afghani (1838-1897), it never developed deep roots in the society. As a social and political force with significant mobilisational capacity, Islamism emerged towards the end of the 1950s, when as part of a program of cultural exchange with Egypt a number of Afghan students went to study at the Al-Azhar University in Cairo. The founding figures of the movement were all Al-Azhar graduates. These included Ghulam Muhamamd Niyazi, who subsequently became the dean of the faculty of theology at Kabul University, Burhanuddin Rabbani, Musa Tawana and Minhajuddin Gahiz (Roy, 1990, pp. 69-83).

In an attempt to reformulate Islam as a political ideology, the Islamists translated the works of Islamists such as Sayed Qotb and Mawlana Maududi and focused on recruiting among students in Kabul. Consequently, in comparison to traditional Islam which was based in mosques and traditional madrassahs, this generation of Islamists was the product of state institutions, and was inspired by broader ideological struggles that raged across

the Muslim world. These activists criticised the government and presented themselves as bulwarks against the spread of communist ideologies and other western influences.

Besides these largely ideological groups that were, at least in theory, non-sectarian in their recruitment and social mobilisation strategies, a number of other groups emerged that were chiefly concerned with more particularist ethno-linguistic issues. These ethno-nationalist groups included the *Hezb-e Social Demokrat* (Party of Social Democrats), popularly known as Afghan Millat after a newspaper it published of the same name during the second half of the 1960s. The second major group with clear ethnic tendencies was *Mahfel-e Entezar* (Awaiting Circle), more popularly known as *Setam-e Milli* or National Oppression. It was led by Tahir Badakhshi, a Tajik from the north-eastern province of Badakhshan who was a founding member of the PDPA but split from it arguing that in Afghanistan ‘national oppression’ was more important than class struggle. Consequently, Badakhshi and his followers focused on what they regarded to be the primary national issue, which it defined as the oppression of the other ethnic minorities by the Pashtuns. While there was no equivalent of *Afghan Millat* or *Setam-e Milli* among the Hazaras, there were various activist Hazaras groups, both in and out of Afghanistan, which actively debated the historical persecution and marginalisation of the Hazaras (Ibrahimi, 2012b; Ibrahimi, 2017). Ethnicity as a framework for social and political organisation owed its emergence very much to the rise of the educated class.

The emerging Marxist, Islamist and other groups organised rallies in the streets of Kabul, and engaged in intense ideological battles against one another. The protests and rallies disrupted the normal functioning of state institutions, including schools, universities and the national assembly. Protests quickly shifted from street demonstrations to activities directly challenging and disrupting state institutions. The new parliament became a major target of such disruptive tactics. Since its opening, the new national assembly had allowed

members of the public – mostly activist students – to sit in the general meetings of the assembly and listen to speeches of members of the parliament. On 24 October 1965, when the Prime Minister Dr. Muhammad Yosuf was due to introduce members of his cabinet to seek a vote of confidence from the assembly, the number of spectators was so large that even members of the parliament and candidate ministers could not find seats. Consequently, the vote of confidence was postponed to 25 October and the assembly also decided to convene a secret meeting to vote on members of the new government. The following morning, when the assembly convened some 2000 demonstrators gathered outside the parliament building, protesting the decision to hold a secret ballot on the new government. While the parliament was in session, government forces were trying to keep the protestors away from the parliament. Towards the end of the day, the confrontation between the security forces and the demonstrators turned bloody: members of the National Army who were also deployed to support the police opened fire and killed three protestors. The incident had a huge effect on the subsequent course of development of the experiment with constitutional democracy. It frightened King Zaher Shah, who asked Dr. Yosuf to resign and nominated Hashim Maiwandwal as a new Prime Minister on 29 October. Hence, the first government under the new constitution survived less than a week.

According to Farhang (1988, p. 508), the 25 October rally was like a ‘funeral service in which large number of people participated but everybody was mourning their own losses’. These included members of the PDPA, and supporters of Daoud Khan (who was sidelined by the new constitution), and of Hashim Maiwandwal. In addition, Farhang (1988, p. 508) refers to other opportunists and ethnic supremacists who also saw the failure of the first government under the new constitution as in their interest.

The 25 October rally was symptomatic of contentious politics that raged throughout the decade. Koshkaki (1986, pp. 121-140) identifies three different stages of student demonstrations: (1) 25 October 1965, which led to the resignation of the Prime Minister; (2) 1968-69 strikes and demonstrations against education laws and regulations which forced the government to revoke those laws and ask the Minister of Education to resign; and (3) 1972 strikes and demonstrations against the Minister of Education and Chancellor of Kabul University that also resulted in the resignation of the minister, the chancellor and heads of faculties of Kabul University. In 1968, students went on strike against policies at schools and universities in Kabul and other urban centres. Workers also used strikes to protest against managers of light industries that had emerged in Kabul and a few other urban centres (Emadi, 2001, pp. 434-435). In 1971, students of Kabul University formed a formal Students Union, which came to be dominated by members of the Maoist PYO. A year later, during a clash between members of the PYO and the Muslim Youth Organisation, Saidal Sukhandan, a prominent PYO activist was murdered inside Kabul University. Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, who was a student of the engineering faculty that time, was accused of the murder.

In July 1973, Daoud Khan, who had been sidelined by the new constitutional democracy, staged a coup and seized power while Zahir Shah was traveling in Europe. The coup was conducted by a section of the PDPA, which had chosen to infiltrate the armed forces of the government. Daoud Khan abrogated the 1964 constitution, and declared the country a republic. The renewed drive for centralisation enraged other activists groups, notably the Islamists and Maoists. In July 1975, the Islamists sought to incite a revolt against Daoud Khan in several provinces. The attempt was a massive failure, as except for a few pockets in the north of Kabul most people refused to join the revolt. In response, the government launched a campaign of crackdown against the Islamists, capturing and

executing or imprisoning hundreds of their members. Those who survived fled to Pakistan.

The April 1978 Coup and External Influence on Domestic Contention

In the second coup in the political history of the country, on 27 April 1978 members of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan killed Daoud Khan and most members of his family and overthrew his government. The coup took the politics and strategies of contention to whole new levels. The new regime initiated a series of radical programmes that, in ways similar to Amanullah Khan's modernisation agenda, sought to transform the country. Unlike Amanullah, the PDPA reform programmes were inspired by Soviet-inspired Marxist top-down transformation. The opposition against the government of the PDPA began with popular and spontaneously-organised revolts at the community level. In other words, the initial revolts against the PDPA reform agendas were led by traditional community and religious elites and were consequently disjointed from one another. In their scope, these initial revolts were restricted to local settings such as districts and sub-districts. The PDPA regime responded to these revolts with terror and violence, launching campaigns of mass arrest and executions of local notable, religious elites, Islamists, Maoists and all forces that were not aligned to the party (Maley, 1991).

Repression and crackdown in the cities drove most of Islamists and non-conforming intelligentsia to the countryside, or to exile in neighbouring Iran and Pakistan. In the countryside, the traditional organisers of revolts were joined by educated cadres who brought with them the ideological framework and organisational tactics for more long-term and nation-wide resistance. Consequently, the two different forms of historical forces were conjoined in their opposition to the pro-Soviet regime in Kabul.

The April 1978 coup and mass rebellions that it provoked unleashed a number of major social and political changes. First, the two coups in 1973 and 1978, and the violent opposition against the PDPA regime began a processes of rapid unravelling of the state. Two aspects of the effects on the state of the war are worth noting here. First, the manner in which both Daoud Khaan and the PDPA gained power reversed the limited institutionalisation of politics that was achieved during the Musaheban rule from 1933. The PDPA regime enjoyed little popular legitimacy to defend itself against popular revolts that it incited through its policies of social and political change (Maley, 1987). As it lost control of territories its domestic revenues also declined quite rapidly. In 1978, 53 percent of the government expenditure was on development. In 1988, 84 percent of its expenditure was on routine operation of the state rather than development, and more than three quarters of its revenues came from foreign aid, sale of natural gas and domestic borrowing (Maley, 2009, pp. 130-131). Second, the unsuccessful agrarian reform launched by the PDPA and the violence that followed corroded the social foundations of the state in the country. The traditional elites who served as intermediaries between the Musaheban governments and society were first persecuted and estranged by the PDPA functionaries before being sidelined by the more organised and ideologically-oriented mujahedin factions. Instead of the traditional elites, the war gave rise to a new generation of elites that achieved their power through violence, greater organisational skills and an ability to obtain and distribute foreign assistance that came from an anti-Soviet coalition of Islamic and western countries. Consequently, the traditional patterns of power relations at the societal level were profoundly disrupted.

Second, Islam became the overarching ideological framework for mobilisation, first against the PDPA and subsequently against the Soviet invasion of the country in December 1979 (Roy, 1990). The armed resistance against the Soviet occupation of the country was framed as a *jihad*, a just struggle within an Islamic framework, and the

participants in the war became known as *mujahedin*. The *jihad* also drew thousands of foreign jihadists to the conflict in the country (Maley, 2009, pp. 49-50). However, in the shift from the spontaneous phase of mobilisation in 1978-9 towards more organised forms of guerrilla warfare, there emerged diverse groups that were motivated by a wide range of interpretations of Islam, including popular religion, traditional Sufi brotherhoods, and modern Islamist ideologies inspired by the Muslim Brotherhood. As the conflict intensified and following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979, the locally-organised popular uprisings were gradually transformed or co-opted into formal political and military organisations that became known as Tanzeem. Throughout the 1980s, there were seven major Sunni Tanzeems based in Pakistan and another eight similar organisations of the mainly Shia and Hazara mujahedin formed in Iran.

Consequently, the mujahedin groups exhibited diverse political and military strategies and pursued different models of social and political organisations. Dorronsoro (2005, pp. 137-172) draws a distinction between three models of organisation among the mujahedin: bureaucratic, clerical, and patrimonial forms of organisations that were inspired by Islamist, fundamentalist and conservative ideologies respectively. The bureaucratic organisations tended to be led by members of the educated class, the clerical organisations were formed by the *ulema*, and the patrimonial organisations were dominated by the traditional landed elites known as *khans*. In a similar manner Roy (1990) identifies three organisational patterns that followed from the existing networks of Islamists, the *ulema*, the Sufi brotherhoods, and tribal networks. According to Roy (1990, p. 120)

So three different patterns emerged, which have characterised the history of resistance parties throughout:

- (1) A number of loosely structured parties, made up of local fronts, corresponding to the segmentation of the Afghan society and indicative of the rivalries of potential leaders and their followers; these multiple groups joined in a loose coalition. They are the so-called “moderate parties”.

- (2) A dominant party which had renounced its quintessential character to absorb people who were not ideologically committed from the very beginning: this is Jamiat.
- (3) A very homogenous party, of the Leninist type: this is the Hizb of Hekmatyar.

On the one hand, there were groups that pursued a Leninist form of political organisation with highly centralised hierarchies. The most significant example of this group was the Hezb-e Islami of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. On the other, there were groups that replicated traditional patron-client relationships in highly personalised networks of mutual exchange and solidarity. In short, some groups reproduced traditional social segmentation and religious identities, and others attempted to override social segmentation and invent new organisational identities.

Third, the armed resistance against the PDPA and Soviet occupation precipitated a period of intense competition as well as mutation among Afghanistan's various social and political movements. Backed by financial and military support from Western and Muslim countries, the Islamists emerged as victorious from the conflict first among the mujahedin, and then against the PDPA regime backed by the Soviet military. The victory of Islamists, however, came at a price for the Islamist' rhetoric of universalism. In the course of their rivalries with other groups, including the PDPA, the Maoists and ethno-nationalists, they were also transformed as they competed to garner domestic support and national legitimacy. In this process of gradual mutation, the Islamist factions also shifted towards ethno-nationalist identities by appropriating causes that were articulated by leftists and ethno-nationalist groups (Roy, 1990).

Among the Hazaras, the Shi'a Islamists first fought against local leaders of anti-PDPA rebellions and then among themselves throughout the 1980s. In 1989, the process of conflict and rivalry resulted to the formation of *Hezb-e Wahdat Islami Afghanistan*, a nation-wide political party that combined Islamist rhetoric with strong elements of Hazara nationalism. Two of the largest Sunni mujahedin groups clearly show ethnic tendencies.

Jamiat-e Islami, the Islamist party that had its roots in Islamist activist networks of the 1960s in Kabul University gradually gravitated towards the narrative of Tajik nationalism that was articulated by the organisers of the *Settam-e Milli* since the 1960s. Among the Pashtuns, the Hezb-e Islami led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, also originated from the pre-war Islamist activism in Kabul. Undoubtedly the most radical and most organised of the mujahedin tanzeems, the Hezb-e Islami was also overwhelmingly dominated by Pashtuns. According to Rubin (1992, p. 89), in Hezb-e Islami two-third of the leadership came from Pashtuns. By contrast, Jamiat-e Islami, the only one among the seven Sunni parties in Pakistan led by a non-Pashtun, had nearly three quarters of leadership roles given to Tajiks. To be sure, both Jamiat and Hezb-e Islami maintained strong national and Islamist rhetoric and included significant members from other ethnic groups. The main point, however, is that the two parties were overwhelmingly dominated by Tajiks and Pashtuns respectively and the process of ethnicisation continued further as they competed with one another during the civil in Kabul from 1992 and 1996. But that said, the ethnicisation process had its limits, as all parties remained committed to the idea of a united Afghanistan, and thus the discourses of national unity and Islamic fraternity continued to be employed by all factions.

Conclusion: Recurrent Contention, Institutional (Under)development and Social Change

In the previous sections, I have attempted to provide a historical overview of the parallel two forms of social mobilisation and contentious politics in Afghanistan. As Giustozzi and Ibrahim (2012, p. 62) argue at the end of their review of existing literature on drivers of anti-government mobilisation in Afghanistan, 'Afghanistan is afflicted by the weight of its own history more than anything else. Structural factors, therefore, are not always given once and for all, but have their own dynamics'. The war and violence and the

profound disruption of state and society in Afghanistan after 1978 greatly influenced the trajectory of all social and political movements of the country. With the Soviet invasion of the country in 1979, Afghanistan's conflict gained highly important regional and international dimensions. Thenceforth, the success of a movement largely depended on the degree to which it could successfully position itself in relation to powerful external players, namely the US and Soviet Union until 1992 and countries in the region from 1992 to 2001. However, as the previous section showed, domestic political regimes and social conditions also greatly shaped the character of groups that were formed and conditions under which they competed against one another. For the longer haul, two aspects of domestic contexts deserve some further elaboration: modernising social change and institutional development of the state.

Institutional closure and (under)development

The combination of formal statehood and underlying socio-economic underdevelopment and fragmentation has had important implications for state-society relations in the country. First, in the domestic arena, the state never developed the institutional capacity and autonomy from the society that are the hallmarks of modern states in developed societies. To borrow from Migdal (2004, p. 63), the Afghan state was 'a sprawling organization within society that coexists with many other formal and informal organizations, from families to tribes to large industrial enterprises'. Lacking sufficient domestic revenues and depending on foreign aid for its major programmes of socio-economic or institutional modernisation, successful statecraft has historically required a careful strategy of balancing between shifts and drifts of domestic politics as well as the interests and alignments of regional and world powers (Bizhan, 2017).

Second, the formal state institutions, and the informal structures of power relations based on various forms of solidarity networks, provided specific sets of opportunities and

constraints for socio-political mobilisation in the country. Some scholars have argued that the institutional underdevelopment of the Afghan state has held back the political development of the country more broadly. In recent years, this argument has emerged among students of political movements of the country. These scholars have been puzzled by the fact that the country has not experienced the rise of any ethnic secessionist movements despite its high level of ethno-linguistic diversity and numerous opportunities presented by the conflict and weakness of central state control since 1978. Barfield (Barfield, 2005) has attributed this to a combination of pragmatism on the part of political elites and a long historical process in the region that de-links ethnicity from nationalism and views multi-ethnic states as a norm rather than an exception. More recently, Gopal (2016) has argued that the underdevelopment of political movements such as the Taliban is due to institutional poverty and backward socio-economic conditions of the country, which accounts for 'prevalence of strong sub-ethnic identities, of ever-shifting networks of solidarity defining hyper-local collectivities' (Gopal, 2016). In short, these scholars argue that underdeveloped socio-economic and political conditions produce 'underdeveloped' political movements.

The argument advanced in this chapter is based on a conception of the Afghan social and political life as layered, contested and continuously evolving. The implication of this argument is that traditional social segmentation along traditional tribal identities and localised solidarity networks provides particular sets of opportunities and constraints for collective action. However, the formal institutional structures of the state, the attitude of the ruling elites, and external factors provide additional layers of constraints and opportunities for collective mobilisation.

Modernising changes

Contrary to the wishes of Abdur Rahman Khan, as it proved to be the case that Afghanistan's rulers could not isolate the country from the modernising influences from the outside world. Some elements of modern education and training were essential to the functioning of the state. The state bureaucracy needed to train new cadres of bureaucrats, giving rise to the need for a modern education sector. Furthermore, within the old regimes, there were powerful modernising tendencies that saw the strength of the state in modernising the society and economy of the country. From the formation of Habibiah High School in 1905 to the founding of Kabul University in 1947, it becomes clear that the most important conduit for dissemination of modernisation influences has historically been the modern state-run education sector. And the intelligentsia that emerged from the state education sector agitated for changes that were often beyond the expectations of the ruling elites.

The most significant pattern that emerges, however, is that throughout the twentieth century, and despite their strong modernist tendencies, the Afghan rulers were reluctant to provide institutional avenues for social and political forces that were the products of modernising policies, and consequently their most likely allies in long-term social and political modernisation. This tendency came to the fore during the 1963-73 experiment with constitutional democracy. Although the new constitution provided for general elections and freedom of press, the King hesitated to sign into effect a law on political parties (Weinbaum, 1972). Consequently, most of the new groups that were formed during this period became known after the names of their newspapers, and had limited access to the commanding heights of the state power. As the subsequent chapters will demonstrate, this pattern repeated itself in the design of the post-2001 state institutions in the country.

Chapter 5: Liberal Statebuilding and its Discontent in Afghanistan, 2001-2016

Introduction

The 2001 US-led military intervention profoundly altered the underlying dynamics of political contestation and armed conflict in Afghanistan by changing the incumbent-challenger relations in the country. The intervention overthrew the Taliban regime, which controlled most of the territories of the country, and empowered two other groups that dominated the politics of the country: the former mujahedin who had lost nearly all of the country's territory to the Taliban by 2001, and influential sections of Afghan diaspora who rose to prominence in the West.

The statebuilding enterprise that followed the intervention provides the critical context in which the argument of this thesis develops. Consequently, this chapter aims to provide the socio-cultural and political context in which the main case studies of this thesis develops. The chapter aims to explore how the intervention and the subsequent courses of statebuilding were shaped by a set of international and domestic ideas and practices that proposed different programmatic and policy solutions to the myriads of problems of post-war reconstruction and stabilisation.

The first section provides an overview of the key tenets of liberal peacebuilding and statebuilding, discussing how implementation of the principles and institutions of liberal democracy were shaped by competing international and domestic interests and agendas. The second section discusses the establishment and evolution of a highly centralised presidential system as an outcome of the compromise between competing domestic and international agendas. The third discusses the rise of patronage-based politics, the Taliban insurgency and continued dependence on foreign aid as major sources of continued state weakness in *in extending its authority over its people and territories uniformly, in*

providing basic public services, and in developing effective and legitimate institutions.

The section ends with a discussion of profound social changes that the country experienced during this period as a result of globalisation. The fourth discusses the formal institutional avenues that were made available by the institutional structures of the state during this period. It discusses the context for organised political parties, social associations and non-governmental organisations as the three main institutionally-recognised avenues for collective social and political organisation.

The Ideas of Statebuilding in Afghanistan

Since the 1990s, international efforts to end violence and build long-term peace in societies disrupted by war and state fragility have coalesced around an agenda that are often described as ‘liberal peacebuilding’. In the words of Mac Ginty and Richmond (2007, p. 493), ‘the liberal peace has become the new ideology, upon which life, culture, society, prosperity and politics are assumed to rest’. The liberal peacebuilding agenda is premised on a theoretical hypothesis that in liberal democracies institutional constraints and democratic norms and mechanisms of accountability such as periodic elections constrain political leaders from engaging in war with other democracies. The idea has its roots in the thoughts of Immanuel Kant and other eighteenth century Enlightenment thinkers (Doyle, 1983a; Doyle, 1983b). The hypothesis is supported by an empirical pattern that show historically liberal democracies have been reluctant to go to war against one another to resolve their conflicts. However, liberal democracies have gone to war with illiberal and authoritarian states.

The countries that adhere to basic principles and institutions of liberal democracy also form a zone of peace. Despite their significant internal differences, as argued by Doyle (2012, pp. 4-5), liberal democracies can be characterised by three sets of rights and four institutions. The first set of rights, describe as ‘negative freedoms’, emphasises on

freedoms from arbitrary use of power. It is complemented by a second set of positive freedoms that are aimed to ensure equal opportunities such as in education and employment. The fourth set of rights guarantees participation and representation in democratic processes. These rights underpin four essential institutions that are found in all liberal democracies. The first is 'juridical equality and other fundamental civic rights'. Second is the principle state sovereignty resides with representative legislatures'. Third, the economy is based on the institution of private property. Fourth, economic system and policies are based on free dynamics of supply and demand.

In practical terms, as applied to reconstruct and stabilise societies ravaged by war and instability, the liberal peace entails wide-ranging political and economic liberalisation. In this respect, peacebuilding has entailed reconstruction of basic state institutions, promotion of human right and rule of law, and a market economy. The record of peacebuilding have been subjected to extensive debates and controversies. These efforts have been criticised for both its failure to achieve its intended outcomes of promoting stable liberal democracies and for its underlying Western assumptions and values (Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2007; Suhrke, 2007; Newman, Paris, & Richmond, 2009).

In Afghanistan, the core ideas of the liberal peacebuilding were first reflected in the initial framework for Afghanistan's political transition that was formulated in the December 2001 UN-sponsored conference in the German city of Bonn. The Bonn Agreement, as it became known, included a tight timeline for the transition from war to peace, beginning with a six-month Interim Administration, which would then hand over power to an a Transitional Administration for another 18 months. During this 24-month period, the country was planned to conclude a series of other highly complex processes for creating the conditions for a national, pluralistic and representative state institutions. These included:

- The Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR);
- The drafting and adoption of a new constitution through nation-wide consultation;
- The organisation of two Loya Jirgas, a traditional assembly of elders and politicians from across the country: First an Emergency Loya Jirga to elect members of the Transitional Authority and second a Constitutional Loya Jirga to approve the new constitution;
- Prepare for a nation-wide popular vote for election of the President and members of the National Assembly at the end of the transition period.

However, as Newman, Paris and Richmond (2009, pp. 8-9) argue a liberal peacebuilding operation may involve a wide range of actors with different priorities and objectives. These include security, development, humanitarian assistance, and promotion of governance and rule of law. In Afghanistan, the statebuilding process in Afghanistan was influenced by a number of competing and sometimes overlapping sets of domestic and international discourses and agendas, including promotion of human rights, technocratic institution building, and stabilisation and security agendas. To begin with, the multiplicity of international actors that participated in the post-2001 statebuilding and reconstruction efforts were following a series of contradictory short-term and long-term goals that can be characterised by the imperatives of *stabilisation* and *counter-terrorism*, promotion of *human rights*, and technocratic and developmental *institution building*. The primary factor that led to the US-led international military intervention in 2001 was counter-terrorism, the chief reason being the overthrow of the Taliban regime that harboured Osama Bin Laden and his Al-Qaeda terrorist network. In this context, nation-building or state-building was a consequence of the military intervention and hence only a secondary agenda. However, once the Taliban and other militant groups began to militarily challenge the authority of the new government in Kabul, the US and NATO

waged a counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism campaign that profoundly influenced the course of statebuilding, particularly in efforts to extend state authority beyond Kabul.

Besides these international agendas, the course of statebuilding in Afghanistan was also shaped by domestic groups as they sought to advanced their own interests or particular models and concepts of statehood in the country. As Goodhand and Sedra (2013, p. 240) argue

In Afghanistan, there has been a constant divergence between proclaimed commitments to liberal principles and actual practices on the ground. This started with the Bonn agreement of December 2001, which, far from being a transmission mechanism for the liberal peace template, was the result of messy compromises between internal and external players and contained distinctly illiberal and non-democratic dimensions.

As discussed in Chapter 4, beginning from the 1960s the Afghan educated and political elites were coalescing around three major ideological currents: the ethno-nationalists, the Islamists and the leftists. The fall of the pro-Soviet government in Kabul in 1992 marked the defeat of the leftists as an organised ideological and political movement in the country. Consequently, after 2001, besides the principles of liberal democracy ethnicity and Islam remained as the dominant frameworks for national-level social and political contestation, including distribution of power in the centre. These mutual interactions can be usefully captured by the main distinctions I make in this thesis between a *foundational*, *programmatic* and *policy* levels. In their extreme forms, Islamism and ethnicist movements clash with the core tenets of liberal democracy. By definition, ethnicist movements make collectivist claims on the state, and similarly extremist or violent interpretation of Islam can clash with core tenets of liberalism that emphasise individual freedom, including freedom of conscience and of expression.

Despite widespread agreement over the role of Islam in the legitimation process, there was significant differences over the manner in which Islam could be reflected in the

political legal frameworks of the state. Similarly, ethnicity became a major a source of division and a framework for social mobilisation. The 2004 constitution, and the political groups that dominated state institutions reflected some major faultlines that reflected the outcome of the mutual interaction between international ideas and agendas and domestic responses. As a result, it became a compromise between the competing domestic and international agendas. In its Chapter Two, the constitution includes 38 specific articles, outlining a wide range of civil and political rights and freedoms for individual citizens of the country. However, beyond these mostly uncontroversial provisions, the constitution reflected some critical tensions on three core sets of issues. First, there was an important debate concerning the role of Islam in the state and politics of the country (Rubin, 2004). As an almost entirely Muslim country, Islam was widely expected to assume an important place in the public life of the country. However, the exact modality of the relationship between religion and politics, or the specific interpretation of Islam was already quite contentious. As a compromise, the country was declared an Islamic republic, and the article two of the constitution declared Islam the official religion of the country, and article three emphasised that no law could contravene the tenets and provisions of Islam. At the same time, article seven of the constitution reiterated the commitment of the country to its international obligations, including the Universal Human Rights Declarations and other treaties to which the country had acceded.

Second, another major contention concerned the way in which the country's diverse ethno-cultural groups be included in the new state structures (Simosen, 2004). During the debate over the constitution, the tension over ethnic issues surfaced in debates over symbolic dimensions of the state-building process, including the status of Dari and Pashto, the two main languages of the country, and other minority languages. The article four of the constitution named fourteen ethno-linguistic groups of the country as

comprising the nation of Afghanistan.³ However, an underlying tension remained over the status of the two main languages of the country. Some of the most protracted controversies over the status of the language have resulted from a clause in article sixteen of the constitution that demand the ‘current national and scientific terminologies be preserved’. The clause was subsequently interpreted by Pashtun nationalists to refer to Pashto military terms for military, educational and administrative terms and ranks. Consequently, they opposed the use of Dari equivalents for the same ranks and terms. Other participants of the Loya Jirga that approved the constitution claimed that the clause was not included in the document as it was approved by the assembly. Regardless of how the clause was included in the document, it has since become a source of heated debate between Pashtun nationalists who attempt to promote Pashto as the public and administrative language of the country, and Dari speakers who have resisted such attempts (Arbabzadah, 2008).

Third, there was some heated debate over the forms of political system, primarily along centralised and de-centralised forms of system, with Pashtuns mostly advocating for a strong centralised state, and many non-Pashtuns demanding systems with greater vertical or horizontal distribution of power (Rubin, 2004, pp. 11-13; Thier, 2006, p. 576). The call for creation of a federal or parliamentary system with the office of a prime minister was muted as some powerful international actors also found it in their interest to work with one person leading a centralised system, rather than multiple institutions balancing one another and providing institutional avenues for political participation.

³ These Pashtun, Tajik, Hazara, Uzbek, Turkman, Baluch, Pachaie, Nuristani, Aymaq, Arab, Qirghiz, Qizilbash, Gujur, and Brahwui.

The Practice of Statebuilding

The constitution created a highly centralised presidential system by giving the presidency the responsibility for both the executive and political leadership of the state (Maley, 2013). According to the article 64 of the constitution, in addition to a range of coordinative and symbolic leadership roles, the President has the power to appoint and dismiss ministers, the attorney general, judges, officers of the armed forces, heads of independent commissions and agencies, and heads of the country's diplomatic missions. The president, who has been a Pashtun, assume these responsibilities with two vice-presidents who are also directly elected in joint electoral tickets, and usually come from among members of Tajik, Hazara and Uzbek ethnic groups. The distribution of power at the presidential palace underlined a broader pattern of distribution of power which was based on an informal hierarchy among the country's major political networks that claim to represent the country's major ethnic groups. In the absence of clearly defined terms of references, the power of the vice-presidents also depended on their informal networks and ability to project power nationally. Karzai who was elected for the first two terms in the 2004 and 2009 elections, and Ghani who succeeded him in 2014 were both Pashtuns, although from two different tribal groups. The two vice-presidential roles were assumed by Tajik and Hazara politicians during the two terms of President Karzai respectively. Muhammad Qasim Fahim, who served as Vice-President and Minister of Defence in the Interim (December 2001-June 2002) and Transitional Administrations (June 2002-December 2004) and the second term of Karzai (2009-2014) was highly influential as he commanded an expensive networks of armed militias. By contrast, Ahmad Zia Massoud, another Tajik politician from the province of Panjshir, who became the first Vice-President from 2004 to 2009 was unable to exercise the same degree of influence as Fahim. Similarly, Karim Khalili, a Hazara, who served as second Vice-President from 2002 to 2014 was widely perceived as lacking much influence over government policies

or distribution of state resources. In 2014, instead of a Tajik, Ghani chose General Abdur Rashid Dostum, an Uzbek, and Sarwar Danish, a Hazara, as the first and second vice-presidents respectively. General Dostum, a former militia commander, was sidelined soon after the formation of the National Unity Government September 2014. As a commander of Uzbek militias in the 1980s and 1990s and accused of committing human rights atrocities Dostum lacked the leadership qualities and credibility's for the job.

Outside Kabul, the list of officials directly or indirectly appointed (either through the Ministry of Interior or the Independent Directorate of Local Governance after 2007) through the President's office include governors and police commanders of the country's 34 provinces. With poorly defined terms of reference, the ability of a provincial governor to exercise any influence depended on what van Bijlert (2009, p. 3) calls 'relationship politics', informal networks of power and resources, as opposed to rule-based and meritocratic appoints. In other words, their power depended on the resources they controlled and the power of their networks of allies locally or nationally. To exert influence beyond Kabul, Karzai regularly appointed, dismissed or reshuffled governors from one province to the other. Between 2002 and 2004 alone, he appointed nearly two hundred governors for the country's 34 provinces (Mukhopadhyay, 2016, p. 3).

Unsurprisingly, the concentration of powers in the president's office has also led to concentration of competition for state resources and distribution of power in the office of presidency, making it highly-prized in an extremely fluid and unstable political situation. The effects of increased competition for the office became clear during the 2009 and 2014 presidential elections when mass frauds were orchestrated by electoral camps to ensure their candidate's victory. In 2014, after a relatively credible first round of the vote on 5 April failed to produce a clear winner with more than fifty percent of the vote, the country was highly polarised between the two leading candidates, Dr. Abdullah and Ashraf Ghani.

The second round on 14 June was so extensively tainted by fraud and irregularities that even months of audit by an UN-led team of international experts could not produce an acceptable outcome. After months of intense political crisis that pushed the country to the brink of a civil war between supporters of the two candidates, a political agreement was brokered by the US Secretary of State, John Kerry, which brought the two candidates together in a highly-fractured government of national unity.

Weak and Fragmented Legislature

Following the model of the 1964 constitutional monarchy, the 2004 constitution created a bicameral legislature. The 249 members of the Wolesi Jirga (House of People), the Lower House of the Parliament, is elected through direct popular votes. By contrast, the Mishrano Jirga (House of Elders), the Upper House, consists of one third appointed by the president for a period of five years, another one third elected from among the country's provincial councils for a period of four years, and the remaining third through district councils for a period of three years (Article 84). Since the district-level elections were never held, the president has appointed two thirds of the members of the Meshrano Jirga in 2005 and 2010, giving him immense influence in the make-up of the assembly.

Although the Parliament has been given the power to approve many presidential decisions such as members of the cabinet, in practice it has limited capacity and power to provide the necessary checks and balances. Two factors appear to have been particularly detrimental to the ability of the National Assembly to perform necessary balancing functions. First, members of the assembly are elected through the Single Non-Transferable Voting System (SNTV), according to which MPs are elected through direct votes in multi-member constituencies, based on the country's 34 provinces. Based on an estimated size of their population, each province was allocated a fixed number of seats that would go to the candidates with the highest number of votes. Consequently, the

system pushed political contestation between the candidates to the local level. A multi-year research by the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU) found that members of the Wolesi Jirga, lacking the organisational capacity and resources for effective and long-term representation of their constituencies, were focusing on building close ties with the government and the president's office to access patronage and resources (Lough, 2011). The same report state that,

the paramount importance of solidarity groups (often referred to as *qawms* or *khels*) and reciprocal patronage networks in Afghan society means that elections revolve around competing local interests rather than cross-cutting issues or ideologies' (Lough, 2011).

Second, the SNTV discouraged formation of nation-wide and programmatic political parties, by making parties essentially irrelevant to fielding candidates in elections and voter mobilisation. The SNTV system encouraged localised and person-centred forms of electoral mobilisation, leaving little incentives for candidates to align themselves with national parties. The system was particularly detrimental to small parties with relatively smaller support bases spread across several provinces (Reynolds, 2006; Reynolds & Carey, 2012). The National Assembly, which was elected through the system, was dominated by members who took pride in being 'independent' and even deployed 'political ambiguity' as a strategy to keep their options open amid changing political alignments (Larson, 2016).

As might have become clear so far, the combination of centralised presidential system and weak legislature spawned two parallel and contradictory processes of centralisation and localisation. While the power of dispensing state patronage was concentrated in the presidency, politics, as evidenced by the parliament, underwent a process of fragmentation, driven by person-centred politics and local dynamics of interest representation.

Neopatrimonialism and its Discontent

Although the conclusion of the Bonn process with the adoption of the new constitution and election of Karzai as President in 2004, technically Afghanistan became a sovereign state. However, the state institutions acquired neither the bureaucratic capacity nor the coercive power to exercise its sovereign authority uniformly over its territory. As conceived in for this thesis, the state continued to remain weak *in extending its authority over its people and territories uniformly, in providing basic public services, and in developing effective and legitimate institutions*. Three major sources of continued state weakness worth highlighting here: 1) patronage-based politics and corruption, 2) violent insurgency, and 3) dependency on foreign financial and military aid.

Informal Patronage, Corruption and State Capture

The idea of building a highly centralised presidential system ran into difficulties. The outcome of the confluence of domestic and international interests and conceptions of statehood was neopatrimonialism, a complex and instable order in which the formal rules and institutions of the state are permeated by informal and patron-client relationships. Since its introduction to the academic debate by Eisenstadt (1973), the notion of neopatrimonialism has been widely debated (Erdmann & Engel, 2007). Clampham (2004, p. 48) defined it as

a form of organisation in which relationships of a broadly patrimonial type pervade a political and administrative system which is formally constructed on rational-legal lines. Officials hold positions in bureaucratic organisations with powers which are formally defined, but exercise those powers, so far as they can, as a form not of public service but of private property.

In Afghanistan, neopatrimonialism translated into what was described by Schmeidl (2016, p. 576) as ‘negative hybridity’, and by Maley as a ‘particularly dysfunctional form of hybridity’ (Maley, 2013, p. 260). The formal institutions of the state were captured by a wide range of groups, including non-state armed groups that had flourished during the

previous decades of conflict and instability. These non-state armed groups commanded coercive power of their own, enjoyed some level of local popular support and controlled local economies (Mac Ginty, 2010). Lacking the coercive power and bureaucratic capacity to project power across the country, the government of Hamid Karzai chose to extend state authorities at the provincial level through dispensation of patronage and co-optation of local and provincial strongmen into the folds of state structures. Local strongmen and power networks also responded to the centralisation agenda by taking control of state institutions as governors, police commanders and judges, and hence appropriating both the official legitimacy which came with formal positions and the material patronage resources.

The co-optation by the state and appropriation by the non-state networks, compounded by weak to non-existent state bureaucratic capacity, created the conditions for extreme forms of corruption, loot of meagre domestic revenues, and foreign aid. Afghanistan was consistently ranked as one of the most corrupt countries in the world by the Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index. According to a survey by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, in 2012 half of Afghanistan's population paid a bribe to access a public service, and the total amount of bribes paid to state officials in the same year was estimated to amount to US\$ 3.9 billion (United Nations Office on Drug and Crime, 2012). As the US Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction noted, although corruption had highly corrosive effect on the statebuilding process as it undermined the legitimacy of state institutions and created widespread grievances and even diverted funds to the insurgency, the US and other international actors were slow to recognise it as problem. The report also highlighted how the US even contributed to corruption through its 'flawed oversight and contracting practices', and partnership with 'malign powerbrokers' (Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, 2016).

Insurgency and Terrorist Violence

After a hiatus of few years after their overthrow from power in 2001, the Taliban regrouped in sanctuaries in neighbouring Pakistan and launched an insurgency to challenge the central government control in many provinces. Beginning with sporadic and small-scale attacks in 2003, the insurgency developed a resilient fighting force by 2006, challenging government control over districts and highways in the south of the country. Overtime, the insurgency gradually spread to seriously affect large areas in the south-east, east, west and north of the country. In response, the US and NATO forces launched a counter-insurgency campaign to clear areas from the insurgents whilst simultaneously training and helping build up the Afghan Security Forces. The counter-insurgency campaign was intensified by President Obama's December 2009 military and civilian 'surge' which included deployment of an additional 30,000 US forces in the country. The surge escalated the military campaign against the insurgents, and subordinated the statebuilding and developmental programmes to the logic of winning hearts and minds.

As of November 2016, according to the United States Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), only 57.2 percent of Afghanistan's 407 districts was under the control or influence of the government of Afghanistan; the remaining districts, which accounts for a third of Afghanistan's population, were either contested, or controlled, or influenced by the insurgents (Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, 2017). In the process, the human rights agenda and the process of extension of creation and gradual expansion of rule-based institutions became subservient to the logic of counter-insurgency that demanded quick reconstruction efforts, and ill-thought alliances with malign local actors.

Aid Dependency

The Afghan state's ability to exercise its sovereignty is limited by its extensive dependence on foreign aid. As a historically resource-poor state, Afghanistan has always relied on external support for funding its large-scale socio-economic developmental programs. Following the overthrow of the Taliban regime in 2001, financially the state institutions were in extremely debilitated conditions. Consequently, the country relied on foreign aid to fund its socio-economic development programmes, security and reconstruction efforts. According to the World Bank (2012), beginning with a high rise in 2005, in 2010/11, foreign civilian and security aid rose to amount to \$15.7 billion, equalling the total gross domestic product of the country in the same year. Excluding security aid, civilian aid has remained around \$6 billion per year, or about 40 percent of the GDP of the country, creating a level of 'aid dependency [that] is almost unique (only a few smaller entities, such as Liberia and the West Bank and Gaza, have on occasion received more aid per capita) (p. 1). The same World Bank report states,

The large aid inflows that have benefited Afghanistan have also brought problems. Aid has underpinned much of the progress since 2001—including that in key services, infrastructure, and government administration—but it has also been linked to corruption, fragmented and parallel delivery systems, poor aid effectiveness, and weakened governance (p. 1).

Suhrke (2009; 2013) argues that the heavy international role and the presence of tens of thousands of US and NATO forces in the fight against insurgency by the Taliban created a number of inherent contradictions which undermine the long-term prospect of the enterprise. Three such contradictions, raised by Suhrke (2013), are worth mentioning here. First, massive aid created a rentier state and as a result contradicted the stated goals of democratisation by undercutting the prospect of a negotiated bargain between the elite and the people. Second, there was an inherent contradiction between the stated goal of 'Afghan ownership' and the donors' actual concerns with controlling programmes and

policies, including important reform agendas. Third, following the intensification of the Taliban insurgency in 2006 there emerged a contradiction between fighting a war in the form of a counter-insurgency campaign and building peace at the same time. For Bizhan (2017), foreign aid was not destined to produce a weak state. Rather, the weakness of the state was the outcome of more complex interactions between external donors and domestic actors and conditions, including important policy choices made during this period.

Although some of the problems that emerged in the post-2001 state-building process were predictable, the types of intervention that occurred – including aid architecture, the subordination of state building to the war on terror, and donors and domestic policy choices – decreased the effectiveness of the use of aid and contributed to maintaining a weak state (Bizhan, 2017 p.2)

What is clear is that the high level of dependence on foreign aid have multiple effects on the nature of the state and its relations with the society it governs. While foreign aid, arguably funded the revival of the state institutions and enabled the state to fight the insurgency that violently contest its sovereign claims, it also contributes towards the fragmentation and weakening of state's claim to exercise sovereignty over its people and territories.

Globalisation and Social Chang

Despite the key challenges that emerging in the statebuilding process, foreign aid, and reconstruction efforts radically transformed the country, reviving critical public institutions, rehabilitating the national infrastructure, and expanding basic public services such as health and education. The Afghan society is deeply connected to the outside world in ways that they closely follow transnational and global socio-cultural and political changes through television, radio and the most recently the internet. Domestically, these changes have the effects of created a nation-wide audiences, with profound implications for social mobilisation in a country historically shaped by its traditional social

segmentation. The expansion of the education sector has dramatically expanded the educated class with their specific modernist tendencies and social outlooks, and the internet and mass media have created the opportunities for activists and politicians to deliver and communicate their messages to national or transnational audiences.

Between 2001 and 2010, Afghanistan's urban population grew by about 4.5 percent per year (The World Bank, 2016, p. 54), and Kabul became the fifth fastest growing cities in the world (Rasmussen, 2014). In 2001, the Taliban's restrictive educational policy and general deterioration of the state capacity had left fewer than one million students at schools, and only 7,800 students at the country's universities; the girls were almost entirely excluded from the education sector. By contrast, in 2015-16 the expansion and reconstruction of the education sector had increased the number of school students to about 9.18 million (including 3.6 million girls) who were studying in 15,384 schools. In the same year, there were 171,609 students at around 145 public and private universities (Central Statistics Organisation, 2016).

Similarly, the number of active health facilities has increased, from 496 in 2002 to more than 2200 in 2015. The expansion of health services has reduced maternal mortality from 1,600 per 100,000 live births in 2002 to 327 in 2013, and child mortality under the age of five has fallen from 257 per 1,000 to 97 per 1,000 during the same period. Life expectancy has increased from 55.1 years in 2000 to 60.4 in 2014 (The World Bank, 2015; Central Statistics Organisation, Ministry of Public Health and ICF, 2015).

In addition, by 2014, more than 9,200 kilometres of national highways, provincial and local roads were rehabilitated, laying the foundations of the first nationally integrated domestic market in Afghanistan's history. These included the national ring road which connects Kabul to major urban centres and links Afghanistan with neighbouring countries.

The most dramatic, and perhaps also the most durable, effects of the international intervention and statebuilding enterprise is connectivity of the Afghan society to global mass media and the internet. In 2001, Afghanistan was an extremely isolated country. Since 2002, a fast growing telecommunication sector has connected the country's population to the wider world. According to The Asia Foundation's 2015 *Survey of the Afghan People* (2015), 82.3 per cent of the population has access to at least one mobile phone in households, 62.1 per cent own a television and 21 per cent has at least one family member with access to the internet (The Asia Foundation, 2015).

Institutional Contexts for Organised Participation

In important respects, the evolution and trajectory of the post-2001 statebuilding exercise in Afghanistan between 2001 and 2017 can be illustrated by how social and political groups responded to the opportunities provided by the institutional structure of the post-2001 Afghans state. Broadly speaking, the post-2001 institutional arrangement recognised three main institutional avenues for official recognition for social and political groups: political parties, social organisations and non-governmental organisations. First and most obvious are the political parties. Since 2002, the Ministry of Justice was tasked with assessing applications for registration of political parties. Although in 2001 there were several military-political organisations that had emerged during the years of resistance against the Soviet occupation and dominated the Interim Administration and Transitional Authority, there were no formally-recognised parties in legal sense of the term. As explained in Chapter IV of this thesis, many of the political groups had their roots in peaceful and student activism of the 1960s but the years of war had transformed them into mainly military organisations. Consequently, after 2001 Afghanistan's political and socio-economic transformation also required that these groups demobilise their military wings and transition to peaceful and institutionalised political parties.

The efforts to create new political parties or reform and reconstitute the old ones began with a high level of enthusiasm. Afghanistan's Political Parties Law was promulgated through a presidential decree in October 2003. According to the law, groups that could present a list of 700 members with a basic organisational documents would be registered as political parties. According to article 6 of the law, parties were required to demonstrate that they did not have any links to armed groups, their goals were not contrary to principles of Islam, and that they were not using or promoting violence on racial, ethnic or sectarian basis. The relatively low bar set for registration of parties opened the way for an unprecedented rise in the number of parties. By 2009, there were 110 formally registered political parties.

To curb the political fragmentation and encourage the rise of fewer and more national political parties, in 2009 the Political Parties Law were revised with adding more stringent requirements for registration. The new law raised minimum membership from 700 to 10,000 and required all parties to re-register under the new conditions. Furthermore, in 2012 a new regulation required each party to maintain an office in at least 20 of Afghanistan's 34 provinces. Taken together, these measures were aimed at encouraging the rise of more representative and inclusive parties (Bose & Ibrahimi, 2017). The tightening of institutional requirement for party registration reduced the number of registered political parties but not end the political fragmentation of the country. As of May 2017, there were 63 parties registered with the Ministry of Justice (Ministry of Justice).

The tightening of regulations for party registration did not lead to institutionalisation of political parties. Instead, most of the parties that have emerged after 2001 lack clear ideological and political platforms (National Democratic Institute, 2011), and operated as

loose networks led by strongmen competing for patronage and political power (Sharan, 2011).

Second, the same department of the Ministry of Justice also issues licenses for what are called interchangeably *jamiat*, association, *sazman-e ejtema'i*, social organisations. According to a report by the ministry (Ministry of Justice, 2014), between September 2002 and September 2014, the ministry had registered a total of 4,969 separate social organisations. The same report also notes that during this period the ministry had extended the registration of 1400 other social organisations. According to the country's 2013 (Ministry of Justice, 2013), *Qanun-e Jama'iytha*, these organisations are also registered as non-political and not-for-profit (Articles II and III). Article II of the law further stipulates that this category of organisations consists of associations (*anjoman*), unions (*ittehadiya*), councils (*shura*), and forums (*majm'a*). The article distinguished these categories by specifying the aims according to which they can be formed. According to article II of the law, an association can be formed in pursuit of 'scientific, literary and professional goals'; a union is formed to follow 'shared and legitimate occupational, and specialists' of its members; a council can be formed to pursue 'community (*qawmi*), occupational and regional' aims; and finally forum brings together people for 'shared and specific goals'.

Table 4: Trends in Political Party and Social Organisations Registration, 2002-2014
Source: Ministry of Justice, 2014

Major Electoral Events and Institutional changes	Social Organisation Registration	Party Registration	Year
	19	0	(1381) 2002-2002
	146	5	1382 (2003-2004)
2004 Presidential Elections	129	45	1383 (2004-2005)
2005 Parliamentary elections	232	31	1384 (2005-2006)
	214	3	1385 (2006-2007)
	269	10	1386 (2007-2008)
Campaign for 2009 Presidential Elections	453	8	1387 (2008-2009)
	477	8	1388 (2009-2010)
Political Party re-registration, under new law	497	38	1389 (2010-2011)
	556	7	1390 (2011 – 2012)
	570	10	1391 (2012-2013)
2014 Election Campaign	1090	7	1392 (2013 – 2014)
	317	1	1393 (2013-September 2014)

Third, the Ministry of Economy has a specialised department for registering and overseeing the work of domestic and international non-governmental organisations. The NGOs constitute an amorphous and highly diverse field in Afghanistan. The first major NGOs began operation for Afghans began in 1980s, when many Western NGOs began delivering aid for Afghan refugees in Pakistan (Baitenmann, 1990). After the fall of the pro-Soviet regime in Kabul 1992, some NGOs began operating in Afghanistan but their operations were interrupted by the civil war among the mujahedin. The role of NGOs

became particularly significant for the Taliban regime from 1996 to 2001 which, lacking the financial resources and bureaucratic capacity, relied on the NGOs to provide basic social services. However, in 1998 the Taliban became increasingly suspicious of the NGOs and the UN. In 1998, the Taliban ordered many NGOs and the UN to leave the country (Dorrnsoro, 2005, pp. 282-283).

The number of NGOs rose dramatically after the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001. The opportunities created by flow of foreign aid and weak government capacity created a huge demand for the rise of highly diverse range of NGOs, ranging from specialised international NGOs and development agencies to inexperienced local groups. These groups worked in all areas where the fund was available, including agriculture, reconstruction, human rights and delivery of basic health and educational services. By early 2004, there were 2,365 NGOs registered with the Ministry of Planning. Unsurprisingly, such sudden spike in the number and influence of NGOs created a major political backlash. Ramazan Bashardost, a Western-educated technocrat who was appointed as Minister of Planning in March 2004, waged a major campaign against NGOs, accusing them of profiteering and siphoning off aid projects that was intended to reach the poor. Bashardost demanded that 1,935 of the NGOs be dissolved and that must tougher regulations be imposed on them (Rahmani, 2012). The reality of distribution of aid was much more complicated than what was suggested in the Bashardost's campaign but it was clear that from early on for many Afghan groups the NGOs was an important vehicle for accessing foreign resources. In December 2004, Bashardost resigned from his post as minister. The public perception of waste and mismanagement in the distribution of aid created a popular electoral constituency in Afghanistan. In the 2009 presidential elections, Bashardost, who had continued to campaign for reform of the aid sector, finished as the third leading candidates at the national level (Mayr, 2010). Consequently, the domestic demand for regulation of NGOs remained strong. In January 2005, the

Ministry of Planning was reconstituted as a Ministry of National Economy and in June of that year a new law required all NGOs to re-register with the new ministry. Nonetheless, despite the enforcement of tougher regulations and the requirement of re-registration the number of NGOs rebounded. In 2013, some 2,320 NGOs were registered with the Ministry of Economy, were employing an estimated 90,000 people, including 3,337 foreign nationals (Nordland, 2013).

These separate institutional status for the three categories of organisations have a certain logic. The political parties are obviously formed to contest for political power and participate in elections. Social organisations can be formed to pursue social and cultural objectives. Finally, the NGOs work in the humanitarian sector. However, these institutional logics are poor guides to how these organisations work in practise. To begin with, the vast majority of Afghanistan's political parties do not function as political parties as in Western democracies. The line separating the humanitarian sphere from the political and social spheres are also often fuzzy, with NGOs often finding it difficult to maintain their avowed neutrality in rapidly social and political environments. In the post-2001 period, as Goodhand argues, although NGOs tried push back against a trend of 'politicisation' and 'securitisation' of aid, in reality the boundaries between military strategies, political stabilisation efforts and NGO activities were highly blurred (Goodhand, 2013).

The blurring of boundaries is most clearly demonstrated by the pattern in the growth of social organisations. While the number of political parties declined or remained stable, the number of social organisations have progressively increased over the years. The reason for the enormous growth of the sector has partly to do with the easier process and requirements for registrations of a social organisation. However, the trend in the growth of social organisations might illustrate some broader trends in the social and political

landscape of the country. As figure 3 shows, over the period of twelve years between 2002 and 2014, the sector witnesses some steep rises in years that overlap with election calendars. During this period, the country witnessed two parliamentary (2005 and 2010) and three presidential elections (2004, 2009 and 2014). The 2004 and 2005 presidential and parliamentary elections respectively saw the sudden spikes in the number of registered political parties. However, while over the following years the number of parties decline or remain stagnant, the number of social organisations rise dramatically. In the year 1387 (March 2008-March 2009), the Ministry of Justice registered a total of 453 separate social organisations; in the previous year, the ministry had registered 269. The association between the rise in the number of social organisations and election campaigns became starker in preparation for the 2014 presidential elections. During the year 1392 (March 2013 – March 2014), the Ministry of Justice registered a staggering number of 1,090 social organisations, nearly a quarter of all registrations over a period of 12 years.

Conclusion

This chapter provided the critical institutional and socio-economic context for the detailed case studies of this thesis. It began with a distinction between ideas and practices of statebuilding between 2001 and 2016 in Afghanistan, before dissecting the institutional and socio-economic conditions in which collective social and political mobilisation takes places. The main conclusion that can be drawn from this chapter is that although the international intervention and reconstruction efforts made important successes in reviving the state institutions, the state faced serious challenges in enforcing its authority, developing effective and legitimate institutions and providing basic services. These challenges were patronage-based politics, dependency and Taliban insurgency. For the purpose of this thesis, two dimensions of the dynamics and challenges of statebuilding in Afghanistan after 2001 are worth highlighting here. First, the post-2001 Afghanistan is

characterised by intense contestation and contention over the nature of state-society relations. In this respect, the principles and institutions of liberal democracy are the central objects of contention. The liberal state took its particular form in the country through bargaining between various national and international actors. While the Taliban insurgency presents the most significant challenge to idea of a liberal state, as the case study groups of thesis will demonstrate, the overall domestic response to the idea and principles of liberal democracy is far more complex. While some groups are motivated ideologically to transform or reject the institutions of liberal democracy, many others have taken adopted a reformist stance and are more concerned with the patronage-based politics and elite division and corruption that permeate the state.

Second, the highly centralised presidential system coupled by a hostile attitudes towards organised political parties drive actors towards contentious forms of collective action. Consequently, the formally centralised presidential system simultaneously co-habit with, and tries to integrate, a number of competing or overlapping structures of authority. The formal trapping of a centralised state and the informal reality of elite fragmentation and state weakness have led to two emerging trends: on the one hand, the centralised presidential system has led to concentration of contestation for political power and resources at the centre, and consequently high demands and expectations from the office of the presidency. Lacking the bureaucratic capacity and coercive power, the presidency has focused on dispensation of state patronage for extension and maintenance of the authority of the centre over the rest of the country. The patronage-based politics has discouraged the formation of nation-wide programmatic parties, favouring person-centred electoral mobilisation through networks of patronage. The neopatrimonial political order breeds widespread discontent - particularly among the youth and those excluded from the main patronage networks - through regular and unpredictable shifts of power and resources. In this context, the non-state structures of authority, including

informal networks of solidarity and survival, offers alternatives for failure and inadequacy of state institutions but at the same time hinders national and programmatic forms of collective action.

Chapter 6: Group Strategies and Environmental Responses: Between Facilitation, Rejection and Cohabitation

Introduction

This chapter examines the mechanisms and processes of group formation and contentious politics in Afghanistan. It follows from chapter 5, which provided the institutional and socio-economic context for the emergence of the four case group case studies of this thesis. It follows a process-based approach to explore how the four case study groups emerged and then responded to the opportunities and constraints created by the post-2001 US-led military intervention and the subsequent statebuilding process. This chapter aims to identify patterns of group formation and contention through studying the interactive process of international intervention, state formation, and agency by social and political actors. It aims to do so by focusing on two sets of mechanisms: *collective attributions of threats and opportunities*, and *facilitation or rejection*. The former focuses on how groups attribute threats and opportunities to the environment in which they emerge, and the latter aims to explain how the environmental conditions facilitate or reject particular courses of group formation and engagement with the environment. Collectively, these mechanisms link macro-level political and social changes to meso-level strategies and behaviours at the level of groups. The four groups represent four distinct responses to the post-2001 international intervention and statebuilding processes: reformist, transformationist, partial rejectionist and full rejectionist.

The first section of this chapter introduces the four main groups, their main goals and ideological and political orientations and distinctive trajectories. The second section explores the effects of engagement, or lack thereof, in the political process on these groups, examining the changing strategy of these groups towards formal political processes. One of the major goals of the section is to explore the conditions under which these groups engage in protest activities. The third analyses the rise and evolution of these

groups with respect to the formal institutional context as well as informal, non-state and anti-state environments in the country, before highlighting some main patterns in the conclusion.

Responding to the Constraints and Opportunities of the Post-2001 International Intervention and Statebuilding

The 2001 US-led military intervention and the statebuilding process that followed have elicited a wide range of responses from social and political groups in Afghanistan. Two of these responses are widely known and relatively well-studied: first, a violent rejectionist strategy pursued by the Taliban, and a militant faction of Hezb-e Islami that, after a few years of relative calm between 2001 and 2003, launched an armed insurgency to overthrow the new government and evict US and NATO forces from the country (Giustozzi, 2007; Giustozzi, 2009); and second a strategy of embracing the socio-economic and political opportunities created by the intervention pursued by most of the former mujahedin organisations and many Afghan diaspora groups (Mukhopadhyay, 2014; Coburn & Larson, 2013).

However, between these two poles of violent rejection and acceptance there emerged a broad socio-cultural and political space that was characterised by uncertainty, ambiguity and struggle for survival, and constant adjustment to the uncertain and rapidly-changing social and political environment. The position of these groups demonstrates a wide range of posturing, ranging from total rejection, through partial acceptance of the relatively free social and political space created by the intervention in the midst of continuing ambivalence, to acceptance of the ideals and goals set by the new process amidst rising disillusionment with the corruption and poor performances of the state. Drawing on McAdam and Tarrow and Tilly (McAdam, Tarrow, & Tilly, 2004, p. 41), in this chapter, I focus on ‘attribution of threats and opportunities’, as a mechanism that links these broad

level institutional change and group-level responses. However, groups respond to different sets of opportunities and threats that emerge at different levels of a socio-political environment. Drawing on Schmidt (2008), I make a distinction between three levels of institutional change and instability. First, changes can occur in the level of policies as ‘solutions’ to specific set of problems and issue areas. Second, policies are informed and underpinned by more general programmes that operates as organising principles of a range of policy solutions. Third, the programme and policy-level configurations are informed by ‘deep structures’, the foundational structures of opportunities and constraints that shape programmes and policies.

Table 5. Level of Conflict with the International Intervention and Statebuilding in Afghanistan

Level of Conflict	Afghanistan 1400	Hezb-e Hambastagi Afghanistan	Jamiat-e Eslah	Hezb ut-Tahrir
Foundational (The Basic Idea of Nation-State System)	No	No	No	Yes
Programmatic (Elections)	No	Yes (e.g. presidential elections)	No (e.g. elections ⁴)	Yes (e.g. electoral democracy)
Policy	Yes	Yes (e.g. US and NATO military presence)	Yes (e.g. foreign military presence)	Yes

The four groups represent four types of responses, depending on their alignment or conflict with the foundational, programmatic and policy orientations of the state: (1) total rejectionist Hezb ut-Tahrir rejects the post-2001 statebuilding process at the foundational, programmatic and policy levels; (2) partial rejectionist Hezb-e Hambastagi Afghanistan accepts the basic foundational structures of the nation-state system but opposes the

⁴ As of 2014, Jamiat-e Eslah did not participate in elections, although it did not directly oppose it, fearing its divisive impact on its reputation.

particular programme of statebuilding that followed it, and the specific groups that were empowered in the process; (3) transformationist Jamiat-e Eslah accepts the basic idea of the nation-state but seeks to transform it through a bottom-up strategy of Islamisation; and (4) reformist Afghanistan 1400 supports the post-2001 statebuilding processes but is concerned with the actual practices of the state at the level of policies. Taken together, the four group case studies of this thesis exhibit how groups in this social and political space of uncertainty and ambivalence strategised and evolved as they interacted with one another and the state in the context of fragmented and fuzzy sovereignty (Monsutti, 2012).

Reformist: Afghanistan 1400

Afghanistan 1400 began with the motto ‘Our Country, Our Responsibility’, with the vision of becoming ‘a credible and nation-wide movement of the new generation of Afghanistan, [that is] responsible, believer in national obligation and pride, and has influence and impact on political, social, cultural and economic processes of the country’ (Afghanistan 1400, n.d.). The launch of the movement on 6 December 2012, in Kabul’s four-star Safi Landmark Hotel, came after more than a year of intense discussions among its approximately 80 founding members. The founders of the movement included senior government officials, prominent civil society activists, leaders of non-governmental organisations, and private companies and students. As a group of highly-educated and influential individuals, the movement positioned itself as a forward-looking youth organisation that could represent a break with Afghanistan’s corrupt, violent and divisive politics. Consequently, the movement carefully chose the number ‘1400’ in its title to refer to the year, 1400, in the Persian solar calendar. Founded in the year 1391, the group aimed to become a platform of the youth by the turn of a new century and thus represent a *new beginning* for the *new generation* of the country. In its website, the organisation (Afghanistan 1400a) describes itself as,

... a civil and political movement aimed at mobilizing and creating a political platform for the new generation of Afghanistan. It will empower the new generation to partake in Afghanistan's political, social and economic development. We seek to shape the present direction and to determine the future destiny of Afghanistan. We believe that the next ten years is critical for our country, calling for a new generation of responsible leadership. In this period, one principal responsibility is to promote civic duty and national pride.

In one of the organisation's key documents, *M'arefinamah Afghanistan 1400*, Introduction to Afghanistan 1400 (Afghanistan 1400b, n.d.), the organisation explains its conception of the 'new generation'. It explains:

The meaning of the new generation is the generation that was generally born during the three decades of war, and that with a view towards the future of Afghanistan has transcended regional and group boundaries, has gained the capability to work in state and private sectors and the national motivation to lead Afghanistan towards human development, good governance and global credibility. The new generation is not an exclusive concept; it can include future generations that possess these characteristics [My translation].

The movement's launch attracted significant domestic and international media attention (Kazemi, 2012). *The Guardian*'s Graham-Harrison (2012) reported that

In a country where politics is often seen as a byword for corruption, and which is still dominated by jihadi-era commanders, a small group of influential young Afghans have started a civil and political movement that hopes to transcend old ethnic and sectarian divides.

As a movement of middle class Afghans, Afghanistan 1400 was clearly a reformist movement, seeking to consolidate and deepen the liberal democratic order that was enshrined in the 2004 constitution. It sought to embody democratic values through its own organisational structure by emphasising internal democracy, collective and deliberative decision making, and embracing gender equality. Shaharзад Akbar and Sonia Iqbal Zeerak, highly educated and capable young women, were democratically elected as the first and second Chairpersons of the Central Council of the movement respectively. Representing the diverse ethno-cultural make-up of the country, the movement also sought to turn the ethnic diversity of the country into a source of 'strength' rather than 'liability', as described by one of its founders (Interview [10]). Consequently, the

movement was clearly aimed at transcending the ethnic, factional and sectarian divisions that had roiled other social and political movements of the country.

Transformationist, Jamiat-e Eslah

Jamiat-e eslah wa inkishaf-e ijtem'ai Afghanistan (Association for Reform and Social Development of Afghanistan, henceforth Jamiat-e Eslah) was registered as a social organisation with the Ministry of Justice in Kabul in July 2003. It is inspired by the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt (Akbar, 2018, p. 151) and other Islamist movements in Turkey and Pakistan (See below). The manner in which founders of Jamiat-e Eslah responded to the statebuilding enterprise is captured by the following quote from Nasir Ahmad Nawidi, the Chairperson of the Central Council of the organisation. Reflecting on the ten years' history of the organisation in August 2013, Nawidi (2013a) described how founders of the organisation chose a strategy of 'spiritual' building of the country,

In the year 1380 (2001), the situation of Afghanistan witnessed a dramatic change; the Islamic Emirate of the Taliban was replaced by the West-supported regime, led by Hamid Karzai, and the society of Afghanistan, which was previously a closed and completely imitating (*taqlidi*) society, was suddenly opened to intellectual, cultural, economic and political products of the West. The country's intellectuals and aware people were divided into two groups in relation to the new situation. [First], those who saw in the new situation a golden opportunity for themselves and for Afghanistan, and approved the new changes, and the government based on the Bonn model unconditionally and with all their strength.

The second group were those who opposed the new changes, viewing them as not in the interest of Afghanistan, and as opposed to the values and beliefs of the country. The brothers who later formed Jam'iat-e Eslah belonged to this group, and because of this they started studying the new situation, and the challenges and problems that faced the nation.

After prolonged discussions regarding the new regime and the changes after the Taliban, it was eventually decided that, despite opposition to occupation as a permanently negative phenomenon, the compatriots must not be left alone at this sensitive moment so that aliens and xenophiles play with their destiny. To the contrary, it was decided that [the founders of Jamiat-e Eslah] take their affirmative role (*aijabi*) in the spiritual building of the country through preaching (*dawati*) and reforming (*eslahi*) activities; however, the emphasis being that brothers choose civil spheres and free platforms (*manaber azad*) for their work, rather than government roles and positions which were predicted to go quickly down the path of corruption and decay (My translation).

Jamiat-e Eslah is a religiously-inspired organisation and is focusing on a bottom-up strategy of socio-cultural and political change. It pursues a three-phased strategy of *ta'arif* (introduction), *takwin* (formation) and *tanfiz* (implementation). As one activist of the organisation at Kabul University put it, each phase involves a particular level of commitment to the organisation and its values,

In the phase of *ta'arif*, they say you introduce Islam and methods, the method of Ikhwan Al-Muslimin, well to the people that these are our methods. Next is the stage of *takwin* when you carefully choose (*gulchin*) pure brothers and then put them under training, a spiritual and physical training, so that they become ready for *da'awah*. This is the stage of listening and obeying (*sama wa etaat*) whereby you listen to the group (*Jamaat*) and obey [its directions]. After you have been through *ta'arif*, now come listen and follow. In the phase of *ta'arif* there are no obligations to obey. It is your wish to come or not. But in the stage of *takwin*, you must both listen and obey and you should have [acquired] confidence in the leader (*qayed*) of the group. The stage of *tanfiz* involves a shift (*sayr*) towards action whereby you must be ready to give up for your goal [everything] starting from your time to your life. This is what Imam Al-Banna says (Interview [12]).

After its formal launch in 2003, the organisation grew at a much faster pace than the vast majority of other social organisations. A founding member of the organisation remarked that in July 2003 the organisation's membership did not exceed one hundred members but in November 2015 he estimated the organisation had more than 10,000 members, and was active in 28 of the country's 34 provinces (Interview [26]). As is the case in the vast majority of organisations in Afghanistan, the membership figure for Jamiat-e Eslah is also a rough estimate as most organisations do not maintain active membership databases. This means that despite the organisation's widespread reputation as highly organised with hierarchical organisational structures and extensive training of its members, the same member of Jamiat-e Eslah also admitted that the organisation does not maintain updated membership lists as it does not distribute membership identification cards.

There are, however, strong indicators that the organisation has vastly expanded in terms of its wider support base and organisational resources. During the last months of 2015, when I was conducting field research in Kabul, the organisation was close to completing

the construction of a multi-storey building as its permanent headquarters in Taimani, a prime neighbourhood of Kabul. The cost for construction of the building alone, according one of one of its leading figure, was estimated to be US\$ 10 million. The most illustrative indication of the expansion of Jamiat-e Eslah is its success in spearheading the creation of a series of other organisations that focus on a wide range of social, cultural, educational and humanitarian activities. In its strategy, the organisations established by Jamiat-e Eslah focus on the following areas.

- **Publication and translation.** The organisation includes a *markaz-e taalif wa tarjuma*, Centre for Writing and Translation. A senior member of the organisation estimated the number of books published by the centre might have exceeded one thousand, and may have reached millions in terms of individual copies of each book (Interview [8]).
- **Provision of educational services.** Jamiat-e Eslah runs a series of educational services through schools and higher education institutes that are either formally or informally linked to it. In Kabul, the organisation is closely linked to Salam University, a private university where many founders of the organisation also teach. In addition, the organisation has established a number of private schools in Kabul and other provinces.
- **Public mass educational programmes and campaigns.** Besides the formal educational programmes, the organisation has attracted most public attention through its mass public religious education activities that often attract thousands of participants in events that run for days and even weeks. One of the weekly programmes, called *Haftheh Fahm-e Quran* (Quran Learning Weeks) is often organised in public spaces such as parks and stadiums.
- **Mass media.** During my interviews with the leaders of the organisation, they often referred to its media outlets as Eslah Media Group, a series of radios,

weeklies and monthlies, and online platforms that have been established by the organisation in Kabul and other provinces. These include monthly magazines *Qafelah*, published all over Afghanistan, *Marefat* published from Mazar-e Sharif, *Bayyena* published by the women's section of the organisation from Herat, and *Najm* published by the youth wing of the organisation (See below), and a weekly paper and a national weekly paper, *Eslah-e Milli*. In addition, the organisation runs the website *eslahonline*, which is regularly updated, and is highly active on social media platforms such as Facebook. The women's wing of the organisation runs a separate website, *Shabaka-e internet-e zan-e musulman* (Internet Network of Muslim Women), with separate profiles on social media platforms such as Facebook. In addition, the organisation runs *Radyu Sadayye Eslah* (Eslah Voice Radio), with specific locally-tailored programming for the cities of Kabul, Jalalabad and Kunduz. In 2013, the organisation also launched Eslah Television Network, which is based in the western province of Herat.

- **Charity activities.** In 2011, the organisation established the Ehsas (Ehsan) Welfare and Social Services Organisation, headed by Mawlawi Abdul Salam Abed, a prominent Islamic preacher in Kabul and a member of the Central Council of Jamiat-e Eslah. The charity organisation provides welfare services, including emergency support victims of natural disasters, winter support packages for the poor, and educational support for orphans (Eslah Media Group, 2017).
- **Occupational and youth and women organisations.** Over time, Jamiat-e Eslah has established a series of organisations that aim to cater to the needs of particular social constituencies. These include *Nehad-e Jawanan-e Musalman*, (Organisation of the Muslim Youth, NAJM) as its youth wing; *Majma-e Omumi Ulemayy-e Afghanistan* (General Forums of Scholars of Afghanistan) for religious clerics; a separate women's wing of the organisation; Islamic Medical

Association; and Islamic Engineers Association. The Medical Association includes doctors who work in private hospitals, and in September 2015 was planning to establish a private hospital; and the Engineers Association had established a private construction company. The most prominent and active of these organisations is NAJM, which was registered as a separate social organisation with the Ministry of Justice in March 2012.

The central notion around which the organisation is conceived is *eslah* or reform, a term used in Arabic, Dari and Pashto languages to denote a transformationist agenda. The agenda consists of transforming existing conditions and creating alternative socio-cultural and economic models as part of a gradual programme of bottom-up Islamisation. During interviews, members of the organisation commonly referred to other members of the organisation or other entities linked to it as *eslahi*, and *eslah* is used part of the name of its several subsidiary organisations and media outlets. The organisation seeks to bring about reform at three levels: individual (*fard*), family (*khanwadah*) and society (*Jame'ah*). Members of the organisation were keen to emphasise comprehensiveness of the idea of reform. As one member put it,

The purpose of *eslah* [here is] its comprehensive meaning which begins with an individual, including one's beliefs, ethics, worships, then in the family, ranging from small issues of interacting with one's brothers and mother and father, to issues of marriage, honour of the family, undertaking of religion in the family, and similarly in the society to ensure that everyone's rights are preserved, and in the meantime everyone performs his/her obligations. Men and women should have equal opportunities for work and advancement. In general this is the meaning of the reform (*eslah*) (Interview, [8]).

In its effort to present an alternative model to the formal state structure, the organisation is inspired and influenced by a number of Islamist movements in other countries. The most notable influence comes from the Muslim Brotherhood but many leaders of the organisation are also looking favourably to the experience of the Rights and Justice Party

(AKP) in Turkey (Asim, 2015), and Jama'at Islami in Pakistan where many of its founders lived during the 1980s and 1990s.

Partial Rejectionist: Hezb-e Hambastagi

Hezb-e Hambastagi Afghansitan (Solidarity Party of Afghanistan, SPA) was registered as a political party with the Ministry of Justice in April 2004. SPA is a left-leaning political party that advocates a secular system of government, opposes the US intervention in the country and demands prosecutions for crimes perpetrated during the years of war in Afghanistan. In the words of Ghaffar, its spokeswoman in Kabul,

Our views, thoughts and ideologies match the left more than the fundamentalists. Our affinity with the right is little and with the left is more, but we do not consider ourselves a leftist organisation because in a leftist current you should believe in leaders that belong to the left and we don't yet believe in them. We regard ourselves as a democratic current that is based on ideology and views – if you place it between left and right – we are in closer agreement with the left than the right (Interview [11]).

After several months of internal discussion and consultation, the first Constituent Assembly of the party was held on 15 April 2004 in Kabul (Hezb-e Hambastagi Afghanistan, 2004a). The assembly meeting approved the key documents of the party and elected Engineer Abdul Khaleq Neamat as its first leader. The main founding document of the organisation, *Baranamah wa اساسنامah hezb-e hambastagi Afghanistan* (Programme and Constitution of the Solidarity Party of Afghanistan), which was approved by the Constituent Assembly, specifies 19 specific goals for the party. While most of the party's goals such as preservation of independence of the country and the party's commitments to democracy, human rights and gender equality were common statements by most of the parties formed in this period in the country, the document distinguished the party from others by its clearly secularist and highly critical tone towards the role of the former mujahedin groups in the post-2001 government. For example, in stating the sixth goal of the party, the founders of the party declared,

While Hezb-e Hambastagi Afghanistan respects religious beliefs of all peoples of Afghanistan, it demands an end to all forms of prejudice and misuse of religious beliefs of the people, immediate end of the traitorous wars of armed groups, and prosecution of all war criminals and national traitors and seizure and confiscation of the vast wealth they have accumulated during the 25 years of war; those compatriots who unknowingly or through compulsion joined the service of different involved factions after 27 April 1978 (7 Saur 1357) and have realised they made mistakes can be pardoned (Hezb-e Hambastagi Afghanistan, 2004b)[My translation].

At the outset, the party's emphasis on prosecution of war criminals pushed it to a confrontational position towards the former mujahedin organisations who dominated the post-2001 political arrangements. As will be discussed further below, the party's critical stance shifted towards an even harsher line. An important driver of the hardening of the position of the party towards the formal political process was the position of the party on the post-2001 situation as 'under occupation' of the US and NATO forces. By adopting this view, the party also took a moral and political position which limited its ability to access the resources that were injected through the country, and hence remained outside the network of distribution of patronage that dominated party politics during this period. Such a position placed it in a complicated position to recruit new members. Rasikh, a leading member of the party, said that in recruiting new members the party should explain its inability to dispense patronage,

First, I should really believe that you have not come [with the hope] if the party gains victory you become a minister, or director. Or this party has money to give me, or they know some people who can appoint me [to a job]. On the first day we say: nay brother we are opposed to the government, we don't accept the government, and we don't have any resources [to give you]. On the contrary, when you become a member you should give money to us from your own income. You should pay membership fees (Interview [2]).

Despite these significant constraints, since its registration, the party appears to have expanded in terms of its support base. According to the head of the Organisational Committee (*Komitetee Tashkilat*), in 2004 the party had about 700 members (minimum membership requirement for party registration at that time) but in 2015, he said, the party had more than 30,000 members from all over the country. As is the case with other parties,

the membership figures of the party cannot be independently verified, but the organisation has demonstrated its capacity to mobilise hundreds or thousands of people in Kabul and a number of other provinces. Furthermore, the party successfully met more stringent requirements for a re-registration process that increased membership threshold from 700 to 10,000 members.⁵

Outside Kabul, the party's support base and recruitment activities are concentrated in a number of specific provinces. Although the party has offices in Mazar-e Sharif, Herat and Jalalabad, and Bamyan, some of its strongest support bases are in the provinces of Farah in the west (where the organisation claims to have more than 10,000 members), and Kunar, Laghman, Nangarhar and Nuristan (each with more than 1,000 members) in the east of the country. It appears that most of these membership figures come from collective support from entire communities, rather than members who are recruited individually. This became particularly clear when a party official described its support base among a specific community in the district of Hazarat-e Sultan in the northern province of Samangan. According to one party official, there is a community of 700 families in the district most of whom are members of the party (Interview [2]).

Total Rejectionist Hezb ut-Tahrir

Hezb ut-Tahrir, or Party of Liberation, is a pan-Islamist political organisation that is active in many countries around the world. The organisation was founded by Taqiuddin al-Nabhani, a Palestinian Muslim jurist, in Jerusalem in 1953. The central concept that most frequently appeared in my interviews with members of the organisation was 'Caliphate'.

⁵ The Head of the Organisational Committee of the Party said that as part of the re-registration process, the party provided to the government details of 13,000 members.

For activists of the organisation, the caliphate is central to implementation of Islamic rule and unequivocally linked to the honour, dignity and power of the imagined global Muslim community. One of the party's main texts, to which I was referred regularly during my interviews, is *Methods of Hezb ut-Tahrir for Bringing Change* (Hezb ut-Tahrir Afghanistan, 2012a). The book defines the organisation as a vanguard of the Islamic *ummah* in a global scale. The book defines the restoration of caliphate as the central mission of the party.

Hezb ul-Tahrir is a political party the origin of which is Islam. Consequently, politics is its work, and its origin and foundation is Islam, and the party works with and within the ummah so that the ummah adopts revival of Islam in life, state and society as a fate-determining priority (Hezb ut-Tahrir Afghanistan, 2012a, p. 30) [My translation].

Consequently, the ultimate objective of the party is to re-establish the Caliphate, the traditional state that historically governed much of the Muslim world. Activists of the organisation I interviewed in Kabul frequently referred to what they considered as loss of authority (*iqtedar*), greatness (*azamat*) and prestige (*haysiyyat*) of the Muslim Ummah, conceived as a unitary and global community. For them, the loss of authority and prestige came after the dissolution of the Caliphate at the hands of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk in 1924. The caliphate, they believed, served as a bulwark for Muslims against Western colonialism. Hence, they argued that revival of the caliphate was the only way of regaining lost glory and reviving the greatness of the past. In this mission of revival and reunification, the organisation positions itself as a vanguard political party for reunification of the Muslim majority nation-states into a single supra-national entity.

For the activists of the organisation, revival of the caliphate is more than just a practical solution to the multiple crises that afflict the Muslim world; they believe it is a religious obligation, ordained by God. In the words of a Hezb ut-Tahrir spokesperson in Afghanistan, the organisation believes its ideology was revealed by the 'creator of

mankind' through Prophet Muhammad. One of the most significant tenets of that ideology is the idea of a supra-national Islamic state, which the organisation believes was historically manifested by the Caliphate (Interview [13]).

In its strategy to re-establish the Caliphate, the organisation pursues a three-phased strategy: the first stage is called *t'alim* and *tasqif*, meaning education and acculturation respectively; second is the stage of *tafa'aul* or interaction with, and activities among the ummah, the global Islamic community; and the third is the stage of *talab ul-nosrah*, or call for help. To put it simply, the strategy involves preparation, action, and implementation.

According to the *Methods of Hezb ut-Tahrir for Bringing Change*, each of these includes separate elements, which the organisation claims are derived from the methods of Prophet Muhammad for introduction of Islam first in Mecca and building of an Islamic state in Medina. The *t'alim* and *tasqif* phase focuses on identification, recruitment and training of the individual members who form the initial cells of the party. Members go through intensive teaching and training to become 'absorbed' in the thoughts and methods of the organisation. At the end of the training members are expected to gain an Islamic personality (*shakhsiat-e Islami*) and Islamic way of thinking (*Islamic a'qliyat*) so that they 'view thoughts, events and incidents through the lens of Islam', and an Islamic self (*nafsiyyat-e Islami*) 'so that he/she goes wherever Islam goes' (Hezb ut-Tahrir Afghanistan, 2012a, p. 41) [My translation]. Despite the heavy emphasis on the transformation of its members, which amounts to a kind of rebirth of an individual, the organisation does not define itself in spiritual, humanitarian or educational terms,

Hezb ut-Tahrir is a political organisation which is founded on Islamic thought. Hence, it is not a spiritual, priestly, scientific, educational organisation or collective for charity works (building bridges, schools, hospitals etc) (Hezb ut-Tahrir Afghanistan, 2012a, p. 30) [My translation].

In the second phase, cultural activities are combined with public political activities intended to take the message of the party to the public. The cultural elements consists of continued effort at training members and consolidating the organisation and general consciousness-raising efforts for the ummah, and refutation of what are considered infidel and corrupt thoughts and systems. Significantly, the political strategy in this phase combines a confrontation with ‘infidel and colonialist states’ with a struggle against and criticism of the current rulers in the Islamic world (pp. 42-43).

Similarly, [the party] considers it haram [forbidden] to form parties that invite to capitalism, socialism, communism, secularism or Freemasonry or call for ethnocentrism, patriotism, racism or any religion other than Islam, or if a Muslim becomes affiliated to a member of one of these parties (Hezb ut-Tahrir Afghanistan, 2012a, p. 38) [My translation].

The third phase begins when the ummah shows signs of ‘frigidity and dryness’ (p. 46) towards the party. In this phase, the party begins with *talab ul-nosrah*, that is, calling on powerful individuals to help the party in two ways: first, by providing protection for the party and its activities, and second, through constitution of the Caliphate and restoration of the rule of God ‘in the spheres of life, state and society’ (p. 48). According to the organisation,

But third stage, which is the stage of reaching the government through the ummah and practices of *talab ul-nosrah*, so that Islam is implemented in whole without being divided into parts; thereafter the party assumes the practical duty for which it was formed, the Caliphate is set up, and the party oversees the thoughts and feelings of the society and implements Islam in a revolutionary manner that does not accept gradualism – regardless of the conditions and capacity of society – and carries the Islamic call for the whole world through jihad (Hezb ut-Tahrir Afghanistan, 2012a, p. 49) [My translation].

As an Islamist group, Hezb ut-Tahrir heavily relies on Islamic symbolism and discursive resources. It defines itself as a political party and hence, in contrast to Jamiat-e Eslah, it does not view cultural, educational and charity activities as solutions to the problems it believes confront the Islamic world. On the contrary, it regards focusing on socio-cultural activities as an aberration from the main objective of reviving the caliphate. The

organisation also distinguishes itself from competitive party politics of Western democracies by defining its mission as a *d'awah*, literally meaning invitation or call, a long-established tradition in the Islamic world whereby Muslims call upon others and invite them to understand or accept Islam, or call upon fellow Muslims to uphold Islamic principles. The spokesman of the party in Afghanistan emphasised politics had a different meaning for the organisation, defining it as 'managing the affairs of the people on the basis of rules of Shari'a and Islamic thoughts with complete honesty' (Interview [13]).

In comparison to the other case study groups of this thesis, Hezb ut-Tahrir is certainly the most hierarchical organisation with strict rules restricting information on the internal processes and organisational structure of the organisation. When I asked its activists how the organisation was structured internally, they commonly said those were *idari* or administrative issues that they were not permitted to share with me. Having said that, the activists made a distinction between two types of members: organisational members who are recruited and trained through its organisational cells, and another category of supporters that they describe as *hami d'awah*, or supporters of the call. This category of members includes any persons in positions of authority and influence, including government officials, members of the parliament and local notables. Two members of the Afghan parliament confirmed that they had received telephone calls from members of the organisation, inviting them to support it. The two members of parliament also said they knew of several other MPs who had received similar calls (Interviews [22] and [24]).

However, the group is not led by the traditional *ulema*, or religious scholars, who have historically taken upon themselves the responsibility to carry out *d'awah*. Instead, the members I interviewed, or those who appear in public rallies, are generally laymen, mostly graduates of secular universities or state-run Islamic education institutes. As a result, there is often a deep schism over the concept of *d'awah* between these activists

who grew up from the universities, and those who emerge from the traditional centres of Islamic education.

In Afghanistan, the organisation's first attempt to establish a presence was during the period of the Taliban regime (1996-2001). A delegation of the organisation travelled to the country and met with Mullah Omar, the Leader of the Taliban, who had assumed the title of Amir ul-Momenin and declared the country an Islamic 'Emirate'. The delegation, which came from an Arab country, was extending the call for assistance (*talab al-nosrah*) to Mullah Omar for establishment of the Caliphate. According to two members of the organisation, Mullah Omar directly rejected the proposal, saying 'Caliphate is the invention of companions' (Interview [7]). Mullah Omar's rejection was based on an interpretation of Islam that refuses to accept the idea that the caliphate was part of Islam as revealed in the Quran or practised by the Prophet's companions after his death. Consequently, despite the Taliban's emphasis on Islam as a framework for its Islamic Emirate, the country under their rule was effectively closed to Hezb ut-Tahrir.

After its rejection by the Taliban in the 1990s, Hezb ut-Tahrir found a more favourable environment in Afghanistan after 2001. The relative liberalisation of social and political space, including the basic civil and political rights enshrined in the 2004 constitution, provided social and political spaces for expression and contestation of new ideologies. More significantly, the expansion of secondary and higher education, coupled with exposure of the country to globalisation through the internet and mass media, gave rise to a new generation of educated youth that transcended parochial local concerns and acquired national and global consciousness and concerns. Consequently, universities and high schools in major urban centres and provincial towns became the centre of contestation between Hezb ut-Tahrir and other groups with focus on national or global concerns (see below).

According to its members, the organisation first established a basic organisational circle among the students of Kabul University in 2003. Subsequently, the organisation has expanded its activities in other university campuses and among school students in a number of other provinces. A member of the organisation said that as of December 2015, the organisation was active in 20 out of Afghanistan's 34 provinces. These claims cannot be independently verified. What is certain is that as a highly-organised group, the group has established itself as a potential recruiter for the country's politically-active and religiously-oriented educated youth.

In Afghanistan, the implementation of the organisation's clearly-delineated strategy is easier said than done. After 2001, the organisation has positioned itself in opposition to the basic foundation of the nation-state and liberal democracy on which the post-2001 statebuilding enterprise was built. As a result, the organisation has not officially registered as a political party and operates in semi-clandestine fashion. Besides its clandestine recruitment activities, the organisation publishes and distributes a large amount of literature. It has translated a significant number of texts produced by the founding members and ideologues of the party into the Dari and Pashto languages. It translates, produces and distributes these books through its publication wing, Ummat Publishers, which has an active online presence. The books translated from Arabic include *Menhaj-e Hezb ut-Tahrir baray-e awardan-e taghir* (Methods of Hezb ut-Tahrir for Bringing Change) (2012a), *Demokrasi nezam-e kofri ast* (Democracy is an Infidel System) (2012b); *Mafahim* (Concepts) (2012c), and *Takattul* (Party Formation) (2012d). In addition to these foundational texts and books, the organisation publishes the following magazines and periodicals that provide commentaries on current affairs in Afghanistan and the world:

- *Khilafat* monthly magazine, the first issue of which appeared in April 2014;

- *Taghyyer* monthly magazine, the first issue of which appeared in February 2016;
- *Khilafat* periodical, the first issue of which appeared in April 2014;

In addition to these regular publications, the organisation also publishes and distributes pamphlets, and issues statements on current socio-cultural and political developments in the country and participate in protest activities

Group Strategies and Environmental Responses

Broadly speaking, the four groups demonstrate different responses to the international intervention and the subsequent statebuilding process after 2001. As outlined in previous chapter 5, the Afghan state suffered from the triple weaknesses in extending its authority, providing basic public services, and in developing effective and legitimate institutions. These weaknesses provided specific sets of constraints and opportunities for the rise of social movements and contentious politics. These four groups offer insights into how groups attributed opportunities and threats that resulted from weaknesses of the state as well as the international efforts to strengthen and revive the state. In this section, I follow up the discussion in the preceding section by exploring (a) how these groups responded to the 2014 presidential elections (See table 2) as an opportunity to participate in the formal political process, and (b) whether they engaged in protest activities against specific policies or programmes of the state. The aim of the section is to explain how group-level responses are facilitated or rejected by the triple state weaknesses.

Table 6 Group Responses to the 2014 Presidential Elections

Afghanistan 1400	divided and fragmented
Hezb-e Hambastagi	Formally boycotted
Jamiat-e Eslah	Did not participate but launched a parallel campaign of ‘national unity’
Hezb ut-Tahrir	Launched a campaign against elections

As a result of mutual interaction between environmental changes and group level responses the following four patterns can be surmised:

- In nearly five years since it was launched, Afghanistan 1400 has gone through a period of stagnation and fractures that divided the group between proponents of a direct engagement in the political process and advocates of pursuing a social movement strategy.
- Beginning with a cautious optimism towards the formal political process and electoral politics, Hezb-e Hambastagi has gradually shifted from a *reformist* towards a *partial rejectionist* stance.
- Beginning with a mission of ‘spiritual rebuilding’ in 2004, Jamiat-e Eslah has shifted towards a more ambitious *transformationist* agenda.
- Hezb ut-Tahrir has created a small and vocal support base for its version of pan-Islamist ideology; however, its strategy of peaceful social and political change has been mired by the ongoing war and violence in Afghanistan and the Muslim world more generally.

These group-level outcomes are not the products of group strategies alone, as the particular social and political environment in which they emerged *facilitate* or *constrain* particular courses of action. Consequently, to explain these variations in trajectories of these four groups, I look at process of interaction between group-level strategies and the responses by the formal political process.

Internal Fragmentation and External Co-optation: the Case of Afghanistan 1400

Within months of the launch of the group in December in 2012, founders of Afghanistan 1400 were invited to international forums to speak of the hopes and desires of the rising generation of Afghanistan. Many international observers saw in the movement a new generation of Afghan activists and politicians who could bridge the traditional divides in

the country and move towards a shared and democratic future (Gienger & Wilder, 2013). However, the movement was as fast in attracting international attention as it was slow in deepening its roots in the country, and becoming a ‘credible platform’ of the wider youth population of the country.

Driven by English-speaking elites who were socialised in the post-2001 humanitarian and consulting sectors, the movement faced some important hurdles in reaching out to the ordinary young members of the society. To be sure, reaching out to the society was an important priority of the movement soon after it was launched. The movement sent a delegation of its senior leaders to the western province of Farah on 13 April 2013 to express their solidarity with victims of a major suicide attack. On 3 April, a Taliban attack on a court building in the province where suspected Taliban were being tried left 44 dead, including 34 civilians (Stanekzai, 2013). In a symbolic gesture, members of the delegation donated blood to the victims of the attacks and held meetings with local government officials and youth groups. The visit, which was covered by national media, also underscored the challenges facing groups such as Afghanistan 1400 in their efforts to reach out to the rural communities (Tolo News, 2013). A western scholar familiar with the movement pointed to how members of the delegation travelled to the province in a government helicopter (Conversation with a Western scholar of Afghanistan, 10 April 2017). As in several other provinces, many districts in the province of Farah were either controlled or contested by the militant groups. These areas were effectively off-limits for most members of Afghanistan 1400. As a movement of individuals with known affiliation with government or western agencies, Afghanistan 1400 also faced significant security challenges in reaching out to the people in the countryside. With the rapid deterioration of security conditions after its launch in 2012, most founders of the movement would be targets of the Taliban and other militant organisations who have been attacking,

kidnapping and killing individuals linked to the government and international organisations.

However, security threats were only some of the challenges facing the expansion of the movement. To the disappointment of many of its own sympathisers, the movement's performance has been similarly weak in places such as Kabul and even in areas of great strength of its members. The media and tech-savvy members of the movement might be expected to be most effective in exploiting social media platforms, and the internet. However, its official Facebook page is rarely updated and as of September 2017, its website, www.1400.af, provides basic introduction to the movement in English, with little to no texts in Dari or Pashto, the two main languages of the country.

The combination of great expectation generated by the launch of the movement in December 2012, and its inability to create a working organisational structure internally, exposed the organisation to the deep social and political polarisation that was created by the 2014 presidential elections. As a group of highly educated and articulate professionals, Afghanistan 1400 was highly attractive for the main presidential contenders of the election on 5 April. Members of the organisation I interviewed in the second half of 2015 recounted how they were approached by different political factions to join one of the coalitions. However, for many members, the desire to influence politics through direct participation was counteracted by fears of being compromised by the country's divisive and patronage-based politics. As one senior member of the movement put it,

Unfortunately, most of the existing political groups are based on linguistic, ethnic and religious values. We were also a group that wished to participate in politics, we wanted to bring a new form of politics. On the other hand, we wanted to make sure that somebody who engages in politics is not seen with doubt and suspicions because politics can also be undertaken for good purposes (Interview 25 August 2015).

Not all members of the movement shared the same level of ambivalence towards direct engagement with politics. Inside the movement, there was a group of former government officials and others who were motivated to engage directly in the political process. For this group, besides their individual political ambitions, the election was also an opportunity to introduce the movement and its platform to a national audience. By contrast, the other faction was opposed to direct participation in the process for they believed the organisation was not ready to compete in the process and still be able to maintain its integrity; there were even others who wanted to movement to remain as a civic and social movement without directly participating in politics.

After several rounds of discussions in the Central Council of the movement, it was decided that the movement would refrain from endorsing any particular electoral candidate. However, individual members of the Central Council could join one of the political coalitions only if they resigned from membership of the movement. The decision opened the way for many politically-ambitious members of the movement to join various teams of the electoral candidates. In the words of one of its members, one member of the movement ‘pinned himself to Ashraf Ghani, because he saw he could not gain much out of it [Afghanistan 1400]’, and asked ‘Why should I lose my immediate goals?’ Referring to another member who joined another electoral team, the same respondent said, he ‘stapled himself to Mohaqiq⁶ and found the opportunity [to be there]. Now the question for Afghanistan 1400 is, what you have offered to them?’ (Interview 13 September 2015). Waheed Omar, one of the best known members of the movement, first joined the campaign team of Zalmay Rasoul for the first round of elections, and of Dr. Abdullah for the second round. A number of other members who joined various electoral camps

⁶ Mohammad Mohaqeq is a Hazara politician who ran as second Vice-President of Dr. Abdullah Abdullah in the 2014 presidential elections.

subsequently were given prominent positions in the National Unity Government that was formed by the two leading candidate in September 2014.

Those members of Afghanistan 1400 who refrained from backing any particular candidates remained with the movement. However, the departure of a number of key figures and disappointment of a number of others pushed the movement into a period of abeyance, significantly damaging the momentum it created with its launch in 2012. In November 2015, after some months of internal discussions and evaluations the movement issued a public statement, accepting it had been through two years of stagnation but announcing it was ready for a fresh return in the public sphere. The brief one page statement stated,

While our launch and aftermath were impactful and grandiose, we have also suffered unwanted pauses and were affected by the general political environment in the country. We begin our return with the honesty that our people deserve: Afghanistan 1400 was challenged in the past two years due to internal issues and the general political environment. We have faced our own deadlocks, bottlenecks and dare we say even crises. In the critical electoral year 2014, Afghanistan 1400 was also fronted with questions bigger than its then two year long presence on the scene could address. We have learned that in our growth path as a movement, we are not an exception to but rather at the forefront of overcoming the deficit of a culture of collective action in Afghanistan.

Our immediate call, therefore, became overcoming our challenges—and enabling Afghanistan 1400 to return in public with greater cohesion, and that very spirit of forward-looking that sets us apart. We are here to build—inspired by the immense needs of Afghanistan, and energized by the dedication of 1400 members that persisted despite all the challenges (Afghanistan 1400, 2015).

The success of renewed efforts to revitalise Afghanistan 1400 depend on both group-level dynamics and the overall political and security conditions of the country. As of 2017, Afghanistan 1400 is an informal social and political group that is not formally registered with the Government of Afghanistan

The Gradual Shift of Hezb-e Hambastagi towards Contentious Politics

Since its formation in 2004, Hezb- Hambastagi has shifted from its broad programmes towards a narrower focus on prosecution of war crimes and the status of the US and NATO forces in Afghanistan. The shift can be illustrated by the party's changing stance towards elections. In the October 2004 presidential elections, the party backed the candidacy of Hamid Karzai in the elections. The statement declared (Hezb-e Hambastagi Afghanistan, 2004c),

Our nation has found itself in a specific position between Mr. Karzai, on the one hand, and the warlords, on the other. Despite his indecisiveness towards the warlords, lack of reliance on the people, and his collusion with some of the most unclear figures, the Hezb-e Hambastagi Afghanistan has evaluated Hamid Karzai as the suitable candidate for occupation of this post and [therefore] call upon its members and sympathisers all over the country to support Mr. Karzai during the presidential elections (My translation).

Subsequently, leaders of the party have claimed that it had boycotted the election. For example, in an interview with CISDA, an Italian association of organisations supporting women in Afghanistan, Rasikh, one of the leaders of the party, said the party had boycotted the 2004, 2009 and 2014 presidential elections, condemning them as a 'mockery', believing in 'Afghanistan no president can be elected without the White House's approval'. In the same interview, Rasikh said the party believed the 'country is occupied by the US-Nato forces and governed by a puppet regime formed by corrupted criminals: there's no sign of democracy in Afghanistan' (Rasikh, 2014). However, the party makes a distinction between presidential and parliamentary and provincial council elections. In his interview with me, Rasikh said that although the party does not formally field candidates for parliamentary and provincial council elections, it informally supports candidates and allow members to nominate themselves without party affiliation.

Our thinking is that we want a fundamental change in Afghanistan and this change is not possible through [election of an] MP or [appointment of] a minister. We must change the system, the Nezam. And this requires some time, it is taking time and we are working for it (Interview [2]).

The exclusion from both the formal political process and the informal patronage system that developed after 2001 led the party towards a highly contentious approach, with periodic rallies in the streets and regular skirmishes with members of the mujahedin and government officials on the country's television networks. The change of views of the party towards national elections also overlapped with a change in leadership of the party. During the second congress of the party held on 11 April 2010, the leadership of the party was criticised for the party's poor record of action and support for women and the youth of the country. More specifically, the party leadership was criticised for having supported a candidate during the 2004 presidential elections and it was hoped that boycott of the 2009 elections by the party would to some extent 'compensate for past mistakes'. It declared that the seven candidates of the elections were 'known national criminals'. The second congress also elected a new leader, Daoud Razmak, a young medical doctor, who declared 'decisiveness and steadfastness against criminals' and building of 'extensive ties with the people' as his main priorities for the party (Hezb-e Hambastagi Afghanistan, 2010).

Parallel to the internal organisational restructuring and increased radicalism towards the political process among its leadership, the party turned towards street politics. The following are some of the main protest rallies organised by the party:

- On 31 January 2008, Hezb-e Hambastagi organised rallies in Kabul and Jalalabad against a death sentence given for Parviz Kambakhsh, a journalism student, by a court in Mazar-e Sharif over allegations of apostasy.
- On 9 May 2010, it organised a rally in Kabul in support of left-leaning political activists who were facing execution in Iran.
- On 11 July 2011, the party organised a rally against Pakistan for its alleged interference in domestic politics of Afghanistan.

- On 19 August 2011, it organised a rally in Jalalabad to celebrate the independence of Afghanistan.
- On 13 January 2012, it organised a rally to protest mistreatment of Afghan refugees in Iran by Iranian authorities.
- On 29 January 2011, it organised demonstrations in Kabul, Herat, Nangarhar and Mazar in support of Iranian political prisoners in Iran.
- On 7 October 2011, it organised a demonstration to condemn the 10th anniversary of the US-led military intervention in Afghanistan.
- On 20 November 2011, it organised a rally in Kabul to express its opposition to the Loya Jirga decision to sign a strategic partnership agreement with the United States.
- On 30 April 2012, it began rallies to condemn both 7 and 8 Saur as black days.
- On 12 October 2014, it organised a demonstration to express its support for the resistance of Kurdish forces against ISIS in the Syrian city of Kubani.
- On 23 March 2015, it protested against the killing of Farkhunda in Kabul (See chapter 9).

The most controversial of these demonstrations were those organised against the former mujahedin and the PDPA. On 30 April 2012, the party organised a rally in Kabul to call for the prosecution of crimes perpetrated during the years of war in the country. The protestors carried crossed-out pictures of leaders of both the mujahedin and the PDPA. The rally was organised on the 20th anniversary of the arrival of the mujahedin on 28 April 1992 (8th Saur 1371), following the collapse of the Soviet-backed government in Kabul. Incidentally, only fourteen years and one day prior to the victory of the mujahedin the PDPA had gained power through a coup on 27 April 1978. In the post-2001 period, the mujahedin who dominated the government announced the 28 April as a ‘national holiday’ celebrating the victory of the mujahedin. However, Hezb-e Hambastagi became

the most vocal voice challenging the dominant narrative of jihad, accusing both the mujahedin and the PDPA of having committed atrocities during those years. Consequently, they have been calling both 27 and 28 April (7th and 8th of Saur) as *rozhay-e siah*, or black days, and *lakkaye nangin*, or shameful stains in the history of the country.

The slogans of the 30 April 2012 rally quickly outraged the former mujahedin who were dominant in both the government and the national assembly. According to Human Rights Watch (2012)

Condemnation of the demonstration from members of the Afghan parliament was swift. The day after the protest, members of the Meshrano Jirga called for the party to be banned and its leaders prosecuted. On May 8, the Solidarity Party was asked, along with the Minister of Justice, to appear the next day for questioning by the Legislative, Judicial, and Justice Committee of the Meshrano Jirga. Several delays occurred, but on May 22, representatives of the Solidarity Party met with the Complaints Committee of the Meshrano Jirga. On May 29, the Meshrano Jirga wrote to the Ministry for Parliamentary Affairs asking the ministry to inform the Attorney General's Office, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Interior, and the National Security Directorate that the Solidarity Party's activities should be suspended and the organization be investigated by law enforcement agencies.

On 2 June 2012, the Ministry of Justice sent an official letter to the party to inform it of the decisions of the Meshrano Jirga to call for their suspension and possible prosecution of its leaders. However, in the face of rising criticisms and pressure from human rights groups the government backed down and on 15 June announced that the party was not suspended, although a government official warned that preparations were underway for prosecution of its leaders (Ahmadi M. , 2012). One year later, the demonstration of Hezb-e Hambastagi on 2 May 2013 was disrupted by government security forces. According to Human Rights Watch (2013), at least, 9 members of the party were arrested by the security forces, six of whom were tortured and beaten while they were in detention. Subsequently, they were all released without any further proceedings against them.

Jamiat-e Eslah's Strategy of Bottom-Up Socio-Cultural Reform

As a social organisation, Jamiat-e Eslah is avowedly non-political organisation, and hence elections and protest activities are outside its realm of activities as envisaged by the Law on Social Associations. However, in reality the work of the organisation is deeply political. In contrast to the other three groups, Jamiat-e Eslah appears to have successfully insulated itself against the polarising effects of the political process, while steadily expanding its socio-cultural activities. The success of the organisation in maintaining its organisational focus in a polarised political environment is partly the result of a deliberate strategy of avoiding direct engagement in the formal political process, including elections.

During the intense months of campaigning ahead of the first round of voting for the presidency on 5 April 2014, the organisation launched a campaign of ‘national unity’ that specifically targeted, in the words of one of its leaders, ‘ethnicist and secessionist currents’ (Rahimzay, 2014). During the week-long campaign that ran from 15 to 21 February 2014, the organisation organised seminars and public meetings, distributed brochures, and raised large billboards in Kabul and a number of other provinces to promote its message of unity. The launch of the parallel campaign of unity was symptomatic of the organisation’s efforts to present itself as a unifying organisation, offering an alternative to the divisive electoral mobilisation by the ethno-political networks that dominated the post-2001 elections. Commenting on the 2014 presidential elections Nawidi, the Chair of the Central Council of the organisation (Nawidi, 2014) wrote,

Jamiat-e Eslah Afghanistan does not believe the presidential election is the solution to the fundamental problems of the country. But in the meantime it does not oppose elections in general, and believes it is better they be held than not [My translation].

Although, unlike Hezb ut-Tahrir, the organisation is not opposed to elections per se, until 2014 it had prohibited its senior members from participating in the elections as

candidates. In 2014, the organisation decided to allow its members to participate as independent candidates for parliamentary seats. In my interviews, senior members of the organisation emphasised that the organisation did not have any ideological opposition to elections. Instead, they emphasised that the organisation was concerned that it could not secure sufficient seats in the parliament to influence the outcomes of parliamentary proceedings. One member specifically cited the US-Afghanistan Strategic Partnership Agreement as a bill to which the organisation was opposed, but could not reject even had it elected a few members in the parliament.

Besides the fear of being unable to influence politics through direct participation, the organisation had a wide range of options to express its policy positions. As a network of organisations covering a number of different activities, Jamiat-e Eslah has diverse instruments at its disposal to express its socio-cultural or political concerns. This means that, as one member put it,

Demonstrations are one of our instruments for declaring our positions. To declare our positions on national and international issues, we use different instruments, ranging from issuing a declaration on our website, and organising press conferences, to organising a large gathering or conference with demonstration perhaps being our last option (Interview 30 August, 2015)

According to Nawidi (2013a) states, the organisation seeks to go beyond the traditional protests in the streets,

While in our imitating society Islamic activities were mostly reduced to street demonstrations, conferences, large gatherings and fiery speeches, Jamiat Eslah managed to use good experiences of the contemporary world and launch new initiatives that transform Islamic activities qualitatively as well as quantitatively.

Nonetheless, Jamiat-e Eslah has regularly organised protest rallies in the streets of Kabul and other provinces to protest against national and international developments that concern its leaders. The following are some of the major rallies held by the organisation:

- A 2 January 2009 rally in support of the people of Gaza at the height of the 2008-2009 Gaza War between Israel and Hamas (Eslah Online, 2009a).
- On 7 April 2011, the organisation organised a rally to protest against burning of Quran by the controversial US preacher, Terry Jones (Eslah Online, 2011).
- On 20 September 2012 Jamiat-e Eslah organised a rally to demonstrate against the *Innocence of Muslims*, a film produced in the US which allegedly contained anti-Islamic contents (Eslah Online, 2012).
- On 5 July 2013, Jamiat-e Eslah organised rallies in Kabul, Qandahar, Jalalabad and Qunduz to protest against the removal of Muhammad Morsi from the Egyptian presidency by the Egyptian army (Radio Azadi, 2013).
- On 13 June 2013, the women wing of Jamiat-e Eslah organised a rally to protest against the Law on Elimination of all Violence against Women in Afghanistan (Eslah Media Group, 2013)
- On 2 January 2015, Jamiat-e Eslah held a demonstration outside the French Embassy in Kabul to protest against the French satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo for controversial satirical cartoons about Prophet Muhammad (Eslah Online, 2015a).
- On 18 September 2015, Jamiat-e Eslah and NAJM jointly organised a rally against the Israel Occupation of Al-Aqsa Mosque (Eslah Media Group, 2015b).
- 2 February 2016, Jamiat-e Eslah organised a demonstration in Kabul demanding the closure of the Guantanamo Prison (Eslah Online, 2016a).

Although as the list shows, Jamiat-e Eslah is a regular organiser of protest rallies, most of its rallies are organised as expressions of solidarity with Islamic communities across the world. However, domestically it has attracted most attention through its educational and cultural activities. In 2015, the wider effects of its educational and cultural activities

were increasingly followed with concern by the more secular civil society groups. Many civil society groups suspected the organisation of orchestrating a wave of ‘soft radicalisation’, by training and educating a new generation of young radical Islamists (Akbar, 2018).

Hezb ut-Tahrir’s Rejectionist Path

Hezb ut-Tahrir Afghanistan is vehemently opposed to electoral processes. The organisation’s spokesman clearly stated that the organisation believed that an election was a human-made principle (*aosuloi bashari*) that contradicts the basic tenets of Islam (Interview 19 September 2015). Consequently, the organisation actively campaigned against the idea of elections as a method for election of rulers, terming participation in the process as *haram*, religiously-forbidden. It regards electoral democracy as an ‘infidel system’ and any participation in it as a ‘great sin’ (Hezb ut-Tahrir Afghanistan, 2014a). Consequently, the organisation’s presence in the country tends to attract significant media attention during presidential elections. On 31 May 2009, less than three months before the presidential elections on 20 August, the organisation issued a statement, declaring elections as definitely *haram* or forbidden, and the presidency as ‘a position of violating the rights of Muslims, traitor to the material and immaterial values, and a participating hand in murder and massacre of innocent Muslims who are murdered brutally by the bombardment of foreign forces on daily basis (Hezb ut-Tahrir Afghanistan, 2009). The organisation re-issued the same statement on 26 September 2013, as the country was preparing for the 2014 presidential elections. In February 2014, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, leader of the militant faction of Hezb-e Islami that until May 2016 engaged in an armed insurgency against the government, issued a statement, supporting the candidacy of Qutbuddin Helal in the presidential elections. Hezb ut-Tahrir reacted by condemning the

position by Hekmatyar as ‘surrender to the Western crusaders’ and ‘clear betrayal of the holy jihad’ (Hezb ut-Tahrir Afghanistan, 2014b).

By taking such a clear and hard position on the elections, Hezb ut-Tahrir has closed off avenues for peaceful engagement in the mainstream political process. In the meantime, as elsewhere in the world, Hezb ut-Tahrir Afghanistan consistently emphasises its non-violent character, strongly denying any links to violent organisations such as the Taliban and the so-called Islamic State that emerged in Iraq and Syria. The closure of both mainstream political participation and rejection of violent subversion has pushed the organisation towards underground networks that occasionally surface in mobilisation against government policies and international forces in the country. Although the movement distances itself from the insurgency, in practice maintaining a distance between the rhetoric of establishment of an Islamic state and the violent strategies pursued by militant groups has not been easy for the organisation. On 9 November 2015, about 200 students of Nangarhar University organised a rally at the university campus in the eastern city of Jalalabad. The protest, which was initially planned with regard to living conditions at the university’s dormitory, was quickly seized by a number of Islamist groups that raised anti-government and pro-Caliphate slogans. Some of the protestors carried flags of the Islamic state and others shouted ‘we are tired of democracy. We want an Islamic caliphate. We want a fair caliphate and an Islamic system’ (Ghazi, 2015). The white and black flags of the Taliban and the ISIS carried by the Taliban created a national concern about the situation in some of the country’s universities.

On 21 November, a government delegation sent from Kabul to investigate the protest declared that about 200 students of the Nangarhar University were affiliated with the Taliban, the ISIS, and the militant faction of Hezb-e Islami. They also announced that 27 students were arrested in connection to the protest (Tolo News, 2015a). In the meantime,

on 23 November 2015, Abdullah Abdullah, the Chief Executive of the National Unity Government declared that ‘one of the issues of the country neglected by the government [is] the activities of Hezb ut-Tahrir, one of the branches of terrorist groups in Afghanistan. This will be addressed in a fundamental manner at this meeting of the Council of Ministers’ (Office of the Chief Executive of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, 2015a). The statement by Abdullah was apparently triggered by the protest at Nangarhar University. On 25 November 2015, the National Directorate of Security (NDS) announced that it had arrested Abdul Qayyum, whom it identified as General Director of Hezb ut-Tahrir in the South-western province of Nimruz. Qayyum was reportedly a student of Nimroz Teacher Training Centre and was involved in spreading Hezb ut-Tahrir materials and other anti-government materials (Pajhwok Afghan News, 2015).

However, not all officials of the government, including officials of the Office of the Chief Executive, agreed with labelling Hezb ut-Tahrir as a terrorist organisation. These differences of opinion became apparent a week later, in another meeting of the Council of Ministers, on 30 November 2015. During the meeting, the first and second deputies of the Chief Executive Officer made the following remarks.

Engineer Muhammad Khan, First Deputy of the Chief Executive Officer, remarked that Hezb ut-Tahrir does not exist legally. Nonetheless, as of now members of this party has not taken any violent initiative but it is likely they join extremist organisations. In the meantime, Muhammad Mohaqiq, the Second Deputy of the Chief Executive Officer viewed the organisation as part of radical organisations that are opposed to the system of Islamic republic and constitution of the country (Office of the Chief Executive of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, 2015b).

In an interview with me in December 2015, two members of Hezb ut-Tahrir, strongly denied they were involved in the protest at Nangarhar University. They emphasised that Hezb ut-Tahrir would acknowledge its role in a rally in which it participates (Interviews [39] and [40]). However, in April 2016, a local court gave 31 students of Nangarhar University prison sentences, ranging from two months to two years, for disrespecting the

national flag and carrying the insurgent groups' flags. Among those who received two year prison term was a member of Hezb ut-Tahrir (BBC Persian Service, 2016) .

Contention and the Uncertain Spaces between State, Non-State and Anti-State

Domination

As the previous section of this chapter showed, the four groups represent highly diverse ideological orientations, and pursue different goals through very different strategies and tactics. The diverging patterns of group formation and responses to the post-2001 statebuilding can be explained by (1) the social and political characters of their founding networks and circles and (2) the interactive processes of group responses and environmental feedback.

The Role of Initial Founding Networks

The initial founding networks shaped foundational, programmatic and policy preferences of these groups by endowing them with particular symbolic and material resources at crucial moments of their formation. In addition to broad ideological frameworks (Islamism, liberalism and left-leaning nationalism), the networks of founders also introduced to these movements particular social networks, political connections and moral dispositions. To begin with, for the founders of Afghanistan 1400, a reformist strategy was a natural position of its founders, members of a socially-mobile English-speaking elite who met one another at workshops, seminars and conferences in Kabul or abroad. This group owed their rise to prominence to the international intervention and statebuilding enterprise, and the chances of social mobility created by the formal state structures, as well as the vast humanitarian, consulting and service sectors created by the international intervention.

In contrast to the reformist posture of Afghanistan 1400, the transformationist agenda pursued by *Jam'iat-e Eslah* originated from the broadly cultural and ideological activities

of Afghan and international Islamists networks that go back at least to the 1980s. Consequently, instead of western-style workshops, seminars and conferences, the founding members of Jamiat-e Eslah were brought together in cultural offices, media outlets and schools and universities that were established by the seven major Sunni mujahedin organisations that emerged in Pakistan during the 1980s (Abdulbaq, 2009). The founding circles that established Jamiat-e Eslah also had a proclivity towards a culturalist and bottom-up socio-political strategy that would dissociate them from both the violent strategy of the Taliban, which banned their activities when they were in power in the late 1990s, on the one hand, and the former political leaders who dominated the post-2001 government, on the other. Consequently, most members of the organisation tend to be highly articulate and well-educated as a result of skills they have accumulated over several years of teaching at the mujahedin educational institutions or writing for their various media outlets.

Similar to Jamiat-e Eslah, Hezb-e Hambastagi has deeper roots in the conflict in Afghanistan. Although it did not exist as an organisation with the same name prior to 2001, its founding members had a relatively well-established history of activism both in Afghanistan and among the Afghan refugees in Pakistan. Consequently, its 2001 position was also profoundly shaped by the specific position of its founders at that time. Rooted in various factions of the Maoist movement of Afghanistan that were persecuted by the both the pro-Soviet PDPA and mujahedin and the Taliban in the 1980s and 1990s respectively, the founders of the party in 2004 were inclined to take a critical position towards the US-led military intervention and the empowerment of the groups that had persecuted them.

In this respect, Hezb ut-Tahrir offers an interesting case in that its members and founders in Afghanistan do not have a similar history of involvement in the wars and violent

conflicts of the 1980s and 1990s. Having said that, the experience of the initial members who were attracted to the movements at Kabul University from 2003 onwards may well illustrate similar patterns, although given the limited information available about its internal structures it is hard to make such an assertion with certainty. However, beyond these initial postures, these groups exhibit social and political dispositions that result from their interaction with the social and political environment of Afghanistan.

Facilitation, Rejection or Co-Habitation

Beyond the role of initial founders, the development of these groups was also shaped by the ongoing contestation over the nature of state sovereignty in Afghanistan. Characterised by the tripe weaknesses of credibility, capacity and service delivery the Afghan state had a mixed effect on the outcome of these movements. As was shown above, the state elites co-opted many members of Afghanistan 1400, the group that had policy-level conflict with the post-2001 state. However, significantly the co-optation did not entail the movement as a collective entity. Rather, the politically-ambitious individuals were recruited through personal networks. The outcome is even less clear certain in the other three groups. Hezb ut-Tahrir, which was in conflict with the foundational, programmatic and policy orientation of the post-2001 state in Afghanistan, offers an illustrative example. Although, as discussed above, it was accused of promoting terrorism, the accusation did not lead to a systematic policy of repression against the organisation. Similarly, for Jamiat-e Eslah and Hezb-e Hambastagi, which show similar levels of programmatic conflicts, the outcomes of interaction with the state do not show clear facilitation or repression and rejection. On the contrary, despite their significant differences, these groups have managed to co-habit with the neopatrimonial political order, pursuing their own programmes and policies independently of government policies and programmes. In this environment of co-habitation, Jamiat-e Eslah, and, to lesser

degrees, Hezb ut-Tahrir and Hezb-e Hambastagi devise and implement their own programmes of social control independent of the state.

The cohabitation is partly facilitated by the weaknesses of the state, and the ability of groups to draw on material and symbolic resources that are outside the control of the state authority. In this respect, Afghanistan 1400, the closest to the state from the four, is illustrative. By virtue of the background of its members, Afghanistan 1400 was firmly rooted in three separate fields: the formal institutions of the state, and the aid and advocacy sectors. At least 8 out of the 15 members of the Central Council of the movement were current or former government officials. The best known figure of the movement was Waheed Omar, who, prior to joining the movement, had served in senior government positions, including as Spokesman of President Karzai in 2010-2011. Other senior figures included Ershad Ahmadi, who at that time, was working as Director-General of the Fifth Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sediq Sediqi, Spokesman of the Ministry of Interior, and Abdullah Ahmadzai, who served as Chief Electoral Officer for the Independent Election Commission of Afghanistan from 2010 to 2012.

Other members of the Central Council of the movement are noted for their strong connection to international academic, humanitarian and advocacy sectors. For example, Shaharзад Akbar, the group's first Chairperson, holds a BA from Smith College in the US and an MPhil in Development Studies from Oxford University. At the time of founding of the movement, Akbar was a senior consultant at Qara Consulting, a private consulting firm, the Director of which, Haseeb Humayoon, was also member of the Central Council. Most other members of the Central Council had either worked in the government or moved between private sector or aid, and government jobs. What distinguishes members of the movement is the ability to transition seamlessly from the social worlds of government bureaucracy and politics, on the one hand, and the activism

of NGOs and entrepreneurial activities of the private sector, on the other. Yet the very ability of Afghanistan 1400 leaders to navigate and move between these fields is partly a result of the educational opportunities and career paths of the founding members of the organisation. The same ability of the Afghanistan 1400 to shift between formal government and the NGO and private sectors was also the chief constraint on its ability to connect easily to wider sections of Afghan society.

The evolution of Jamiat-e Eslah after its establishment in 2003 offers even more important insights into the uncertain outcomes of group-level strategies and environmental responses. Drawing on the past connections of its founders with the political leaders of the mujahedin and blending its Islamist ideology with practical local concerns, the organisation has walked a fine line between the government and its western backers and the violent opposition groups. While the organisation has benefited from its official recognition as a social organisation, it has limited its participation in the statebuilding process to the level of directors and deputy ministers. With its self-imposed limits on participation in state institutions, the organisation has focused on expansion through creation of alternative structures of power and authority in the forms of schools, universities, media organisations and charitable activities. Consequently, rather than taking control of state institutions, it is creating alternative networks of authority and service provision that assume some of the functions of the state.

Rather surprisingly, both Hezb ut-Tahrir and Hezb-e Hambastagi share a common position towards the post-2001 international intervention and statebuilding in Afghanistan, although for very different historical and ideological reasons. Despite its long history in other Muslim-majority countries, Hezb ut-Tahrir was a late-comer in the ideological and political history of Afghanistan. In its strategy to recruit members and build party cells, the organisation has focused on schools and university campuses.

Although, as will be discussed further in chapter 7, the organisation aims to recruit diverse social groups, the centres of its activities are universities and high schools. In its implementation, the pan-Islamist ideology of Hezb ut-Tahrir, once articulated and pursued in the context of Afghanistan, becomes intertwined with the specific socio-cultural, security and political environment of the country, and the particular socio-political experiences of its members. The new generation of Islamist activists that emerged after 2001 clearly benefits from the transformation of the former mujahedin into dominant political forces. On the one hand, most former mujahedin organisations, except for the militant faction of Hezb-e Islami led by Gulbudin Hekmatyar, deradicalised and embraced the political and socio-economic opportunities presented by the international intervention and statebuilding enterprise.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have attempted to explain the formation and evolution of the four groups in relation to the particular contexts of Afghanistan, characterised by fragmentation and contestation of state sovereignty, ongoing violence and weak government capacity to devise and enforce policies. I also have made a distinction between three levels of change or stability: foundational, programmatic and policy. Evaluating these groups against how they attributed opportunities and threats in these levels, I identified four types of responses to the changes. Afghanistan 1400, which was driven by policy-level concerns, was accepted by the state, and hence many of its members were co-opted into the state structures after the 2014 presidential elections. At the other end of the spectrum, Hezb ut-Tahrir Afghanistan, which positioned itself against the state-building processes at all levels - foundational, programmatic and policy – was rejected by the formal structures of the state but was not repressed.

The manner in which the four groups positioned themselves with regards to the post-2001 statebuilding process also has two other dimensions that are central to the overall arguments of this thesis. First, each of the four groups demonstrates the significance of symbolic and value-based dimensions of politics alongside interest-based politics. Despite their significant differences, the four groups share important value-based and symbolic forms of contention alongside interest-based forms of collective action. Second, these groups responded to threats and opportunities created by both the statebuilding process and ongoing contestation over the nature and limits of state authority. On the one hand, the basic civil and political liberties provided by the 2004 constitution and mass social changes and expansion of the education sector provided unprecedented opportunities for the rise of various political and ideological groups. On the other, corruption and state inability to meet popular demands generated popular discontent that is central to the shared ambivalence and scepticism of these groups towards the state. Hezb-e Hambastagi and Jamiat-e Eslah began by seeking opportunities at the programmatic levels but showed two diverging tendencies. Hezb-e Hambastagi began with a cautious optimism from an initially-reformist position, but gradually shifted towards more programmatic opposition. By contrast, Jamiat-e Eslah cautiously moved towards greater programmatic alignment with the statebuilding process while simultaneously expanding its activities in presenting alternative models and seeking to Islamise the state and society in a bottom-up process of socio-cultural reform. Given the contested and fragmented nature of state authority, the rejectionist and transformationist agendas of Hezb ut-Tahrir and Jamiat-e Eslah respectively also brought them closer to the violent rejectionism of the Taliban and other militant groups. Consequently, in the environment of contestation over state sovereignty, the groups responded to threats and opportunities in state, non-state and anti-state spaces as they attempted to survive and cohabit in a highly-polarised and contested environment.

Chapter 7: From Texts to Contexts: Ideologies and Collective Identity Formation

Introduction

Assessing their foundational, programmatic and policy orientations, the previous chapter developed a typology of responses by the four groups to the post-2001 international statebuilding enterprise in Afghanistan. The chapter also explained how these group-level strategies were initially formulated and then shaped through processes of interaction with the broader environment of Afghanistan: Afghanistan 1400's reformist response led to internal fragmentation and partial co-optation by the government; Hezb-e Hambastagi shifted from an initial reformist position of cautious optimism towards partial rejectionism and contentious politics; Hezb ut-Tahrir's total rejectionism met with rejection by the formal state institutions but found pockets of support among the educated youth; Jamiat-e Eslah continued with a bottom-up transformationist agenda whilst attempting to present its own models of alternative reform and statebuilding.

The chapter concluded that while the particular institutional design of the post-2001 state played important roles in the shift in strategies of these groups, the overall picture that emerges is not one of clear facilitation or rejection. On the contrary, between full response and rejection there emerged a wide space marked by ongoing contestation over the nature of statehood and sovereignty in the country. To complement these institutional analysis, the chapter highlighted the important roles played by initial founders of these groups, as sources of particular resources, and particular political and ideological orientations, and the challenges facing the state's capacity and credibility to claim sovereign rights.

This chapter discusses the discursive mechanisms and processes in formation and evolution of the four groups, highlighting group-level dynamics and the agency of actors, both individually and collectively, in making strategic and tactical choices. It explores processes of identify formation through describing mechanisms of boundary activation

and narrative articulation to assess how these groups construct meaning and social categories, and legitimate the particular claims they advance. These mechanisms and processes connect group-level dynamics with broader shifts in the discursive environment of Afghanistan.

The first section of this chapter discusses the importance of shared meaning and collective identities for contentious politics. The second section explores how the broad ideological frameworks of the four groups are articulated in the particular context of Afghanistan by identifying their most significant agendas. The third section highlights the importance of narrative by describing how these groups build on existing historical narratives or articulate new ones. The fourth section moves beyond the role of ideology and narrative by underlining the importance of social differentiation in highly-contested discursive fields. The fifth revisits some of the main themes that emerges from the chapter before I draw some general conclusions.

Identity formation and Mechanisms of Boundary Activation

The construction of collective meaning and identities is central to any group formation and collective action. As Fligstein and McAdam (Fligstein & McAdam, *A Theory of Fields*, 2012, p. 49) argued, ‘any collective action requires identity and meaning in order to convince individuals that they are part of something real, important, and tied to their “interests”’. Identity construction involves ‘boundary activation’, a discursive mechanism that separates group-members from outsiders, and defines the protagonists (Tilly, 2004). For McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly (2004, p. 143), the mechanisms involves either invention, borrowing, encounter or a combination of them,

Invention involves authoritative drawing of a boundary and prescription of relations across that boundary, as when Bosnian Serb leaders decree who in Bosnia is a Serb and who not, then regulate how Serbs interact with non-Serbs. Borrowing involves importation of a boundary-cum-relations package already existing elsewhere and its installation in the local setting, as when rural French revolutionaries divided along the lines patriot/aristocrat that had already split Paris

and other major French cities. Encounter involves initial contact between previously separate (but internally well connected) networks in the course of which members of one network begin competing for resources with members of the other, interactively generating definitions of the boundary and relations across it.

The manner in which groups construct collective social identities has highly consequential implications for the particular claims groups can make on the state. It is through formation and legitimation of social categories that groups can assert themselves in a society, making particular moral or interest-based claims on the state or other actors. The meaning and significance of social boundaries may vary depending on the particular social contexts. Some social boundaries such as those based on tribal identities or kinship networks may have entirely local significance. Others built around broader socio-political categories such as religion, ideology or ethnic identities may have broader significance. Consequently, beyond localised settings, the significance of social boundaries and identities may lie in their ability to connect multiple social relations and sites for coordinating collective action at a national or transnational levels.

As chapter 4 argued, historically in Afghanistan, collective action and group formation were profoundly shaped by a long-standing cleavage between the traditional and modern modes of social organisation. The traditional-modern divide presented these movements as well as the modernist state elite with a particular set of choices for construction of group identities. Throughout the twentieth century, in their encounter with the traditional social segmentation and divisions, modernist movements would either replicate and reproduce these social segmentations or seek to transcend them by inventing or borrowing new social categories. The modernist intelligentsia grappled with the challenges of modernisation in a deeply traditional and conservative society.

The historical divide between the modern, usually urban, and the traditional and rural segments of the society was altered by deep social changes that occurred after the onset of conflict in the country in 1978. The war and violence that began in 1978 radically

transformed social relations, weakening traditional patterns of authority and creating new actors such as commanders of armed groups (Dorronsoro, 2005, pp. 93-136), and Islamists (Roy, 1994, pp. 147-167). In the post-2001 period, the dynamics of the traditional-modern divide changed further as a result of unprecedented social changes, most notably expansion of the education sector, and exposure of the society more generally to forces of globalisation. The exposure of Afghanistan to the forces of globalisation and the rapid social, cultural and political changes that accompanied it have transformed the underlying structures of constraints and opportunities that faced social and political groups in the country.

Consequently, the four groups studied in this thesis, and their underlying socio-cultural networks, are shaped by the rise of a new generation of educated Afghans who have been profoundly transformed through their formal education at schools and universities, or exposure to transnational ideas and methods of socio-political organisation. In this respect, the four groups are the products of social change. The expansion of mass education and connection of Afghan youth to global ideological forces have created a deep rift between the ideas and ideals of a new society, and the reality of Afghan social segmentation, corruption of political elites, and government incompetence and inefficiency. A profound sense of ambivalence, disillusionment, and frustration with capture of the post-2001 state apparatus by divided and predatory elites appeared in almost all of my interviews with activists and members of all groups.

Abstract Ideologies and Concrete Realities

As the previous chapter showed, these four groups are highly diverse, ideologically, socially and politically. Ideologically, these four groups represent four orientations: radical pan-Islamism (Hezb ut-Tahrir), Muslim Brotherhood-style Islamism (Jamiat-e Eslah), left-wing nationalism (Hezb-e Hambastagi), and liberalism (Afghanistan 1400).

Taken together, these groups also represent a secular-religious divide among Afghanistan's post-2001 educated elites who have come to espouse different ideologies with divergent conceptions of a good society. In their broad ideological orientations, Hezb ut-Tahrir and Jamiat-e Eslah are driven by Islamism, although of different varieties. As a pan-Islamist political movement, Hezb ut-Tahrir positions itself as a vanguard of a global community of Muslims whereas Jamiat-e Eslah attempts to maintain a balance between its national focus, and global pan-Islamic inspirations and concerns. By contrast, despite their significant differences, Hezb-e Hambastagi and Afghanistan 1400 are secular in their social and political orientation. The important distinction between the two groups, however, is that the Hezb-e Hambastagi is an avowedly anti-fundamentalist group, openly calling for a secular government, whereas for Afghanistan 1400 the divide is a relatively less salient issue.

Ideologies are, however, among a number of important drivers of formation and evolution of political groups. As Munson (2016) argues, social scientists tends 'to elevate and even essentialize ideology in our study of political organizations' formal ideologies', neglecting the actual processes in which groups, including their ideologies, change over time. For the purpose of understanding these four groups, it is important to explore how they connect and relate their broad ideas to the specific social and cultural environment of Afghanistan.

In my interviews with respondents from each of the four groups, I asked them to name some of most important goals and ideas that unite members of their organisations. The responses illustrated both the broad ideological orientation, and the actual significance attached to ideologies, in these four groups. For members of Hezb ut-Tahrir, *revival of the caliphate* was unequivocally the most important goal of the organisation. One Hezb ut-Tahrir activist referred to the caliphate as central to dignity and honour of a global Islamic community. For him, until its dissolution in 1924, the caliphate was like a 'shield

for Muslims' that protected the dignity, and honour of the Islamic Ummah (Interview [7]).

Similar to Hezb ut-Tahrir, members of Jamiat-e Eslah shared important concerns for the global Islamic community, often highlighting a competitive struggle with other groups that they believed were inspired by western ideas and models of social and political organisation. However, the organisation follows a different strategy for bringing change, one that is inspired by the Muslim Brotherhood. The most central notion that unites the organisation and its various affiliated organisation is *eslah*, literally meaning reform, but used to imply a broad idea of re-Islamisation of the society through bottom-up social and cultural changes. The organisation seeks to follow its broad and transnational goals within the frameworks of nation-states whilst expressing a significant degree of solidarity with Muslims and Islamist movements around the world. A supporter of the organisation in Kabul University argued that broadly speaking, there are two groups competing in the society:

First, [there are] associations (Jama'at) and social forces that work in the society to bring reform to the society based on western values. This is one type of people. There are other associations that seek to reform the society and achieve their goals based on Islamic values. So there are two types of people. Now, naturally associations and groups that [seek] to work and bring reform based on western values are inspired by western scholars who are also their models. Islamic forces that work in the society and [seek] to bring reforms based on Islamic values naturally take their roots from Islamic models. One of the great associations, which everybody believes inspires many Islamic movements, is the Muslim Brotherhood which was founded by Martyr Hassan Al-Bana (Interview [12]).

Similar to Jamiat-e Eslah, members of Hezb-e Hambastagi could refer to a number of goals and ideas as top priorities of the organisation. Some of the most significant ones mentioned were *national independence*, *freedom from foreign occupation*, *secularism*, and *prosecution of atrocities of war* in Afghanistan (Interview [2]). Consequently, members of Hezb-e Hambastagi had a high level of clarity and consistency over the core ideas and goals of the party. In practice, the emphasis on these goals has turned the party

into a fierce opponent of the US-led military intervention, and of the empowerment of the former mujahedin that followed from it. As will be shown further below, each of these goals found a particular meaning with the party's opposition to the presence of US and NATO forces in the country.

The core concerns uniting members of Afghanistan 1400 ranged from embracing the *ethno-cultural diversity* of the country, through *gender equality*, to espousing *democracy* as a system of governance for the country as well as internal decision making within the movement. As one leading member of the movement put it,

The first and most important value, in which we always take pride, is that of our diversity, the diversity that exists in Afghanistan, [and] has always been seen as a point of our weakness. Diversity here is our ethnic, linguistic and religious diversity – all forms of diversity, including intellectual diversity. This diversity has always been a negative point, a point of weakness for us. I tell you this because if you go deep into the background of this group you will find that this is a generation that no longer shares thought with their fathers. They have even come out of family values with which they grew up (Interview [6]).

The emphasis on diversity, equality and democracy clearly put Afghanistan 1400 in a liberal-democratic camp. It is, however, important to understand that these goals and ideas may have particular meanings and ideas in the context of Afghanistan. By embracing diversity, the group clearly aims to distance itself from the divisive ethno-political alignments of the post-2001 ruling elites. Similarly, by emphasising democracy, members of the group differentiate themselves from the patronage-based and person-centred politics that characterise most of the dominant political factions.

Despite these significant differences, these four groups are the products of Afghanistan's social, cultural and political transformation after 2001. To varying degrees, all of these groups owe their rise and growth to the expansion of the education sector and exposure

of Afghanistan to forces of globalisation.⁷ At the core of this social transformation is a new generation of young Afghans who have acquired new individual and collective consciousness through education, travel, mass media and connectivity to the outside world.

In important respects, the identities of these groups are shaped by the particular ideological and ideational frameworks by which they are inspired. However, in building and communicating a collective identity, these four groups confront a large number of other groups that lay similar claims to the major goals and values of these organisations. To begin with, Islam features extensively in the political and cultural rhetoric of the groups who dominated the post-2001 state institutions, including the former mujahedin, and those who challenged the statebuilding process, most notably the Taliban, Islamic State and other violent groups. Similarly, the notions of civil society and human rights that underpin demands for democracy and recognition of diversity also gained widespread currency following the 2001 international intervention. Backed by extensive efforts and spending by international donors and human rights organisations, as chapter 5 showed, thousands of domestic and international NGOs and other groups emerged with avowed goals of embracing and spreading the conception of ‘civil society’. Finally, despite the fuzzy nature of the claim of the post-2001 Afghan government to national sovereignty (Monsutti, 2012), national independence and sovereignty were also widely endorsed as principles by both the government and political elites of the country.

Consequently, the process of boundary activation and identity formation confronted these four groups with two challenges: first, in constructing their identities around their primary goals, they were confronted by a highly contested field, demanding an effective strategy

⁷ Although most founders of Hezb-e Hambastagi and Jamiat-e Eslah were politically active prior to 2001, as formal organisations with particular programme and collective identity they were established after 2001.

of social differentiation; second, in scaling up beyond their relatively small network of founders, these groups faced the reality of existing social and political cleavages that either overlapped or cut across their primary identity markers. To put it simply, the choice was between inventing or borrowing social boundaries, or creating one through process of encountering other rival groups, and responding to the existing social cleavages of the country.

Identity Formation: the Role of Historical Narratives

Social boundaries and categories develop over time, and through contestation or cooperation with existing social and political groups. At the national level, as chapter 5 showed, in 2001 the building of a liberal democratic state was faced with a domestic discursive environment that was dominated by various forms of Islamism, and ethno-national politics. In an attempt to establish historical roots for the statebuilding enterprise, the crafters of the post-2001 political process sought to build on the similar experience of the constitutional democracy from 1963 to 1973. Similarly to the statebuilding enterprise, groups also sought to establish roots in history to enhance their claims of authenticity. Historical narratives play a highly-important role in construction of collective identities, and legitimation of claims made by groups to the state and society. Such historical narratives gain particular significance with deep divisions and social polarisation that result from protracted conflicts. In Afghanistan, the war and violence since 1979 have produced new social divisions or strengthened existing ones, and most of the prominent groups that dominated the state institutions, and the Taliban that challenged them, adopt and articulate particular historical narratives as part of their broader legitimation strategies.

Hezb-e Hambastagi

The identity of Hezb-e Hambastagi is built around three main ideas: *independence* of Afghanistan from foreign (colonial) influences, *opposition to the presence of the US and NATO forces*, and demand for *prosecution* of those involved in the foreign-led wars since the late 1970s. The leaders of the party combine these claims to build the identity of the party as nationalist, non-compromising, and clean from the atrocities of war. Hezb-e Hambastagi's nationalist identity is interwoven with a historical narrative that celebrates King Amanullah for his modernist policies as well as his role in leading Afghanistan in the Third Anglo-Afghan War that led to the country's full independence from the British in 1919. In this context, the party celebrates the country's independence on 19 August, and condemns the 27 and 28 April as 'black days'; the first for the 27 April 1978 coup that brought the pro-Soviet regime to power, and the latter date for the arrival of the mujahedin in Kabul on 28 April 1992 after the fall of the last pro-Soviet government in the country.

On 20 August 2015, a few days after I had interviewed one of Hezb-e Hambastagi's leaders, I was invited by one of the party's leaders to attend its annual celebration of the national Independence Day in Kabul. The event was highly symbolic in a number of respects. First, it was organised outside the Darul Aman Palace in West Kabul. The palace, built by Amanullah during the 1920s, stands as a symbol of the country's first major modernisation programme. It was destroyed during the years of war, becoming a powerful symbol of destruction of the state institutions caused by war and violence, and the country's failed efforts at modernisation. Consequently, the venue had symbolic significance for the Hezb-e Hambastagi's historical narrative of foreign and colonial interferences and national popular resistance. Second, the event that drew several hundred participants was also marked by clear signs of exclusion of most of its participants from the distribution of foreign aid and resources that had given rise to a wealthy elite in Kabul.

Most evidently, the event did not have any trappings of usual public events in Kabul that are characterised by a display of wealth of their main organisers and a socio-economic hierarchy among their participants. There were no participants with armed body guards or expensive vehicles. The party leaders were even switching between speaking and working with other members to set the stage and organise chairs for the participants as they were arriving. Third, unlike most events in Kabul at this time, the event was evidently secular, with little efforts to employ any form of religious language and symbolism, or cite Quranic verses to legitimate the party's symbolic narratives.

The speakers at the event used the symbolism of the venue to combine celebration of the legacy of Amanullah with a strong criticism of the post-2001 US-led intervention, statebuilding and socio-economic conditions of the country. Selay Ghaffar, the spokeswoman of the party and the main speaker at the event, made the following points to contrast the present condition with the role played by Amanullah. First, Amanullah prioritised modern education, particularly for women and girls. At present, she argued, the education sector is neglected and dominated by the extremists, and is particularly bad for women. Second, as part of his effort to make Afghanistan self-sufficient, Amanullah supported domestic products and industries. She stated that the king even asked foreign embassies in Kabul at that time to buy local products such as matches. By contrast, she argued, the current elites even import their own household items from Dubai and other foreign cities. Third, she argued that corrupt officials were punished and prosecuted under Amanullah Khan while now the Afghan government is one of the most corrupt in the world. Like other speakers, she emphasised the importance of sacrifice and devotion for preserving and gaining national independence.

Afghanistan 1400

Unlike Hezb-e Hambastagi's articulate narratives of national independence and anti-fundamentalism politics, Afghanistan 1400 does not invest much in building its historical narrative. It does not organise many regular public events. In fact, for founders of the movement, the lack of interest in articulating a narrative of the history of the country or organising public events is a conscious decision made to avoid being embroiled in the country's mostly controversial and divisive past. Defining itself a forward-looking movement of the 'new generation', the group does not identify with any particular period or movement in the history of Afghanistan. Commenting on the dominant ethno-political networks' use of historical narratives, one founder of the movement said,

Most of the factions and groups that are somehow prominent gain legitimacy from the past, from the history of Afghanistan, the narrative they have from the history. We thought something that could divide us - as young Afghans – are our narratives from history. Everyone has their own narratives and these narratives can make a movement that is multi-ethnic particularly fragile. Therefore, we agreed that we may have differences in our narratives about the past but we focus on the future. You might say that the main cause of adversity in Afghanistan was its unequal structures of power that preferred one ethnic group over the others. Others might say that the main cause is foreign intervention. Still others might say it is religious extremism or conflict between religion and politics. You know better, everyone has a different definition [of the problem]. So if we focus on agreeing a common definition of the main cause of adversity, we get divided, not united. For example, when Sayyaf stands [to speak] for him it is very clear what are the main causes of adversity in Afghanistan, in the past or in the present. And based on that [narrative] they also define [who are] the saviours of Afghanistan (Interview [38]).

As the quote illustrates, the awareness of the multiplicity, complexity and divisive nature of the country's past did not lead to articulation of another alternative historical narrative among the founders of Afghanistan 1400. Fearing that the contentious nature of the past might create divisions among its members, the movement focused on developing an alternative framed around a shared future that began with the limited achievements of the post-2001 liberal democracy. This put the group in a clearly disadvantaged position in a country where rival groups use historical narratives to legitimate their current and future social and political demands.

Jamiat-e Eslah

Jamiat-e Eslah adapts its version of Islamism to the history of Afghanistan, anchoring its roots in the country's Islamic movements and personalities. The organisation's particular way of blending of Islamist ideology with national history is most powerfully illustrated by its celebration of the legacy and life of Sayed Jamaluddin Al-Afghani (Keddie, 2011), and the Muslim Brotherhood-inspired Muslim Youth Organisation that emerged in the 1960s (See chapter 4). The legacy of Afghani is so important for Jamiat-e Eslah and its associated organisations that the establishment of NAJM, the youth wing of the organisation was planned to coincide with the anniversary of the death of Afghani on 9 March. The organisation usually combines celebration of the anniversary of its own establishment with conferences on the history and thought of Afghani. As a senior leader of NAJM put it,

Another main goal of Najm is to instil in the youth a feeling of love for the country (hob ul-watan) and defence of national interests, or public property. For this purpose, we organise programmes such as visit to museums and historic site and organise conferences about national personalities such as Sayed Jamaluddin Afghani and other personalities in national, cultural and even religious fields (Interview [8]).

It is important to note that as an early Muslim reformist of the nineteenth century, Afghani is widely respected by Islamic movements across the world. In his role as a pioneer of Islamic awakening in the nineteenth century, he is so widely regarded that there is even a controversy over his nationality. The Iranians have long been claiming that Afghani was in fact from Iran, born in the town of Asadabad near the Iranian city of Hamadan, and therefore call him Asadabadi. The Afghans claim Afghani was born in the town of Asadabad in the province of Kunar in the east of the country. Nawidi, one of the senior leaders of Jamiat-e Eslah, refutes the Iranian claim that Afghani was an Iranian, describing him as the 'greatest reformist of the nineteenth century' (Nawidi, 2013b).

The controversy over Afghani's nationality is partly a result of his own extensive travels and political activism in many countries that included Afghanistan, India, Iran, Turkey, Egypt and Europe. During the 1860s, he served as political counsellor to Afghan kings and princes in Kabul, before spending nearly the three next decades in Iran, the Middle East and Europe. He died in Istanbul in 1897. Based on a request from the government of Afghanistan in 1944, his remains were transferred to Kabul and reburied inside the main campus of Kabul University, where a mausoleum is also built in his name (Keddie, 2011). Consequently, Afghani has gained a prominent significance for Afghanistan's national history more generally.

For Jamiat-e Eslah and its affiliated organisations, while Afghani offers an important historical point of reference where ideological Islamism and national history can be blended, his approach was rather different from that of the organisation. Afghani spent most of his career attempting to bring about top-down reform through working with kings, princes and other rulers of the time. In contrast, Jamiat-e Eslah follows a bottom-up strategy of change. Furthermore, beyond Afghani and the early Muslim reformists, Jamiat-e Eslah views itself as more directly influenced by the Islamist movement that emerged in Afghanistan in the 1960s. As will be shown further below, the claim over the legacy of the Islamists of the 1960s brings the organisation into ideological conflict with the mujahedin organisations that claim to be more direct descendents of the Islamists of this period.

Hezb-ut Tahrir Afghanistan

As a pan-Islamist organisation that established its presence in Afghanistan only in 2003, Hezb ut-Tahrir lacks a particular historical precedent on which it can draw to establish a national historical narrative. This means that the organisation's views on history are shaped more by its ideology than its relatively short history of existence in Afghanistan.

Ideologically, the organisation is opposed to the basic notion of the nation-state, viewing it as western and colonial construct, and a ‘fundamental cause of the decline of the Islamic Ummah’ (Ummat Production, 2014). This means that, in the view of the organisation, Islamist movements that limit their goals the nation-state system or adapt Islamic principles to national and local concerns deviate from the principles of Islam, and sustain the western colonial domination. Hezb ut-Tahrir Afghanistan’s spokesman went to great lengths to criticise Sayed Jamaluddin Afghani for adapting his messages to national contexts as he travelled from Afghanistan to Iran, Turkey and other countries during the second half of the nineteenth century. He argued that, similar to Afghani, the Muslim Brotherhood also compromised by ‘taking the national colour of every country they went to’ (Interview [13]).

Hezb ut-Tahrir’s ideological rejection of the idea of the nation-state is most clearly reflected in the views of some of its commentators on the emergence of Afghanistan as an independent country. One Hezb ut-Tahrir commentator denounces all of Afghanistan’s rulers for their alleged submission to the influence of foreign powers, thus failing to uphold the principles of Islam (Ahmadi, 2015a). According to another Hezb ut-Tahrir commentator, Solaiman (2015) the problem runs even deeper.

In launching a war against the colonial force of the day in the year 1919, Shah Amanullah Khan, who was among those deeply influenced by Kemal Ataturk – the main player behind the collapse of the Ottoman Caliphate in 1924 – succeeded in freeing Afghanistan from their direct military occupation. However, the indirect political occupation of the Britain of the day persisted through their culture, thoughts and concepts. And after independence, [Amanullah’s] reforms went in a direction that did not lead to real progress, and because of this once more [the country] was occupied by the Soviet Union of the day, and today, after 2001, it has been under direct occupation of the US and its allies [My translation].

As Solaiman further explains, the Hezb ut-Tahrir’s lack of interest in history goes beyond the influence of Kemal Ataturk on Amanullah Khan. The organisation views nationalism and nationalist histories as diametrically opposed to its ideology,

The values and concepts that are daily promoted among the people by the ruling system are un-Islamic and have no connection to Islam. For example, we are told, Happy Independence Day, at a time we are currently living under occupation; [it is] like saying congratulations on your freedom to a slave who is under the chain of slavery. Furthermore, it is not permissible for Muslims to defend the current geographical framework called Afghanistan, and view those living outside it as aliens. The reason is that first of all Afghanistan, with its current name and symbol, was created by a few infidels such as Durand and McMahon and Mellan⁸ and secondly Islam is a global religion that does not recognise geographical borders, that believes the whole world deserves Islam, and that this faith is revealed for all the peoples of the world [My translation].

Hezb ut-Tahrir's refusal to anchor its roots in any particular period of history of Afghanistan is a part of its broader strategy of resisting any adaptation to national and local contexts. In defining its identity around what it sees as a global conflict between the Islamic community and the West, the organisation also complicates its mission of recruiting people whose primary interests and concerns remain local, or national.

Social Differentiation in a Polarised and Contested Environment

The divergent approaches by these four groups to the national history of the country are closely linked to their strategies of responding to the ongoing contestation for power and legitimacy in the country. The narratives of the past are often deployed to legitimate the particular positions these groups take in relation to the problems of war, presence of western forces, and the dependence of Afghan state on western political, military and financial assistance. Groups draw on the past to give meaning and legitimacy to the current social constituency they represent, and the particular claim they make on the state and society more broadly.

Civil Society, Democracy and Pluralism

As a movement, Afghanistan 1400 was united by a shared desire to embrace democracy and diversity. However, these ideas did not provide a sufficiently distinctive core around which an organisational identity could be built. The rhetoric of democracy and national

⁸ Apparently, the name refers to an official of British India in the nineteenth century.

unity were among the buzzwords of most of the political elites of the country and the international actors from 2001. The most distinctive mark of the group's collective consciousness was underpinned by a shared estrangement from the actual practices in Afghanistan of pluralism and democracy. This led many members of the movement to define the group's identity by emphasising the differences that distinguished its members from the underlying dynamics of divisive and violent politics. In other words, members of the movement had greater collective awareness of what the movement *was not* than what *it was*. As one senior founder of the movement put it,

These features separated us from a number of [other groups]. They showed who we were not rather than defining who we are: We were not interested to enter into politics from an ethnic angle. We were not interested to ascertain the right and wrong sides of the civil war, meaning intellectually we were neither close to the mujahedin nor to the leftists. In the definition we had of the future of Afghanistan, we stressed on values of mutual tolerance, diversity and equality of men and women. Some issues were ambiguous. For example, until today we have not had the discussion about the role of religion in the state, recognising the sensitivity of the discussion in Afghanistan and recognising the controversial past of the discussion in Afghanistan (Interview [38]).

Dismayed by the bitter and divisive politics of the past, rather than anchoring the movement's roots in a particular history of the country, the movement emphasised its futuristic outlook. The futuristic outlook was combined with an emphasis on civil society both as a social category with which most members were comfortable to identify, and as a source of a particular set of values and of models of social and political organisation. The underlying motivating factor behind the stress on civility and the future was a reluctance to accept identification with existing social and political cleavages. This led to a profound tension in building the movement's identity between what was often described as a 'social and civil movement' as opposed to a 'political movement or party'. As explained in chapter 6, the tension over emphasising its civil-social characteristics or political aspiration of its members as identity markers led to a roiling internal tension over

how the movement could respond to political polarisation during the 2014 presidential elections.

National Independence and Accountability for Crimes during War

Hezb-e Hambastagi emphasised national independence, opposition to empowerment of the mujahedin, and accountability for crimes as its core identity markers. Similarly to Afghanistan 1400, the party distances itself from ethnic and sectarian politics. However, the party goes beyond simply underlining the intrinsic values of diversity by highlighting the shared sufferings of members of all communities as part of its call for accountability for atrocities of war. As one leader of the party put it,

If a Pashtun is oppressed, a Tajik cannot live in peace, and if a Hazara is oppressed a Pashtun cannot live in peace. We have a common destiny. We have shared affiliations, we have shared pride and we have shared history. If you look at the three Anglo-Afghan Wars, no ethnic group has achieved the pride alone. All ethnic groups of Afghanistan share that pride. The same is true in the Anti-Russian War. I remember from the time of resistance, when we were travelling from Pakistan to different regions, we went to eat food in a Hazara tent, we went to eat food in a Pashtun tent and everyone's home. There was no such conflict because the [shared] thought was the country was under occupation (Interview [2]).

In contrast to Afghanistan 1400, Hezb-e Hambastagi's clear demands, particularly its demand for accountability for crimes perpetrated during the years of war, brought the party into direct conflict with the former mujahedin who stand accused by human rights groups of having committed mass atrocities during the war. Although clearly secularist in its outlook, the party does not seek to deny entirely the ideological and religious foundations of jihad. On the contrary, as the quote above shows, it stresses that the 1980s jihad was a national war of resistance against the Soviet occupation, and hence every citizen of the country participated in it. By emphasising the popular nature of jihad, the party aims to question and criticise the symbolic and political privileges claimed by the mujahedin as organised groups in formal distribution of power in the government.

However, the demand for accountability for crimes perpetrated during the war does not bring the party necessarily close to another movement of national and international human rights advocates that coalesced around the idea of transitional justice (Winterbotham, 2010). In fact, similar to the gradual shift of the party away from initial optimism about elections and political reform, some members of the party show a similar shift in their views towards transitional justice and accountability processes. Some members of the party reported that they were active in NGOs that worked to promote transitional justice. The shift maybe illustrated by the change in attitude of a senior member who was leading an NGO prior to joining the party. She explained how she was attracted to the party while she was still working for an NGO,

At the top of its [Hezb-e Hambastagi's] programme was that Afghanistan was an occupied country. Eventually, I came to the conclusion that Afghanistan is occupied. I was someone who was directly in touch with them [western actors] – as the civil society the international community or the occupiers – including Hillary Clinton, the Embassies and other institutions. Every day, I was in touch with them, you come and see [them]; and I was also in touch with the government including Karzai at that time. When I closely grasped the nature of civil society, and closely grasped the nature of this government, - because I was in contact with them every day – and closely grasped the nature of civil society of the occupying countries, I came to the conclusion that Afghanistan is an occupied country. These sayings that they have come to help us are ill-founded claims because I saw closely how they were misusing [these ideas], and closely saw their policies. Of course, reading [party policies has its own roles), so that we understand what does imperialism want in Afghanistan (Interview [11]).

The quote illustrates that, unlike some NGOs that viewed transitional justice as a technical and non-political process, the party politicised it by turning it into a major element of its political platform, and linking it to the broader goals of the US-led intervention in the country.

The Mujahedin in Power and the New Generation of Islamists

As religious groups, both Hezb ut-Tahrir and Jamiat-e Eslah are confronted by a wide range of challengers who lay similar claims to Islam and Islamic values. As Osman (2015,

p. 2) argues, the diversity and multiplicity of Islamist movements that were active during this period meant that there was a ‘variety of ‘flavours’ on offer, allowing these groups to accommodate audiences with different types of religious dispositions’. Consequently, the success of these organisations in inventing and forming social boundaries requires a social differentiation strategy that distinguishes them from other, sometimes more entrenched, groups that also rely on Islam and the history of Islamist movements to construct their identities and legitimate their claims. In this respect, members and activists of Jamiat-e Eslah and Hezb ut-Tahrir were at pains to distinguish themselves from one another, the former mujahedin who dominated the post-2001 state apparatus, and the Taliban, the Islamic State and other violent groups who participated in the armed insurgency against the international intervention and statebuilding process.

Not surprisingly, when I asked what were the main challenges confronting the organisation in Afghanistan, the spokesperson of Hezb ut-Tahrir in Afghanistan pointed to what he described as ‘the so-called mujahedin’. He argued that as a result of ‘failure of the mujahedin’ people have lost ‘faith in all mujahedin organisations’. He contended that the failure of the mujahedin to live up to their ideals, and establish an Islamic state meant that other organisations seeking to do the same need to prove to the people that they are different from the former mujahedin (Interview [13]).

For Hezb ut-Tahrir, the social differentiation begins with a relentless criticism of the former mujahedin while praising the actual idea of jihad and resistance against western powers. The Hezb ut-Tahrir spokesperson presented a particular definition of the causes and types of failures of the mujahedin. For him, the failure of the mujahedin in establishing an Islamic state after their victory in April 1992 resulted from their practise of *maslahat* (expediency). For him, expediency-based politics led the former mujahedin towards pragmatic and unprincipled forms of politics that he thought were determined by

the interests of Pakistan and the West. He argued that these forms of politics were responsible for the mujahedin's internal disunity, and their subordination to the interests of Pakistan and 'Western colonialism', one the one hand, and their entanglement with ethnic, linguistic and nationalistic movements, on the other (Interview [13]).

Hezb ut-Tahrir in Afghanistan makes a distinction between the practice and the idea of jihad in the country. The mujahedin and their supporters are an important constituency for Hezb ut-Tahrir, and it cannot risk alienating them entirely. As discussed in chapter 6, the organisation makes a distinction between two types of members: first organisational members who are recruited and given extensive individual training, and second, those it considers *hami d'awah*, or supporters of the call. The former mujahedin who occupied important positions of power after 2001 are considered important supporters or even full members of the organisation.

The tension between rejection of the former mujahedin's power politics, and a desire to recruit them as members or supporters was evident in a conversation between two activists of the organisation that was published online in June 2016 (Ummat Production, 2016). The programme, featuring Ahmad Kayhan as interviewer and Walid Omar, as commentator, focused on the 'condition of the mujahedin in the framework of democracy'. In the interview, Omar began by highlighting the role of the mujahedin in defeating communism. This was, however, only a short prelude to a more detailed description of a fundamental conflict that the commentator argued existed between the mujahedin and their western backers. He argued the 'US, as an ideologically capitalist country, or a system of democratic capitalism, is opposed to the [Islamic] groups and Islamic ideological system'. Consequently, after 2001, the mujahedin presented a threat to the US's goal of creating a secular system in the country. To overcome the threat, the commentator argued, some former mujahedin such as Ahmad Shah Massoud and

Burhanuddin Rabbani were assassinated, others were marginalised, and the remaining were absorbed into the system. Emphasising the alien nature of western capitalism and secularism, the organisation believes that the collusion of the former mujahedin with the US-led military intervention is making them responsible for importation of another alien ideology into the country. Consequently, for Hezb ut-Tahrir, communism and capitalism are ‘two sides of the same coin, and with the rule of either of them the life of the ummat is under the sovereignty and banner of infidelity’ (Sayes, 2016).

As an organisation established by members of former mujahedin organisations, Jamiat-e Eslah faces a more difficult challenge in differentiating itself from the former mujahedin. Many of its founding members gained prominence in cultural and educational centres established by the mujahedin organisations in Peshawar in the 1980s. The association of the initial founders of the organisation with the mujahedin was so strong that during the late 1990s the offices and libraries of the Islamic Cultural Centre (the forerunner of Jamiat-e Eslah) were closed by the Taliban in the eastern city of Jalalabad.

Jamiat-e Eslah emphasises its roots in the anti-Soviet jihad in Afghanistan during the 1980s. However, the organisation makes a distinction between jihad against the Soviet occupation of the country in the 1980s, and the behavior of the mujahedin after the downfall of the pro-Soviet regime on 28 April 1992. For some of its members, the ‘glory’ of the victory on 28 April was ‘squandered’ (Jalali, 2011). The emphasis on the organisation’s origin in the jihad and the religious nature of its ideology have led Jamiat-e Eslah to make a distinction between the idea and practice of jihad, on the one hand, and between the period of jihad against the Soviet occupation in the 1980s, and the civil war among the mujahedin after 1992, on the other. Accordingly, and similar to Hezb ut-Tahrir, the alleged deviation of the former mujahedin from what is considered the true principles guiding jihad is central to the social differentiation strategy of Jamiat-e Eslah. However,

for Jamiat-e Eslah the deviation had a different reason from that cited by Hezb ut-Tahrir, and hence the organisation pursues a different strategy. As one senior member of the organisation put it,

The reason we first want to increase the level of awareness of the people is the unfortunately unsuccessful experience after jihad. Jamiat-e Eslah is of the view that during [the years of] jihad, based on our religious feelings, we fought a jihad against Russians to the extent that they concluded that it was no longer good for them to stay here. Therefore, they left and were defeated. But there were very few trained and aware individuals in the country who could preserve the victory, and advance this great victory. As a result, the victory we had achieved is overshadowed by claims that the mujahedin did this or the mujahedin did that (Interview [8]).

Another senior member of Jamiat-e Eslah similarly emphasised that while the organisation commends the jihad against the Soviets, it distances itself from the behaviour of the mujahedin after 1992. After this period, he maintained that the mujahedin shifted towards what he described as ‘person-centred’ and ‘regional’ (*samti*) politics. For him, the underlying reason for the deviation was lack of selflessness (*khodgozarai*) and commitment to Islam, which, he argued, can be acquired through proper education and training (Interview 16 November 2015). Other leaders of the organisation laud the international significance of jihad whilst distancing themselves from, and even condemning, the behaviour of the mujahedin after 1992 in Afghanistan. As Fakhri (2014) puts it,

At the international level, the people of Afghanistan taught the world the lesson of freedom... After the defeat of the Soviet Union and the emergence of jihadi and independence movements, especially where Muslims were in chain, the thought of political Islam stood and spread in the world as a rival against the thought of liberal democracy; until today, as a political-social system that present appropriate solutions to all problems of the society, Islam stands tall and proud against Western secularising programmes, and every year its firmness and progress expands as it pushes secular and West-dependent systems to retreat and marginality (My translation).

The emphasis on educational and cultural credentials as markers of identity of the organisation underscores a broader strategy of identity construction that aims to blend an

Islamic identity with ideological purity, and practical competence. In other words, the organisation's leaders claim that they represent not only ideological purity but also a practical competence and ability to respond to the practical demands of modern societies. As one member claimed, the organisation has 'the largest number of people with doctorates and master degrees' (Interview [8]).

Jihad, Violence and the New Generation of Peaceful Islamists

In criticising the former mujahedin's pragmatism and entry into mainstream politics, the new generation of Islamists run the risk of being conflated with the violent and subversive strategy of the Taliban, Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and other violent groups that also employ similar narratives of national and religious resistance against western powers. The gradual rise to prominence of both Hezb ut-Tahrir and Jamiat-e Eslah as Islamist groups overlapped with the intensification and spread of extremist violence by the Taliban, the ISIS, and the other militant groups. While both Hezb ut-Tahrir and Jamiat-e Eslah claim to be peaceful in pursuit of their agendas of Islamisation, many of their critics have pointed fingers at both groups, blaming them for expansion of violent ideologies. One respondent in Kabul described the Hezb ut-Tahrir and Jamiat-e Eslah's activities as contributing to a process of 'soft radicalisation' (Interview [4]). The concerns over the role of these groups in promoting 'soft radicalisation' were not expressed by individual critics. Such concerns were reflected in a number of other research reports that also point to the role of the Hezb ut-Tahrir and Jamiat-e Eslah in the spread of violent and extremist ideologies (Fazli, Johnson, & Cooke, 2015; Ibrahim, Omer, & Irfani, 2015).

For Hezb ut-Tahrir, the most significant challenge to its ideological and organisational identity came with the rise of Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), the terrorist proto-state that first emerged in Iraq and Syria in 2013. In June 2014, ISIS declared itself a worldwide Islamic Caliphate, and its leader, Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, as the Islamic

world's leader (Hashim, 2014). The rise of ISIS in the battlefields of Iraq and Syria and its particularly brutal and violent strategy for establishment of a caliphate system posed tough questions for Hezb ut-Tahrir, an organisation that proclaims to have struggled for several decades for revival of caliphate through peaceful means. The challenge was both ideological and practical. Ideologically, ISIS's brand of caliphate with its trademark of brutality faced rejection by mainstream Muslim scholars and communities worldwide. More practically, the very notion of the caliphate, which is cherished by groups such as Hezb ut-Tahrir as a symbol of Islamic unity and power, came under closer scrutiny. Muslim activists and scholars were presented with the horrors of violence, bloodshed and deep divisions that came with the rise of the ISIS. In other words, the caliphate, the imagined symbol of unity and power, became a source of deep divisions and despicable violence against Muslims and non-Muslims alike. Furthermore, internationally, ISIS became a challenger to both violent and peaceful Islamists in seeking to recruit members and attract loyalty and support from Muslim communities in many countries.

ISIS established its own branch of the caliphate in Afghanistan and Pakistan, declaring the region as Wilayah Khorasan, or Khorasan province of its global caliphate. In January 2015, Afghan officials confirmed that the group had established a presence in the country (Al Jazeera, 2015). With the advent of ISIS and its own brutal tactics of beheading its local enemies in Afghanistan, the Hezb ut-Tahrir's national chapter and its calls for establishment of a caliphate also came under spotlight. The distinction between the two groups was often blurred as both employed the same religious symbols and narratives. For instance, both ISIS and Hezb ut-Tahrir uses very similar flags with black backgrounds and white writing or vice versa. The ideological and symbolic dimensions of the two groups are so close that in October 2014, when Hezb ut-Tahrir activists used their own flags in a rally in Kabul University they were arrested by security forces on suspicion of being supporters of ISIS (Khaama Press, 2014; Osman, 2014).

In 2015, the Hezb ut-Tahrir Afghanistan chapter used its online platforms to highlight its distinctive conception of the caliphate and its peaceful strategy for change. In its public communication, members of the organisation blamed the West for creation of ISIS. For example, Ahmadi (2015b) wrote a piece that discussed the historical background of both ISIS and the Hezb ut-Tahrir, arguing that

But in the present conditions, when as a result of *tasqif* (cultural) activities of Hezb ut-Tahrir the Muslims are awakening and the political power is nearly being restored according to the methods of the Prophet, the West and its collaborators have begun conspiracies at regional and even global levels to scare the peoples of the world, especially Muslims; [One can] name the creation of the terrorist group Daesh as an example [of this conspiracy], the brutal acts of which they link to the political activities of Hezb ut-Tahrir (My Translation).

In another similar effort, in March of the same year, the organisation's Ummat Production broadcast online an interview with Sayfullah Mustanir, the organisation's spokesman in Afghanistan. In the interview, Mustanir distinguished Hezb ut-Tahrir's political activities from the violence of the ISIS by portraying the latter as a ploy of Western strategy to defame Islamic movements (Ummat Production, 2015).

Two members of the organisation I interviewed in Kabul in December 2015 were quick to denounce ISIS's brutality, stating that the Hezb ut-Tahrir is 'completely different from ISIS'. One pointed to an important ideological difference between Hezb ut-Tahrir, and the Taliban and ISIS regarding the status of Muslims living under what they regard as non-Islamic powers, including the post-2001 Western-backed government in Afghanistan. At the core of the debate, he argued, was whether Muslims, who quietly live under un-Islamic rules in Muslim countries, are also culpable for maintaining these rules. For Hezb ut-Tahrir, they argued, the acquiescence of ordinary Muslim to their present rulers does not amount to infidelity. However, those Muslims may commit sins and become sinful by not challenging un-Islamic rulers. In contrast, they argued, the ISIS and the Taliban were not making such distinction between the rulers and the ruled (Interviews

[39] and [40]). Having said that, it is important to mention that the Hezb ut-Tahrir's views about the Muslims living under what it considers non-Islamic rules is far from benevolent. One of the organisation's key texts, *Methods of Hezb ut-Tahrir for Bringing Change*, declares that the reality is that 'today, in all nooks and corners of the world, Muslims are living in the abode of infidelity (*Dar ul-Kufr*), not in the abode of Islam (*Dar ul-Islam*)' (Hezb ut-Tahrir Afghanistan, 2012a, p. 7) [My translation].

The challenges facing Jamiat-e Eslah in its effort to construct its identity as a peaceful activist group are no less acute than those facing Hezb ut-Tahrir. Over the years, the intensification of insurgency and the propaganda of the Taliban and other militant groups against the government in Kabul created an environment in which peaceful Islamist activism could easily be confused with the militants' violent jihad and anti-state propaganda. Furthermore, in an environment where insurgent violence, including suicide bombing, killed or maimed thousands of civilians on a regular basis, it became increasingly untenable for any notable social or political group to stay silent towards violence and the profound suffering it brought to the civilian population of the country. The challenges of creating a distinctive identity in such a contested and highly-polarised environment were noted by one of Jamiat-e Eslah's members,

There are two main challenges facing Jamiat-e Eslah activities: one is that on the one hand, because most activities of Jamiat-e Eslah are religious, people who are outside the organisation, particularly who follow new thoughts, or [those who] are influenced by the West, or have returned from the West, think that Jamiat-e Eslah's activities may cause the spread of radical thought or extremist thought among the people. On the other side, persons who follow the Taliban's thought or that of Hizb-e Islami, [which believes] only armed jihad is the solution, criticise us because our activities are peaceful or civil and cultural (Interview [8]).

Jamiat-e Eslah's position towards the Taliban and their violent insurgency came under the spotlight after it was revealed in July 2015 that Mullah Muhammad Omar, the leader of the Taliban, had died in Pakistan in April 2013 (Nordland & Goldstein, 2015). Once the death of Mullah Omar was formally confirmed by the Taliban, some groups, which

were sympathetic to the Taliban and its ideology, organised memorial services for the Taliban leader in Kabul. Some leaders of Jamiat-e Eslah participated in these events, and the organisation issued a public statement, expressing its own condolence for the death of the Taliban leader, describing him as ‘one of the important and prominent personalities of the last two decades’. The statement, however, stressed that every personality will be judged by history (Eslah Online, 2015b). Despite this qualification and an expression of a hope for resumption of peace talks between the government and the Taliban, the statement enraged many in the country. *Hasht-e Sobh*, one of the country’s leading daily newspapers, criticised the move as an effort to ‘free Mullah Omar from the obscenity (*qabahatzodayye*) of his legacy’ (Azhand, 2015).

Identity Construction Processes and Mechanisms: Borrowing, inventing and encountering?

The previous three sections explored how the four groups combine ideologies with specific narratives to construct collective identities and social boundaries that separate group members from their antagonists and the rest of the society, and generate shared meanings to make sense of their social and political environment. The sections demonstrated that abstract ideologies only find their meaning and relevance when articulated in relation to existing social cleavages, which are among other things, based on specific narratives.

To what extent can these boundary-drawing processes be explained through the mechanisms of inventing, borrowing, and encounter? At the first instance, it might appear that the empirical description above shows that some of these groups are inventors and others are more borrowers of social boundaries and categories. For instance, *Hezb ut-Tahrir*’s emphasis on a global conflict between the Islamic ummah and the West may appear to involve inventing a new religious and political faultline that cuts across all

domestic social cleavages. Similarly, Afghanistan 1400's refusal to adopt any particular historical narrative, and its ambition to embrace the ethno-cultural diversity of the country, may also create the impression of a group seeking to differentiate itself through invention. However, such an analysis can be profoundly misleading. At a deeper level, the identities of these groups are formulated and constructed through an interactive process of group-level strategies for drawing boundaries, and ongoing contestation with other groups over the meaning of the core concepts and values that define these groups. To illustrate these interactive process, a brief discussion of the role of ideology will be followed by a discussion of key identity markers of the four groups: civil society (Afghanistan 1400), accountability for war crimes (Hezb-e Hambastagi), Islamic nationalism (Jamiat-e Eslah) pan-Islamism (Hezb ut-Tahrir).

Ideology and Identity Formation

In an important respect, the broader ideological frameworks of these groups shape the manner in which they construct their identities. Hence, these groups use ideologies to define their identities and imbue social categories with meanings. Hezb ut-Tahrir is opposed to the foundation of the nation-state system on which the post-2001 statebuilding project was based. *Rejecting* it as a western, and therefore non-Islamic construction, the organisation naturally refuses to adopt any existing national narratives or articulate new ones. By contrast, although Jamiat-e Eslah has significant pan-Islamic concerns, it is largely limiting itself within the framework of Afghanistan as a nation state. However, in pursuit of its *transformationist* agenda, the organisation selectively draws on historical narratives and symbols to construct an alternative vision of nationhood.

Similarly, Hezb-e Hambastagi's *partial rejection* of the post-2001 international intervention and statebuilding is backed up by an organisational collective image built around a nationalist and pro-independence narrative. The party goes beyond accepting

the idea and framework of the nation-state by positioning itself as the most pro-independence and authentic movement of the country. To strengthen its claims, the party draws on the history of national struggle for independence. In comparison to the other three groups, ideology is relatively less salient for members of Afghanistan 1400. As a *reformist movement*, Afghanistan 1400 accepts both the idea of the state and liberal democracy as a system of governance but is opposed to specific policies and practices of the state. In other words, founders of the movement were mostly concerned with the manner in which liberal democracy was put into practice.

Identity Formation through Interaction and Competition

The identities of these groups are not shaped by ideologies alone. Rather, the process is better understood through an interactive process of group-level articulation of ideologies and boundary drawing that separates ingroups from outgroups, and environmental responses. The competitive interaction may involve *foundational*, *programmatic* and *policy* conflicts with rival groups. At the foundational level, these groups face particularly high levels of contestation as many actors with divergent programmatic and policy ideas seek to draw on a limited number of ideational and symbolic resources. It is at these deeper levels that overarching normative ideas for construction of broader identities at national and transnational level are articulated.

Table 7: Ideological Orientations and Social Differentiation Strategies of the Four Groups

	Hezb-e Hambastagi	Afghanistan 1400	Jamiat-e Eslah	Hezb ut-Tahrir
Ideological Orientation	Left-leaning nationalism	Liberalism	MB-Style Nationalism (Islamic Nationalism?)	Pan-Islamism
Central Identity Markers	Authentic and non-compromising	Civil and modern	Competent and Pious	Authentic and global
Core concerns	Justice for crimes of war, and	Democratic and pluralistic	Bottom-up socio-cultural	Revive the lost glory and power through

	establishment of an independent and democratic state	parties and movements	reform and transformation	re-establishment of the caliphate
Communicative strategy	Emphasising shared identity and suffering of the victims of war and the poor	Citizenship and citizen responsibility	Islamic and national solidarity and emphasising Afghanistan's Islamic history and identity	Emphasising pan-Islamic solidarity through linking incidents and issues to a global conflict between the Islamic and the rest.

At the foundational level, the ideological conflict between the four groups revolved around three core ideas of civil society, nationalism, and Islam (See table 1). These foundational ideas are central to the broad identities these groups aim to construct at the national or transnational levels. These ideas are not necessarily mutually exclusive. A political group can argue that Islam, civil society and national identity are compatible and draw on a combination of them to construct its identity. The key point, however, is that these foundational frameworks, particularly when combined, can give rise to multiple and contradictory identities and claims. The contestation that emerges from the multiple claims over limited options at the foundational level pushes social differentiation at the programmatic and policy levels. As part of a social differentiation strategy, groups can often make small adjustments in their foundational ideas, but mostly rely on programmatic and policy discourses to carve out their distinctive identities. It is at this stage that groups combine their ideologies with specific narratives, and appropriate or cut across existing social cleavages.

Afghanistan 1400 as Civil Society Movement

In emphasising the *civility* of its collective identity and members, Afghanistan 1400 employed a highly-powerful discursive strategy. On the one hand, this particular mode of identity construction could link the organisation to international donors' efforts for promotion of civil society as a force to watch and even counterbalance the state, and on the other, they could safely protect themselves from risks of involvements in the corruption, violence and divisive nature of the country's politics and history.

However, the notion of civil society is intensely debated. First, some Islamist groups charge that the whole notion of civil society is western, and therefore, alien to the Islamic world. For example, some Hezb ut-Tahrir commentators view it as diametrically opposed to the concept of Islamic society (Hayati, 2015). Second, if one accepts that there exists a civil society in Muslim majority countries such as Afghanistan, there is often a tension between two forms of civil society groups: the urban sector that is dominated by NGOs and formally-registered organisations, and the mainly traditional sphere dominated by the local councils, tribal institutions and religious networks (Winter, 2010; Harpviken, Strand, & Ask, 2002).

Hezb-e Hambastagi as Vanguard of National Independence

Hezb-e Hambastagi's core ideological claims (national independence, an anti-fundamentalist stance, and demand for prosecution of crimes of war crimes) are closely interlinked with its narrative of foreign invasion and occupation of Afghanistan (both Soviet in the 1980s, and US and NATO after 2001), the rise of the mujahedin during the 1980s, and the atrocities perpetrated throughout the years of war. In other words, the party differentiates itself from groups that it alleges perpetrated war crimes and compromised the independence of the country by aligning themselves with foreign powers. In this respect, as noted earlier, the party describes 27 and 28 April as 'black days' for bringing

the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan, and the mujahedin to power on those days in 1978 and 1992 respectively.

Consequently, Hezb-e Hambastagi's historical narrative and thus identity construction is based on a claim of non-involvement in either foreign occupation, or perpetration of atrocities of war. Beyond their specific meanings as used by the Hezb-e Hambastagi, national independence, resistance against foreign occupation and even demands for accountability for crimes of war are cherished and celebrated by a wide range of other groups, including the mujahedin who dominated the post-2001 state institutions. Hezb-e Hambastagi is not alone in demanding accountability for atrocities perpetrated during the years of war. The human rights discourse promoted by the international actors and domestic civil society groups since 2001 also aimed to address the atrocities perpetrated by all parties to the conflict. The demand for accountability by human rights and peace-building group was centred on the idea of transitional justice. There was, however, an important difference. The human rights groups that called for transitional justice were accepting the broader frameworks and values of a liberal democratic order. Their demand for accountability was often based on the argument that a long-term consolidation of the liberal-democratic order required accountability for crimes of war and an end to a culture of impunity that had emerged as a result of the war (Rubin, 2003). By contrast, as the previous chapter showed, Hezb-e Hambastagi gradually shifted from an initial position of optimism for reform in the early 2000s towards a more critical approach.

In their demand for prosecution of crimes of war, most members of the party also reflected their own social and political experience as members of Maoist groups and factions (Ibrahimi, 2012b). There are a number of other Maoist groups that were reconstituted in response to the 2001 US-led military intervention. These groups claim more direct descent from the Maoist circles of the past. The most prominent of these is the Communist (Maoist) Party of Afghanistan that was announced in 2004, and claims direct descent

from the original Maoist movement that emerged in the 1960s. Atkinson (2016) describes another group, Left Radical Afghanistan, an underground group of former Maoists that has shifted from Maoism towards a Trotskyist-style international communism. However, what is clear is that except for underground networks and an active online presence, none of these groups has achieved any significant social and political mobilisation capacity.

As a political movement, the Maoists of the country were persecuted by both the pro-Soviet PDPA regime and the mujahedin and the Taliban. During the 1980s and 1990s, the Maoist factions were either pushed into exile or forced to conceal their identities by collaborating with moderate and traditional mujahedin groups inside the country during the war and conflict. Consequently, a demand for prosecution of atrocities of war is a natural response by a movement that saw many of its members summarily executed, forced into exile, or simply condemned to more than two decades of underground activities. However, Hezb-e Hambastagi no longer subscribes to a Maoist ideology or a strategy of militarily overthrowing the post-2001 government in Kabul. On the contrary, it describes itself as a democratic party, although with greater tendency towards the left rather than the right end of political spectrum in Afghanistan (Interview [11]).

From Islamic Nationalism to Pan-Islamism

Hezb ut-Tahrir and Jamiat-e Eslah are both Islamist organisations, seeking to Islamise the state and society, although in very different ways. Consequently, both share important foundational roots. However, the two groups diverge significantly at the programmatic and policy levels. Consequently, the activists of these groups need to frame their messages in a way that resonates with the moral and cultural sensibilities of the common people. As a lecturer of a private university in Kabul put it, both of them are highly ideological groups.

The Afghan culture does not show equal reactions to all foreign phenomenon. It depends on the package in which you present the idea to this society. This is a very important point. It can attract a lot more acceptability – whatever its nature and content - if it is presented with religious flavour and colour. From the point of view of nature, there does not exist much difference between Hezb ul-Tahrir and Marxism. Both show a utopia in the future, both show you a virtuous city in the future and both of them are violent and speak in the language of politics. That means they have no difference from this point of view. But [their] terminology and literatures are very different. In the end, one literature is rejected and suppressed and faces resistance and another literature is accepted (Interview [23]).

Hezb ut-Tahrir seeks to follow a strictly political approach aimed at establishing a pan-Islamic state whereas Jamiat-e Eslah focuses on bottom up change, beginning with individuals and families. Highlighting the differences between Jamiat-e Eslah and Hezb ut-Tahrir a member of the former said that they often challenge the Hezb ut-Tahrir by asking,

‘Have you established an Islamic village so far now that you want to establish an Islamic caliphate? Do you have a programme to build an Islamic family? Look at the essential difference that exist’ (Interview [12]).

Hezb ut-Tahrir activists in Afghanistan often responds to such criticism by accusing groups such as Jamiat-e Eslah of diverting attention from the political nature of struggle for revival of the Islamic ummah by focusing on cultural, educational and charity activities (Interview [13]).

Beyond the ideological conflicts, the history of experiences of these groups also shapes the particular identity construction that might be available to them. As a relatively new actor in Afghanistan’s social and political landscape, Hezb ut-Tahrir faces a difficult challenge in appropriating historical narratives. Consequently, it seeks to construct a pan-Islamic identity whilst trying to avoid being drawn into dynamics of local and national politics. In its endeavour to project a global conflict involved the Islamic ummah and the West, the Hezb ut-Tahrir certainly benefited from the presence of the US and NATO forces in the country. The foreign forces became the object of the organisation’s globalist rhetoric in an otherwise fragmented local and national socio-political environment.

By contrast, Jamiat-e Eslah draws on elements of national history and pan-Islamic solidarity to construct its own identity. In this endeavour, as former members of various factions of the mujahedin who also had longer histories of Islamist and nationalist politics, the organisation faces a tougher challenge in building its distinctive collective identity. As an organisation it lays claim to historical movements and symbols that are already claimed by a wide range of groups, most notably the mujahedin. To increase its distinctiveness, the organisation emphasises the authenticity of its members, highlighting their history of non-involvement in ethnic politics, violence and corruption of the post-2001 statebuilding. Emphasising its cultural and bottom-up cultural transformation strategy, the organisation highlights the competence, and efficiency of its members. At the broader level, this emphasis means that members of the organisation combine a commitment to Islam with an ability to respond to the needs of modern world, and remain true to the jihad for national independence without being tainted by corruption of involvement in politics and violence.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have attempted to explore the processes of construction of identity by these four groups. The aim of this chapter has been to identify how the discursive environment of Afghanistan facilitates or constrains particular models of collective identity construction. The chapter highlighted a number of important points that are relevant for the overall arguments of this thesis. First, the discussion of the processes and mechanisms of construction of identities showed that the four groups have invested considerable time and effort to mobilise ideational and symbolic resources to build their collective identities. However, the process of constructing collective identities and producing social categories cannot be reduced to straightforward choices between inventing, borrowing or encountering, as suggested by McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly (2004). By highlighting the foundational and programmatic underpinning of contention,

the chapter demonstrated that at deeper levels the available choices for construction of collective identities were rather limited. The chapter identified civil society, national history and symbols, and Islam as the main frameworks through which the groups tried to build their identities.

Second, and following from the first point, the symbolic and ideational processes of building a collective identity are highly contentious processes. The contentious politics involves intense competition over ideational and symbolic resources, including ideologies and narratives. In constructing collective identities these groups are confronted with a wide range of actors, including anti-state elements, who make the same or very similar claims to similar sources of ideas. Consequently, the experiences of the four groups show that contentious politics does not necessarily emerge in response to changes in the state's discursive strategies. As the cases of Jamiat-e Eslah and Hezb ut-Tahrir show, in the context of Afghanistan, groups are responding to pressures from both the state and anti-state forces. Third, ideologies alone cannot serve as the basis of collective identities, although they have more significance for some groups than others. Abstract ideologies, communicated through texts, can only find relevance in local contexts when they are interwoven with local narratives and experiences. It is through these processes of ideological articulation in local contexts that groups adapt to specific national conditions.

Chapter 8: Organizational Approaches and Social Appropriation Strategies

Introduction

Chapter 6 discussed the broad political and socio-cultural positions of the four case study groups towards the international intervention and statebuilding in Afghanistan. Chapter 7 focused on the mechanisms of boundary activation to explore the manner in which these groups constructed their collective identities. This chapter aims to explore the role of individual and group agency by taking a closer look at group-level dynamics of the four case study groups. It identifies the broader organisational approaches and social appropriation strategies of the four groups, focusing on their role in and approach towards the education sector and students.

The first section discusses the broad organisational approaches of the four groups. The second follows by undertaking a detailed analysis of the approach of these groups towards youth and students. The third offers a broader overview of the social appropriation strategy of these groups by linking their activities at schools and universities to their efforts to develop a mass following. The fourth section attempts to offer some explanation for the patterns identified before the fifth section concludes the chapter.

Organisational Approaches

At its core, collective action is about mobilisation of people and resources. As reviewed in chapter 2, beginning in the 1970s the Resource Mobilisation Theory became one of the main theoretical perspectives on social mobilisation in the United States. In subsequent decades, the theory's definition of resources was expanded beyond its originally economic conception to include a wide range of socio-organisational, cultural, moral, and material resources. In *Dynamics of Contention* (2004) McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly used the concept of *social appropriation* as a mechanism to account for accumulation and

mobilisation of resources as broadly defined. Central to the process is the role of organisations. In the words of McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly (2004), ‘would-be activists (members no less than challengers and subjects) must either create an organizational vehicle or utilize an existing one and transform it into an instrument of contention’ (2004, p. 47).

How do Afghanistan 1400, Solidarity Party of Afghanistan, Jamiat-e Eslah and the Hezb ut-Tahrir chapter in Afghanistan appropriate and mobilise resources as organisations? Broadly speaking, the four organisations manifest four distinctive internal organisational structures and social appropriation strategies. To begin with, these organisations demonstrate various levels of capacity to appropriate and mobilise internal and external resources in pursuit of their collective goals. Jamiat-e Eslah and Hezb-e Hambastagi have created publicly-known organisational structures, including permanent offices, staffed by paid or volunteer members of the organisations. Hezb ut-Tahrir Afghanistan also appears to have established a working internal structure with dedicated activists, although given its un-registered status it does not have permanent offices. Afghanistan 1400 is weakest in terms of building a permanent organisational capacity. As of 2015, three years after it was established, the movement lacked a permanent office or dedicated paid or volunteer staff, being largely run through periodic and voluntary contributions of its members.

Internally, except for the Hezb ut-Tahrir, the three organisations adhere to various levels of internal processes for deliberation and consultative decision making. Hezb-e Hambastagi, Jamiat-e Eslah and Afghanistan 1400 have clearly-established rules that define the terms and responsibilities of the key leaders of the organisations. These organisations have used their internal procedures to make and enforce collective decisions, and change their leaders through internal election. In the context of Afghanistan, what is striking about the three organisations is that, unlike most political parties, they are not led by a single charismatic leader. In this respect, Afghanistan 1400

stands out with a particularly high emphasis on internal collective deliberation, and even resistance against personality-based politics. Hezb-e Hambastagi and Jamiat-e Eslah are relatively high on both organisational cohesion and internal democracy and Afghanistan 1400 is high on internal democracy, and extremely weak in developing an organisational capacity. Hezb ut-Tahrir Afghanistan is strong in building an internal organisational structure but is opposed to western-style forms of internal deliberation and collective decision-making.

Centralised and Secretive: Hezb ut-Tahrir Afghanistan

Little is known about the internal organisational structure and decision-making processes of Hezb ut-Tahrir in Afghanistan or elsewhere in the world. Members of the organisation in Afghanistan emphasise that the organisation in Afghanistan is a chapter of the global Hezb ut-Tahrir. In fact, in its publications in the Dari and Pashto languages, the organisation describes itself Hezb ut-Tahrir *welayah* Afghanistan, the latter meaning province of Afghanistan. Given the secret nature of the organisation, it is nearly impossible to establish clearly how the national chapter of the organisation in Afghanistan coordinates its activities with its global leadership. It is, however, clear that Hezb ut-Tahrir is ideologically opposed to western-style collective decision-making processes. When I posed questions to members of Hezb ut-Tahrir in Afghanistan, they often declined to reveal any details about the inner workings of the organisation. Describing them as administrative (*idari*) issues, they often stated they were not permitted to discuss them with me. Sayfullah Mustanir, the organisation's spokesperson, emphasised that Hezb ut-Tahrir is a 'centralised organisation' with the same 'ideas, platforms and strategies' across the Muslim world (Interview [13]). When I pressed two other members about the organisational structure of Hezb ut-Tahrir in Afghanistan, they recommended that I read *Al-Takattul Al-Hezbi* (Party Organisation), one of the main texts produced by the founders of the movement in the 1950s in Arabic.

The *Al-Takattul Al-Hezbi*, which is also translated into Dari by Hezb ut-Tahrir Afghanistan, prescribes an almost Leninist-style method of political organisation. The most fundamental unit of the organisation is *halqah*, or a cell, where members of the party first get recruited and trained. The organisation is built and expanded through formation of cells, with each cell taking the responsibility for formation of additional cells. Consequently, the first also assumes the leadership role of subsequent circles as they gradually multiply.

In the beginning, the person who possesses a prominent reasoning talent and sharp understanding faculty will acquire the ideology. The ideology will interact with him until it becomes clear for him and crystallises in him. In this way, the first party cell is formed, and after its emergence the cell will begin to multiply, although the [process of] multiplication will go slowly. New persons will join this collective, and more cells shall be formed. The relations of these persons will be entirely based on ideology. It is in this way that the first party cell (party leadership) is formed and has become evident. Ideology is the only pivot of the organisation and the sole force of attraction for these individuals (Al-Nabahani, 2012, p. 31) [My translation].

The *Al-Takattul* also predicts that as founders of the first circle, the first members of the organisation face a long and challenging task of convincing the society to accept the party as manifestation of its interests.

The number of persons in this first circle will usually be small and their activities will be limited and slow as although the party expresses the feelings of the society in which it has emerged, it uses words and concepts with which the society is not familiar, and the party has new concepts that contradict the dominant concepts in the society. Nonetheless, the new concepts reflect the feelings of the society. As a result, the first circle will appear as unfamiliar in the society, and only those persons will be attracted to it that have strong feelings; feelings that give them the ability to be attracted to the ideology that is embodied by the first circle (Al-Nabahani 2012, p. 31).

However, it is not just the language and concepts used by the party activists that make them hard to be accepted in the society. Rather, the party views itself as simultaneously in conflict with, and vanguard of, the global Muslim community that it seeks to represent. In other words, beginning with a strong assumption about moral corruption and decay of

the Muslim world, the organisation seeks to represent a new global Islamic ummah, a community built and transformed through the party's activities.

The thought of the first circle will be usually be deep, and their method of thought will be fundamental. This means that this circle will begin with the basics, and because of this the first circle will rise above the bad and stagnant condition of the ummah and see the issues from a higher point of view, and is fully aware of the reality (the new Islamic life) to which it seeks to transition the ummah. Similarly, it is fully aware of the methods for transformation of the present conditions. Because of these, this collective (that has risen above the society and has clear foresight) can see the other side of the wall and curtain whilst most members of the society in which they live only see that which appears to them. Because of the strong ties they have to the bad circumstances in which they live this majority cannot rise above their own conditions. Hence, it is difficult for them to understand accurately the solutions for changing the presently bad circumstances as the thought of the society that has become stagnant is superficial and sees everything from the point of view of the realities in which they live. Hence, they [the majority] make wrong inferences and adapt themselves accordingly. Consequently, they see their interests on the basis of realities in which they live (Al-Nabahani, 2012, pp. 31-32).

While the exact details of the internal working of the organisation are not available, such a high level of emphasis by the party and its activists on texts and an ideological model in itself offers important insights about the organisation. First, it is clear that the organisation follows a highly pyramidal structure which restricts the flow of information even to the organisation's members beyond their immediate circles (Osman, 2015, p. 5). This means that the party is highly ideological and hierarchical, even in comparison to other Islamists groups. The organisation does not follow western-style models of internal democracy and collective deliberation. As will become clear below, the combination of a hierarchical top-down leadership model and the development of basic organisational structures and dedicated staff provides Hezb ut-Tahrir Afghanistan with some important advantages over other case study groups of this thesis. Second, it is highly likely that actual organisational models and behaviours of the party members and supporters do not reflect the texts. The party's activists and supporters may very well make adjustments to the organisation's prescribed structure to adapt to local and national conditions.

The Flagship Approach of Jamiat-e Eslah

In contrast to Hezb ut-Tahrir, Jamiat-e Eslah combines internal collective deliberation with a strong element of hierarchical structures. In its organisational structure, Jamiat-e Eslah includes the following main structures: a Central Council (*Shuray-e Markazi*), an elected body of more than 40 members that is responsible for the overall strategic leadership and policies of the organisation and meets twice a year; an Executive Council (*Shuray-e Tanfizi*) that is responsible for executive leadership of the organisation; and the General Assembly (*majlisi umumi*). Externally, the organisation is represented by the heads of the central and executive councils. It is not clear how the two roles are defined, as the *asasnamah*, the document that outlines the organisational structure of the organisation, is not made available to the public.⁹ As Osman (2015, p. 9) states ‘the head of the Central Council is the *de facto* leader of the organisation, although publicly, the head of the Executive Office is presented as the general leader’.

Nonetheless, it is clear that these internal structures are more than just symbolic bodies. They are regularly convened to discuss and deliberate on collective decisions. Since its formation in 2003, the organisation has used these internal procedures to elect and replace its leaders. In November 2009, the General Assembly of the organisation voted to elect Nasir Ahmad Nawidi as Head of its Central Council, replacing its previous head, Sefatullah Qanet (Eslah Online, 2009b). In May 2015, in another meeting of the council, Nawidi and Fakhri’s terms were extended for another three years as heads of the central and executive councils respectively. On occasion, the organisation uses the meeting of its central council to issue public statements on current affairs of the country. For example, in October 2016 the meeting of the council issued a public statement in which the

⁹ In July 2017, after repeated queries regarding the precise roles of the various councils of the organisation, a senior member sent me the *moramamah* of the organisation, the constitution that explains the overall goals and strategies of the organisation.

organisation expressed its concerns at intensification of violence in the country and demanded negotiations for resolution of the conflict (Eslah Online, 2016b). Below the leadership councils, Jamiat-e Eslah's organisational structure follows the model of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt in which the basic unit of is a circle called *usra*, which is headed by a *naqib*. Circles can cluster to form *shubas* (branches) at a provincial or sub-provincial levels (See also Osman 2015, p.8).

As an organisation, Jamiat-e Eslah stresses collective deliberation as one of its organising principles. However, the organisation does not define its internal working structure in terms of western-style decision making processes. Central to its organisational model is the concept of *shura 'iyyat*, the historical tradition of consultation and deliberation in the Islamic world, which underpins the collective deliberations in the general assembly and the central and executive councils of the organisation. The founding document of the organisation declares shura, next to its commitment to Islam, as its defining features, declaring 'all affairs of Jamiat-e Eslah, from bottom to the top, will be managed on the basis of shura. No member of organs of Jamiat-e Eslah has the right individually to make decisions in collective affairs' (Eslah Online, 2013).

While the internal structures and deliberative processes are highly important, they are not the defining features of Jamiat-e Eslah. In comparison to the other three organisations, Jamiat-e Eslah is characterised by its role as flagship organisation in a network of organisations. Over the years since its formation in 2003, the organisation has created a range of other organisations that includes media outlets, charity organisations, schools and universities, and professional associations (See chapter 6). While some of these organisations have assumed their own organisational identities, they are linked to the parent organisation through a shared ideology and strategy. Consequently, in its strategy to expand beyond its core members, rather than integrating all activities in one

organisation it has created a range of other organisations that focus on particular themes or areas of activities or respond to the needs of particular constituencies.

Combining Hierarchy with Internal Democracy: the Approach of Hezb-e Hambastagi

In its organisational structure, Hezb-e Hambastagi follows a hierarchical model. The local unit of the organisation is a council that can be formed at local and district levels. These local councils elect members of provincial councils, and finally members of the provincial councils constitute the party's General Council (*Shuray-e umumi*). The 43-member General Council is the party's highest leadership body and is convened once a year. In 2015, it represented 24 of Afghanistan's 34 provinces. According to the Head of the party's Organisation Committee, the number of representatives from the provinces at the General Council is based on the relative strength of membership as well as the overall population of each province. Accordingly, in 2015, according to him, 10 out of 43 members of the council came from Kabul ((Interview [2]). The General Council elects a 9-member Executive Council (*Shuray-e ijrayer*), which in turn elects from amongst its members a 5-member Permanent Committee composed of the party leader, two deputies and another two members elected by the Executive Council. The Executive Council is convened every three months, with its Permanent Committee responsible for the day-to-day leadership of the organisation (Hezb-e Hambastagi Afghanistan, 2010).

As with other organisations, it is hard to verify independently whether the organisational structure as outlined here is fully implemented by the party in practice. For one thing, the deteriorating security situation and declining confidence in political parties after the first few years following the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001 are likely to have affected the enthusiasm of many party members to participate in multiple councils within an organisation. However, it is clear that the party has elaborated internal working procedures which it uses to make important collective decisions. At its second congress

in 2010, the party elected a new leadership, replacing Engineer Khaleq Neamat, an urban planning engineer from the Pashayee minority community in the east of Afghanistan, with Daoud Razmak, a young medical doctor and a Tajik from the western province of Farah (See chapter 6).

While certainly weaker in comparison to Jamiat-e Eslah, Hezb-e Hambastagi has developed a basic bureaucratic capacity, with a permanent office and dedicated staff. In August and October 2015, when I visited the party's headquarter in Kabul, it had a relatively small but functional office with dedicated staff members and volunteers who were running the party's day-to-day affairs. However, in contrast to other political parties of Afghanistan during this period, the Hezb-e Hambastagi Headquarters in Kabul and the life style of its leaders plainly demonstrated that the party had benefited little from the resources that flowed to the country after 2001.

High Internal Democracy and Poor Organisational Capacity: the case of Afghanistan 1400

Although relatively young in comparison with the other three organisations, since its launch in 2012 Afghanistan 1400 has adopted internal decision making processes that demonstrate its organisational approach. Based on my interviews with senior leaders of the movement as well as key organisational documents of the movement, Afghanistan 1400 is composed of the following key organs:

- General Assembly of its members, convened every two years;
- Central Council elected by members of the General Assembly;
- General Presidency (*Riasat-e omumi*) that includes a General President and a Vice-President;
- Executive Board (*Rayes Ijrassyi*), led by an Executive President,
- And finally a Constituents Council.

The General Assembly of the movement, which is convened every two years, is designed as the highest body within the organisation, with the power to elect the General President and members of its Central Council and deliberate and approve amendments to its organising documents. To ensure organisational continuity, members of the Central Council are elected by the General Assembly for three separate terms of three years, two years and one year. The council makes its decisions by a two-thirds majority, and the General President is usually a non-voting member, only allowed to cast a vote if the body reaches a deadlock when all other members are equally divided over a decision. Similarly, the Executive President who serves as Secretary of the Central Council does not have a right to vote. The Executive President reports to the General President and is tasked with implementing the decisions made by the Central Council, and overseeing the day-to-day coordination between the departments and offices of the movement.

Since its launch in 2012, Afghanistan 1400 has been regularly convening its general assembly and central council meetings. The first two General Presidents were young educated women. Shaharзад Akbar who was elected as the first General-President of the movement in 2012 was also the first Afghan woman to graduate from the University of Oxford. In July 2013, at the conclusion of Akbar's term, the organisation elected Sonia Iqbal Zeerak, another young woman with a postgraduate degree from the University of York as its second General President. In July 2014, the organisation elected Shoaib Rahim, a young man and graduate of Duke University in the United States as its third General President. While very strong in its emphasis on internal democracy, Afghanistan 1400 is weakest in developing a bureaucratic structure. As of early 2017, the organisation lacks both a permanent office and dedicated professional staff to carry out its activities. Instead, the organisation largely relies on voluntary contributions of its members to cover the costs of organising events.

As the brief overview of the structure of the movement shows, in the context of Afghanistan's post-2001 patronage-based politics, members of the movement placed an unusually high degree of emphasis on internal democracy. By comparison, Jamiat-e Eslah and Hezb-e Hambastagi have changed their leadership only once since they were formed in 2003. This high turnover in leadership of Afghanistan 1400 can be interpreted as indication of a strong adherence to internal democracy by founders of the movement. In a country where most parties are led by life-long leaders, the movement elected three separate leaders within a period of four years, and the terms of none of its General Presidents were extended beyond their first appointment. However, such rapid changes in leadership can also be a source of instability and rapid changes in the movement's leadership styles and policy priorities. For a movement that is in the early stages of its development, such rapid pace of change can potentially be highly damaging. In my interviews, members of the organisation recounted how the emphasis on internal deliberation and collective decision making processes resulted in prolonged discussions, turning the movement's meetings into a major source of frustration for its members.

Mobilising the Educated Class

How do the various organisational approaches, as represented by these four groups, synch with or shape their broader social appropriation strategies and tactics? More specifically, do the way in which these groups are structured affect their capacity to navigate through broader social change processes that Afghanistan experienced between 2001 and 2016? These are important questions to ask because to various degrees, each of these four groups is a product as well as an instigator of social change during this period. The rise and activities of these groups would not be possible without the social and political liberalisation of the post-2001 period as well as the dramatic social changes such as urbanisation, expansion of the education sector, and the emergence of mass media and global connectivity that took place during this period (See chapter 5).

Mobilising the Students, the Case of Kabul University

The education sector is a social and political field where the success and strategic approaches of the four groups in developing a mass following can be usefully assessed. Groups and individuals make organisational and tactical choices under a specific socio-cultural and political environment. As Giustozzi (2010) argues, for the politically-active students the available options have historically involved a choice between ‘rebellion’ and ‘patronage’. The former involves challenging the status quo as demonstrated by the Islamist and leftist student groups of the 1960s, and the latter is centred on a transactional exchange in which students provide political support to a dominant ethno-political network in return for political backing for getting jobs and provision of material assistance such as accommodation. Giustozzi argues that ‘since 2001, student politics seems to have been characterised by the predominance of patronage-based relationships between students and political parties’ (2010, p. 6). The perception of predominance of student careerism and opportunism among students of the post-2001 period was echoed by some of my own interviewees. Some argued that the country’s post-2001 intelligentsia had succumbed to pressures of consumerism and careerism generated by globalisation. A lecturer at a private university in Kabul made a distinction between three generations of intelligentsia in Afghanistan: a generation of *tafsir* (interpretation) who were concerned with understanding and interpreting the world up to the middle of the twentieth century; a generation of *taghyir* (change) who sought to change the world after the 1960s according to their ideologies; and finally a post-2001 generation of *tamatto’a* (fruition or enjoyment) who prioritised fulfilling personal desires and ambitions (Interview [23]). Nonetheless, a clear-cut distinction between generational attitudes or predominance of patronage or rebellion in a particular era is too simplistic to capture the complexity of student politics. One might find evidence of rebellion and careerism among students in any period in the history of the country.

Despite their shared futuristic outlooks and emphasis on the youth as drivers of change, the four groups demonstrate significant differences in their approach to recruiting and mobilising the youth. The first such major difference is marked by a secular-religious divide across the four case-study groups. The two religiously-oriented groups, Jamiat-e Eslah and Hezb ut-Tahrir, invest heavily in developing mass following among the country's students. By contrast, Afghanistan 1400 and Hezb-e Hambastagi lack any systematic policy of mass recruitment in the universities.

The lack of investment in recruiting the educated class is particularly surprising for Afghanistan 1400, an organisation, which describes itself a movement of the 'new generation' of the country. Furthermore, the movement has also brought together some of the most educated and most influential members of the educated class with degrees from prestigious western universities. A member estimated that about 10 of the 42 founding members of the movement had degrees from western universities with the rest having studied inside the country. Ironically, the type and level of educational attainment by some of the movement's leading figures also created a gap between it and the mass educated class. Although most founders of the movement had studied inside the country and some even lacked university education, the socially-mobile and western-educated members exercised greater influence in shaping public perception of the movement. One such perception was that the movement recruits a particularly elitist section of the educated class. The same member noted with regret that

Unfortunately an impression was created that this [Afghanistan 1400] is a group of people who have MAs and PhDs from abroad. How did I get to know this? One of our relatives in the family said "I am very interested [to join] but I don't qualify". I asked, "How do you not qualify?" He said, "We are told we need to have degrees" (Interview [6])

The elitist perception was also underpinned by a deep social divide that separated the urban western-educated youth from the mass of mostly rural students who competed to find places in universities such as Kabul University.

Similarly to Afghanistan 1400, Hezb-e Hambastagi recognises youth and university students as important constituencies but the party lacks the resources and policy to launch a significant drive for student recruitment. The Head of the Organisational Committee of Hezb-e Hambastagi emphasised that the students were a highly important constituency for the party. To recruit the students, he said the party had a Student Affairs Committee in its organisational structure. In 2015, the committee was headed by a female university student (Interview [2]). However, as will be shown below, the party has not developed any significant following in the universities.

In stark contrast to Hezb-e Hambastagi and Afghanistan 1400, Jamiat-e Eslah and Hezb ut-Tahrir are widely recognised as two of the most active organisations on university campuses. Hezb ut-Tahrir began its presence in Afghanistan by establishing its first cell at Kabul University in 2003. Similarly, Jamiat-e Eslah has been active in Kabul University and other state-run universities at least since its formal launch in 2003. Both of these organisations have been accused of training a new generation of radical students in the country (Nazari, 2015). Both organisations have used their networks in university campuses to organise rallies in Kabul and a number of other provinces. However, the two organisations follow different approaches to appropriating the socio-cultural spaces that have been made available as a result of the expansion of the education sector. A major source of difference in the recruitment and mobilisational strategy of the two organisation is their official status in the country. As a legally-registered organisation, Jamiat-e Eslah recruits and mobilises students without facing repression by the university administration or government security agencies. Furthermore, as a social organisation it can always claim to be a non-political entity, and hence present its activities as educational and cultural. Consequently, it organises and recruits more openly. A student who lived in the dormitory of Kabul University for four years stated that Jamiat-e Eslah's publications were widely distributed among the residents of the dormitory. For example, he described

how every week, the organisation's activists would leave leaflets and magazines of the organisation at the doors of every student at the dormitory. He contrasted Jamiat-e Eslah's relatively open recruitment and freedom in distribution of its publications with Hezb ut-Tahrir more direct and face-to-face recruitment. While both Hezb ut-Tahrir and Jamiat-e Eslah expand through formation of cells, the character of these cells varies significantly between the two organisations. For Hezb ut-Tahrir, the cells are more secretive, and information about its internal organisational structures is strictly guarded. The organisation seldom organises public events under its own name and banner. Most often, its cells of activists are mobilised to join, and even take control of, rallies and events organised by other groups (Interview [28]).

Both Hezb ut-Tahrir and Jamiat-e Eslah have their own allies among the faculties of Kabul University. Many members of the Sharia (Islamic Law) Faculty of Kabul University are consistently cited as the main allies and supporters of radical Islamist students of the university. The faculty trains students in Islamic law, history and culture, and has historically been the main driver of Islamist politics in the university. The faculty's influence extends over students of other faculties as offers courses that are mandatory for all students. A chief way in which the faculty exercises influence over students of other faculties is through the subject of *saqafat-e Islami* (Islamic culture). First introduced by the mujahedin government in 1992 and taught by members of the Sharia Faculty, the course has become mandatory for students of all faculties. The course has often been the object of the highly-charged debates, with many blaming its particular interpretation of Islam as responsible for training a new generation of radical students. In November 2016, Hafiz Mansur, a Member of Parliament and a former *mujahed*, provoked intense debates by specifically accusing the course of training 'terrorists' (Royee, 2016). Critics have argued that some of the texts taught as part of the course promote the caliphate and emirate as the legitimate Islamic political system, thus indirectly

challenging the Islamic legitimacy of the post-2001 democratic political system (ITV, 2016).

In the Sharia Faculty, some lecturers are particularly known for their hard-line views. One such figure is Muhammad Maruf Rasikh, a lecturer of the faculty and Imam of Kuwait Al-Khair Mosque, which is strategically located across the road from the main building of the university's male dormitory. A student of Kabul University claimed he supported Hezb ut-Tahrir in the university (Interview [28]). Rasikh was detained in April 2016 by the National Security Directorate for his alleged involvement in promotion of radical activities (Ettilaat Roz Daily, 2016a). He was released from detention in October 2016 without being formally charged. Abdul Zaher Da'ai, another lecturer of the Sharia Faculty, was cited by two interviewees in Kabul University as supporting activities of Jamiat-e Eslah in the university. One respondent, for example, alleged that these faculty members would give students marks based on the articles they were writing for the various publications of these organisations (Interview [28]). The validity of these claims, or other details of the way in which these faculty members allegedly supported these organisations, could not be independently established as restriction on political activities in the universities mean that such political activism is usually not made public (See below).

Nonetheless, it was clear that these lecturers who also served as imams of a number of mosques across Kabul were playing a highly-influential role in connecting networks of the Islamist students with like-minded groups outside the university. According to another student of Kabul University, one way in which these lecturers connect the networks of students at university campuses with Islamist groups is through their teaching circles (*halqah*), informal and loosely-structured groups of university students and other participants who gather at mosques or private residences of these lecturers-preachers. In these circles, the lecturers combine university education with their own interpretation of

Islamic texts and history. A student provided an account of his own experience in one of these circles,

When I went there, their lessons had become more intellectual (*fekri*). There, they would read Sahih Bukhari¹⁰, exegesis and other [usual] religious texts that exist, books of hadith and Quran and its exegesis. They would also teach, for example, Islamic world view (*Jahanbini Islami*). The chapters we read at the university are taught there, considering the level of education [of participants] because there people come from all levels. There are students of universities, students of schools, porters as it is an open circle; everybody is free to come and participate. These were taught gradually. Then, naturally [scholars] are named, as Hassan Al-Bana said this and Sayed Qotb said that. This gives you the motivation that if your teacher quotes him I should also read the sources. Then we begin to read about the lives of these people and became very interested (Interview [12]).

Although some of these lecturers and preachers are widely known as supporters of one of these organisations, in practice they share strong ideological commonalities. This means that even if some lecturers are clearly linked to one organisation, they can still offer strong ideological support for rival groups. For example, Abul Zaher Da'ai, who is generally known as a Jamiat-e Eslah supporter, has spoken highly favourably of Hezb ut-Tahrir's ideology and the importance of its efforts for revival of the caliphate. In a video statement, published by an online media group called Risala (2016), Da'i refers to Hezb ut-Tahrir members as 'brothers', and emphasises revival of the caliphate as the ultimate goal of all Islamist groups. In another indication of cross-organisational recruitment and solidarity, a member of Hezb ut-Tahrir was a participant in a teaching circle of a Jamiat-e Eslah supporter before joining the organisation (Interview [7]).

Recruitment and Visibility at High Schools

The general patterns that emerged from my own interviews with university students in Kabul are supported by other research. In this respect, a survey of Afghanistan's high school by Giustozzi and Muhammad Ali (2015) is particularly relevant. The survey demonstrates the extent of politicisation of the new generation of students at the level of

¹⁰ Sahih Al-Bukhari is one the six main collections of Hadith, prophetic traditions, for the Sunni Muslims.

secondary education. The survey, which involved by 28 teachers and 403 students in a total of 136 schools in 18 provinces of the country, offers some broad indications of the level and type of political activities in the country's rapidly-expanded high school sector. At the national level, the survey found that 91.8 of the respondents had personally witnessed political activities at their high schools, although there were significant variations across regions and time periods. The most common political activities reported by the respondents were political debates (96.7%) followed by verbal arguments among students (64.3%), recruitment (52.3%), graffiti (38.2%), political meetings (23.2%), and distribution of leaflets and political literature (22.6). Significantly, open protest was among the least reported activities (2.3%) across the 18 provinces. However, the respondents in Herat (37.5%) and Kabul city (18.2%) reported much higher levels of protest activities.

The issues covered in the political debates offering important insights into what attracts the greatest attention at the level of schools. The issues most debated were elections (96.7%) followed by the presences of foreigners in the country (80.8%), and political corruption (50.5%), Islam versus the West (41.9%), women's rights (29.9%), and the status of languages of the country (36.5%) (Giustozzi & Mohammad Ali, 2015, pp. 6-9). The survey also reported on the respondents' perception of the type of political groups that were most active in the schools. According to the report the most active groups as reported by the respondents were Islamic groups (81.9%) followed by groups derived from the militias of the civil wars (75.4%), ethno-nationalist groups (51.4%), Maoists and other leftists (20.6%), and liberals and democratic groups (10.2%) (Giustozzi & Mohammad Ali, 2015, pp. 9-10).

It is important to make one qualification regarding the typology of active political groups described in the survey. The survey report makes a distinction between Islamic groups, and groups derived from militias of the civil wars, with the former referring to the post-

2001 Islamic groups (both the Taliban and peaceful groups such as Jamiat-e Eslah) and the latter referring to the mujahedin groups. While it is important to make a distinction between various forms of political Islamist groups, when it comes to their avowed adherence to Islam the distinction between most former mujahedin and the other groups is not always easy to make. As discussed in chapter 5 of this thesis, most of the mujahedin groups were born out of student activists groups, and many groups such as Jamiat-e Eslah claim descent from the network of activists of the 1960s.

The most relevant findings for this thesis that come from the survey concern the level of reported activity of Jamiat-e Eslah, Hezb ut-Tahrir and Afghanistan 1400. As indicated above, the report places Jamiat-e Eslah and Hezb ut-Tahrir in the category of Islamic groups, and the latter in the liberal and democratic camp. Nearly a third (32.9%) of the respondents of the survey reported having witnessed activities by Jamiat-e Eslah at their high schools. It was reported as strongest in Kabul, Kunar and Parwan and weakest in the two mainly Pashtun provinces of Paktia and Logar in the southeast of the country. Across the 18 provinces, Hezb ut-Tahrir activities were reported by a similar number, a little below a third of the respondents (29.2%). However, in contrast to Jamiat-e Eslah, the activities of Hezb ut-Tahrir were reported to be particularly concentrated in some provinces more than others. They were strongest in the provinces of Baghlan (96.7%), Takhar (93.3%) Badakhshan (71.4%), Parwan (66.7%) Herat (62.5%), Kabul city (54.5%) and Kabul districts (55.0%), with very little or no reported presence in the provinces of the south and east of the country (Giustozzi & Mohammad Ali, 2015, p. 11).

Although the survey does not look at the activities of Hezb-e Hambastagi specifically, the trend reported on the level of activities of leftist groups more generally offers some indications of the broader trend in leftist group activities in the country. In this respect, the report makes an important distinction between groups which derived from the Maoist Sho‘alayi Jawid and those with roots in one of the factions of the pro-Soviet People’s

Democratic Party of Afghanistan. Activities by groups derived from the Maoist movements were reported mainly from Kabul city (40.9%), followed by Herat (12.5%), Helmand (11.8%), and Kandahar (5.7%) (Giustozzi & Mohammad Ali, 2015, p. 13). Although the groups derived from the PDPA were reported to be active in urban centres, they were reported to be active by substantial number of respondents in other provinces. For example, 63.6 percent of respondents from Kabul city reported activities by such groups (Giustozzi & Mohammad Ali, 2015, p. 13). Beyond Kabul, although much weaker than the Islamists, the former PDPA groups were reported to be active in a number of other provinces. Among the liberals, the survey elicited the views of the respondents on activities of Afghanistan 1400, along with five other groups.¹¹ The unmistakable pattern that emerges from the responses is that the so-called liberal and democratic groups are almost entirely restricted to Kabul, with little activity reported from other provinces. Less than a quarter of the respondents in Kabul city (22.7%) reported activities by Afghanistan 1400, with no positive response from Kabul's district or other provinces (Giustozzi & Mohammad Ali, 2015, p. 10).

The general picture that emerges is that the secular groups, both leftist and liberals, are largely restricted to urban centres. The Hezb ut-Tahrir and Jamiat-e Eslah are far more successful in reaching out beyond Kabul. However, the survey data indicate that Hezb ut-Tahrir is most active in areas traditionally dominated by Jamiat-e Islami Afghanistan. In particular, the centre of activities of the organisation is reported to stretch from Kabul with greater reported activities in north-eastern provinces of Baghlan, Takhar, Qunduz, and Badakhshan. Outside the northeast region, Herat is also a traditional Jamiat stronghold in the west of the country. By contrast, Jamiat-e Eslah has spread out more evenly across the provinces, although it is also stronger in some provinces than others.

¹¹ These were Rights and Justice Party, Afghanistan Awareness and Analysis, Afghanistan Forward, Republican Party and Green Trend.

Going Beyond Schools and Universities: Creating Social Space and Resources

Hezb ut-Tahrir and Jamiat-e Eslah efforts at recruitment are not restricted to major state-run universities. Hezb ut-Tahrir targets government officials, security forces, members of the parliament, and local notables and former mujahedin leaders. Osman (2016, p. 6) reports that two senior members of the organisation worked in ‘administrative and technical’ capacities in the National Security Council of the country. Similarly, Jamiat-e Eslah has members who are working in various government departments, especially in ministries of education and Haj and Islamic affairs. I interviewed a senior member of the organisation at a department of the Ministry of Education in Kabul, and Mawlawi Abdul Salam A’bid, a member of the Central Council of the Organisation, served in senior positions in the same ministry, including as Head of Policy in 2017. Two members of Jamiat-e Eslah served as members of the parliament from 2005 to 2010. Subsequently, the organisation banned members for running for the parliament fearing that ‘having members in the legislative or senior executive positions would endorse the legitimacy of the state, which it believed it did not have, and would harm its own standing among the more conservative segments of society’ (Osman, 2015, p. 7)

Transcending ethno-cultural divisions?

Ideologically, both Hezb ut-Tahrir and Jamiat-e Eslah are opposed to any form of association with ethnic or other forms of particularistic identities. When I raised the issue, my interviewees in both organisations responded by citing verses from the Quran or the sayings of Prophet Muhammad to argue ethno-centrism is in fact *haram*, explicitly banned in Islam. As discussed in chapter 6, Hezb ut-Tahrir goes even further by declaring the very foundations of the international nation-state system as non-Islamic. By contrast, Jamiat-e Eslah seeks to combine its pan-Islamic concerns with a focus within the framework of the nation-state of Afghanistan. Beyond its recognition of a national

identity, the organisation strongly campaigns against sub-national, ethnic or otherwise, political associations. However, in a country with deep ethnic divisions that challenged the coherence of past ideological groups such as the PDPA and the mujahedin, and in an environment in which distribution of political power is based on an informal ethnic hierarchy among the country's major ethnic groups, staying aloof from ethno-cultural divisions requires more than mere ideological refutation.

In its organisational leadership, Jamiat-e Eslah represents both Pashtuns and Tajiks. The first President of the organisation from 2003 to 2010 was Muhammad A'tif, a Tajik from the north-eastern province of Takhar. Subsequently, the General Assembly of the organisation elected Abdul Sabur Fakhri, a Tajik from the province of Panjshir, as its President, and Nasir Ahmad Nawidi as Head of its Central Council. Nonetheless and despite its expressed ideological opposition to ethnic politics, Jamiat-e Eslah is seen by many as being dominated by Pashtuns. The ethnic perception of the organisation was even expressed by a Tajik supporter of the organisation in Kabul University who remarked that

They have slogans and programmes against ethno-centrism. I mean that sometimes they organise a conference and have published brochures against ethno-centrism. [They say] these things are rejected and we should abandon them. But some brothers complain that [members] of Pashtun ethnic groups are more in the organisation of Jamiat-e Eslah (Interview [12]).

Others added to the ethnic charges against Jamiat-e Eslah by pointing to foreign hands behind its rapid expansion. A member of parliament who was critical of the organisation argued that an ideological void created by entry of the former mujahedin into mainstream politics after 2001 was going hand in hand with support by Pakistan's Jama'at Islami to account for the expansion of the organisation. Pointing to the factors behind the rise of the organisation, he said,

Void, void! Foreign money plus persuading Pashtun businessmen. They have become a big economic group... In Herat too, there are the Pashtuns. It is mostly

the void, an ideological void. Other parties became busy in the government and other things. The world does not stop. The youth expects to hear something and the nation is a Muslim nation and they exploit the void (Interview [21]).

Ethnicity and other forms of identity do not just confront these organisations when they assume political roles. Another way in which they become the objects of ethnicised perception is through their campaign against what they regard as non-Islamic cultural traditions, some of which predate Islam and are closely associated with ethno-cultural identities. One such example is the festival of Nawruz, the ancient New Year on 21 March, celebrated across many countries in the region. In Afghanistan, although it is a national holiday, the tradition tends to be particularly strong among the non-Pashtun communities with its largest event organised in the province of Balkh in the north of the country, and birthplace of the Zoroastrian religion. Jamiat-e Eslah and other groups have questioned the basis of the festival, pointing to its origin in pre-Islamic Zoroastrian civilizations. In response, some critics have even accused the organisation of leading a campaign of ‘ethnocide’ by attacking the cultural traditions of the country’s non-Pashtuns as non-Islamic whilst remaining silent on similarly non-Islamic tribal practices of Pashtuns. Criticising Jamiat-e Eslah’s declaration of the annual celebration of Nawruz as haram, Saqeb (2013), a Tajik commentator, argued that ‘the goal of Jamiat-e Eslah is not religious reform but consolidation of ethnic hegemony. Jamiat-e Eslah wants to achieve this goal through suppression of culture and identity of non-Pashtun ethnic groups’.

Similar to Jamiat-e Eslah, Hezb ut-Tahrir’s public perception is also getting entangled with ethnic politics, although its very strong pan-Islamist rhetoric and open hostility to any forms of national and sub-national politics make it less vulnerable to such allegations. My own interviews, as well as the survey by Giustozzi and Muhammad Ali, show that Hezb ut-Tahrir has met with greater successes in the mainly Tajik provinces stretching from Kabul to Badakshan in the northeast. The organisation appears to be relatively weaker in the Pashtun provinces of southern and south-eastern Afghanistan. Members of

the organisation admitted their relatively weak success in establishing a presence in the mainly Pashtun provinces of the south and east. One member cited the concentration of insurgency and violence in these areas as the primary cause of the delay in the expansion of the movement in provinces such as Kandahar in the South and Paktiya in the East (Interviews [39] and [40]). Hezb ut-Tahrir spokesman in Afghanistan went even further by admitting the different rates of success of the organisation at the sub-national level but stressed that, depending on their socio-cultural traditions, the peoples of these regions could complement one another in supporting the organisation. He contrasted the Tajik's relatively long history of literacy and education with what he described as a tradition of 'bravery' in fighting fields among the Pashtuns. Drawing on the contrast, he contended that the Tajik communities' cultural capacity and greater awareness were being used by the organisation, and the Pashtun's warring culture could be exploited in future stages of the organisation's mission (Interview [14]). While fiercely pan-Islamist in its rhetoric, such clearly ethnicised perceptions of the dynamics of political power in the country may point to an emerging adaptation of the organisation's ideology to the context of Afghanistan.

Consequently, the rivalry between Jamiat-e Eslah and Hezb ut-Tahrir gains ethnic dimensions (if not motivations) by virtue of finding greater levels of support among the two major ethnic groups of the country. In the long-term, these ethnicised perceptions of Jamiat-e Eslah and the Hezb ut-Tahrir may point to recurrence of a similar process of adaptation of Islamism with local power bases by Jamiat-e Islami and Hezb-e Islami during the 1980s and 1990s. As chapter 4 showed, although both Hezb-e Islami and Jamiat-e Islami originated from the networks of Islamist students of the 1960s, in their competition for mass following overtime they coalesced around ethno-culture cores of Pashtuns and Tajiks respectively. However, if such a process of ethnicisation of the new generation of Afghanistan's Islamists were to repeat itself, it would be a long-term

process and might become more apparent if these groups went beyond educational and cultural arenas and engaged with power politics.

Ideology and Agency as Drivers of Social Appropriation Strategies

How can one explain the divergent organisational patterns and social appropriation strategies as demonstrated by these four groups? It might be useful to begin by exploring the institutional context of public education Afghanistan as a site of contestation as well as a victim of more than four decades of violence and instability in Afghanistan.

The Institutional and Historical Context

In the period after 2001, the revival and expansion of the public education system became a key component of the statebuilding enterprise. Funded by foreign aid, the sector witnessed rapid expansion in terms of enrolment of students and opening of new schools and universities. Although mostly welcomed by the general population, the expansion of schools and universities was seen as a threat by groups such as the Taliban that blame universities and state-run schools for spreading foreign and secular values and ideologies. The Taliban attacked schools and universities, killing teachers and burning down hundreds of school buildings in several provinces. As a result of this campaign of violence, hundreds of schools were closed in many provinces of the country (Human Rights Watch, 2006). To mitigate the threats against schools, the Ministry of Education entered into informal arrangements with local Taliban groups to ensure the security of schools in return for allowing the Taliban to influence the curriculum and appointment of teachers in the schools of the insecure provinces (Giustozzi & Franco, 2011). While the overall effects and durability of such deals were not always clear, the challenge posed to the education sector by groups framing their violent opposition to the state in religious terms had the effects of further strengthening the role of conservative and Islamist forces in the education sector more generally.

The Taliban attacked schools and universities despite the fact that unlike the PDPA regime in the 1980s, the post-2001 governments in Kabul did not actively use schools and universities as centres of ideological indoctrination. On the contrary, the government strongly discouraged organised political activities in schools and university campuses. Although there are no formal laws restricting student political activities, in places such as Kabul University students who engage in politics are subject to ‘reprimand and event punishment’ by university administration and faculties, and ‘student activities are monitored by teachers but also by frequent visits of undercover staff from the government’s internal security organization, the National Directorate of Security, who students said are easy to identify but nevertheless maintain a watchful eye on any dissident behavior’ (Larson & Coburn, 2014, p. 11). These informal restrictions on student activism are products of fears of the country’s history with student politics and sudden expansion of its educated class as demonstrated in the 1960s. However, the policy of encouraging a quietist and careerist intelligentsia also meant that the education sector did not assume an active role in promoting liberal values.

Despite the informal constraints, the students are deeply enmeshed in political networks of the country. In Kabul University, the country’s largest and oldest university, students engage in politics through forming informal study and activist associations and cultivating ties (often based on ethnicity or ideology) with political factions and elites who also see in the growing student population potential sources of support and networks of political mobilisation. A student who served as representative of Kabul University dormitory for three years provided an account of a highly dynamic, and at times very intense political atmosphere in the university. His account of student activism in the university was one of localism and fragmentation as well as national political organisation. He pointed to predominance of localised (provincial and district levels) associations among the university’s students. However, beyond the localised politics, he

emphasised that ‘religion’ and ‘ethnicity’ were the two predominant sources of student mobilisation that would bring together students from various regions of the country (Interview [28]).

The Role of Ideology

Ideology is an important source of the organisational and mobilisational approaches of these organisations. For example, for Hezb ut-Tahrir and Jamiat-e Eslah, ideology determines their strategies the socio-political environment of Afghanistan. As Karagiannis (2010, p. 50), discussing similar strategic disagreements within Hezb ut-Tahrir writes,

Ironically, this ideological division resembles the confrontation between the Stalinist and Troskyist [sic] factions of the Boshevik Party in the 1920s. As surprising as it may seem though, the communist ideology has some features that are not alien at all to Islam. Communism and Islam generally advocate emphasis on group goals over individual interests. In addition, both claim to be universal and seek to convert ‘unbelievers’. They offer a vision of a perfectly just society and they can justify violence to achieve this goal.

Central to the strategic disagreement between Jamiat-e Eslah and Hezb ut-Tahrir is the question whether Islamisation can be pursued on a country-to-country basis. Ideologically opposed to the nation-state system, Hezb ut-Tahrir seeks to expand by establishing underground cells within and outside existing institutions such as universities and schools but refuse to align itself with national identity. By contrast, as a legally-registered organisation Jamiat-e Eslah actively invests in establishing its own institutions of education and learning while continuing to maintain a presence in state-run universities and schools. Furthermore, ideologically, the Hezb ut-Tahrir does not view educational and cultural activities as the primary areas of its activities. Some of its members even described such as activities as a deviation from the real mission of reviving the global caliphate. By contrast, for Jamiat-e Eslah the cultural and educational arenas are the central arenas for its mission of bottom-up socio-cultural transformation. Referring to the

Jamiat-e Eslah's focus on cultural and charity activities, a member of the Hezb ut-Tahrir said,

The distribution of books and charity are good activities but are not enough for attainment of power. Perhaps, they gain rewards¹² (*sawab*) for preaching but we consider making [cultural activities] essential as opposed to method (*menhaj*) (Interview [40]).

The ideological rivalries between groups such as Hezb ut-Tahrir and Jamiat-e Eslah are also influenced by the ideological environment after 2001. The four decades of politicisation of the sector have also worked to create a strategic environment that favors conservative and religious forms of social and political mobilisation. As chapter 4 showed, beginning from the 1960s Afghanistan's public education sector became a central arena of contestation for ideological and political domination among the country's various ideological groups. In stark contrast to the post-2001 period, the student activism of the 1960s was shaped by highly diverse groups, with the Islamists competing with a wide range of leftists and nationalist groups. During the 1980s, education and indoctrination became battlegrounds for the PDPA and the mujahedin groups that were backed by the Soviet Union and a coalition of western and Islamic countries respectively. While the PDPA regime used schools and universities as centres of recruitment and indoctrination in Kabul and other areas it controlled, the mujahedin organisations in Peshawar, supported by western donors, produced their own alternative curricula (Jones, 2008). The mujahedin textbooks funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and produced by a centre of the University of Nebraska at Omaha promoted an Islamist ideology that aimed to encourage violent resistance against the Soviet occupation of the country. As Spink (2005, p. 199) put it,

In fact, the textbooks of the time did not reflect a love for one's country, but rather a love for militant ideology. Primary school maths books developed exercises around the number of dead and alive Russians. Children learnt division by

¹² Sawab is an Arabic term meaning reward. In this context, it refers to spiritual attainment or rewards given in the other world to a Muslim for fulfilment of one's religious obligations.

examples of how to equally divide bullets between commanders. Secondary school religious textbooks presented a very specific Deobandi ideal of being Muslim and clearly stated that if someone was not a ‘good Muslim’ then one must kill them. History books outlined three key threats to the Prophet Mohamed during his lifetime in the seventh century as, non-Sunni Muslims, infidels and communists!

According to some observers, the unrivalled domination of the post-2001 university environment by the Islamist movements have had some important implications for the nature students’ politics and the quality of academic debate in the universities. Drawing a contrast between the 1960s and the post-2001 periods, a senior university professor in Kabul remarked,

Because Marxism-Leninism was the dominant discourse [during the 1960s], other currents had also attempted to show that they were familiar with the literature of [European] enlightenment. If Islamic discourses were created, under the influence of those literature, [they] tried to present a brighter face of Islam. In other words, because of the dominance of the left the level of debate was higher. Unfortunately, now it is not the case. Now, the social sciences are presented at a very poor level, the level of understanding of students is very low. The dominant discourse and literature are unfortunately not enlightening. Even if new ideas such as human rights or the like are discussed, [they are presented] as if they are western projects (Interview [20]).

A professor of Kabul University argued that the years of war have pushed what he described as enlightening forces (*Nairohayi roshangar*) to the margin, leaving the centre to be occupied by conservative and Islamist forces (Interview [16]). While the distinction between ‘enlightening’ and ‘conservative’ forces may carry an ideological undertone, the fact is that as a result of the years of war and upheaval, some of the most intellectually vibrant movements of the country were entirely marginalised. In short, in comparison to the 1960s, when university campuses were dominated by intense rivalries and debates, after 2001 the universities are dominated by Islamist and conservative faculties and students, with relatively smaller networks of liberal and secular groups.

The Role of Agency and Resources

However, ideology explains only part of the approaches of these organisations as its significance varies from one group to the other. As an organisation that is deeply

influenced by its own literature, Hezb ut-Tahrir is the most ideological of the four groups. By contrast, Afghanistan 1400 does not make any references to any overarching ideology or prescribe any particular literature to its members. Other key factors that shape the organisational approach and mobilisational strategy of these groups are the resource endowments of the founders of these groups, and the choices they make to exploit those resources. As Fligstein and McAdam (2012, p. 90) argue,

One of the main factors shaping the eventual structure of a strategic action field is the initial distribution of resources in the field. Where resources are highly unequally distributed across groups, one would expect that one group or a set of dominant groups would be able to impose their will on the field. The resulting strategic action field is likely to have a hierarchical structure.

As organisations, the four groups are embedded within broader socio-economic networks with varying levels and types of resources. In its broad conception, the resources that the initial networks bring to these organisations also include social and cultural capital. Thus in addition to material resources, the networks of founders are also predisposed to and familiar with particular organisational knowledge and social mobilisation strategies. The initial founders of Afghanistan 1400 were endowed with particular material and socio-cultural resources that may explain their weak record in establishing a working organisational capacity and their particularly rapid change of leaderships. Dominated by middle class professionals with broadly equal socio-economic status and material conditions, and socialised and networked with one another in non-governmental organisations, consulting firms and workshops and conferences, the founders of the movement were comparatively less likely to submit to a centralised authority exercised by one of their peers. By contrast, the founders of Jamiat-e Eslah had spent several years as activists of the mujahedin organisations where leaders commanded respect and obedience through their charisma, and centralised and even personal control of resources. Beyond the initial distribution of resources, the basic organisational approaches chosen by the founders of these organisations also affected their chances of developing a mass

following. In this respect, Islamist organisations such as Jamiat-e Eslah invest a great amount of time and resources in building an effective organisation. While in Pakistan, many founders of the organisation appear to have been deeply exposed to modern organisational strategies and tactics through their contacts with Jama'at Islami of Pakistan and the activists of the Muslim Brotherhood. Consequently, leading a network of other organisations, Jamiat-e Eslah offers a wide range of incentives and entry points for new members through its schools, universities, charity organisations, media organisations and professional associations (See chapter 6). A senior member of NAJM describe how the organisation provides multiple opportunities for various youth groups to join the organisation,

Beyond completely social-religious circles, we have provided more extensive opportunities for the youth in NAJM. For example, if there were young people who were interested in entertainment and did not know about Jamiat-e Eslah, they knew there are entertainment programmes, for example the youth gathers to go for swimming, or they gather to climb a mountain, or Qunduz youth says let's go the Abadan desert for scientific *rehla* (tour). The type of programme depends on the nature and seasons of each province. Similarly, we organise sport activities, and have created various football, cricket and volleyball teams. So some young people who did not know about Jamiat-e Eslah, they slowly came to know about us through football because that was what they were interested in. We also provided cultural opportunities, through a cultural association, Resalat Cultural Association, through which we gather youth who are interested in writing and poetry. Through the opportunities we provided, we helped introduce them to those who have experience in writing, and overtime their writing got better. Also we provided opportunities for publication of their articles in our magazines, and on the Najm website. This was the reason the youth section, became more famous a little more and sooner than we expected and it was felt a large number of youth are slowly joining Najm (Interview [8]).

As this quote demonstrates, the organisational approach adopted by Jamiat-e Eslah enables it to offer a wide range of incentives to different constituencies.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have sought to highlight the role of group level dynamics and agency by exploring the organisational approaches and mobilisational strategies of the four groups. By focusing on the mechanism of social appropriation, I identified significant variations

in how these groups are organised, and how a tendency to adopt a particular organisational approach also shapes and constrains these groups' strategy to expand by appropriating resources beyond their internal networks. A major pattern that emerges is that Islamist groups of Hezb ut-Tahrir and Jamiat-e Eslah have achieved a high level of organisational capacity and mobilisational power in comparison to the secular Hezb-e Hambastagi and liberal Afghanistan 1400. Does this mean that Islamists have an intrinsic advantage over their secular rivals? The explanation that emerges is that a range of factors shape social appropriation strategies of these groups. First, the broader ideological frameworks of these groups predisposes them towards particular courses of social mobilisation. As a rejectionist organisation, Hezb ut-Tahrir follows an appropriation strategy that is characterised by infiltration of existing institutions and formation of underground cells. As a transformationist organisation, Jamiat-e Eslah invests heavily in appropriating and inventing resources to establish an alternative networks of social control. As reformist and partial rejectionist groups respectively, Afghanistan 1400 and Hezb-e Hambastagi do not build structures of mass following. Second, in this chapter I also highlighted the resource endowments of the initial founders of these groups as encouraging particular social appropriation strategies. The role played by resources in its broadly non-economistic conception also highlights the agency of these actors in making important strategic and tactical choices at important stages of developments of their organisations.

Chapter 9: Taking to the Streets to Demand Security and Public Service

Introduction

In the previous three chapters, I sought to expound the dynamics of collective action and contention in Afghanistan through detailed analysis of four separate groups. In this chapter, I aim to expand the discussion further by providing a detailed analysis of three

specific protest activities. In analysis of these events I follow the mechanism-based explanation, focusing on mechanisms of *collective attribution of threats and opportunities*, *social appropriation*, and *boundary activation*.

The first section sets the context of the chapter in the broader framework of this thesis by discussing the roles of formal organisations and informal social networks in organising protest events. The second section introduces the three main protest events of this study. The third section identifies the similarities and differences between these events by focusing on the mechanisms of collective attribution of threats and opportunities, social appropriation and boundary activation. The fourth section provides broader context by explaining how these movements emerged between 2014 and 2016, years of rapid decline in the Afghan government's capacity and credibility. The fifth and concluding section returns to the main questions of the thesis by exploring how these particular events were shaped by the fragility of the Afghan state as well as the centralised presidential system that was created by the 2004 constitution.

The presence and absence of organisations in contentious mobilisations

The statebuilding enterprise that followed the 2001 US-led military intervention in Afghanistan set in motion another period of highly turbulent and contentious politics amidst the country's protracted conflict and violence. While the Taliban and other extremist groups challenged the legitimacy and authority of the liberal democratic regime through an armed insurgency and violent tactics such as suicide bombings, many other groups chose repertoires prescribed by the new liberal democratic system. The latter groups formed associations, political parties and formal or informal coalitions to promote or defend their interests and values from within the state institutions created by the 2004 constitution.

When formal and institutional politics failed to respond to social demands for inclusion and change, many turned to the streets, turning the post-2001 period a period of intense and passionate street politics. As reviewed in chapter 2, since the 1970s scholars of social movements have recognised the role of formal organisations as well as informal social networks in social mobilisation (McCarthy & Zald, 1977). Social movement organisations play central roles in mobilising resources and people and sustaining protest activities over extended periods of time. However, organisations can take different forms, ranging from highly centralised and formalised to more flexible and participatory and grassroots structures (Della Porta & Diani, 2006, pp. 135-161). The diversity of organisational forms in Afghanistan was also illustrated by the four case study groups discussed in the previous three chapters.

The four case study groups demonstrate an effort by various Afghan social and political groups to respond to the statebuilding enterprise in Afghanistan after 2001 in a more organised fashion. However, many other responses to the idea and practice of statebuilding were expressed through more informal social networks that linked wide ranges of formal organisations and grassroots activists. These networks of formal organisations and informal alliances came together to organise protest events, ranging from individual and collective hunger strikes and boycotts, through localised demonstration against district government authorities, to more national and even transnational mobilisation of people and resources.

However, not all protest events of this period were organised in response to policies and programmes of the Afghan state institutions. Many were organised in response to policies or behaviours of foreign actors, including the US and NATO forces that were deployed in the country to fight the insurgency and help stabilise the country. For example, in February 2012 a series of protests were organised against alleged burning of copies of the

Quran at Bagram Airbase, the largest US military base in the country. After several days of violent protests in many provinces, which killed more than three dozen, including 4 Americans, and injured 200 others (King, 2012), President Barak Obama was forced to write a formal letter of apology to Afghanistan's President, Hamid Karzai, to express his 'deep regrets' over the incident (Agence France-Presse, 2012). Still other protest events were organised in the diplomatic quarters of Wazir Akbar Khan and Shahr-e Naw of Kabul to demand that the international community and the United Nations support certain causes. For example, on 5 August 2007, more than a hundred women, widowed during the years of war, gathered outside the UN office to demand accountability for crimes perpetrated during the war (Agence France-Presse, 2007). Nonetheless, over time most protest events were organised to influence the policies and programmes of the Afghan state institutions. After its opening on the Darul Aman Road of Kabul in 2005, the National Assembly became a popular destination of regular protest rallies, petition campaigns and hunger strikes. For example, in October 2011, Simin Barakzai, a woman member of parliament from the western province of Herat, went on a 19-day hunger strike outside the parliament to protest against her disqualification from her parliamentary seat after an investigation into voter fraud in the 2010 parliamentary elections (Reuters, 2011). Barakzai's hunger strike, which attracted significant public attention and media coverage, became an important precedent for a collective hunger strike by some 80 students of the Social Science Faculty of Kabul University. These students began their week-long strike on 20 May 2013 in front of the Parliament Building to demand reforms in Kabul University. The student protest, which attracted widespread support from civil society groups, led to rival protests by other students who opposed the demands for reform, which included removal of certain members of the faculty (Ibrahimi, 2013).

The National Assembly as a site of protest offered protestors an important opportunity to gain political and media attention. However, as discussed in chapter 5, the parliament in

Afghanistan was a weak institution. Dominated by independent members with weak political affiliations and few programmatic or policy agendas, and overshadowed by the powers of the president's office in the country's highly centralised presidential system, the parliament had little influence over government policies. Consequently, for those protesters demanding change in government policies or programmes, the Presidential Palace, known as Arg, in the centre of the city is a favourite destination.

From Single Events to Campaigns of Protests

While most protests remained localised and ephemeral, ending with single acts of protest, others involved coordination of multiple events at national and transnational scales and over extended periods of time. In the words of Tilly (2004), these movements combine 'campaigns', special social movement 'repertoire' with sustained public display of 'WUNC' which he described as the following:

- *worthiness*: sober demeanor; neat clothing; presence of clergy, dignitaries, and mothers with children;
- *unity*: matching badges, headbands, banners, or costumes; marching in ranks; singing and chanting;
- *numbers*: headcounts, signatures on petitions, messages from constituents, filling streets;
- *commitment*: braving bad weather; visible participation by the old and handi-capped; resistance to repression; ostentatious sacrifice, subscription, and/or benefaction' (Tilly, 2004, p. 4).

To explain the dynamics of the shift from single events of protests to sustained campaigns with western-style social movement repertoires, I will discuss the following three movements in greater details.

The protests and counter-protests over the killing of Fakhunda March 2015

One of the largest social mobilisations of the post-2001 period in Afghanistan was triggered by the mob killing of Farkhunda Malikzadah in the afternoon of Thursday 19 March 2014. While visiting the Shahi Du Shamshirah shrine in the centre of Kabul,

Malikzadah, a 27-year old woman was accused by Zain Al-Abidin, a 57-year old attendant of the shrine, of having desecrated the Quran by burning copies of it. The shrine is one of the oldest and most popular of its kind in the centre of the city. The accusation mobilised a spontaneous mob of mostly young men who began beating Malikzadah and dragging her around the shrine before driving a car over her unconscious body and then finally setting her body alight. The acceptance of the accusations of Quran burning went beyond those who participated in the killing. A number of prominent officials and religious figures supported the killing. These included Simin Ghazal Hasanzadah, a woman who served as Deputy Minister of Information and Culture, Zalmai Zabuli, Chair of Complaints Commission of Meshrano Jirga, the Upper House of the Afghan Parliament, and Hashmat Istanekzai, a spokesman of Kabul Police, and Mawlawi Ayaz Nayazi, the Imam of Wazir Muhammad Akbar Khan Mosque in the diplomatic neighbourhood of Kabul (Aman, 2015). Furthermore, even the Kabul Police department appears to have accepted the accusation of Quran burning. In a move to defuse tension, police officials asked the family of Farkhunda to report to media that she was mentally ill (Goldstein & Shakib, 2015).

The horror of the killing became apparent after the crowd dispersed and some of the participants shared footages of the incident on their social media platforms, including many who acknowledged their own role in it. These social media footages were subsequently used to arrest 22 suspects (Khamush, 2015). Despite the initial confusion and support for the killing, the broader social response quickly turned to collective moral outrage and indignation. Such brutal killing of a young woman in broad daylight, in the presence of police officers, and in an area only about two kilometres away from the presidential palace, shocked the entire country. For obvious reasons, Kabul's professional women and rights activists were among the most outraged. A woman rights activists described her own shock and horror the moment she received the news.

It was one of the last days of the year. My husband returned home and said “I think a woman has been set alight at the Shahe Du Shamshirah Wali”. I asked, “Why?” in shock. He said: “it is said that she has burnt a Quran”. [I said to myself] “Oh my God. No sane human being does this. She was either psychologically ill or it is a lie” (Interview [33]).

As details of the killings circulated, Farkhunda became the symbol of intense debates over the situation of women in the country. Some of the country’s major newspapers dedicated special issues to bring together activists, journalists and poets to discuss the incident, (Etilaatroz Daily, 2015; Hasht-e Sobh Daily, 2016), major television networks organised extensive talk shows and produced documentary films and investigative reports about Farkhunda and the situation of women in the country more generally (BBC Newsnight, 2015; Saba Television, 2016; Parsa & Sabawun, 2017), and several groups took to the streets of Kabul and other provinces of the country to protest the government’s failure to protect women.

However, while the collective shock and anger mobilised the public in opposition to violence against women, the social mobilisation that followed also exposed the country’s deep social divisions. In the course of one week after the incident, several protest events were organised in Kabul and other provinces. The burial of Farkhunda on 22 March became a major public protest event in itself. It drew thousands of people who spontaneously turned the event into a major occasion for expression of anger over the killing as well as over the religious figures and politicians who had initially approved the killing. In a highly powerful symbolic act of protest, dozens of young women activists assumed leadership of the event. As one participant said,

The moment we arrived, her [Farkhunda’s] father was trying to take her body off the ambulance. We did not let him do that. We said, “Dear father! This body does not belong to you; it belongs to the women of Afghanistan” (Interview [33]).

The women carried the coffin of Farkhunda on their own shoulders to the cemetery, refusing to allow the male participants to touch her coffin. In a move that further enraged

many conservative ulema, the participants refused to allow Nayazi, the Imam of Wazir Akbar Khan Mosque, to join the ceremony even though he had subsequently changed his initial remarks in support of the killing. These were highly symbolic acts of protest in a country where traditionally burial services are usually dominated by men and led by a cleric.

Over the following days three major demonstrations were organised in Kabul. These events became symptomatic of the broader social and political responses to the incident. First, on 22 March, a day after the burial service, the first demonstration was organised by Hezb-e Hambastagi Afghanistan and Belqis Roshan, a former woman member of Meshrano Jirga, the Upper House of Afghan Parliament, from the province of Farah. Hundreds of members and supporters of the party gathered outside the Shah-e Du Shamshira shrine and marched through the street where Farkhunda was murdered. The demonstration ended with a pronouncement of a statement and planting of a tree at the location where Farkhunda's body was set alight.

The second major demonstration was organised on 24 March by a group that described itself as *Faa'lin-e madani wa shahrwandan-e Kabul*, Civil Activists and Citizens of Kabul. In contrast to the other two main protests, it was organised outside the Supreme Court. The event, which was organised by a range of groups and grassroots activists, attracted several thousand participants, becoming the largest single social mobilisation against this particular incident. The organisers included many former members of Afghanistan 1400 as well as members of a range of non-governmental organisations and political groups.¹³ However, the organisers decided to make the event as non-partisan and inclusive as possible. In my interviews, organisers of this demonstration described how

¹³ These former members of Afghanistan 1400 had parted ways with the movement after disagreements emerged over the movement's strategy in 2014 (See chapter 6).

they deliberately avoided employing languages or symbols that could associate the event with any established social and political groups, including women rights NGOs. For example, participants were actively discouraged from holding banners and placards carrying the names and arms of existing political parties and NGOs. Similarly, prominent politicians were not listed as speakers in the conclusion of the event (Associated Press, 2015).

The third rally was organised on 26 March by a relatively unknown group called *Majma-e Tansiq-e Ulema-e Afghanistan*, the Forum of Organisation of Scholars of Afghanistan. The forum was led by Mawlawi Enayatullah Baligh, a politician and religious figure who was nominated by President Karzai as Minister of Haj and Religious Endowments in 2010 but failed to secure the vote of confidence from the parliament. Baligh also served as Imam of the Pul-e Kheshti Mosque in the centre of Kabul. The rally brought together several imams of mosques and other religious figures along with several hundreds of their supporters. Similar to the Hezb-e Hambastagi, this group also chose the Shah-e Du Shamshira as the site for their rally. As will be discussed further below, the organisers of this demonstration combined the condemnation of the killing with a defense of the ulema and religious establishment against public criticism after the killing.

Despite their important differences, these protests radically changed the public opinions towards the killing of Farkhunda, and forced the government to take action against the perpetrators. President Ghani formed a special commission to investigate the incident. The commission did not find any evidence of burning of the Quran by Farkhunda. In the meantime, the police arrested 49 suspects, including 18 police personnel. In the first trial of the suspects on 6 May 2015, four primary culprits, including Zain Al-Abidin, the shrine attendant, were given death sentences, 8 others were given 16-years prison terms, and four police officers were given one-year prison terms.

However, as documented in a detailed report by Alissa Rubin of the New York Times (2015), the initial momentum for prosecution of the perpetrators was lost in subsequent phases of the trial. Subsequent court proceedings were organised in the absence of the family of Farkhunda or their attorney, and there were major flaws in every step of the process. On 30 June 2015, the Appeal Court in Kabul changed the decisions of the Primary Court, reducing the death penalties for the four primary perpetrators to prison terms, and giving similar lighter sentences to others. According to a detailed investigation by by Hasht-e Sobh Daily and Payk (2017), a centre of investigative journalism in Kabul, in February 2017 only 11 of the civilians were still held in prison and all others were set free.

Protests against the killing of the Zabul Seven: November 2015

On 11 November 2015, Kabul saw one of the largest demonstrations in its history. The demonstration was organised in protest against killing of seven civilian Hazaras by militant groups in the southern province of Zabul. The seven victims, who became known as the Zabul Seven (Tolo News, 2015b), included Shukria a 9-year old girl along with her father, mother and brother. They were among dozens of civilian Hazaras who were kidnapped from buses and cars while travelling on various roads across the country (Goldstein & Shah, 2015). The Zabul Seven were abducted on 13 October while travelling on the road in the southern province of Zabul. After several weeks of captivity, on 7 November 2015 bodies of the victims were found on the road side in an area outside government control. It was not clear which particular group was responsible for the abduction and killing as the area was contested by two factions of the Taliban and a group of foreign militants that were reported to have established links to the ISIS. Although in most reports the ISIS was blamed for the killing (Mashal & Shah, 2015; Reuters, 2015), the Taliban movement also has a long history of persecuting the Hazaras (Ibrahimi, 2017).

Regardless of which group was responsible, the killing became a rallying cry for expression of popular frustrations that were building up over the government's inability to provide security. After the bodies of the victims were given to the officials in Zabul, the government planned to hand them over to their family members for burial in their home district of Jaghuri in Ghazni province. However, a spontaneously-organised group of activists in Kabul and Ghazni opposed the immediate burial of the victims. Instead, they demanded that the corpses be brought to Kabul where they also planned a demonstration against the government's failure to protect the civilians against terrorist violence.

The organisers of the protest faced formidable challenges. Time was of critical importance as according to Islamic traditions, dead bodies must be buried as quickly as possible. Within a period of two days, the organisers needed to organise transfer of the bodies of the victims through the highly insecure 150-km road from Ghazni to Kabul and plan what turned out to be one of the largest demonstrations in the city's history. Thus, in addition to government reluctance and opposition, there were genuine security concerns that the predominantly Hazara convoy that accompanied the coffins could come under attack by the insurgents along the Ghazni-Kabul highway.

What triggered the decision to organise a protest could not be ascertained. Some of the activists I interviewed claimed that a single post on Facebook mobilised the initial network of activists into action. Nonetheless, on 8 November the call for protest circulated through social media networks and on 9 November a network of activists was mobilised in Kabul and Ghazni; activists in Ghazni had secured the support of families of the victims. Before heading towards Kabul on 10 November, some two thousand people gathered to protest the killing in the city of Ghazni (Andalid, 2015). On the evening of 10 November 2015, when the bodies of the victims arrived in Kabul, I was also in the city,

and thus had the opportunity to observe the event, beginning with preparation meetings that took place a night before the demonstration. The convoy of Hazara activists and family members took the coffins to the Musallaye- Shahid Mazari, a wide open space that is designated for mass prayers such as Eid prayers. Located in the Dasht-i Barchi district of Kabul, over the years the centre has also become the main venue for mass social and political gatherings of the Hazaras of the city (See below).

As planned, on the morning of 11 November the crowd began marching from Musallay-i Shahid Mazari towards the presidential palace. As it moved along the 10-km route, the crowd grew larger, attracting thousands of participants, including a significant number of participants from among other ethnic groups. By mid-day, the crowd of tens of thousands of participants had reached Pashtunistan Square outside the Presidential Palace.

The sheer number and diversity of the participants of the event encouraged many commentators to see in the movement the signs of a new national solidarity against violence and terrorism and even a new ‘shift’ in politics of the country. For example, Robert Crews (2015), a long-term observer of Afghanistan argued that,

The protests in Afghanistan—the largest popular demonstrations ever in the country—reflect a dramatic shift in Afghan politics. Inspired by many causes and ideologies, Afghans are mobilizing against their government on a scale that is unprecedented in the country’s history.

While the protestors were united by a shared demand for security and outrage against terrorism (Yunespour, 2015), as the crowd grew the demonstration became an amalgam of social and political groups with different agendas and interests. This high level diversity of the participants had particularly important implications for collective representation of the demonstration and framing of their demands. The final resolution of the protest, which I had observed being drafted by a small group of organisers late on the previous evening, was clearly based on the primary concerns and security challenges

facing the Hazara community. Even among the Hazaras, the event was an amalgamation of several groups with different interests and agendas. As noted by van Bijlert (2015),

The demonstration, which continued well into the night, became an amalgam of emotions and agendas: grief and horror over the attacks; defiance against brutality; exasperation over the perceived non-responsiveness of the government; calls for greater security, alongside the airing of more localised demands; and, possibly, among some, a hope to further undermine the government. The government initially focused mainly on the latter part, largely treating the demonstration as a threat and a slight, while ignoring the underlying emotions that brought so many people who had no direct link to the victims on the streets

There was also an important confusion about how to end the protest. The confusion was also reinforced by how the government responded to it. In the words of van Bijlert (2015) the government responded ‘first with silence, then with a fairly impersonal presidential speech in the late afternoon and finally, around 9 pm, in a televised meeting with a delegation representing the protesters, which seemed a touch more acerbic than necessary’.

The televised meeting at 9 pm was organised after some protestors had crossed the wall surrounding the Arg and a number of other important government offices. As the crowd gathered outside the presidential palace, in the early afternoon some younger participants began discussing the idea of climbing the high concrete walls that surround the Arg. Others suggested the idea of an indefinite sit-in in the Pashtunistan Square. Towards the end of the day, while many protestors dispersed several hundred remained outside the Arg. In the early hours of the evening some of those who remained managed to get into the Office of Administrative Affairs. In response, the Presidential Guards opened fire in the air, which was reported to have injured several protestors (Harooni, 2015).

At the 9 pm meeting, President Ghani, and Chief Executive Officer Abdullah along with Sarwar Danish, and Muhammad Mohaqeq, both Hazaras and second Vice-President and second Deputy CEO respectively, met with a particular group of representatives of the

demonstrators. The group included Hazara members of parliament from the district of Jaghuri along with a few representatives of Shi'a ulema and elders of village of Dah Murdah from which the seven victims came. Consequently, the younger activists who organised the protest and represented more diverse socio-political groups were excluded. These activists framed the killing as part of a broader government failure to protect the civilians. By promoting village and district-level representatives as leaders of the protest the government also turned it into a local issue.

Nonetheless, the meeting which was broadcast live on the Radio and Television of Afghanistan, proved to be highly contentious. Bashir Fahimi, a cleric and representative of Ayatullah Fayyaz, a Hazara and one of the most prominent religious authority based in Najaf, harshly criticised Ghani on a range of issues, including by pointing out to lack of Hazaras among the staff of the president's office. President Ghani spoke at great length defending his government's record in making every possible effort to secure release of the hostages. To the surprise of the Hazara activists, the strongest defense of the government came from Muhammad Mohaqeq. In his speech, Mohaqeq lashed out at the organisers of the demonstration, defending President Ghani against the accusation of indifference towards the abduction of civilian Hazaras and pointing to the broader suffering of all communities in the country. He accused them of 'exploiting the bloods of martyrs' to mobilise people against the government. More specifically, he claimed some of the organisers were motivated by their failures in the elections or secure jobs in the National Unity Government (Tolo News, 2015c).

The Enlightenment Movement

In May 2016, the Enlightenment Movement (Jonbesh-e Roshanayee) emerged in response to a cabinet decision to change the route of a 500 kV trans-regional electricity transmission line that was designed to import electricity from Central Asian republics to

Afghanistan and then Pakistan in South Asia. Known as TUTAP after the name of the participating countries (Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan) the line was funded by the Asian Development Bank.¹⁴ The initiative was part of Afghanistan's Power Sector Master Plan, a detailed plan for expansion of electricity services prepared in 2013 by Fichtner, a German consulting firm. The plan, which was also funded by the ADB, had recommended that the TUTAP line pass through the Central Highland region of Hazarajat, going through the Hazara-majority province of Bamyan before reaching Kabul. The other alternative route would go through the Salang Pass in the north of Kabul. Assessing the comparative advantages of both routes, the report suggested that 'The Bamyan route will avoid the narrow space and difficulties along the Salang Pass, will allow connecting further generation by coal fired power plants along the route and will secure power supply of Kabul and south Afghanistan by using a separate route (Fichtner GmbH & Co. KG, 2013, p. 3).

In January 2016, disagreements first emerged within the National Unity Government after the Ministry of Power and Energy and Da Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat (DABS), the state-owned electricity company, decided to reroute the line through the Salang Pass. The intra-government disagreements first became public after a letter of Vice-President Sarwar Danish to DABS was published by Etillatroz Daily. In the letter, after assessing the technical, economic and environmental advantages of the Bamyan over the Salang route Danish (2016) argued that changing the route

does not have any reasonable technical and economic justification, and is in contradictions with national interests, and [principles of] balanced development, social justice and other values enshrined in Afghanistan's constitution, and [thus]

¹⁴ TUTAP was one of the two main trans-regional electricity lines that aimed to import electricity from the energy-rich Central Asian republics to Afghanistan and Pakistan. The other major line is CASA-1000 which is funded by the World Bank to bring electricity from Kyrgyz Republic and Turkmenistan to Afghanistan and Pakistan. See podcasts of presentations of the projects by ADB and World Bank experts in an event organised by the Centre for Strategic and International Studies in Washington (Centre for Strategic and International Studies 2014).

is not approvable by me. And the people of the central regions have repeatedly expressed their opposition to it, and have shared their reasonable demands with the government. Now, the respected Ministry of Energy and Water and the respected corporation of DABS must reconsider its master plan (because as it was mentioned some provinces were not included in the Master Plan), and execute the third line for transition of the 500 kV electricity from Pul-e Khumri to Bamyan through the province of Bamyan so that concentration of multiple electricity lines in an incident-prone route such as Salang is avoided [My translation].

In combining the demand for balanced national development with economic, technical and environmental reasons, Danesh's letter was symptomatic of arguments by protestors who dominated the movement. The movement was built around a collective narrative, which among other things, was publicized through frequent public statements and resolutions that were issued by its *Shuray-e aali mardumi*, or People's Supreme Council and widely shared through social media. Between 1 May 2016 and 4 May 2017, the movement issued 50 separate statements and resolutions, which in July 2017 they were preparing to publish as a volume called *goftaman-e roshanayee* (Jonbesh-e Roshanayee, 2017). Besides the demand for balanced national development, the organisers of the protest emphasised the broader advantages of the Bamyan route over the Salang Pass, highlighting its significance for the national economy of the country, and increasing the security of energy supply for cities such as Kabul by adding an alternative route to the avalanche-prone Salang route. Two such reasons cited by movement in its first statement on 3 May 2016 are worth highlighting here. First, the statement argued that extension of the power line through Bamyan had important additional advantages for the national economy of the country. They argued the line could make sufficient electricity available for extraction of the country's largest iron ore deposit in Hajigak in Wardak province¹⁵.

¹⁵ In 2011, a \$10 billion contract for extraction of four blocks of the Hajigak mine, one of the largest untapped deposits of its kind in the world, was awarded to a consortium of Indian companies led by the Steel Authority of India. However, because of subsequent worsening of security conditions, the company did not make any actual investment in extraction of the mine. In May 2015, Indian press reported that the consortium was considering withdrawing from the project altogether. The report was subsequently rejected by Indian authorities ((The Times of India 2015).

Furthermore, they argued the electricity transmitted through the line could be used to generate even more domestic electricity by activating coal-fired power plants near coal deposits in Bamyan and Samangan provinces. Second, the statement pointed to environmental Hazards of the Salang Route, highlighting the Salang Pass's narrow valley and long winter and heavy snowfalls. Their argument was that extension of all lines through the treacherous mountains would make Kabul and other regions in the south of the Hindukush completely dependent on a single route which was highly vulnerable to avalanches. As a result, they argued that another line through Bamyan would reduce the risk associated with overdependence on the Salang Route (Jonbesh-e Roshanayee, 2017, pp. 17-19).

Many prominent organisers of the movement participated in several television programmes where they debated with government officials, challenging the rationale for changing the route. In response, in a series of debates on television networks (Tolo News, 2016a; Khurshid TV, 2016) government officials cited pragmatic and practical reasons. They cited a different document by Fichtner which recommended Salang as a cheaper and faster route. Government officials also argued that preparation for the Salang route was already underway as the project was already designed and ready to be tendered. For example, in a video statement on 9 May 2016 President Ghani argued

This project, which was supposed to have started a long time ago and already be operational by 2016, was delayed for several years. At this juncture, we had to consider the development opportunity cost. As our financial resources are sadly insufficient, our current dependence on funding has meant that our options regarding national projects are also limited and dependent on conditions, which are presented mostly with a particular perspective of economic rationality. For this reason, we had to use this last chance and deadline and take the final steps towards the implementation of this national project in order not to lose this important development opportunity (Ruttig, 2016).

For organisers of the movements, these economic, technical and environmental arguments were underpinned by an underlining factor that was central to the claim of the movement: a government policy of discrimination against the historically-persecuted

Hazara people of the country. Although the movement was formed around claims of discrimination against Hazaras and thus had a strong ethnic element from the outset, the ethnic identity and rhetoric of the movement gained greater salience over time. Initially, leaders of the protest framed the claim around the provisions of the country's 2004 Constitution that demand the government to ensure *enkeshaf-e mutawazen*, or balanced development at the national level. Thus, the core argument was that by excluding the Hazara regions from major infrastructural projects, the government was violating its obligation of ensuring balanced national development. Over time, the movement placed greater and clearer emphasis on the rerouting of the electricity line as an example of broader discrimination against Hazaras of the country. Beginning with its statement number 9, the movement began referring to fighting 'systematic discrimination' as one of its primary goals (Jonbesh-e Roshanayee, 2017, p. 34). The shift from rational and technical claim-making towards more open assertion of systematic discrimination against the Hazaras occurred through a series of events in which the movement organisers interacted with the government while trying to build its constituency and respond to its critics. The following main events¹⁶ were central to a chain of organisers' protest and government responses that shaped the movement's identity and rhetoric.

- On 9 January, the first protest against the rerouting of the line was organised in Bamyan.
- In response to mounting criticism, on 11 January the National Unity Government formed a technical committee, consisting of representatives of DABS, the Ministry of Energy and Water and the office of Vice-President Danesh, to reassess the advantages and disadvantages of each route. The committee submitted its report to the government on 10 March, which presented the government with two

¹⁶ The description of these events are based on Ruttig (2016) and other media sources.

options: TUTAP be built through Bamyan, or continue through Salang Pass but a separate 220 KV line be extended from the TUTAP line from Baghlan to Bamyan.

- On 30 April, the cabinet approved the Salang Route.
- On 6 May, the first significant demonstration was organised in Bamyan under the name of *Junbeshe-e Roshanayee* followed by similar protests in Day Kundi and Herat provinces.
- On 9 May, the movement's High People's Council held its first major gathering in Musallay-e Shahid Mazari. The event was attended by all major Hazara political groups, including Vice-President Danesh and Deputy CEO Mohammad Mohaqiq, and former Vice-President Karim Khalili. In a highly symbolic act, these former and current government officials left the podium to sit on the ground among the people.
- On 12 May, supporters of the movement organised a protest in London where President Ghani was attending a major anti-corruption summit. On the same day, three Hazara activists disrupted President Ghani's speech at the Royal United Services Institute (Sengupta, 2016);
- On 14 May, 31 mostly Hazara members of Wolesi Jirga, the Lower House of the National Assembly, walked out of the parliament in protest against the government decision to reroute TUTAP.
- On 15 May, President Ghani suspended work on the Salang route and announces another 13-member National Commission to re-assess the routes of the power line. The commission would include some of the organisers of the movement. The High People's Council of the movement declared revocation of the rerouting decision as a precondition for any negotiations.
- On 16 May, the movement's first major demonstration attracted tens of thousands of participants. The protestors gathered from various predominantly Hazara

neighbourhoods of West Kabul before marching towards the Presidential Palace through the Deh Mazang Square, one of the two narrow valleys that connect the west of the city with its administrative and commercial centre. The government responded by closing off all streets leading to the Presidential Palace by erecting barriers with some 560 separate shipping containers (Tolo News, 2016b). Vice-President Danesh and Deputy CEO Muhammad Mohaqeq did not participate in the demonstration, marking the first major split in the movement between the two major Hazara officials in the government and the protestors.

What is clear is that by May 2016, the Enlightenment Movement had emerged as a fully-fledged social and political movement, presenting the government with one of its most sustained grass-roots challenges. The 16 May demonstration was a highly critical event in the trajectory of the movement. On the one hand, it marked a major fracture in the initial consensus among the Hazara elites as Danesh and Mohaqeq parted ways with the movement, henceforth becoming major objects of criticism and ridicule by the movement supporters. Karim Khalili and Sadeq Modabber, second Vice-President and Head of Administrative Affairs in the Karzai government, respectively, withdrew from the movement ahead of its second major demonstration on 23 July. On the other, the popular turnout in the demonstration encouraged a younger generation of politicians and activists to stay the course.

Those who left the movement were partly motivated by the government's offer to negotiate and partly by a fear of rise of a new generation of activists who threatened the hegemony of the dominant Hazara political elites over the political representation of the Hazaras. The National Commission announced by President Ghani on 15 May included six Hazara members, including Ahmad Behzad, a leading organiser of the movement and a Hazara member of parliament from the western province of Herat. However, only one

of the six Hazara members accepted the appointment, which led to appointment of three pro-government Hazaras to the commission on 18 May (Bjelica & Ruttig, 2016). On 24 May, the National Commission presented its report to the President, which as organisers of the movement had suspected, confirmed the previous cabinet decision. Citing the previous government reasons, the report concluded

Neutrally assessing the trajectory of events and expressed opinions for and against the two routes, the commission has come to believe that the recommendation of the Fichtner company in its first report (although it was not based on field investigation) on the preference of Bamyān route looks more logical, and probably it was better that the relevant agencies had acted upon it. However, over the past three years the events have developed to a direction that today it is impossible to reverse to the initial position (Etilaatroz Daily, 2016b) [My translation].

The commission also recommended that the government upgrade the alternative line for Bamyān by increasing its capacity to 300 megawatt electricity for the entire region of Hazarajat. While the commission's recommendations strengthened the position of Hazaras in the government, for the younger members of the movement it appears to have had the effect of confirming their suspicion that the government was using negotiation to derail the movement without genuinely renegotiating the 30 April cabinet decision. Henceforth, the intra-Hazara conflict assumed greater significance in the politics of the movement. The High People's Council continued meeting and issuing statements without the representatives of Vice-President Danish and Deputy CEO Mohaqeq.

In July, the confrontation between the Hazara officials in the government and the movement intensified further. On 10 and 11 July, Danish and Mohaqeq issued separate statements criticising the movement. In response the Enlightenment Movement issued another statement (Statement 21) in which it accused the government of 'continuing a policy of "divide and rule"' and aiming to reduce 'advocacy of the Enlightenment Movement to an erosive and trivial intra-ethnic conflict' (Jonbesh-e Roshanayee, 2017, p. 68). Further, the movement argued that

Our target is the government of Afghanistan, regardless of the ethnicity of state officials. Ethnicity is not an issue here. If we address the President and the Chief Executive Officer, it is because of their authorities and responsibilities, not their ethnic identities' (Jonbesh-e Roshanayee, 2017, pp. 69-70).

To maintain the social momentum, the activists continued gathering at the Mosallay-e Shahid Mazari throughout June and July. Declaring the nights of Ramadan (6 June – 6 July 2016) as nights of enlightenment they continued gathering at the Mosalla. On 8 July, during a major gathering on the occasion of Eid, which it called enlightenment Eid, the movement gave the government two weeks to revoke the 30 April cabinet decision. If not heeded, it threatened to organise an open-ended demonstration (Jonbesh-e Roshanayee, 2017, p. 64). As might have been expected, the government did not revoke the government decision. In response, the movement announced 23 July 2015 as the date for an unlimited demonstration, beginning with marches from 10 separate routes towards the Presidential Palace (Jonbesh-e Roshanayee, 2017, pp. 72-73). The 23 July demonstration attracted several thousand people but as it reached the Deh Mazang Square it encountered barriers set up by the government, using shipping containers. While most of the demonstrators dispersed after 1.30 pm, several hundred remained, intending to set up a tent at the square. Within minutes after 2.30 pm, the remaining crowd was attacked by two suicide bombers, who ISIS claimed were its members. According to a subsequent UN investigation, the first attacker who managed to explode his suicide vest killed 85 people and injured 413 others. The second attacker died by partial detonation of his own explosive vest (United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, 2016, p. 8).

The attack on the peaceful gathering raised many questions about the future of peaceful protest movements in the country. For one thing, it made clear that the outcome of protest movements was not shaped by interaction between protest movements and the government alone. Anti-state forces such as the ISIS and the Taliban were as opposed to the government as to peaceful activism of a rising generation of activists and politicians

who saw their future in the success of the liberal-democratic state. Among the supporters and critics of the movement, the attack raised some hard questions. Some asked whether in view of such risks the movement leaders were culpable in exposing large numbers of people to such lethal attack. In fact, one day before the demonstration, the government reportedly had warned the leaders of movement of ‘a credible but non-specific terrorist threat’ (United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, 2016, p. 4) in Kabul for which the demonstration could become a target. The argument was subsequently taken by other critics of the movement, including those associated with Muhammad Mohaqeq to attack the organisers of the protest. However, it is clear that leaders of the movement did not heed the warning of security threats as they suspected the government would use security warnings as a ploy to neutralise the movement.

Rising Protests amidst Declining Government Capacity and Credibility

How did these three protest movements emerge in this particular period of the history of Afghanistan? This is an important question to ask because these movements became the largest social protests since the overthrow of the Taliban regime in 2001. Furthermore, they emerged in a period when the post-2001 statebuilding enterprise faced its most formidable security, socio-economic and political challenges. The years 2014-16 saw rapid declines in government credibility and capacity, marked by shrinking security space and deteriorating socio-economic conditions. In 2014, Afghanistan experienced three major transitions. First was a presidential election that would facilitate the first change of leadership of the post-2001 highly centralised presidential system. Hamid Karzai, who had served as President of the Interim and Transitional Administration (December-2001-December 2004) and later as popularly elected President, following elections in 2004 and 2009, was barred by the constitution from running for another term. Second, a military and security transition that followed the drawdown of the US and NATO forces and

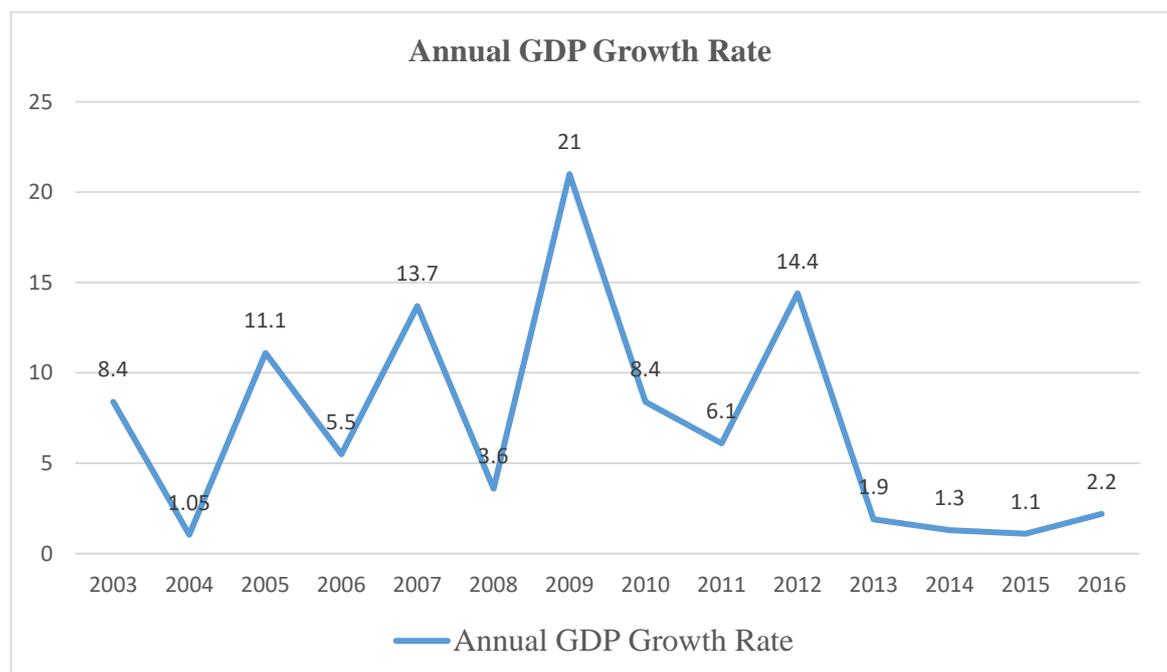
transfer of the overall security responsibility of the country to the Afghan security forces. Third, an economic transition resulted from sudden implosion of the war economy and reduction of foreign aid that followed the withdrawal of most of the US and NATO forces. The effects of these transitions combined to create a highly volatile political, security and economic environment (Maley, 2016).

The first round of the presidential elections on 5 April 2014 failed to produce a clear winner with more than 50 percent of the votes. The results of the run-off on 14 June between Abdullah Abdullah and Ashraf Ghani, the two front runners who had secured 45 and 31.5 percent of the vote respectively, placed Ghani ahead of Abdullah who then accused the electoral commission of orchestrating mass fraud in favour of his rival. The results, which some international observers estimated contained more than 2 million fraudulent votes (Goldstein, 2014), were so tainted by fraud and irregularities that several weeks of audits by a team of international experts could not determine the actual winner of the vote. The political crisis that followed stopped short of a civil war after a political agreement, mediated by the then US Secretary of State, John Kerry, brought the two contenders together in a government of national unity. Ghani became the President and Abdullah was given the semi-prime ministerial role of Chief Executive Officer (International Crisis Group, 2017).

Beset by deep internal disagreements and factionalism, the National Unity Government faced rapidly shrinking economy and mounting insurgency (International Crisis Group, 2017). Ghani, a former World Bank official, was accused by many of centralising power in a small group of mainly Ghilzai Pashtuns and running the government in highly autocratic manner (Constable, 2016). As figure 1 shows, the country's annual GDP growth, which was highly volatile throughout the post-2001 period, fell from 14.4 in 2012 to just 1.3 and 1.1 percent in 2014 and 2015 respectively. Similarly, the security

conditions deteriorated significantly, with the Afghan Security Forces losing control of large numbers of districts. In May 2017, the US Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) reported that 59.7 percent of Afghanistan's 407 districts were under government control or influence. Another 45 districts were under the insurgent's control or influence and some 119 districts were contested by both the insurgents and the government forces (Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, 2016, p. 88). The figures showed that the Afghan government control or influence over its districts had declined by 15 percent since the end of 2015 (International Crisis Group, 2017, p. 13).

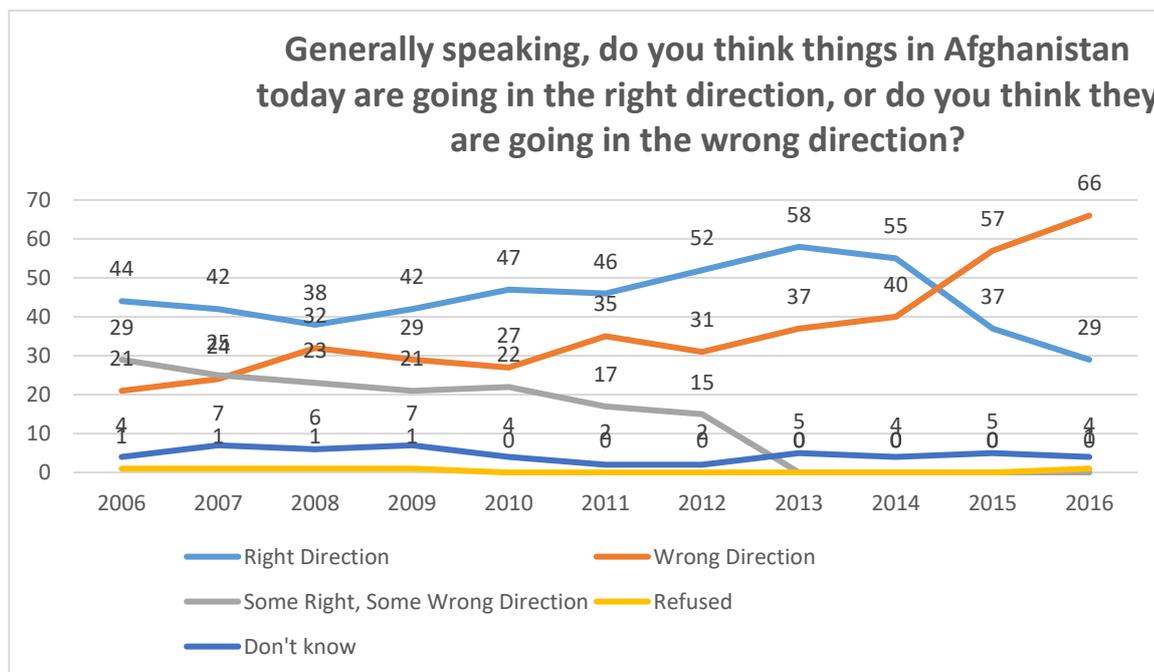
Figure 2: Annual GDP Growth in Afghanistan, 2003-2016. Source: World Development Indicators 2016



The civilian population of Afghanistan bore the brunt of the armed conflict. As documented by the UN (2017), between 2009 and December 2016, the conflict led to killing of 24,841 civilians and injury of 45,347 others. According to the same UN report 3,498 were killed and 7920 others were injured in 2016 alone (p. 3). While most civilian casualties occurred in the course of active armed conflicts or during insurgent attacks on

government and foreign military targets, in 2015 the insurgents began deliberately targeting civilian Hazaras. The same UN report also noted that in 2015, the insurgents abducted 226 Hazaras in 26 separate incidents (pp. 67-68). The number of such abductions dropped to 16 incidents in 2016 but the militant groups stepped up their attacks on Hazara targets in Kabul and other cities (pp. 34-35). These attacks, which included the 23 July suicide bombing of the Enlightenment Movement rally, killed and injured hundreds of Hazaras, greatly straining relations between the Hazara activists and the National Unity Government.

Figure 3: Level of Optimism in the Future Direction of Afghanistan. Source: The Asia Foundation Survey of the Afghan People (2016)



Not surprisingly, as figure 2 shows the effects of the deteriorating security and weakening government capacity and credibility was most clearly reflected in popular optimism about the future direction of the country. According to the Asia Foundation's annual Survey of the Afghan People, the number of people who believed the country was headed in the right direction fell from 55 percent in 2014 to just 29 percent in 2016. By contrast, the

number of respondents who believed the country was going to a wrong direction increased from 40 in 2014 to 66 percent in 2016.

The declining government capacity and shrinking security after 2014 overlapped with the rise a new generation of Afghan intelligentsia who grew up after 2001. The new generation was the product of expansion of public education and exposure of the society to the forces of globalisation. The level of educational attainment of the victims of the 23 July attack on the Roshanayee Movement illustrates the role of the new generation in organising these protest movements. Among those killed, 7 had MA degrees, 25 had bachelor degrees and 40 were active university students (1TV Kabul, 2015).

These rise of protest activism at a time of declining state capacity and credibility point to some important dynamics of contentious politics in Afghanistan. At the core of these protest activities was a general fear of rising threats against both the ideas and practices of the liberal democratic state in the country. Consequently, although apparently a challenge to the authority of the National Unity Government, these protests pointing to a deepening of the post-2001 state in the Afghan society and the rise of a new generation who viewed their future in terms of the success of the state to enforce its authority and provide security and basic services.

Explaining the Mechanisms of Social Mobilisation

Despite their important differences, the organisers of the three protest movements were united by a shared goal of demanding that the government perform its basic functions in providing services and ensuring security. Consequently, none of the movements aimed to challenge the authority of the government. On the contrary, these protestors were seeking to demand that the government give effect to its avowed policies of providing security and public services. However, as organisers of the movements interacted with the

government and engaged in broader social mobilisations these policy-level conflicts gained broader foundational and programmatic dimensions. To explain these shifts, I will explore the key mechanisms involved: collective attribution of threats and opportunities, appropriation of social resources, and identity construction.

Collective Attribution of Threats and Opportunities

To explore how the organisers of the three protests responded to the declining government capacity and credibility, I begin by assessing the primary factor that triggered these movements. To begin with, all three movements were triggered by government's failure to provide security and public services. The protests against the killing of Farkhunda and the Zabul Seven emerged in response to government failures to provide security. The Roshanayee Movement was initiated in response to a deliberate decision to change the route of a major power supply line but at the core of the protest was the government's failure to provide electricity as a basic public service. Furthermore, as the detailed description of the events leading to the rise of the movement showed, the movement's rise and evolution was more profoundly shaped by the limited ability of the state to make and enforce a policy decision authoritatively.

It is important to situate the immediate causes of these protests in broader contexts. While at the national level, violent groups such as the Taliban and the ISIS saw in weakening of government capacity and credibility an opportunity for further deligitimisation and destabilisation of the post-2001 political order, the protest movements reacted to the shrinking of security and social and political space by asserting their voices in the public arena and demanding that the government discharge its responsibility to provide security and services. A collectively-felt urge to act to preserve and protect the post-2001 civil and political space was a common theme that appeared in many of my own interviews with organisers and observers of these protests. Seeking to go beyond their offices to develop

a mass following, many civil society and NGO leaders spoke of the need to move from 'projects' to 'process'. For Hazara organisers of the Enlightenment Movement the TUTAP power line became a symbolic object of protest for what were commonly felt to be years of 'loss of opportunity' for socio-economic development of the Hazara region after 2001.

For the organisers of the Roshanayee Movement, the government decision to change the route of the power transmission line was seen as part of broader pattern of exclusion of the historically-marginalised and mountainous region of Hazarajat from developmental and reconstruction efforts. Among the Hazaras, the movement was an expression of a sense of exclusion of the Hazara regions from reconstruction efforts after 2001. As most of the foreign aid and reconstruction efforts were diverted to the mainly insecure regions of the south and east as part of a strategy to win 'hearts and minds', peaceful regions such as Hazarajat became part of what was described by the World Bank as 'lagging regions', comprising provinces with the highest rates of poverty and the lowest foreign aid spending after 2001. The poverty headcount rate in some areas of these regions was more than 50 percent as compared to the national average of 39 percent. Yet the average per capita foreign aid spending in these regions was half that of the more affluent regions (The World Bank, 2015, pp. 15-16).

Against this background of widespread poverty and exclusion from major developmental and reconstruction efforts, many Hazara activists saw rerouting of the electricity line as another indication of a broader pattern of the exclusion of their region. Demand for electricity was particularly high. In 2016, US authorities estimated that although access to electricity had significantly improved from just 6 percent of the population in 2002, in 2016 only 30 percent had access to reliable electricity, and more than 80 percent of the available electricity was imported from neighbouring countries (Special Inspector

General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, 2016, p. 10). Some provinces such as Bamyan were entirely excluded from the national electricity network of the country. For several years, Hazara activists in Bamyan had regularly protested to attract the attention of the central government and foreign aid donors, with electricity being one of their main demands (Chiovenda, 2014).

Similarly, the mass protests against the killing of Farkhunda and the Zabul Seven were popular responses to the threats of general deterioration of security for civilians, and women in particular. There were, however, important differences among the organisers of the protest movements. For organisers of the protest event against the killing of Zabul Seven, the threat came from outside the political system, from terrorist groups who were motivated to target the Shi'a Hazaras. What motivated the insurgents to target the Hazaras was mostly likely a combination of sectarian hatred of the Shi'a and an instrumental calculation as part of their strategy of destabilising the government by exposing its inability to protect its citizens. By contrast, for organisers of the protest events against the killing of Farkhunda, the threat came from within the society: young men and conservative religious groups who, in comparison to most of the country's rural population, lived under control of the central government in Kabul and benefited from relative stability and the socio-economic changes that the city had experienced after 2001.

However, besides the shared goal of demanding security and services, there were important differences in how organisers of each protest reacted to threats and opportunities that emerged in the course of contentious politics. These event-level differences can be further illustrated by the choice of venues in which the three main events were organised after the killing of Farkhunda. For civil society groups, the threat came from the failure of the state institutions to uphold the rule of law and consequently they gathered to protest outside the Supreme Court in Kabul. By contrast, the ulema and

the Hezb-e Hambastagi chose to gather at the site of the mob attack in the centre of Kabul, bringing their rival and competing positions to the masses. Furthermore, the public horror that followed the killing created an unprecedented opportunity for criticism of the religious establishment, and hence a rare opportunity for secular and liberal groups to challenge and question the authority of religious groups. In response, in their protest on 26 March, the ulema attacked the very concept of civil society and called on the government to stop activities of ‘anti-religion and irreligious currents’ (Sediqi, 2015). Despite these important differences, the killing of civilians by a spontaneous mob of vigilantes in Kabul or armed militants in the remote districts of the province of Zabul shared an important parallel: declining government capacity to ensure security and the efforts by non-state and anti-state actors to use violence to impose their own systems of political and moral control.

Appropriation of Resources

Although after 2014 the general socio-economics situation deteriorated significantly, between 2001 and 2014 a new generation emerged that had acquired greater mobilisational capabilities. While warlords and corrupt politicians benefited most from the inflow of foreign aid, many new groups also accumulated significant resources – material, social and cultural capital - that they could mobilise to engage in sustained protests. As the four case study groups of this thesis show, many of these groups sought to break with the patron-client networks of the groups that dominated the politics of the country. At the level of the three protests discussed in this chapter, the organisers of each protest mobilised particular material, social and cultural resources that they had accumulated after 2001. For example, the four events that followed the killing of Farkhunda were characterised by particular social appropriation strategies. Civil society groups used offices of non-governmental organisations and private consulting companies

as sites of coordination meetings. The ulema tended to gather in mosques or offices of religiously-oriented social organisations and foundations. The HHA used its own party office in Kabul where its leaders met to organise and coordinate its activities. Finally, the Hazara activists who organised the Zabul Seven rally and the Roshanayee Movement's rallies used a far more diverse range of social spaces including private universities, cafes, and NGO and private offices, and mosques that are located in the predominantly Hazara districts in the west of Kabul.

Despite their evident difference in the types of claims they make, diverging social appropriation strategies, and the language and other symbolic resources they employ, the organisers of these events reinforced one another to constitute 'continuous streams of contention' (McAdam, Tarrow, & Tilly, 2004, p. 24). At the least, each event inspired other protests by establishing a precedent and a model that could be emulated. In fact, the organisers that I interviewed described in detail how social networks built in one event were subsequently activated to organise other events. For example, some of the main organisers of the civil society rally against the killing of Farkhunda continued to work together after March 2015. In fact, during the months in which I conducted field research (August-December 2015), many organisers of these protest events had built their entire personal identities around the notion of civil society. Widely known as *faalin jamea madani* (civil society activists), this new generation of activists had emerged out of the comforts of their NGO and consulting offices to lead rallies, criticise the government on television, develop mass following on the country's social media, and speak on behalf of civil society in international conferences.

On 6 April 2015, several civil society activists set up a tent, which they called Advocacy Tent, at Zarnegar Park at the centre of Kabul to press the government to secure the release of 31 civilian Hazaras who were abducted by the militant groups in Zabul on 23 February

2015. The tent hosted several family members of the hostages, and dozens of civil society activists who worked together to maintain public and media interest in the plight of the hostages for several months. During this period, the organisers used the tent to organise cultural activities such as poetry nights, street theatre, and musical performances. These activities maintained the interest of the media which regularly interviewed the organisers and family members of the hostages. As documented by the organisers' Facebook page, the site became such an important object of public attention that several high level officials visited it to express their sympathy with the organisers and families of the victims. On 10 April Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, the Chief Executive Officer of the National Unity Government visited it. On 14 April, Abdul Rauf Ibrahimi, the Speaker of the Wolesi Jirga came to express his support for the organisers. The tent and its network of organisers remained active until November 2015 when the protest against the killing of the Zabul Seven activated more diverse social networks.

In its capacity to organise and coordinate multiple protest events over extended periods of time, the Roshanayee Movement also became the most successful in appropriating a wide range of resources. However, the movement went beyond the notion of civil society by bringing in members of parliament, representatives of political parties and a much more diverse range of younger activists. It was led by what was called *Shuray-e a'li mardumi*, or People's Supreme Council. Designed to include all influential social and political groups in Hazara community, the council included representatives from the main Hazara political parties,¹⁷ Hazara members of the Upper and Lower Houses of the

¹⁷ The most prominent Hazara political parties were: Hezb-e Wahdat-e Islami Afghanistan led by former Vice-President, Karim Khalili; Hezb-e Wahdat-e Islami Mardum-e Afghanistan led by Muhammad Mohaqiq, a former minister in the Karzai government and Second Deputy of the Chief Executive Officer Abdullah in the National Unity Government formed in September 2014; and Hezb-e Ensejam-e Milli Afghanistan led by Sadiq Modabbir, a former senior official in the Karzai government;

Parliament¹⁸ as well as representatives of university students. By maximising participation of various Hazara groups, the movement also lost the multi-ethnic character of the civil society groups. The Musallaye Shahid Mazari, a vast public space in the Dashti-e Barchi district of west Kabul, became the central organising hub for both the Zabul Seven and the Roshanayee movement. Located along Shahid Mazari Road, the only main road that connects the vast sprawling district to the rest of the city, over the years the venue has become the most significant centre of social and political activism for the Hazaras. The place is named after Abdul Ali Mazari, the Hazara politician who was killed by the Taliban in March 1995. Mazari is widely respected by Hazaras as a symbol of unity and struggle for the rights of the community for his role in unifying various Hazara mujahedin factions into the single party of Hezb-e Wahdat-e Islami Afghanistan in 1989 (Ibrahimi, 2009).

Boundary Activation: Identity Formation Processes

The three events also offer important insights into the processes of construction and articulation of a collective identity in Afghanistan during this period. The organisers of the three separate events that followed the killing of Farkhunda constructed their collective identity around three separate identities. First, the demonstration by Hezb-e Hambastagi was organised in the name of the party, a pre-existing social category with its own particular history and symbolic meaning. Second, the largest demonstration that took place outside the Supreme Court defined its highly diverse participants around the notion of civil society. The third event organised by the ulema in Kabul used an existing

¹⁸ It is not clear whether all the Hazara members of the parliament participated in the meetings of the council. However, some MPs took a leading role in the leadership of the movement. These were Ahmad Behzad from Herat, Arif Rahmani from Ghazni, Ghulam Husain Naseri from Wardak, Shah Gul Rezayee from Ghazni, Jafar Mahdawi from Kabul.

organisational identity, although a rather ambiguous one with little prior organisational history.

One might ask why should events organised to condemn a specific brutal crime invoke such highly-divergent notions and social categories. In an important respect, the identities of these groups and events were shaped in the process of interaction and competition as they attempted to bring their various symbolic and interpretive frameworks to provide meaning to the brutal killing of Farkhundah. However, these different approaches were also informed by underlying divisions of the society. A central driver of the various identity construction mechanisms is the broader and pre-existing divide in the Afghan society along a religious-secular continuum. Hezb-e Hambastagi and most organisers of the civil society events tended to be secular and thus use less overtly religious language and symbols. By contrast and for more obvious reasons, the ulema of Kabul employed religious language and symbols. For example, the notion of civil society, which is employed for its assumed non-political nature, was at the core of the contestation. The notion employed by the organisers of the 24 March event outside the Supreme Court served well their purpose of bringing together a wide range of groups, including NGO activists, members of Afghanistan 1400, and supporters of Rawand-e Sabz, Green Trend, a socio-political movement led by Amrullah Saleh, a former Director of National Security Directorate. However, the very unifying role of the subject for participants of this event became a major source of contention between the secular and the religious groups. The ulema, who had come under unusually widespread public criticism for their silence towards or even support for religiously-inspired violence, attacked the very notion of civil society. In their final statement, on 26 March, the ulema declared that,

This is an undeniable crime that [is perpetrated by] some activists and extremists of the civil society who reveal their hostility to Islam and the Muslim nation and [seek to] institutionalise the goals of the enemies of Islam and of this homeland. Some irreligious and extremist activists of civil society have active and central

roles in disruption of security, peace, [and] national unity, [and in spread of] of discord and disunity, and promotion of depravity (*fohashah*), shamelessness and moral corruption. As a result, we, the ulema, see it our responsibility to eradicate this evil tree, destroy it and nip it in the bud [My translation].

However, the secular-religious divide is only one part of the dynamic. There were important divisions among the secular camp. For example, the organisers of the separate civil society Hezb-e Hambastagi rallies did not even consider organising a joint event, even though the organisers of both even tended to be secular. While the protest against the killing of Farkhunda sparked competitive identity-construction processes along secular-religious fault-lines of the country, the Enlightenment Movement represented an effort to invent a new identity, a new social category that refused to align itself with any existing institutional and social categories. Central to identity construction was the notion of *roshanayee* (light or enlightenment), which they used to refer to its literal as well as metaphorical meaning. In a statement on 13 May 2016, two days ahead of its first major demonstration on 16 May, the organisers of the movement declared that,

“Our dream” is to hate “darkness” and to reach “light”. We do not just mean the literal meaning of *roshanayee*. [Rather] its metaphorical meaning is more important. We come to the street for realisation of justice; we come to the street to bury in the cemetery of history the sick and dark-thinking brains, and minds saturated by discrimination and prejudice. We come to the street to shine as an effulgent/radiant electricity at the heart of everything that is dark (Jonbesh-e Roshanayee, 2017, p. 29) [My translation].

By employing abstract notions such as enlightenment as its identity marker, the movement sought to appeal to a new generation of Hazara activists with new socio-cultural sensitivities, on the one hand, and refuse to align itself with the existing ethnic and sectarian divisions of the country, on the other. Nonetheless, the movement was unambiguously shaped by the historical persecution of the Hazaras and their precarious socio-political conditions in the post-2001 period. It framed its core claim against what it described as ‘systematic discrimination’ against the Hazaras. The employment of ethnic

narratives and symbolism increased even further after the 23 July bombing of its demonstration.

Conclusion

The previous two sections highlighted a number of factors that are critical to understanding how state fragility as characterised by poor state capacity and credibility shapes contentious politics in Afghanistan. Two major themes that run through the discussion of the three events are worth highlighting here. First, the three protest events were driven by shared desires for basic security and social services. Although the protestors may use Islamic language and symbols to promote their claims, the demand for security and public services undercuts ideological divides, including that between Islamist and their secular rivals. Second, protests against specific policy failures or policy changes involved a series of underlying programmatic and foundational conflicts as shown by the contestation over the notion of civil society. I explored the two themes through a discussion of underlying divisions in the Afghan society through the mechanisms of collective attributions of threats and opportunities, appropriation of resources, and constructive of collective identities. The recurrent shifts from policy to deeper conflicts are closely linked to the condition of the Afghan state. Three aspects of the relationship between state fragility and protest movements are worth highlighting further here.

Challenges of Poor State Capacity

The three protest movements underline a series of challenges that result from poor capacity of the Afghan state. In fact, the movements were triggered by the state's failure to provide security and basic public services. The environment characterised by the failure of the state to provide security shapes collective action in more complex ways. On the

one hand, nearly four decades of uninterrupted cycles of violence and instability have created a particularly high-risk environment in which engagement in contentious politics always carries the risk of lethal violence. Such risks were most powerfully illustrated by the 23 July 2016 bombing of the Enlightenment Movement. Taken together, the three cases also demonstrate that the inability of the state to provide security and public services creates opportunities for anti-state groups to expose its weakness even further.

The security environment also shaped the manner in which the state responded to mass protest events. In the case of the Roshanayee Movement one might expect that given the object of the protest, relevant civilian ministries of the state such as the Ministry of Energy and Water or DABS would be the primary points of contact for the protestors. However, throughout 2016, the National Security Council and National Directorate of Security became the lead institutions in negotiating with leaders of the Enlightenment Movement. Given the security environments of Kabul, there were important reasons why the security agencies of the state became an important interlocutor of mass protest movements. However, the preminent role given to security institutions also led to securitisation of the government approach towards the protestors.

Challenges of Poor State Credibility

After nearly four decades of instability and conflict, in addition to challenges of poor capacity, the Afghan state also suffers from extremely low public trusts in its institutions. Ravaged by consecutive conflicts and foreign influences since 1979 and having served as instruments of mass repression, after 2001 Afghan state institutions faced enormous challenges in gaining the trust of the society. For these particular protest movements, as discussed above, the credibility of state institutions also suffered from the way in which the National Unity Government was formed and the general security and socio-economic conditions of the country after 2014.

The combination of weak state capacity and credibility creates an environment in which reliable information is scarce, trust is low, and rumours and conspiracy theories are pervasive. The fact that a rumour had the power and potency to motivate a group of young men to murder a young woman in the presence of police officers reveals an environment rife with distrust in both the society and in the state institutions. The other two protests were also deeply shaped by widespread rumors and conspiracy theories. In August 2015, when I visited Kabul, there were multiple conspiracy theories circulating in the city (unsupported by any direct evidence) about malign intentions of the government and some organisers of the Roshanayee Movement. Two such theories are worth highlighting here.

- Many in the Roshanayee Movement believed that the 23 July attack on the movement's rally was in fact planned by the National Security Council. There were two versions of this theory. Some believed that the government security agencies had directly planned the attack. But how could the government recruit suicide bombers? The explanation was that the government had a significant number of suicide bombers that were detained by security forces and then were held in government detention centres. The proponents of this theory claimed that the government agencies could direct these suicide bombers to attacking a target by arranging a mock release back to a bogus Taliban network. Another version of the theory claimed that while the government was not directly involved in planning the attack, certain circles in the government were still responsible for the attack by allowing it to proceed despite their prior knowledge.
- Many in the government believed that there were larger and more sinister goals behind the movement. Some pointed to the alleged ties between some movement leader and the former President Hamid Karzai to argue that Karzai was behind the movement. Others even claimed that the movement, being predominantly led by

Shi'a Hazaras, were in fact supported by Iran, even if the vast majority of the movement's leaders were secular and even opposed to Iranian influence. Government security officers had circulated the theory of Iranian involvement among the diplomatic community in Kabul.

The low trust in state institutions played an important role in failure of the negotiations with the presidential commissions to resolve the conflict. These negotiations were mostly designed to take place through ad hoc commissions and often through the security institutions. But throughout the period after 2001, many of these commissions even failed to meet or produce any public report or outcome. These included the commission that was appointed by the President Ghani to investigate the 23 July 2016 bombing in Deh Mazang, which never released its finding. In other words, the presidential commission was a well-worn mechanism with little credibility. As discussed above, the level of trust in state institutions was so low that the leaders of the Enlightenment Movement did not heed warnings of an impending attack provided to them by the National Directorate of Security.

The Perils of Presidentialism

The effects of poor state capacity and credibility are compounded by the highly centralised presidential system that was created by the 2004 constitution. The 'perils of presidentialism' in investing both symbolic leadership and policy making and inter-agency coordination in a single office were powerfully illustrated by Linz (1990). The dangers of such concentration of power in one office becomes even more obvious when the presidency lacks the capacity and credibility to meet the high expectations it generates. The institutional structure of the presidential system created in the 2004 constitution shapes contentious politics encouraging certain forms of contentious politics over other forms of political activities. The concentration of political leadership and

policy making in the institution of presidency by the 2004 constitution also turn it into the central object for expression of public anger and frustration. The Arg becomes the central object of protests because as provided in the constitution it is the centre for both political leadership and policy design and implementation.

Chapter 10: Conclusion

Introduction

In this thesis, I have sought to contribute to two sets of literature. First, I have sought to contribute to the literature on internationally-sponsored statebuilding efforts in Afghanistan by offering a fresh perspective through analysis of social movements and contentious politics in Afghanistan between 2001 and 2016. By highlighting the mechanisms and processes of peaceful social mobilisation I have aimed to complement those aspects of existing scholarship that focus more on the high politics of statebuilding and the violent insurgency. A study of contentious politics offers another perspective into processes of social and political change during this period in the country. Second, I have sought to engage critically with literature on social movements and contentious politics by drawing on its insights to explore dynamics of collective action and social mobilisation in a socio-cultural and political environment characterised by state weaknesses and ongoing violence.

More specifically, I have set out to answer two interrelated questions: First, *how might state fragility shape contentious politics?* And second, *do state fragility and disruption create conditions that favour particular groups or forms of contention?* The first question seeks to contribute to the contentious politics literature by examining mechanisms and processes of contention in a context characterised by limited state authority, poor service provision and a dearth of effective and legitimate institutions. The second question aims to examine critically a claim in recent years that in Muslim-majority countries ‘Islamists’ enjoy a ‘political advantage’ over their rivals in mobilising the masses.

In the preceding four chapters I have attempted to answer these questions through detailed analysis of four groups and three events between 2001 and 2016. In this concluding chapter, I highlight some of the main themes that have emerged from the

empirical chapters of the thesis before attempting to explain how they answer the primary questions of this thesis.

Research Gap

In my review of the literature on social movements in chapter 3 and 4 of this thesis I argued that as they had developed from the 1960s, social movement theories were largely based on studies of movements in liberal democracies. Over the past two decades, these theories have been applied to a wide range of contexts. However, in their application to these contexts, particularly to countries characterised by state disruption and fragility, the theories suffer from three major interrelated shortcomings. First, the literature is highly state-centric, focusing on types of political regimes and extant power relations to account for variation and evolution of contentious politics. Second, it is underpinned by an interest-based assumption about politics. In this conception, it is assumed that actors engage in contentious politics predominantly in defence or promotion of their interests, and thus it does not sufficiently take into account value-based and symbolic forms of contention. Third, even when extended to studies of movements outside liberal-democratic countries, the literature is dominated by an underlying normative preference for study of western-style liberal movements over other movements.

Restating the Approach of the Thesis

In this thesis, I have aimed to address some of the gaps in the contentious politics literature by (a) taking a multi-institutional view of politics, in which the state is a major actor but only one of multiple actors engaged in competitive struggles for domination and control in the society; (b) highlighting the nature of social conflicts by making distinctions between three levels of conflict (foundational, programmatic and policy); and (c) underlining symbolic and ideological dimensions of contention alongside interest-based politics.

Methodologically, I compared and contrasted four groups and three events to examine the dynamics of mutual interaction between state weakness and contention in Afghanistan. The four groups (Afghanistan 1400, Hezb-e Hambastagi Afghanistan, Jamiat-e Eslah and Hezb ut-Tahrir) and three protest events (rallies in March 2015, November 2015 and in May and July 2016) represent four distinctive positions along the religious-secular spectrum as well as exemplifying models for peaceful political action in Afghanistan.

In examining these groups and events, I focused on the relational and interactive nature of contentious politics by highlighting the mutual interaction of group-level dynamics and shifts in social and political environments. To explore the interactive relations, I focused on mechanisms of *collective attribution of threats and opportunities*, *social appropriation*, and *boundary activation* to explore how the four groups and events emerged in response to changes in the social and political environment of Afghanistan between 2001 and 2016. However, I emphasised that groups and protest events do not respond to all changes equally. Understanding the nature and scope of environmental changes in societies struggling to overcome protracted conflict is particularly important, because by virtue of their complexity, rebuilding states and societies ravaged by war involves or induces far-reaching social, cultural and political changes. In Afghanistan, the international intervention in 2001 and the statebuilding enterprise that followed it entailed predictable socio-economic, cultural and political changes or helped generate new changes.

Key Empirical Findings

The empirical research of this thesis reveals the following:

First, the four groups defy the institutional logic of the post-2001 state in Afghanistan. Hezb-e Hambastagi Afghanistan is registered as a political party but functions as a protest

movement, and Jamiat-e Eslah, registered as social organisation, plays an increasingly assertive political role; while Afghanistan 1400 is divided over whether to assume the role of a political party or a civil movement; and the unregistered Hezb ut-Tahrir finds significant levels of support for its anti-institutional forms of politics.

Second, while all of these groups benefited from the social and political freedoms and changes introduced after 2001, not all of them supported the principles and practices of liberal democracy as it was introduced in the country. Based on the distinctions made between the foundational, programmatic and policy levels of conflict, the four groups represents four different responses to the post-2001 statebuilding in Afghanistan: *reformist* (Afghanistan 1400), *transformationist* (Jamiat-e Eslah), *partial rejectionist* (Hezb-e Hambastagi), and *full rejectionist* (Hezb ut-Tahrir Afghanistan). In taking these strategic positions, these groups were motivated by a combination of interest-based and symbolic and value-based considerations. In fact, taken together the four groups demonstrate a vibrant and dynamic politics focused on the symbolic dimensions of the statebuilding process. This is evident in the deep ideological divides that the four groups represent over the role of religion in politics, as well as in the reluctance of these groups or most of their members to participate in the political process fully. Consequently, as statebuilding was simultaneously symbolic and material, the responses by these groups were also shaped by a range of interest-based and symbolic considerations.

The divergence between prescribed institutional avenues for political action and divergent patterns emerged as a result of interactive process of group level mechanisms, (for example, attribution of threats and opportunities) and environmental changes. First, the institutional design of the 2004 constitution, characterised by a highly centralised presidential system and the adoption of the SNTV electoral system, limited incentives for programmatic and institutional participation. When one person can head the executive government, when the electoral system militates against the existence of strong and

effective political parties, those with concerns to voice are driven in the direction of contentious politics. Second, the neopatrimonial nature of state-society relations created a wide gap between the promises and the practices of the liberal democratic state, making participation in institutional politics morally compromising and highly unpredictable, even for its supporters. Third, the ongoing contestation over the nature and model of state sovereignty creates an uncertain environment in which groups respond to threats and opportunities from state, non-state and anti-state actors. In this environment of flux and uncertainty, conflicts over policies often involve deep programmatic and foundational dimensions.

The three events demonstrated that the escalation of contentious politics in 2015 and 2016 was closely linked to declines in the state's capacity to enforce its authority, provide services, and develop effective and legitimate institutions, following the triple political, security and economic transitions of 2014. While the rise of these protest activities underscored the emergence of a new generation of activists who demanded that the government discharge its basic functions, social protests over government policy failures/changes often give rise to deeper conflicts, highlighting the fragile nature of the post-2001 political settlement and deep social divisions. Launched in response to policy-level changes and failures by state institutions, these events involved deep programmatic and foundational conflicts, highlighting underlying state-society tensions over ethnic distribution of power and religious-secular conceptions of state-society relations. Consequently, social protest as a strategy for bringing social and political change can be overshadowed by broader conflicts and violence over the nature of state-society relations.

State Weakness as both Opportunity and Constraint

The empirical chapters of the thesis clearly demonstrate that state weakness presents both threats and opportunities for social mobilisation. In this concluding chapter, it is worth revisiting these two aspects of state weakness in some detail.

State Weakness as an Opportunity

The weakness of the state in performing its basic functions creates opportunities for rise of challenging groups. Challenging groups may use the opportunity to assume some of the functions of the state by creating alternative structures of authority and providing basic services. Alternatively, some groups may use the social and political space created by state weakness to engage in anti-state activities. How groups respond to opportunities created by state weakness can be usefully illustrated by the four case-study groups examined in this thesis. While each of the four groups shared some degree of fears of full participation in the state over concerns of corruption, in general the four groups responded in four distinctive ways: the liberal Afghanistan 1400 took a reformist posture and the Hezb ut-Tahrir Afghanistan took a rejectionist stance. Hezb ut-Tahrir used the weakness of the state to engage in anti-systemic and rejectionist activities. Between the two poles of full rejection and reform, Hezb-e Hambastagi adopted a partially-rejectionist stance whereas Jamiat-e Eslah followed a more ambitious strategy of transforming state-society relations through a bottom-up programme of Islamisation and assuming some of the state functions by providing basic services such as education and welfare services.

In important respects, Islamists appear to be more successful in exploiting the opportunities created by state weakness. After all, a sense of crisis that results from the failure of modern states in the Islamic world is central to both the rhetoric and mobilisational strategy of the Islamists. In Afghanistan, Islamism has emerged as a dominant perspective in the course of gradual weakening and failure of the state during

nearly four decades of war and instability since 1978. However, in evaluating whether the Islamists have a political advantage over their rivals, three factors need to be taken into account. First, in their rise to prominence in Afghanistan, the Islamists have appealed to highly diverse groups of people and appropriated a wide range of concerns and causes that are typically secular in nature. The need to appeal to local communities and the resultant appropriation of secular socio-economic grievances and concerns also transform the Islamists. It was through these processes of Islamist expansion and local adaptation that the first generation of Afghanistan's Islamists, who dominated the anti-Soviet resistance, were fragmented along the lines of ethnic and regional identities. Subsequently, the former mujahedin dominated the post-2001 political process, including elections. As ideologically-motivated groups, in comparison to more moderate groups who are motivated by a wide range of factors, Islamists tend to invest greater amounts of time and resources in pursuit of their goals of social and political change. However, because of the process of local adaptation it is hard to prove with any certainty whether the political success of these groups is a result of their Islamist agenda or their underlying ethnic, regional and other socio-economic dynamics. The failure of the Afghan Islamists to form an Islamic state in the 1990s and their subsequent change and transformation clearly point to the validity of the Roy's thesis that political Islam has failed (Roy, 1994) and Bayat's argument regarding the change of Islamist movements (Bayat, 1996). However, the changes do not necessarily lead to a post-Islamist society. Nor do these changes indicate that Islamists are wholeheartedly embracing the principles of liberal democracy. As the examples of Jamiat-e Eslah and Hezb ut-Tahrir in Afghanistan demonstrate, the local adaptation of the former Islamists and their involvement in corruption and patron-client politics of the post-2001 period created conditions for the rise of a new generation of Islamists who claim to advance more a 'authentic' long-term agenda of Islamisation.

Second, these groups exhibit nearly all the alleged sources – ideological, organisational, and access to resources – of the Islamists’ political advantages as summarised by Cammet and Luong (2014). However, while in contrast to Afghanistan 1400 and Hezb-e Hambastagi, Jamiat-e Eslah and Hezb ut-Tahrir have certainly achieved greater success at the level of organisations, the ability of these groups to translate these organisational gains into political outcomes could not be proven. As discussed in detail in the empirical chapters of this thesis, these groups do not participate in elections, either because they are ideologically opposed to electoral democracy (Hezb ut-Tahrir) or because they are not sure they can win enough votes to be an effective player in the parliament (Jamiat-e Eslah). Furthermore, these groups do not have any advantage in bringing the masses to the streets. In fact, as the three protest events demonstrate, the largest protest events of the 2001-2016 period were organised in response to state failures to provide security and services. This proves an obvious point, that politics in societies suffering from government failures is most likely to be driven by demands for more effective and legitimate states that can ensure security, rule of law and provide socio-economic opportunities.

Third, the rise of Islamism over the past four decades in Afghanistan and elsewhere in the Islamic world cannot be understood without looking at the broader political and strategic shifts over the past decades. In this respect, the provision of vast financial, political and military support for Islamist groups, first by the United States and Arab world during the Cold War, and later as part of rivalries between countries such as Saudi Arabia, Iran and Pakistan, trumps any resources the Islamists gain from their access to mosques and religious endowments. Obviously, some groups such as Hezb ut-Tahrir position themselves against the interests of powerful states; but the durability of other Islamists, including violent groups such as the Taliban, would not be possible without the financial, political and even military support they receive from powerful states in the region.

State Weakness as a Constraint

A state's weakness in enforcing its authority, providing public services, and developing effective and legitimate institutions creates a number of constraints that are relevant to social movement formation and evolution. First, the success of social movements in achieving their policy and programmatic goals requires a state with minimum capacity and credibility in performing basic functions such as provision of security and rule of law. As the 23 July 2016 bombing of the Roshanayee Movement demonstrated, the failure of the state to provide security of peaceful assembly dramatically changes the conditions in which social mobilisation takes places.

Second, social movements often respond to changes that result from enactment and enforcements of policies and programmes by state institutions. Movements can either proactively demand enactment of certain policies or programmes, or respond to policies and programmes initiated by the state. For example, a women's rights movement might demand that state authorities enact a particular policy for promotion of the rights of women, or an environment movement might respond by mobilising against a government policy that harms the environment. However, the emergence of policy and programme-level movements presupposes a basic political settlement and a state with basic legitimacy and capacity to enforce its authority. As the case studies of this thesis demonstrated, foundational conflicts over the terms of state-society relations continue to undermine development of programmatic and policy-level movements and parties. In this environment, actors respond to shifts and changes in a multitude of institutions and actors. For example, some Islamist groups may not stand against anti-state actors because either they share deeper ideological affinities with the armed insurgency or simply out of instrumental reasons of maintaining security of movement and their members.

The underlying puzzle that emerges here is whether weak and fragmented state authorities also give rise to weak and fragmented movements. In other words, do movements that emerge to address some of the challenges of political fragmentation and divisions themselves become victims of what they attempt to solve? Writing on the Taliban movement, Gopal (2016) has recently argued that the historical institutional underdevelopment of the Afghan state also inhibits the development of national movements beyond the original networks of trust and personal contacts. As chapter four of this thesis showed, kinship and local identities historically offered the main vehicle for rebellions and challenges against state authority. Furthermore, the case studies of this thesis demonstrate that state weakness and institutional underdevelopment present important challenges for social and political movements. However, the cases also demonstrate a wide range of approaches and strategies by Afghan social and political groups to overcome the challenges created by state weakness. Furthermore, the broader socio-economic transformation that Afghanistan experienced after 2001 has created conditions for broad-based politics beyond the narrow networks of personal trust and contact. In this respect, each of the four groups and the networks of activists behind the protest events point to the rise of a new generation of activists that have gained the resources and capacity to move beyond networks of kinship and personal trust.

Future Avenues for Research

States disrupted by protracted violence and suffering from endemic corruption, present highly-challenging contexts for all forms of collective collection. Understanding the processes and challenges facing collective action in these societies can contribute to fuller understandings of how state weakness, political instability and violence feed one another; and potentially suggest better policy responses. Since the focus of this thesis has been groups and events, it offered a meso-level perspective. While bringing the mid-level perspectives helps complement the existing scholarship on Afghanistan and statebuilding

in important ways, the thesis also suggests the perspective can be extended further by looking at the micro-level and macro-level dynamics. Two relevant ideas are particularly worth exploring further. First, at the macro-level, this thesis focused on understanding the role of state weakness in shaping social movements and contentious politics. However, while highly limited in their capacity to exercise authority effectively and uniformly, when backed by international recognition and foreign political, financial and military supports, weak states can be in a position to dominate other players. While these states lack the bureaucratic capacity and resources to enforce their power across the society uniformly, they can overpower challengers through their ability to dispense patronage and bestow symbolic recognition selectively. In other words, rulers in these states may have great capacity for manipulating rifts and divisions that already exist in the society.

Second, focusing on groups and events, this thesis did not address how protracted violence and political instability affect dynamics of participation in contentious politics at the level of individual participants. However, the interviews with activists and organisers involved in the groups and events pointed to some of the complexity and challenges of participation in contentious politics. As the attack on the Roshanayee Movement on 23 July 2016 showed, participation in protest movements in a country ravaged by war and violence comes with the risks of particularly high costs. The threat of physical violence, however, is only one aspect of how protracted instability and violence can affect decision-making at the level of individuals. The effects of instability and violence can be felt in risks and uncertainty of day-to-day social life in which individual and group survival becomes the overriding priority. The politics of survival can privilege high-levels of flexibility and pragmatism over deep commitment to collective action. Understanding the daily uncertainty and adjustments better might offer insights into how patterns of domination and resistance, including violence and instability, are created and enacted in these societies.

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