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THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF THE NETWORKED STATE: THE POST-2011 AFGHANISTAN

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Abstract: This article argues that post-2001 political development in Afghanistan must be considered in terms of networked politics. I critique the current taken-for-granted assumptions of the post-conflict state as a cohesive entity, exhibiting unproblematic and uniform organisational structure, and possessing territorial integrity. I propose to understand the internationally sponsored state in Afghanistan as a 'complex multiplicity of global assemblages' of objectives, knowledge, techniques and practices of diverse attribution as the result of strategic bargains made among international, national and local forces since 2001. In light of this, I see the state in Afghanistan as a 'contested field' where a web of political interplay between varying political-spatial networks is taking place, each attempting to pull the direction of international statebuilding in their favour. As such, I argue that the state in post-2001 Afghanistan is a *networked state*. I show how the state is externally placed, fragmented, and highly contested. I show how authority is constantly subject to contestation and reformulation by a range of international, national and local networked actors. I conclude that contestations among these networks have further exacerbated inter-elite conflict and the clientelistic features of Afghanistan's state and society.

Introduction

Following the collapse of the Taliban regime, on the 5th of December 2001, the international community as well as the four main Afghan political elite groups concluded the agreement on provincial arrangements in Afghanistan pending the re-establishment of permanent government institutions (the Bonn Agreement).[1] Named after the Bonn Conference, the agreement became the

[1]The first group was the Northern Alliance (NA) Jihadis, a loose coalition of several factions who had fought one another during the civil war (1992-6) but had formed a coalition against the Taliban. Among them, the most dominant faction was *JamiatTanzim* whom in turn was dominated by its military wing, the Panjsheris of Shura-yiNezar. The Rome group was associated with King Zahir. The Peshawar group was linked to Gilani, the old seven Sunni Mujahedeen groups in Pakistan. The final group - known as the Cyprus group – was associated with Humayoun Jareer in Iran. The Rome group was selected to balance and represent the Western interests, the NA were the winners against the Taliban while the two smaller groups were arguably selected to please Afghanistan's neighbours, in particular Iran and Pakistan.

legal framework for the building of a unitary state in Afghanistan. This paved the way for an internationally-led process of statebuilding to re-establish the very foundation of the Afghan state. It became an internationally supported four-year political process. It included the holding of an Emergency Loya Jirga (Grand Council) in June 2002 to elect an interim president to lead a transitional government, which in turn would ratify a new constitution in 2003. This was then followed by a presidential election in October 2004, which elected Hamid Karzai as President, and legislative elections a year after.

This paper aims to understand the post-Bonn state by examining the interconnections and linkages across various global, ethno-regional and local actors, institutions and discourses. I propose that a more useful framing of post-Bonn state would be to see it as a site of interconnection and contestation among various opposing political-spatial networks that came to dominate different parts of the state since 2001. As such, post-Bonn state is *networked*. The networked politics points to a new forms of governance in post-Bonn space as a "contested field" between different global, ethno-regional, local and regional-national networks inside and outside the government who have come to constitute the state, each network seeking to expand its influence through the structural and strategic positions it occupies within the Afghan state and society. In another word, the post-Bonn state is a "complex strategic terrain", to use Jessop's (2001: 4-9) phrase, in which various rival social groups and political-spatial networks constantly negotiate and contest the material and symbolical aspects of the Afghan state. This is in contrast to the dominant image of the state that takes the post-Bonn state for granted as cohesive entity, exhibiting an unproblematic and uniform organisational structure, and possessing territorial integrity. Instead, I show how the state in post-Bonn Afghanistan is externally placed, incoherent and fragmented with uneven networked powers.

The competition among various political-spatial networks has dominated the post-Bonn statebuilding. The post-Bonn politics and statebuilding has become about the domination and control of various political-spatial networks and the flows of goods, ideas and power within them. In this paper I argue that to understand order and authority we must look at networked ties between actors, organisations, and structures. State power lies and depends on the strategic interconnection among state officials, local political forces, and their complex web of interdependencies that links formal and informal, legal and extra-legal activities. Simply put, the greater an agent, an organisation, a business, or a factional group's connection to these flows of spaces the greater their power and influence within the state. As such, the post-Bonn state become a forum for conflict and compromise between two broadly opposing political-spatial networks-namely the oppositional former Northern Alliance (NA) Jihadis, in particular the Panjsheris in Shura-yi Nezar, the military wing of the Jamiat Tanzim, which was represented by Dr Abdullah

Abdullah in the 2009 presidential election, and the government represented by incumbent President Hamid Karzai. The former elite network emerged during the Jihad years of the 1980s against the Soviet occupation, in particular between 1992 and 2001, while the latter emerged as part of the outcome of the political settlement at the Bonn Conference in 2001. The Karzai network has emerged as the dominant network by establishing an extensive patron-client networks and manipulating ethno-regional ties (Sharan and Heathershaw, 2011). These political-spatial networks are fluid as they have been reinforced, renewed and reproduced in the post-Bonn statebuilding process and regime formation. For instance, most of the Northern Alliance elites, especially those not belonging to the *Jamiat Tanzim*, have been effectively co-opted to the dominant Karzai network through bargains and exchange.

I propose a different frame of analysis to better understand the post-Bonn state in Afghanistan. I draw on the global assemblages literature in international sociology (Ong, Aihwa and Collier 2005; Sassen 2006). By building on, augmenting and revising the literature on global assemblages, I argue that post-2001 statebuilding in Afghanistan has emerged as the result of a *complex multiplicity of global assemblages* of global objectives, knowledge, techniques and practices of diverse provenance which came about as the result of bargains made among international, national and local forces at the Bonn conference and carried out since then. Therefore, the state in Afghanistan is an "all-encompassing" phenomenon that takes place across all political-spatial spaces and directions: local, ethno-regional, national, national-regional and international levels. It is the outcome of the process of the interaction of globalising and localising networked forces, of tendencies towards integration and fragmentation, leading to both cohesive and conflictual dynamics. Spatial networks cut across horizontal structures and institutions linking the local to national to international; while at the same time bridging vertically across different socio-economic communities and factions. I also draw on Duffield's (2001) work on liberal peace networked governance in showing how the post-Bonn space is a "strategic complexes" that is increasingly based on local-global linkages and networks.

This paper is structured as follows. The first section provides the conceptual framework to study the post-Bonn state. This is followed by the empirical section that shows how the Afghan state became a venue for contestation and negotiation by different networked elites who uses state resources to promote and expand their networked interests within and outside the state. I show how the dominant network within the state, the Karzai network, has been able to arrange, represent and discipline, both materially and discursively, the daily practices of the state by pursuing a policy of exclusion and inclusion. In conclusion, I consider how contestation within the state have further exacerbated inter-elite conflict and the clientelistic features of Afghanistan's state and society.

The Post-Bonn state: A Conceptual Framework

The current international intervention in post-2001 Afghanistan experiences an intensive transformation from conflict to peaceful outcomes. It is at the border of liberal peace, at sites of post-conflict spaces, that the strategic domination and subversion as well as the grand design of social transformation take place: statebuilding. The Liberal peace statebuilding agents, institutions, structures and agencies have assembled in post-Bonn space with the aim of rebuilding the foundation of a peaceful and viable Afghan state. The current statebuilding in Afghanistan can best be characterised as a "complex multiplicity of global assemblages" of objectives, knowledge, techniques and practices of diverse attributions that came about as the result of bargains made among international, national and local forces at the Bonn conference. These complex assemblages concern themselves with broad issues in Afghanistan such as development, human rights, ecology, refugees, migrations, drugs, trafficking, insurgency and so on, literally everything. In this sense, the liberal peace assemblages connects various multi-level and increasingly non-territorial decision-making networks that brings together donors, their agencies, NGOs, local actors and so on, in a new complex way to manage the post-conflict space. This is a new form of governance that is collective and networked. As Mark Duffield's work on networked global governance suggests the liberal peace networked governance is shifting from hierarchical and territorial relations of governance to "polyarchical, non-territorial and networked relations of governance" (2001:2).

I find the global assemblages literature illuminating and suggestive. Approaching the issue of sovereignty and territoriality from a globalisation perspective, Ong, Aihwa and Collier (2005) have argued that the process of globalisation is territorialising a network of technoscience, licit and illicit exchanges, systems of administration of governance and regimes of ethics or values within a specific space. To them, this is first and foremost a 'problem-space' in which anthropological questions needs to be framed. These spaces have been termed as global assemblages. Global assemblages are global forms, which are articulated, in specific situations (Ong and Collier, 2004). These global forms are abstractable, mobile and dynamic, moving across and reconstituting society, culture and economy. As such, the current internationally-led statebuilding in Afghanistan can be seen as a multiplicity of complex forms of global assemblages that has been assembled with the import of administrative expatriates (e.g., experts, technicians, and politicians), global aid and its agencies (e.g., the World Bank, UN agencies and NGOs), institutional-building mechanisms and their ethical regulations (e.g. human rights, property rights, freedom of expressions). These multiplicities of global assemblages have been assembled, disassembled and reassembled from one post-conflict country into another. They vary in their size and forms of activities from a small set of actors, ideas,

agencies and organisations that work on promoting human rights issues in the country to major actors, objectives and organisations that work on rebuilding the country's economic and financial system. For instance, the establishment of Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission is one of these global assemblages that was set up to promote and protect human rights in the country.

There are major differences and tensions between Sassan's (2002) historical approach, which looks at the historical configuration of state sovereignty and Ong and Collier's state-directed strategic techno-industrial strategy (2005).[2] However, what concerns this paper is its problematisation of territoriality and authority that can be applied to post-conflict spaces such as Afghanistan. They propose that we move beyond the territorial organisations such as the modern state to 'spatial orders' in which the space "is not a mere container or tabula rasa" but "is itself productive of the new dynamics of power and control as well as produced by these" (2002:172). Post-conflict spaces such as Afghanistan are such new spatial-temporal orders. The Liberal Peace peacebuilding industry in Afghanistan has brought complex assemblages of diverse linkages of material, collective and discursive relationships into intimate interaction.

According to Ong and Collier (2005), global assemblages are the product of 'multiple determinations' that are not reducible to a single logic. Hence, global assemblages suggest inherent tensions: global implies broadly encompassing, seamless, and mobile; assemblage implies heterogeneous, contingent, unstable, partial and situated (2005:12). In post-Bonn Afghanistan, with the arrival of the peacebuilding industry, the post-Bonn state has become further interconnected and internationalised while at the same time this newly internationalised space has increasingly enabled "local actors" to engage in an intensive contestation in transnational practices to maintain or even expand their political and material support from interveners (De waal 2010, Heathershaw and Lambach 2008). It has become "global-local." In Afghanistan, the multiplicity of statebuilding assemblages connects diverse actors (e.g., experts, academics, policy-makers, warlords, police chiefs) and practices (ex: rule of law, patronage, corruption). In the post-Bonn space which exhibits a "continuous self-vibrating plateau" of multiplicity of interconnected actors across networks

[2]Sassen's analysis of territory, authority and rights (TAR) in the current global world is the continuation of historical modern state formation, which at its current shape is neither global nor national. Ong and Collier's analysis drives from a techno-industrial perspective in which the decision to assemble objectives, knowledge, actors, institutions and techniques is a strategic policy in the part of the state. It is a response to a globalised economy and industry. Ong and Collier (2005) identify three different reflective practices: 1) Technological, organisational or administrative to achieve end; 2) Political: concerns with the appropriate form and scope of juridical-legal institutions; 3) Ethical: reflection of how we should live our lives (10). Their understanding of global assemblages are a technoscientific form that can be decontextualized and recontextualised, abstracted, transported and territorialised, and is designed to produce functionaly comparable results in disparate domains (2005: 11).

(Deleuze and Guatarri, 2004), the multiplicity of statebuilding assemblages is creating inclusive networks that foster interaction between the 'global-local' actors and practices (e.g., political elites aligned with the interveners, businessmen, NGOs) within the assemblage while excluding actors and practices (e.g., Taliban, Insurgency, Drug traffickers) that do not conform with the assemblage's moral and political ethics. Put differently, the post-Bonn state is a politically and morally charged domain.

The New War literature is suggestive in informing us that the multiplicity of liberal peace global assemblages in the current statebuilding process in Afghanistan is "non-territorial, mutable and networked" (Duffield, 2001:34). As Duffield informs us it is in post-conflict spaces that the "complex network of strategic governance", government, NGOs, militaries and business sectors cooperate together to deal with complex political emergencies of failed states. These networks of "strategic complexes" are the operational basis of liberal peace and an important nexus of global governance (2001:45). In this sense, post-conflict spaces are strategic complexes that "is based on new, mutable, and increasingly privatised local-global linkages and networks" (2001:46). The radical project of transforming societies can only function by creating networks that bridge "traditional boundaries, specialisms and disciplines" (Duffield, 2001: 45). In another words, liberal peace is a network system which is embodied in a number of flows and network nodes of authority that bring together different "strategic complexes" of state-non-state, military-civilian and public-private actors in pursuit of its aims. They are strategic because they pursue a radical agenda of social transformation in the interest of global stability, or more precisely Northern liberal countries' stability. Liberal global assemblages operate on an "adaptive and selectively inclusive system" (2001:45) as they decide with which local actors, organisations, institutions, structures and NGOs to work with and which ones to exclude. In post-Bonn Afghanistan, for instance, donors and international agencies such as World Bank and others actively have awarded some ministries such as Trade and Health as example ministries; however, as soon as the favourite minister is reshuffled into another ministry resources have reduced substantially. Similarly, a warlord like General Atta who is known as the biggest druglord in the country is seen as one of the most favourite governors by donors, while his opponent General Dostum, an ethnic Uzbek is marginalised and labelled as a terrible warlord. It was the international donor's support in providing political legitimacy and material resources to the dominant network, the Western educated technocrats headed by president Karzai, that resulted in the domination of the state by Karzai network. This is of course not to suggest that the networked relations is a linear process originating from international donors reaching the local political-spatial networks. As I have shown elsewhere, the state in post-Bonn period became a venue for contestation among opposing networks and it was often the local

networks that coerced the international donors to follow the local network politics. In this sense, network politics is global-local as it links global, local, regional and national forces.

The emergence of the multiplicity of global assemblage points to a new form of authority and power in post-Bonn state and space that is networked. Power and authority can no longer be seen in its Walfsteinian charater of physically controlling and subjugating a people and their territory, but in ability of the networked powers to control and manage the non-territorial networks. In Afghanistan, Karzai regime and its dominant network do not aim to physically control a territory but to supervise and manage the networks and flows of security and development agendas, institutions, structures and discourses. As I have highlighted elsewhere, it was the ability of the Karzai and its Western technocrats to better interconnect with their international counterparts that enabled them to gradually marginalise the Jihadis within the state by the end of 2009 (Sharan 2011). They were able to take advantage of network property: Information sharing, comparative advantage and coordination. On the other hand, the price of non-cooperation is conditionality and isolation. In this sense, in such an order, connectivity and maintaining that connectivity is the strategic tool that can be used to enhance an actor, a businessman, an organisation, a political party's security and economic comparative advantages. In Afghanistan, various networks-based groups are more interested in establishing connectivity and maintaining their connectivity as a source of physical and socio-economic security.

The networked state, however, is multitude and fragmented. It is multitude because it is a combination of diverse strategic complexes of agencies, institutions, structures and discourses. It is fragmented because the network of relations, responsibilities, institutions and actors are distributed into different regions on the basis of donor allocation of security and governance. Currently, there are more than forty international donor countries whose efforts are fragmented to their own allocated territory and administration. For instance, the Germans are in the North, the Americans in the West and South West, the British in the South of the country. The lack of uniformity, coherence and coordination effort among them in their strategies, approaches and mechanisms to deal with statebuilding is well noted. There is no single "international community" but multiple international communities each seeking its own objectives, approaches and strategies. As such, intervention in Afghanistan creates "naturally discontinuous spaces." The state in post-Bonn Afghanistan cannot be read in terms of a "Singular" legibility at national level, but "multiple" legibility in multiple spaces distinguished by attributes imposed and directed by the international interveners.

To summarise, the above framework provides us with a conceptual framework to consider the

post-Bonn state in the current internationally-led intervention in terms of networked politics. Seeing post-Bonn space as a complex multiplicity of global assemblages in which competing networks within the state compete at material and symbolic levels to extend their power allows us to analyse governance and authority within multiple networked spaces within and beyond post-conflict space, not in one single space, authority and order. And even within the state itself within multiple spaces. In Afghanistan, these diverse socio-political spatial networks within the state cut across horizontal structures and institutions linking the local to national to international; while at the same time bridging vertically across different socio-economic communities and factions.

The Post-Bonn State (building)

The Bonn Conference of 2001 provided the framework for the Afghan state to be reassembled. The conference was a "grand bargain", an opportunity for the Afghan elites to distribute the state "spoil" among themselves (Goodhand, 2010). It provided a platform for pact-making and re-negotiation among four main Afghan political elite networks. The first of these groups was the Northern Alliance (NA, Ettihad-e-Shamal) Jihadis, a loose coalition of several factions who had fought one another during the civil war of 1992–1996 but then formed a coalition against the Taliban. Among them, the most dominant faction was Jamiat Tanzim, which in turn was dominated by its military wing, the Panjsheris of Shura-yi Nezar. Secondly, the Rome group was selected to balance and represent Western interests and was associated with King Zahir. Thirdly, the Peshawar group was linked to Gilani, the former seven Sunni Mujahedeen groups in Pakistan. The final group—known as the Cyprus group—was associated with Humayoun Jareer in Iran.

The failure of the Bonn settlement to contain the networked elite disunity produced a highly confrontational situation within and outside the state among opposing networks. It become a highly contested venue for competing networks that came to capture different parts of the state by occupying strategic positions within and outside the state and then extending their networks. For instance, at the Bonn conference the NA Jihadis got seventeen key government cabinet positions out of thirty. Once occupying key positions within the government they were able to monopolise different parts of the state bureaucracy by brining in their own-networked colleagues (Jalali 2003). As the consequences of such uneven networked-power structures, the post-Bonn state became a forum for conflict and compromise between two broadly opposing elite networks – namely the former Northern Alliance (NA) Jihadis, in particular the Panjsheris in Shura-yiNezar, the military

wing of the *Jamiat Tanzim*[3], which was represented by Dr Abdullah in the 2009 presidential election, and the externally imported Western technocrats represented by President Karzai (Sharan, 2011). The former elite network emerged during the Jihad years of 1980s against the Soviet Union occupation, in particular 1992-2001, while the latter emerged with the outcome of the political settlement at the Bonn Conference in 2001. Both networks exhibits politically constructed ethno-regional formations, principally defined along ethnic line, which have been resourced by years of intervention and interference by the Western, Soviet and regional powers. As I have shown in other places, by 2006 Karzai network was able to effectively remove most of the opposing elites personnel from the government and this way consolidate their power-base (Sharan, 2011). Giustozzi (2005) in his study shows how in 2004 the Karzai network gradually used their positions in the state and state's resources in war-making so as to strengthen their position, particularly vis-a-vis the Jihadi Panjshiris.[4] These networked practices are in contrast to the dominant image of the state as fully constituted, internally coherent and organisationally closed system. The state in post-Bonn period is networked. It is highly fragmented and incoherent entity; different networked groups dominate different parts of the state.

The post-Bonn state has also become the "site and stake" (Hall, 1982), of struggle for symbolic production and domination among the competing networks. Recent studies (Joseph and Nugent 1994; Scott 1998; Corrigan and Sayer, 1985; and Taussig 1996) on the discursive practices of state through which state symbolically and materially represent itself to its population, is illuminating and suggestive. These studies reveal how power works to constitute distinctive spaces materially and symbolically and how; conversely, the arrangement of space generates the effect of power. According to Shapiro (1997), spaces and identities are mutually constitutive in space-making as social group identities enable space formation and space enables identities formations. In Afghanistan, elite networks within the state have been able to construct divided identities such as Pashtuns, Kandahari, Panjshiri, Jihadis, radical Taliban, or brother Taliban to gain support and this way expand their networks within and outside the state that rely on such demarcations. During the 2009 the state become a platform for discursive representation of reality between two opposing elite networks represented by a former Northern Alliance Jihadi and incumbent Karzai. The highly confrontational rhetoric and symbolism deployed in the campaign not only depicted two very different images of the Afghanistan's past history, state and society but also opposing spatial

[3]*Tanzim* is used to refer to the ethno-regional military-political formations that emerged during the Jihad years against the Soviet Union.

[4]In 2004 Karzai pursued a high-risk strategy in eliminating the Northern Alliance influence in two main regions of the North and South West. He tried to play one commander against another, by categorising one as a "good governor" and another as warlords. By 2004 he managed to co-opt Ismail Khan (Minister Energy and Water), Rashid Dostum (Symbolic Chief of Staff) and Gul Aga Shirzai (First Urban Development minister and then governor of Nangarhar province), three of the country's most powerful warlords, through the offer of positions in the central government.

identities: one around “national unity” and “stability” another around “exclusion” and “injustice”. As the winning candidate and the dominant network in the state, Karzai was able to portray itself as the state. Karzai regime once again secured the post-Bonn state as an “image” through the symbolic and material organisation of social space. This way, Karzai regime secured its legitimacy, naturalised its authority and represented itself as superior to, and encompassing of, other institutions and centres of power. As Mitchell (1991) and Harvey (2005) argued, it is this ability of the state to produce itself as a separate domain through material and symbolic practices that is revealing about our state analysis. As Reeves (2007:16) notes in the context of Farghana valley, the dominant territorial image of the post-Bonn state conceal state-like processes that are “multiple and minutely located.”

In Afghanistan, the Karzai network as the dominant force in the state has been able to produce “spatial and scalar hierarchies” such as warlords, Jihadis, brother Taliban, Angry Taliban, Radical Taliban to represent, manipulate and control these socio-political spaces. In addition, as the gatekeeper to the external resources supporting “statebuilding” he has been able to create hierarchies of exclusion and inclusion to consolidate its power through a system of patronage (Sharan and Heathershaw, 2011). Those local, ethno-regional and national elites who are linked to his network is abundantly awarded while those outside is marginalised. Karzai and his network have been effective in manipulating Afghanistan’s complex interrelations of hierarchies of interaction among different kin connection, village elders, Khans, tribal leaders, ethno-regional leaders establishing a large and extensive network of patronage. It is through these linking hierarchies that the effect of the state is produced, its authority mediated and impersonated. For instance, it is these networks of linkages and interconnections that determines who would be the next official representative in the district or who can become the new provincial and district police chief. This is expected when a large part of the government work is done at the informal house dinner invitations, tea offerings at home or local mosque after prayers, where poor farmers or relatives ask officials to write an *Ariza* (official government letter) or sign an official paper. In such environment of networked politics, the boundary between formal-informal, legal-illegal, private-public is blurred. Such dichotomies are inadequate analytical tool to the daily practices and imaging of the state and society. As Mann reminds us, societies are “constituted of multiple overlapping and intersecting socio-spatial networks of power” (Mann, 1986: 1). In the current international intervention in Afghanistan where aid money is politicised, illegal shadow economy is dominant and informal politics prevails over the formal, social groupings such as citizens, communities (Chatterjee 1990), and social groups (Bourdieu 1985) at local, ethno-regional and national levels are in constant process of contestation, negotiation, and collaboration with the state, constructing networks of socio-political spaces.

In the last ten years the Karzai regime has effectively impersonated the state from the top government officials to the district police chiefs and governors through informal bargaining of patron-client relations. The post-Bonn state is constituted *as state* by its appreciation of informal exchange: elite networks and factions have constituted an internationally-supported regime, which enact as a state in a system of patronage. These patronage and nepotism practices have been essential to the domination and survival of the Afghan networked state. In a country that is ranked as the second most corrupt country in the world according to 2010 Transparency International, the boundary between the legal and extra-legal runs right within the offices and institution that embody the state. In Afghanistan the realm of formal and informal boundaries is blurred as the majority of state officials are both "within" the state and "outside" the state; both an embodiment of "legitimate" authority and outside or above the law. Whilst working for the UNODC in Afghanistan I was constantly informed by officials and ordinary farmers how certain district chief is a state official at day time, impersonating the Afghan state, at nights he is a partner in the illegal drug trade, negotiating bargains. It is well known to many Afghans that the governor of Balkh province in the North is the second biggest drug baron in the country while he has been constantly praised by the international donors, the UNODC and the Afghan government for his efforts in making Balkh province a free-poppy zone since 2007.

The post-Bonn state cannot be found in a single space, but in its "multiplicity of spaces" in an environment of culturally, socially and economically interconnected and interdependent spaces. To many Afghans, state is a mutli-contested space where people's socio-economic status, their extra-formal linkages, connections and bargaining is essential to work within the state space. To them, there is no single visualisation of state but "multiple visualisation": A farmer sees state as dysfunctional and corrupt, an Uzbek minority shopkeeper sees state as a site of unjust and discriminatory practices, a parliamentary candidate sees it as a site for business opportunities. During one of my fieldwork to Saripul province I was told regularly about the difficulty of accessing government in the area. In one case, a village elder after months of appeal to local bureaucrats to get his daughter's divorce approved, appeared defeated by the procedures of bureaucracy whose rule he could not comprehend. Eventually, he obtained a letter from General Dostum, the leader of the *Junbish* faction, to succeed in his case. Or the example of a parliamentary candidate who uses the following slogan "the way to *Karbala* [the most important religious shrines to Shiites] is through parliament", is revealing in representing how state is imagined. These practices contest the unitary image of the state. State is a formation that, as Stuart Hall put it "condenses contradictions (1986).

The Liberal Peace global assemblages of statebuilding has further attributed to the fragmented and incoherent nature of the post-Bonn state. A multiplicity of global assemblages has conglomerated in the post-Bonn space to rebuild the state, its organisational institutions and structures such as army, police and bureaucracy as well as helping reconstruct the country's economic, financial and political infrastructure. In Afghanistan multiple actors international (international donors and NGOs), national (state, warlords, strongmen) and local (tribal leaders, ethno-regional ethnic leaders, regional commanders) operate across multiple spatial scales. This is contrary to the current understanding of statebuilding where such heterogeneous socio-political spaces are subsumed within uni-linear and unproblematic post-conflict statebuilding. This means that there is no "singular legibility" at the national level, but "multiple legibility" in multiple spaces within "discontinuous spaces." If we examine the role of international actors alone, we will see donors themselves often compete and contest over the dominant representation of statebuilding, its strategies, approaches and mechanisms. There are currently more than 40 international countries contributing to Afghanistan's security and sub-national governance-building at provincial level. For instance, in the North and North East, the Germans are the sole donor responsible for security and peacebuilding, in Helmand, the British and in Kandahar, the Canadians. A closer look at the security sector is revealing. In Kunduz and Takhar provinces where the Germans are responsible for statebuilding, they have taken a long-term approach to training Afghan police, a civilian police. In the South and South West where responsibility falls on Americans they have focused on building short-term counter-insurgency police force with as little as two weeks training. Similarly, in relation to counter-narcotics, the Germans and Dutch have advocated the legalisation of poppy; Americans on the other hand have pursued complete eradication; while the British have employed a softer strategy of limited coercion combined with introducing alternative livelihoods. The statebuilding global assemblages being build in multiple forms and fragmented nature and these global assemblages with various and often-conflicting discourses, approaches, agendas and strategies has made governing in Afghanistan difficult

These multiple global assemblages in post-Bonn Afghanistan are imposed *schemes to improve human condition*s as it involves in a sense something of a comprehensive "authoritarian-high-modernisation" offered by Scott (1998). The current international intervention is an attempt by the interveners with an agenda for modernisation imposes political and economic grids or complex institutions such as elections, rule of law, property rights, and bureaucratic reforms to codify political and economic behaviour. It is to make these failed spaces more "legible." I find the global assemblages an essentially "imperialism of high modernism", or planned social order, which reflects an imperial or "hegemonic planning mentality" that excludes the necessary role of local knowledge and know-how" (Scott 1998: 6). As Scott remind us these grand schemes often fails. In

Afghanistan the failure lies in international donor's lack of understanding that, in post-conflict spaces such as Afghanistan, most informal practices cannot be codified through simple formal institutional-assemblages. Formal rules on their own are inadequate as a set of instructions to create a functioning social order. According to Scott these formal schemes are "parasitic" on "informal processes" that, alone, it could not create or maintain (1998: 6). One such grand scheme of global assemblage of objectives, knowledge, techniques, actors and institutions is the National Solidarity Program (NSP) program in 2004. During one of my fieldwork in Yamchi village in Saripul province while working at Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, I could not help realise the intensification of tensions after the introduction of the NSP in the village. The annul allocation of 200 USD for the village had drastically changed power relations among different village actors (e.g. village mullah, former Dostum commander, newly appointed head of NSP, village*Arbab* (chief) and village shopkeeper) each aligning themselves within different groups to decide what, how and where to spend the NSP money. This often involved painful contestation on deciding where the local clinic or mosque should be build or the new water pump is stationed to suit different household. It is this invisible power relation and dynamics that go unnoticed to foreign high-modern planners.

Conclusion

In this paper, I argued that the post-Bonn state is a networked state. This networked state is externally placed, contradictory and fragmented with uneven networked power structures. This is against the mainstream assumption that sees state as fully constituted, internally coherent and organisationally closed system. I showed how the post-Bonn state became a venue for inter-elite competition who readily uses state's material and symbolic resources to expand their networked interests within and outside the state. The dominant Karzai network has been able to consolidate its power though a system of patronage and nepotism within the state.

The latest one-year conflict between the Afghan parliament and the Karzai network is further prove of Karzai's attempt to strengthen its position within the state. In the 2010 parliamentary election, the Karzai network failed to bring in more of their allies into the parliament to establish a majority. Rejecting the Afghanistan's Independent Election Commission's final result, Karzai used his extra-legal power to try to change the result by setting up a Special Court to investigate the cases of fraud. Backed by the High Court, the Attorney General, and the president, all dominated by Karzai network, the Special Court ruled that more than 200 MPs have committed fraud opening the case to prosecuting them in the future and that 62 MPs must be removed immediately. A closer look at the list of the 62 MPs reveals that this was a strategic decision to replace Karzai's opponents with his

networked allies. The final outcome is yet to be seen. The consolidation of Karzai network within and outside the state will have serious consequences for the current international intervention and for the future of the country. It will further exacerbate inter-elite conflict, ethno-regional divisions and clientelistic features of Afghanistan's state and society. This might easily undermine the NATO's plan to withdraw from Afghanistan by 2014.

In this paper I raised a number of conceptual and methodological problems, which can be helpful to our analysis of state in the Central Asian countries. First, as several studies in Central Asia have shown (Reeves, 2008; Collins, 2002; and Schatz, 2004), state in Central Asia should not be seen as a unitary organisation operating within a unified geographical territory. An ethnographic approach highlights that such analytical pursuits leaves the messiness and everyday practices of the state outside our analytical vision. As in Afghanistan, we need to recognise the multiple agencies, levels, agendas and socio-political spaces that produce the effect of an intense field of contestation in these countries. The case of Afghanistan reveals that the state is a "multiple mediated spaces" where individual's socio-economic status, their extra-formal linkages, connections and bargaining help them to operate within the state space. As such, in our analysis of Central Asian states, we need to go beyond the need to assume state as a unitary entity that stands apart from, or in opposition to society, or that it is mutually exclusive of the social spaces. Secondly, By focusing on the extra-legal practices of the state officials we can observe the importance of these practices on the daily functioning of the state in Central Asia. Such an ethnographic approach allows us to gain intellectual capital on how the state is impersonated on a daily basis and how this shapes the image of the state to many Central Asian citizens. This is something that Reeves (2008) has looked in detail in relation to the Fergana valley. The third problem I raised was the totality of the state. Post-conflict state such as Afghanistan came about as the result of an assemblage of objectives, knowledge, techniques and practices of diverse provenance by the international interveners. This is particularly relevant to post-conflict Tajikistan and the post-Tulip revolution in Kyrgyzstan where the state is constituted of multiple spaces and its operation is contingent on opposed political networks and forces within and beyond government's strategic and structural positions and behaviours. In the Central Asian context, such an approach allows us to examine networks, groupings and institutions in Central Asia that are involved in the process of contestation, negotiation and collaboration within the state, each seeking to expand their influence through the structural and strategic positions they occupy.

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