

Misguided State Building: The Case of Afghanistan

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Abstract:

Recent attempts of the international community to overcome conflict and to support reconstruction in post-conflict societies have often been based on the concept of state building. However, external efforts at state building have largely failed. In this paper I will analyse the foundations of the concept of state building and look at the difficulties and problems of their implementation. It is hypothesized that the poor results are due to a gross neglect of local capacities for conflict management and a disregard for practicing local ownership. The case of Afghanistan is a telling example. Despite nine years of (military and civil) involvement, the state building efforts in Afghanistan seem to be misguided. The military mission fuels new insurgencies. The non-military efforts of aid are largely donor-driven and uncoordinated. In addition, while the official concept is to strengthen public institutions. The security arena is partly dominated by private military and

security companies; these companies operate in Afghanistan without proper public (local or national) oversight and accountability.

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Introduction: Strategies and Change of Strategies

At the beginning of the military intervention in Afghanistan in 2001 the intervening countries – particularly the United States – pursued a dual strategy: Firstly, they wanted a military victory over the terrorist group al-Qaida and the Taliban government in Afghanistan. The implementing tool for this part of the strategy was the US-led military Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). Secondly, the declared aim of the intervention forces was a fundamental reform of the Afghan society through the building of sustainable and efficient central state institutions. The aim of this second component was to deprive terrorist groups of their home base in Afghanistan. The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) was in charge of this mission. At the same time, the broader aim was the democratization of Afghanistan. Both components of this strategy were supposed to complement and reinforce each other in order to bring stability to the country. Hence, the concept was also called a stabilizing strategy. Stability and reconstruction were used simultaneously to legitimize the military intervention.

Since the adoption of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) and the corresponding Afghanistan Compact in 2006, the dual strategy was changed into a triple strategy. The purpose of the ANDS is to place policy making into the hands of the Afghan government. It rests on three pillars: (1) to consolidate peace and stability (security) through (2) just, democratic processes and institutions of government (good governance) and (3) to reduce poverty and achieve prosperity through broad based and equitable economic growth (social and economic development).¹ The international community affirmed through the Afghanistan Compact its commitment to continue to assist Afghanistan and strengthen its partnership.² These three pillars are confirmed in this Compact as well.

Finally, the London Afghanistan conference of January 2010 announced measures pointedly as a “new strategy”. These commitments consist of an

¹ Final comunique of the conference where the Afghan government presented the ANDS: <http://www.afghanistanembassy.org.uk/index.php/site/more/36/>.

² United Nations Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). <http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/Documents/AfghanistanCompact-English.pdf>.

increase in the numbers of foreign troops, an increase in development aid and an intensified investment in training of the Afghan National Army and the Afghan National Police. There is, however, nothing really new in this strategy. The US emphasizes even more than before the classical counterinsurgency strategy (COIN) while other governments committed to double their aid delivery. The German government, for example, promised to accelerate training of police, a commitment that the Germans had given already immediately after the invasion. In fact, under the rubric of the “lead nation” concept Germany was responsible for police training.³ In reality, more of the same of what had been done before will be done now. In the meantime, however, the international community realized that the high-flying aims of a thorough democratization and quick and sustainable economic development of Afghanistan were over-optimistic. Today, a more modest aim, consolidation of security, is seen as the most important priority. Creating state institutions (armed forces, police, justice sector, administration etc.) has for long been the central aim of the official policies for Afghanistan. Ideally, the notion of nation or state building envisions the creation of a state with a national identity (Schneckener 2007). Of course, the protagonists of the Afghanistan intervention have – depending on political opportunities and contexts – mentioned other aims as well. Currently, the danger of Pakistani nuclear weapons in the hands of terrorists is mentioned to legitimize military action in Afghanistan; ISAF also serves to signal solidarity within NATO. Other aims of the intervention in Afghanistan are usually not openly mentioned: for example, the importance of the country for geopolitical concerns such as secure supply of energy from central Asian countries. In this paper I will analyse the foundations of the concept of state building and look at the difficulties and problems of their implementation. My conclusion is, that the way in which the state building concept has been planned and practiced cannot be successful. It is a dead-end road.

³ On the commitment of the German government see: Regierungserklärung Bundesregierung Deutschland am 27. Jan. 2010.
<http://www.bundesregierung.de/Content/DE/Artikel/2010/01/2010-01-27-afghanistan-konferenz-regierungserklaerung.html>.

The Concept of State Building

According to the concept of nation or state building, the state is supposed to have the capacities to perform its basic functions, among them: guaranteeing security to its citizens (state monopoly of force), rule of law, taxation, management of economic development and the environment, and the delivery of essential services (OECD 2010b, 9). Externally initiated state building is not only practiced in Afghanistan. Since the early 1990s the international community has mobilized enormous resources (finance, technical assistance, armed forces) for peacekeeping in order to stabilize weak or failing states or even create stable states. These external state building interventions have one aim in common: they want to build stable state structures.

The notion of nation or state building results from a debate within peacekeeping and development aid over failing or fragile states as well as post-conflict countries. After the end of the Cold War it became abundantly clear that many governments did not have the capacity to perform the functions of an effective state. This all too obvious trend led protagonists for stabilization to call for external interventions. Such interventions (if needed by military means) are intended to stabilize the international system.

In a recent study the OECD (2010a, 55) concludes: „Afghanistan fits in just about every category of the fragile states classification:

- Deep structural poverty coupled with difficult access to many regions in the country.
- A dysfunctional state compounded by thirty years of war resulting in a deep disconnection between the state and the population.
- A growing insurgency fuelled by external elements and insufficient economic and employment opportunities.
- An illicit economy that thrives under the various regime changes (reaching about 50% of the GNP at its peak in 2006 (...)) and fuels local and regional conflicts.
- A high dependency on international aid, in both the development and the security sectors: 65% of recurrent government expenditures are financed from domestic revenue, while 35% comes from foreign aid.”

The political and philosophical background of the state building debate is the so-called “liberal peacebuilding (Paris 2004). The label of “liberal” or “democratic peace” which is increasingly attached to external interventions assumes that the end of war and conflicts offer a window of opportunity. This paradigm assumes a threefold transformation of society to security and peace, democracy and market economy as a self-strengthening process to sustainable development. The explicit goal is the establishment of states with the rule of law, democracy and liberal markets. It is hypothesized that a legitimate state should be organized according to liberal-democratic principles since these states tend to be more peaceful. One of the critiques of this vision is that the risk of too rapid political and economic liberalization will have destabilizing effects and will thus exacerbate rather than moderate the volatile situation.⁴

A modern state exists (and functions), when there are governmental institutions (like parliament, courts, civil service etc.), rule over a given territory, a legal system and when the state has the capacity to implement its policies. State building is the process how these conditions are established (Barnett 2006, 91). These were and are until today the visions of a future Afghanistan after the 2001 invasion. The three forms of transformation of peace, democracy and sustainable development apply for Afghanistan too. Insurgencies should be stopped and the military is trying to win against the Taliban. Elections have taken place to establish democratic procedures and radical market liberalization is called for. The ANDS, a technocratic development concept that largely ignored the political process, aims to “ensure sustainable development through a private-sector-led market economy.”⁵ None of these three transformation has really been achieved; on the contrary, far from it. Security seems to deteriorate week by week and the consolidation of peace in Afghanistan is distant. The Fall 2009 elections were a farce; nevertheless, the international backers of Afghanistan remain supporters of President Karzai despite the obvious

⁴ The democratic peace paradigm has been widely discussed and criticized. I will not go into the validity of this theory here. See Russett (1993), Geis (2001), a critique of the thesis of the democratic peace: Layne (1994).

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http://www.embassyofafghanistan.org/documents/Afghanistan_National_Development_Strategy_eng.pdf, p. 1.

manipulations during the election. Local elections called for in the constitution have been postponed. After the Taliban government was toppled in 2001 people in Afghanistan were open for democratic reforms. But the US anti-terror program helped to strengthen non-democratic factions and prevented broad and popular participation in the political process (Ruttig 2008, 7). Finally, Afghanistan's economy is far from being a market economy. It is a war and drug economy and, in addition, plagued by chronic corruption.

Structural and practical problems

To be successful, state building needs to be based on an endogenous political process that is strongly rooted within the society. The main problem of most of today's state building endeavours is the fact that it is externally imposed. The crucial question is, whether state building can at all be achieved through external measures or if those well-intended policies might unwittingly and inadvertently do more harm than good? Noah Feldman concluded: "The high failure rate [of nation-building exercises] strongly supports the basic intuition that we do not know what we are doing—and one of the critical elements of any argument for autonomy is that people tend to know themselves better than others how they ought best to live their lives" (quoted in Barnett 2006, 110). State building concepts designed far away in Washington, London, Berlin or other capitals of Western states fail due to their lack of adaptation when facing the local realities.

The state building process in Afghanistan was from its beginning problematic and is until today faced with a number of dilemmas. Some of the difficulties are caused by the situation of this war-torn society, others are a result of the external intervention and yet others are caused locally.

Given the development of the country during the last few decades, a speedy process of democratization in Afghanistan was over-ambitious. The discussion on hybrid societies questions the whole euro-centric concept of state building more fundamentally and argues that cultural traditional local notions of conflict mediation, laws, governance, authority etc. have to be an integrated part of the state building process (Boege, Brown, Clements and Nolan 2009). The authors argue, traditionally oriented societies should not automatically be seen as backward or underdeveloped and should not exclusively been pushed towards a Western-type development path. Such

an attitude and aid policy would block or exclude autonomous development. A recent study of the OECD (2010b, 12) pleads to observe “the alternative source for legitimacy anchored in tradition, ethnicity, identity and region.” Such basic critique at the Western oriented state building concept is still largely ignored in Afghanistan and, instead, the preferred development path is imposed externally in neo-colonial style. In case of doubt, external intrusiveness is practiced to fill a perceived political vacuum of domestic authority. There is much rhetoric of “local ownership”, but it is not really practiced; most major decisions are taken outside the country.

When state building is externally initiated, the difficult question is which local actors should be the “owners” of such a process (and which actors should be excluded); and, furthermore, when is the right moment for the transfer of authority. The reliance on the identification of a certain group of local partners runs the risk of sidelining others (Narten 2008, 374).

The Afghanistan agreement of the December 2001 conference acknowledges “the right of the people of Afghanistan to freely determine their own political future in accordance with the principles of Islam, democracy, pluralism and social justice”⁶ - in reality, however, the Karzai government still a puppet of the US and its allies. Ruttig (2008, 17) concludes, that the US government insisted that decisive articles of the Afghan constitution follow the US Presidential model. They made Karzai the only acceptable candidate and “instrumentalized the preparations and monitoring of the [2009] elections, in order to get the desired result”, namely to install Karzai again as President. This was, indeed, possible on the basis of manipulations of the election.

It is an often-confirmed notion today that priorities have been wrongly placed too much on establishing the central government in Kabul. According to the OECD (2010a, 55): “More attention should be paid to the non-executive branches of government, to state/societies relations, to strengthening civil society, and to improving the connections between top-down and bottom-up approaches.”

⁶ <http://www.afghangovernment.com/AfghanAgreementBonn.htm>

The Afghan Conference in Bonn was responsible for a wrong direction of the state building process in several ways. The conclusions of a recent OECD study (2010 forthcoming, 4 – 5) are revealing:

“First: In fact, only four Afghan groups were invited to the Bonn Process: the Northern Alliance, the Rome Group, representing the former King Zahir Shah, and two smaller coalitions, the Peshawar and Cyprus Group. The absence of key warring factions led commenters to describe it as a ‘winners conference’...

“Second, it formalized a centralised mode of governance that was to depend extraordinarily heavily on a presidential mode of government and therefore on a single individual: This individual was to be Hamid Karzai...

“Third, the process was affected by tactical needs on the ground. The reliance of the United States’ led Operation Enduring Freedom on the warlords of the Northern Alliance rendered their involvement in the new government inevitable...

“Fourth, the international community ignored the limitations of the Bonn Process and treated the results like a peace process, throwing their entire weight behind the Karzai Administration. Accordingly, they committed to a ‘light footprint’ in terms of both of troops and a relatively light aid commitment...

“Fifth, the Bonn Process was not a peace settlement but a road-map towards peace. It did not attempt to address key failures in representation, but rather specified a process to deal with these challenges.”

One should add that due to the inclusion of the warlords in the government, the necessary disarmament and demobilization process remained half-hearted and incomplete until today. The OECD (ibid, 7) concludes: “With no money in the Government’s coffers for the first few months after the invasion, the warlords on the CIA’s payroll were invited to join the government, placing state stability over the demands of state-building.”

The plan of the “light footprint” mentioned above did not work out. In the course of the war, the intervening countries increased both their military presence as well as their financial commitments.

External powers are faced with a number of dilemmas. Paris and Sisk (2007, 5 – 6) have categorized them in their summary of intensive empirical

studies on state building in post-conflict countries into a cluster of five different types:

1. *Footprint dilemma*: A dominant external presence (a heavy footprint) might be necessary to maintain or guarantee security and to initiate the political reform process. A less intrusive international presence (a light footprint) is essential “to allow local political, social and economic life to achieve a post-conflict equilibrium on its own terms”.
2. *Duration dilemma*: On the one hand, state building needs a long-term perspective and it is not enough to quickly hold election and introduce radical market reforms. On the other hand, given such fundamental ruptures and transformations, people expect a quick impact (security, standard of living). A slow process will lead to disillusion. At the same time international resources (finance) are scarce and a long-term process with continued internal insurgencies or other forms of violence (with casualties among the foreign troops) will lead to the request of calling the soldiers back home quickly.
3. *Participation dilemma*: Inclusion of certain groups (e.g. spoilers of the peace process) is problematic. The role of the warlords in the Afghan government discredits and delegitimizes the government. The situation requires on the one hand a clear break with the past, but on the other it requires to strike a balance between the former warring factions. External powers decide on who participates in the power sharing in Afghanistan. What Western actors consider as “legitimate” might be classified as “illegitimate” by the people of Afghanistan (Barnett 2006, 93). Yet, exclusion of certain groups might reignite or exacerbate existing conflicts (Narten 2008, 374). This is the background to the present debate on whether or not the Taliban should be invited to take part in the political process.
4. *Dependency dilemma*: A strong or dominant presence of external powers leads necessarily into dependence of the Afghan government. However, the aim of state building is – ideally – to enable a sustainable and self-enforcing peace process. Whether these aims are really pursued by the intervening countries is an open question. Nixon (2007, 1) calls the problem of long-term external measures and the resulting dependency the “state building paradox”. External peacebuilders can

hardly bridge the “contradictions between the prevailing local need for and dependency on long-term peacebuilding assistance, on the one hand, and donor-driven short-term delivery requirements, with limited resources and manpower on the other hand” (Narten 2008, 374).

5. *Coherence dilemma*: On the one hand, the large number of external actors in Afghanistan illustrates the multitude of programs that are partly implemented uncoordinated or even in competition with each other. Each organization seems to have its own agenda. This is the case, for example, for the Operation Enduring Freedom and the ISAF mission but also for the original concept of lead nations. According to that program the US was responsible for capacity building of the Afghan National Army (ANA), Germany had responsibility for the Afghan National Police (ANP), Italy for judicial reforms and Great Britain for fighting drugs. Because these programs were largely uncoordinated; they encountered increasingly difficulties. The rhetoric for the need of the coordination of military, diplomatic and economic activities of the intervening countries are much more prominent than the practical measures. A further problem is that certain norms (freedom, democracy, free market) are being preached but not practiced by the external powers.

Misguided strategy: two central policy programs

Critics of the military intervention often call for development aid and reconstruction programs instead. The aim is to advance the civilian reconstruction of Afghanistan by such programs as technical assistance, capacity building in education, training of police forces etc. Such measures are intended to pacify the war-torn society, to enable economic development and implement an effective state monopoly of force. I will illustrate in two central policy programs, development aid and the monopoly of force, how problem-ridden this approach is in practice and how unsatisfactorily it is tried at present in Afghanistan.

Development aid in Afghanistan: too much and with a wrong focus

Since 2001 the country has received enormous amounts of development funding and technical assistance from about 70 different countries. Official development assistance (ODA) amounted to US \$ 3.0 billion in 2006, US \$

4.0 billion in 2007 and US \$ 4.9 billion in 2008.⁷ Afghanistan ranks as number two 'aid recipient' of all Asian countries and received, with a population of roughly 30 million about US \$ 175 per capita in 2008. In some sources even higher numbers are mentioned. The donor countries claim to have committed between 2003 and 2007 US \$ 29 billion in official development aid (OECD 2010 forthcoming, 15), on average almost US \$ 6 billion per year. However, the donors committed more than they actually delivered or more than Afghanistan could absorb. In addition to these amounts, commitments of private organizations have to be added and – most importantly – the military expenditures are not included since they are not counted as ODA. The high priority of development aid for Afghanistan is not due to the poverty or the underdevelopment of the country but rather the result of Afghanistan's strategic importance for the West.

It was not only development aid that began to flow after the 2001 invasion. At the same time Afghanistan's income from drug trade began to increase. Today, the country's share of global illegal opium trade is 93%. The beginning of the commercial drug production was the anti-Soviet Jihad, the holy war, in which the Mujahedin received financial and logistical assistance from the CIA, the US and other Western states (Maaß 2010, 5). Since then drug production in Afghanistan has increased continuously. Additional means flowing into Afghanistan come from financial transfers of Afghans living abroad.

Afghanistan's GNP fluctuates much; it amounted to over US \$ 11 billion in 2007.⁸ Assuming that the share of Afghan investments reaches a maximum of US \$ 2 billion (about another billion is spent on the Afghan armed forces), the country received, with about US \$ 5 billion, much more development aid than it can possibly invest in long-term development programs. A former high-ranking civil servant of the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation describes the situation as "development aid in bizarre proportions" (Heinrich Langerbein, 2010, 2). But Germany just committed at the London Afghan Conference in January 2010 to double its aid. Of course, much of these funds, end up as contracts for foreign companies.

⁷ OECD. <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/39/51/42139371.pdf>, S. 7.

⁸ OECD, <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/18/22/43188641.pdf>, S. 126.

Domestic revenue amounted in the budget year 2007/2008 to only 19.6% of the central government's budget (Nixon 2007, 6). The financial sources of the Afghan economy with grants from aid, income from illegal drug trade and to a lesser extent from transfers from the diasporas are no solid basis for sustainable social and economic development.

The official development cooperation in Afghanistan suffers from a range of problems, caused both by donors and the Afghan government. Many donors feel they have to deliver more development assistance, once they have committed themselves to take part in the invasion and when they realized the consequences of their military engagements. They come under internal political pressure and hope to open potential exit strategies. They invest in highly visible "mega projects" that are recognized as coming from the state. But the Afghan state has limited capacities to carry out such projects effectively. The state lacks capacity to absorb the inflow of finances. This difficulty is not solved by the proclamation of the Afghan National Development Strategy, which was written by Western experts for the Karzai government. Since foreign organizations hire qualified Afghans in great numbers and pay higher salaries than the Afghan state can afford, they exacerbate the lack of local capacity further.

A further problem in development cooperation is the almost exclusive focus on the central government. These programs are intended to create legitimacy for the Karzai government. This government, however, has not got the political will to put formal accountability processes in place to handle the international aid. This presents donors with the classic "rentier state" dilemma (Suhrke 2006) or the above described "state building paradox" and the lack of local "ownership". To arrange for the appropriate accountability of aid it is necessary to accept even more external assistance and control; this will, however, prevent the establishment of local actors' capabilities in these areas. In addition, the Afghan government is chronically corrupt. Afghanistan ranks 179th in the corruption list of Transparency International – outpaced in corruption only by Somalia.⁹ Every additional Dollar or Euro that is transferred to Afghanistan will add further possibilities for corruption. The dependence of the Karzai government on drug organizations and other

⁹ Transparency International, http://www.transparency.de/uploads/media/09-11-17-CPI_2009_Pressemappe.pdf.

corrupt local leaders results in the transfer of aid money into the wrong hands. Even the Taliban profit from grants of the international community since they extort money for offering protection.

Priorities of international donors on behalf of the central government and discrimination of sub national governance have led to uneven development, fueling of local tensions and deepening of conflicts. Some regions, even some with no high security problems, did not receive much development assistance (OECD 2010 forthcoming, 9). A decisive criterion for the disbursement of aid is often the security situation; particularly those projects were implemented in regions where ISAF troops operated. Development aid, thus, remains donor-driven and the uneven development of the various regions and provincial inequalities is described as “Balkanisation” of Afghanistan (OECD 2010, forthcoming, 14).

Finally, there is much scope for improving cooperation among international and multilateral organizations like the UN, World Bank, International Monetary Fund and other donors. The 1000 or more NGOs working in Afghanistan have their own agenda in mind. The international donors are still poorly harmonized. There is much talk about cooperation, but nobody really wants to be coordinated.

In conclusion, there are, of course, areas in which development aid has improved the situation (the number of females attending school is often mentioned). A large proportion of the disbursed international grants, however, are not necessarily relevant for development; they often do more harm than good, especially when local initiatives suffer under the dominance and the financial power of the internationals. To summarize, probably too much, not to little, money has been transferred into Afghanistan and it is often spent for the wrong purpose.

The state monopoly of violence: endangered by private security firms

Life in Afghanistan is dangerous. The reasons for the insecure situation are manifold: a lack of integration of hostile groups into the political process, short-term oriented military missions against terrorists fuel new insurgencies and a still existing negative influence of warlords in government, e.g. in the Ministry of the interior with responsibility for police matters.

The problem of insecurity is solved in the classical concept of state building through disarmament of private citizens or groups and the establishment of a state monopoly of force. This was, of course, not successful in Afghanistan.

US-President Barak Obama increased the US-troops in Afghanistan immediately after his election, and additional 30,000 troops are deployed there in 2010. ISAF had a strength of 102,500 troops in April 2010, deployed by 46 different countries.¹⁰ The January 2010 London Afghanistan conference committed to increase the number of Afghan troops from about 100,000 to 171,600 by October 2011.

It is questionable that the concept of sending more troops and police to stabilize Afghanistan or to create reliable state institutions will be successful. Military actions usually are followed by new insurgencies. The disarmament of non-state actors – a precondition to create a state monopoly of force – was not successful in the past. Mujahedin leaders, warlords and other local leaders “privatize” the state security apparatus. Their power rests on their inclusion into the central government as well as on income from the war economy (aid) and shadow economy (drugs). More than 63,000 fighters took part in the official Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration program between 2004 and 2006. But only one quarter of the demobilized found permanent civilian jobs (Ruttig 2008, 21). As in many countries, the third phase of the program, reintegration, did not work in Afghanistan either. Also the disarmament program was implemented half-heartedly. Members of some of the militias were made into auxiliary police, others keep both their weapons and their status as illegal armed groups until today, and private military and security firms hired others.

It is not a big issue in public debate that private military and security firms are not mentioned in any statistic; they remain mostly outside public visibility and are insufficiently controlled. Big and small companies as well as individual war adventurers quickly realized that Afghanistan’s war chest offers ample opportunities to make money. Big foreign companies and Afghan clan leaders run many of these private firms (Sherman and DiDomenico 2009, 1). Nobody really knows how many of these contractors,

¹⁰ ISAF, <http://www.isaf.nato.int/images/stories/File/Placemats/Apr-16-2010-placemat.pdf>.

often also labeled as mercenaries, are actively working for the armed forces at the frontline, in logistics, in property or personal protection. Many of the contractors are armed and dressed in self-styled company uniforms. They can be seen in front of many ministries in Kabul, and they protect even President Karzai. The reputation of these dubious troops has suffered, for example, by the high-noon profile of Blackwater. Afghanistan has tighter regulations than Iraq; nevertheless, their role remains suspicious (Sherman and DiDomenico 2009, 2).

Privatizing internal security services is exactly the opposite of a state monopoly of force. This policy contradicts the concept of creating efficient state institutions. Only when such firms are tightly and systematically regulated and controlled – an impossible task, given the weak state structures in Afghanistan – could the state delegate security services to private actors. In present circumstances such companies are rivals or opponents of state authorities.

A US-Congress report of the Commission on Wartime Contracting in Iraq and Afghanistan illustrates the dimension of this “secret” force. The Commission wrote (2009, 16), that the number of contract personnel of the Pentagon amounted to 242,647 people in Asia in the 2nd Quarter of 2009. Of these 133,610 were contracted in Iraq, 68,197 in Afghanistan and 41,850 in other South Asian countries. Almost a quarter million non-military people are serving for the armed forces. This is more than the US-soldiers in those countries. Not all of them are armed. Their services range from supplying food to the armed forces to maintenance of modern weapons, from protection of military convoys and bases to personal protection, from cleaning of laundry to secret operations against the Taliban and from delivering mail to destroying poppy crops. Jobs at private military and security companies are attractive. The contractors are much better paid and better armed than the members of the Afghan armed forces or the police.

It is not just the Pentagon that contracts these firms; the same is true for other ISAF armed forces, for Afghan ministries and civilian NGOs. Nobody knows exactly how many are employed in Afghanistan, neither the UN who is the official coordinating body for reconstruction, nor the American or the Afghan government. The above-mentioned US-Congress Commission on Wartime Contracting in Iraq and Afghanistan mentions that more than 80% of the contractors are not US citizens. The companies recruit worldwide:

primarily, of course, in Afghanistan, but also in Chile, Russia, Germany, Fiji, Nepal, South Africa, Kosovo etc. Young men with war experience and training in special operations, members of Special Forces, rebel groups and militias are particularly sought after. The companies tender for contracts and hire chains of subcontractors. Who is deployed where and for what purpose is usually beyond the control of the contracting authority. The companies act as a state within the state.

The findings of the congressional report (Commission on Wartime Contracting ... 2009, 17) illustrates the lack of control and accountability: "There is still no clear picture of who the contractors are, what services they provide, which contracts they perform, and what their support costs are," despite the fact that they are hired by the Department of Defence. A lot remains in the dark and neither the hearings in Congress, nor public criticism, nor casualties among the contractors has led to a reversal of privatizing military and other security tasks. More and more security-relevant missions are carried out by private companies with dubious reputations.

According to the "new strategy", announced at the January 2010 London Afghan conference, police training and capacity building are priorities now. This has been practiced already since 2004 by the US companies Dyncorp and MPRI. They offer two to eight week crash courses in police services in which they train thousands of Afghans mainly in anti-terror fighting. The reason for these company activities is a lack of police in the Western countries who are willing to volunteer for the dangerous job in Afghanistan. Many of those trained and their weapons end up with the Taliban.

Originally, the US Department of Defence had contracted private companies to save money. The private sector, according to the ideology, works more efficient than the armed forces. But in the meantime doubts are cast on this believe of cost efficiency. The Commission on Wartime Contracting in Iraq and Afghanistan (2009, 27) offers some painful conclusions: "Based on an analysis of data covering some \$43 billion in high-value awards to 15 contractors in Iraq and Afghanistan, we learned that roughly 30 percent of contractor business systems audited by the Defense Contract Audit Agency contained significant deficiencies. (...) Contractor billing systems and estimating systems were deficient at even greater rates – 50 and 42

percent, respectively.“ Companies charge for services that nobody can really control.

Despite these findings, it can be expected that additional contracts will be signed with private military and security firms in the future. The criticism at home on the military engagement in Afghanistan and deployment of more soldiers and police gets more vocal in many of the ISAF countries. These privately organized alternative power centers might possibly improve the security of foreign troops, diplomats and expatriates in the short term. This policy, however, is a long-term burden at the expense of the authority of the Afghan state. Furthermore, it also goes at the expense of the security of the Afghan people who cannot afford to hire private security firms for their personal protection.

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