Afghanistan 2001-2011 : gewapende interventie en staatsvorming in een fragiele staat

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Summary

Owing to their weak governmental institutions, instability and lack of basic security, fragile states can represent serious security risks. They can serve as safe havens to terrorists and international organised crime and can disseminate the negative effects related to poverty and an inadequate rule of law such as refugee flows and opium, arms and human trafficking. Events taking place far from the national borders of developed states governed by the rule of law can therefore affect the national security situations of these states. Armed intervention is one option for developed states to help to create stability elsewhere in order to benefit their own national security. This dissertation examines the use of the military instrument for initiating a state-building process in fragile states as a foundation for stability and basic security. This is done by analysing the position of the armed intervening parties in Afghanistan in the 2001 – 2011 period as an empirical and qualitative single-case study.

According to Frances Steward and Graham Brown, as well as a recent study carried out by the Netherlands Advisory Council on International Affairs, fragile states are characterised by the lack of a functioning government and a lack of legitimacy. The situation in fragile states displays similarities with the characteristics of the patrimonial phase of the state-building process as described by Charles Tilly in his study of the European state-building process. This involves competing centres of political power, a segmented society with a patrimonial order and 'intensely fragmented sovereignty'. Whoever wishes to create a well-functioning state and society from such a situation can bring about stability and continuity by commanding authority, by getting government to function properly and by instigating social processes. According to the most commonly accepted state-building theories, and particularly according to Charles Tilly's and Amitai Etzioni's theories which will serve as a basis for this dissertation, monopolies of force and taxation as well as basic security among the population are conditions for allowing civilians to shape the state-building process bottom-up. State-building cannot be seen as merely defeating domestic rivals claiming the same monopolies; state-building also involves the establishment and development of states alongside and in relation to each other.

Armed intervention in a fragile state is not an isolated event but is the linchpin of a long-term, difficult and exhausting value chain that is intended to create stability and security and make the (independent) functioning of the state possible. In other words, such an intervention encompasses assisting in fast-track state-building. In theory, after armed intervention has started, the value chain comprises: enforcing a negative peace, achieving monopolies in the use of force and taxation, creating basic security, establishing national state organs, establishing a constitutional order and law enforcement system, and finally – and ideally – establishing democratic and parliamentary relations. The problem is that armed intervening parties are restricted in how far they can force progress in the value chain, in view of the fact that authority can only be commanded to a limited extent. To put it another way, in many armed interventions it is a dilemma as to what extent the intervening party itself is managing and directing the situation, when the interim government of the fragile state in question has simultaneously assumed responsibility for and ownership of the state-building process.

According to Rupert Smith, armed interventions have a population-centric approach. In the associated paradigm of the 'war amongst the people', it is about the clash of wills between population groups and their leaders. It is not about claiming victory over the opponent and the victor then imposing his will; it is about creating the conditions for the process of state-building to take place, a process that the majority of civilians are willing to commit to. From this point of view, the armed intervening party supports the development of a safe and secure environment, where basic security of civilians is guaranteed and where the (accelerated) establishment of a well-functioning constitutional state is possible. Ashraf Ghani and Clare Lockhart demonstrate that, to achieve this, the legitimacy and sovereignty of a state must be guaranteed as soon as possible owing to the necessity of reducing support and assistance from the intervening force.

On the basis of the theoretical context sketched above, the aforementioned case study was analysed and the main question of the study – what is the role of the armed intervening parties in the Afghan state-building process between 2001 and mid-2011 – was answered.

During the course of the last three decades of war and conflict in the country, Afghanistan has assumed all the characteristics of a fragile state. Gradually, the state ceased to function and Afghan society changed drastically. Warlords slowly assumed a dominant role in all sections of the Afghan state and Afghan society. The population became segmented and fractured along ethnic, geographic, religious and other dividing lines, with the geography of the country acting as a catalyst in this process. Approximately two thirds of Afghans fled from their homes. During the course of the 1990s, the middle class and civil society left the country for good; in consequence, a part of society essential for a well-functioning political and administrative system in a healthy society went missing. The legitimacy of the, at that time, ruling Taliban regime was increasingly called into question, all the more so as the humanitarian crisis in the country became untenable. Almost all other nations condemned the Taliban regime, partly on account of the fact that the regime offered a safe haven to Al-Qaida. UN Security Council resolutions piled up, but this did not mean that intervention would actually take place. This all changed after the 9/11 attacks of 2001 in the United States.

The American invasion of Afghanistan in the autumn of 2011 was carried out as an act of self-defence, pursuant to article 51 of the United Nations Charter. The attacks also made a legitimate framework for armed intervention possible. In comparison with the armed reprisal, intervention in the humanitarian crisis was only a secondary reason for military intervention. Initially, the political objectives of the United States were limited to the destruction of Al-Qaida. Although more significant in the surrounding region, American interests in Afghanistan itself were minor and, despite NATO's article 5 on mutual assistance being declared valid, allies of the United States were reluctant to lend assistance for similar reasons.

The intervention on the ground was carried out by the Northern Alliance, which was thus fighting a proxy war. The various Afghan commanders were given American air support and intelligence support as well as considerable quantities of arms and funding. A relatively

small number of – mainly American and British – ground troops were deployed to the area. This led to a spectacular tactical military victory over the Taliban government in Kabul.

On 5 December 2001, a small number of Afghan groups that had turned against the Taliban signed an agreement on the future of Afghanistan. This had all the hallmarks of an 'arranged marriage', where the warlords who had helped make the intervention a success were rewarded with prominent positions. It soon emerged that the Taliban and Al-Qaida were far from beaten; they had temporarily fled the country. In the years that followed, they would gradually step up their operations, mainly from the inaccessible Afghan-Pakistani border region.

In the state-building process that was to follow, Afghanistan implemented a presidential, centralised system of state. The government and parliament were given independent positions based on an electoral mandate: governance by the government and legislation by parliament. The government, led by the president, did not, however, have to have the confidence of parliament. The president appointed ministers to his cabinet; these ministers were accountable to the president only.

As time went on, Afghanistan increasingly became a hybrid state; an 'illiberal democracy', as Fareed Zakaria puts it, with both repressive and (fragmented) plutocratic characteristics. President Karzai had little grip on the country. The role of warlords and the fear of actually dealing with them hampered the concentration of power at the central authorities in Kabul and the delegation of powers to the provincial level. The influence of groups affiliated to Pakistan increased and destabilised the situation particularly in the southern part of Afghanistan. Momentum in the state-building process evaporated. The population lost confidence in the process, which to many had been imposed on the country. The legitimacy and sovereignty vacuum became ever larger and more visible. The intervening parties changed little about this. After taking office in 2009, the new American president, Barack Obama, reviewed the American strategy in Afghanistan, giving it an emphatically regional character. He also focused on the integration of military, diplomatic and civil surges and pertinent Afghanification to first give the intervention and the state-building process new impetus before the American military presence would gradually be down-scaled and ended.

Ten years after the start of the intervention in Afghanistan, much has been achieved; however, state monopolies on the use of force and taxation, as well as basic security for the population, still seem a long way off. That does not mean to say – with reference to the theoretical value chain of an intervention – that the state-building process has not got off the ground. However, the armed intervening parties seem to have seriously underestimated the tasks related to the consolidation of military success on the battlefield. In contrast to the 'war against the people' paradigm, consolidation was mainly aimed at the destruction of Al-Qaida and affiliated groups in order to bolster the authority of the government in Kabul. Only gradually – and as a consequence of operational limitations – did a more population-

centric approach gain importance in creating stability and stimulating the state-building process.

This case study addresses internal and external factors. In Afghanistan, state-building is not only driven by internal forces and is not only an expression of the domestic balance of power. An armed intervention is therefore not solely about a monopolisation of instruments of force and thus not merely about the establishment of the monopoly on force of the (Weberian) state. Breaking up the often deep-rooted patrimonial order and the establishment of a functioning, self-sustaining state system are fundamental. It can also be said that each state forms and develops alongside – and often in competition with – other states. The key to a successful intervention lies in finding the balance between the culture, the history and the position in the region of the state being intervened in and the nature, mandate and options of the intervention force.

The intervention in Afghanistan confirms that the intervening party only has limited control and say in the state-building process. It is a confirmation of Tilly's conclusion that societies mainly build themselves up, or are built up by their (legitimate) leaders. It is crucial that warlords and other 'roving and stationary bandits', as Mancur Olson and Martin McGuire characterise the powerbrokers in a patrimonial order, reconcile themselves with the state-building process. This will ensure a largely safe and secure environment, leading to basic security for civilians. 'Soft power' can best be used to stimulate this, as 'hard power' often has a limited – or even counterproductive – effect. Monopolies of the use of force and taxation can be gained bit by bit after the gradual introduction of the constitutional state. It is clear that the theoretical value chain of an armed intervention needs to be adjusted. In the absence of a functioning government, a primary task of the armed intervening party is to provide (initial) basic security. In the context of accelerated state-building and the gradual acquiring of monopolies on force and taxation, the armed intervening party will sooner have a decreasing supporting and assisting role.

The endogenous factors in state-building underline that reciprocity in relations between civilians and the state is essential for enduring state authority. For the legitimacy of state authority, a functioning political system characterised by 'reconciliation and compromise' is needed, particularly in a heterogeneous, segmented state. According to the theories of Arend Lijphart, the introduction of a parliamentary consensus democracy is the ideal solution, owing to the fact that this system safeguards the interests of the largest possible number of groups. It is essential that the 'safe and secure environment' propagated by Etzioni is expanded in order to allow broadly supported standards and values to fully mature, contributing to unity of the state. The objective is to have civilians actively participate in the process of government and to prevent large groups being excluded from the same process, as disenfranchised persons are then left with little choice but to offer resistance to the authorities. This case study clearly illustrates the importance of the previous two points, in view of the continual resistance of the Taliban, the Haqqani network, the HiG and others excluded from the Afghan state-building process. They were given direct or indirect support for their resistance activities from or via Pakistan. Not only does this outside help

confirm the endogenous and exogenous factors of the Afghan state-building process, but it also confirms the fact that the armed intervening party must address these endogenous and exogenous factors. The armed intervention in Afghanistan cannot restrict itself to that country alone. From this, and in line with the findings of Ashraf Ghani and Clare Lockhart regarding the crucial reduction of both the 'sovereignty gap' and the 'legitimacy gap', it follows that a stable Afghan state will remain unfeasible as long as Pakistan is unstable.

The intervention in Afghanistan underlines that harmonisation of military operations with political objectives is an extremely complicated matter, be it within a multinational coalition or between the intervening force, aid organisations and the government of the state being intervened in, and also between the most important players in the region in question. The intervening force must be capable of kneading this harmonisation into a workable and integrated strategy, giving as much confidence as possible to the legitimate and broadly supported leadership and ownership of the fragile state that was the subject of the intervention. Whatever the motive for an armed intervention, before it commences the question must be asked as to whether the intervention force is fit-for-purpose regarding the tasks to be carried out and whether there is a large enough support base, not only for the invasion, but also for the long-term process required for the political consolidation of military results.