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INSPIRE

THE INTERNATIONAL STUDIES UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT JOURNAL

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I am delighted to introduce to you the inaugural issue of the International Studies on-line journal, INSpire. The International Studies department is multi-disciplinary incorporating Anthropology, History, Philosophy, Political Science and Sociology with-in a single major program. The Department is also home to the new Psychology major allowing International Studies students to take electives in psychology. The diversity of specializations and perspectives inspires our students to expand their horizons and investigate subjects from many different perspectives, as you will discover in this issue of the journal.

In the pages below are articles about how the British influenced the patriarchal system in Kerala and how they in turn were changed by Indian cuisine. Other articles explore women's roles in Lebanese politics, the propaganda efforts of the Taliban and ethnic conflict in the Caucasus.

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This journal would not be possible without the efforts of a dedicated team of student editors who worked under the supervision of two of our faculty members. Their work exemplifies the dedication and sense of community that makes the International Studies Department a dynamic and exciting place to study and work.

Regards,
Dr. Vernon Pedersen
Head of the Department of International Studies

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CURRIED APPROPRIATION

by Nada Nassereddin

Abstract: This paper argues that through cultural appropriation, the British constructed the term "curry," which led to the creation of their own perception of Indian cuisine. After exploring the origins and the development of the idea of curry, the paper shows how the British reduced Indian cuisine to curry and reshaped Indian identity and culture.

Introduction

In 1998, a song titled "Vindaloo," which is a spicy Indian dish, became the national anthem of the British football team and reached number two on the United Kingdom Single Charts (Westcott & Sims, 2014). In 2001, the then Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, declared chicken tikka masala as Britain's national dish (Collingham, 2006). Britain is known to be a nation of curry lovers since one in four Britons eat an Indian meal once a week (Kanjilal, 2016). These dishes, considerably regarded as South Asian, are signature meals in restaurants across the UK. This shows that while certain foods tend to be associated with certain places, cultures still borrow, appropriate, and recreate from one another. Among the major actions that have altered culinary cultures, cultural appropriation stands out as the most common. It occurs when members of a dominant culture adopt parts of another culture, and it generally results from colonialism, globalization, and interconnection (Cole, 2017; Dirlik, 2002). While some argue that to appropriate cultural food elements is to express appreciation, it is problematic when the people of the dominant culture decide the narrative that surrounds the culinary experience (Cheung, 2019). One of the most enduring appropriated food concepts is the British idea of curry (Kanjilal, 2016). While curry is the British expression of Indian cuisine, the word curry has no real meaning in authentic South Asian cuisine. Therefore, this paper aims to present the different perceptions of curry in Indian and British context. It will also elaborate on the origins and the development of the idea of curry. Finally, the paper will argue that throughout the British construction of the term "curry," the trade of curry powder around the world, and the use of cookbooks, the British appropriated the culinary wisdom of the colonized and constructed their own perception of Indian cuisine. Through that, the British reduced Indian cuisine to curry and reshaped Indian identity and culture.

The Term "Curry"

The word "curry" is widely misunderstood and is defined differently in separate regions. Initially, it is important to acknowledge that there exist curry leaves along with the famous curry spices or powder, and that curry could also refer to a type of stewed dish. This means that a "curry's consistency varies anywhere between a soupy concoction to a dry mixture that coats the meat, fish, or vegetables in the dish" (Waldrop, 2007, p.32). Curry powder, which is a combination of different spices, is regarded by the British as the main ingredient in making a dish Indian (Thomas, 2014). They created the curry powder to have a quick and ready flavor that resembles the South Asian tastes that the British colonists of India experienced. However, in India, the idea of singular curry powder is nonexistent since numerous spices with varying formulas are prepared to suit different tastes (Balaramdas, 1966). Furthermore, "the range of culinary styles within India means that authenticity is more accurately tied to a region" (Collingham, 2006, p.3). Through the notion of curry powder, the British homogenized distinctive Indian foods into one concept (Narayan, 1995). Consequently, the British reshaped an aspect of Indian culture by regarding the word curry as a collective term that encompasses the cuisine of an entire and widely diverse nation.

There are conflicting opinions on the meaning and the origin of the term “curry.” One possibility is that it was derived from the word “Kari,” which is a common etymology for the word sauce in Tamil, a South Indian language (Sen, 2009). The word “Kari” is also used as a terminology for the different ways locals prepare their food (Davidson, 1999). However, the meaning of curry in the Victorian cookbook that first officially used the term is different. In the book, The Forme of Cury, “the English word curry is used to describe cuisine based on French ‘curie’ meaning to cook, boil, or grill” (Kohli, 2015). This is assumed to have led the word to become popular, and it was slowly associated with stew. Alternatively, for Collingham (2016), “Kari” means to bite and can be used as a noun for meats and vegetables. While the meaning of the word is debated, it is affirmed that the Portuguese initially encountered the spiced “curry” dishes. In 1498, the Portuguese sailed to India, more specifically Kerala, a South Indian state, in search for spices and commodities. Therefore, it is also believed that the Portuguese were introduced to the spicy, thickened stews and then named it carel and applied it to many Portuguese dishes. However, it is also important to acknowledge that Indian cuisine was also influenced by goods that the Portuguese empire brought in and infused into the country’s culture. For instance, the Portuguese introduced spices such as sweet and chili peppers that are seen as an essential part of Indian food today (Ramos, n.d.). Moreover, Portuguese dishes, similar to British dishes today, were adapted to Indian culinary techniques and tastes. While the concept of curry evolved through a process of transculturation before the British reached South Asia, it was only until the British settled that curry was fully constructed under British terms. With regard to the term, some concluded that “the British Anglicized the term into curry when they colonized the subcontinent” (Waldrop, 2007). Regardless of where exactly the word originated from, curry eventually embodied Britishness under the guise of being authentically Indian.

Demand for Curry

Curry became more than just a beloved taste; it also was a successful commodity of British production. Demand rose from housewives in London to British subjects in India. Furthermore, curry has eventually gained a lot of popularity in Asia. For instance, in Thailand, cooks have taken in a local dish, “transformed” it into an Indian dish, and referred to it as yellow curry by adding curry powder and other Indian spices (Synder, 2018). It is important to note that these spices were not new to the region, but rather they were traded with them years ago. However, the term “curry” that has come with the powder was unfamiliar. Still, curry became assimilated into the cultures of Fiji, Japan, Singapore, South Africa, Jamaica, Guyana, and it even made its way into Germany, Scandinavia, and America (Sen, 2009). Curiously enough, India was one of the few countries in the world without a dish with “curry.” This was due to the fact that “curry” is not a valid representation of Indian cuisine since the food, like the country, is not a homogenous entity, rather it stems from multiple regions. As can be seen, while it might be easy to identify the source of curry powder, the origination and the reason for the term “curry” are more complex.

Appropriation through Cookbooks and Households

In British India, cookbooks have weighed in on the creation of the British construction of curry. The British have taken over this nation-building tool in India and further strengthened their hold on Indian culture and identity. By identifying what belongs to a certain cuisine and what does not, cookbooks have the ability to create a unique relationship between food and nationalized boundaries (Kanjilal, 2016). Through a means of cultural exchange, appropriation of Indian culture became more prevalent in British households. British women

had an important role here, since they incorporated Indian food, mostly rice and curry, into their national diet (Zlotnick, 1996). By their efforts, any dish with curry powder was identified as Indian. One example of a British Indian dish could be curry mixed with chicken and mayonnaise placed in slices of spongy bread or onions, apples, stock, and curry powder stewed with meat, thickened with butter and flour, and finished with a mortifying splash of cream (Collingham, 2016). Furthermore, in the nineteenth century, it would have been difficult to locate a British cookbook without a curry recipe or a food store without curry powder. To entertain colonizer terms in cookbooks that reduce the complexity of Indian cuisine is critical as it recreates a culture on the colonizer's terms.

In order to further demonstrate British ownership over curry, it is important to look at how curry recipes began appearing in British middle-class cookbooks. While some authors emphasize that the dish is foreign by calling it Indian curry, it is still evident that the British have already appropriated their favorite aspects of Indian cuisines to create curries. Whether it was for the taste, its practicality, or its nutritional values, the curry was firmly established as part of the British culinary landscape by the 1850s (Colllingham, 2006, p.72). Curry was completely nationalized in Britain, where Englishwoman at home converted exotic flavors into familiar ones, and that was possible through their use of cookbooks, especially those authored by women (Zltonick, 1996). This shows how Indian culture started to enter the homes of ordinary British people through the appropriation of curry into the national diet and the transmission of aspects of Indian culinary culture.

Eliza Acton's book, Modern Cookery for Private Families, first published in 1845, acts as the perfect example of a cookbook that transforms curry into a national dish of the British Isles. Initially, Acton provides definitions of certain cooking items but she does not define the term curry. However, she still features curry in many of her recipes, and uses it together with many British ingredients like eggs and oysters. For instance, in one of her chapters, she presents the recipe for "Brown Apple Sauce," a dish that contains marmalade, which is a preserve made from citrus fruits, apples, pears, and a pint of rich brown gravy. Acton (1845) then states in her cookbook that "Curry sauce will make an excellent substitute of the gravy when a piquant accompaniment is needed for pork or other rich meat" (p. 125). The author's use of curry with ingredients common for the British shows that the recipe was adapted to suit the palates of the British at home. Furthermore, Acton offers the recipe of another form of curry, referred to as "Bengal Currie Powder no.1". The recipe provides specific proportions of different spices such as black pepper, coriander seeds, and cayenne seeds that should be finely reduced and mixed to create her own version of curry powder (Acton, 1845, p.614). These recipes make it clear that during the nineteenth century, curry was used as both a powder and a paste: the British were dependent on the flavors of India in their dishes, and they properly appropriated and perfected them to their interests (as cited in Waldrop, 2007). Finally, Acton showed her ownership of curry in her cookbook by presenting it both as a British idea and a British meal, where most of her recipes include British ingredients being curried.

Another popular cookbook is The Wife's Help to Indian Cookery, written by W. H Dawe in 1888, which provides recipes for curries from different regions in India. "Dawe seemingly appreciated the foods that he experienced in India, so much that he not only made notes about the regional differences that he noticed but also of the construction of the meal, down to the correct process of adding ingredients" (Waldrop, 2007, p.65). Therefore, he primarily offered recipes to show the differences between Madras curry, Bengali curry, and Malay curry. For the Madras curry, it was a powder that consisted of turmeric, ginger powder, coriander seed, cayenne powder, black pepper, cumin seed, and cardamoms. On the contrary, the Bengali curry was a paste that was composed of onion, cayenne pepper, and coriander seeds (Dawe, 1888). Throughout his cookbook, he went into detail on how each curry was cooked

and mixed using the exact pieces of cooking equipment. For the Malay curry, it is different because it includes garlic and coriander. While Dawe tried to present curry in the most Indian way possible, he still incorporated British ingredients such as breadcrumbs and fruits to his curry recipes. Furthermore, despite his careful emphasis on the regional differences in curry, the British palate was still unaware of the subtle variety of different dishes. To conclude, the women of the British empire and cookbooks were active actors in incorporating Indian elements into British cooking and making curry, in essence, culturally British. Through this process, cookbooks have worked in popularizing the British idea of Indian cuisine on a global scale.

Counterargument

To complete this overview of the discussion of British cultural appropriation of Indian cuisine, this section will examine other arguments with respect to the construction of curry. It could be argued that over four hundred years of interaction, Britain celebrated tolerance and appreciation of Indian culture by incorporating Indian cuisine. In a sense, sharing another culture's food allows one to experience a taste of familiarity and comfort. This becomes all the more positive as one acknowledges the presence of Indian diaspora in Britain. In the 1950s, a significant number of South Asians have found themselves in Britain (Waldrop, 2017). Many Indians have found jobs as chefs in Indian restaurants in Britain (Trueger, 2018). With that, the authenticity of traditional Indian food would be preserved to an extent by Indian cooks, and Indians would become appreciative of a familiar element of culture from home. Therefore, the British creation of curry can be seen as a symbol of a multicultural Britain that opened its borders and culture to Indians. Some scholars also argue that "although curry was adopted and adapted by the colonizers, it was not invented by them. Essentially, curry figured prominently in the colonial imagination; its culinary creation was a collective but haphazard effort of both the colonizer and the colonized" (Leong-Salobir, 2011, p.40). Furthermore, with the collaboration of women who cook in households, there was respect for Indian and Southeast Asian foodways (Leong-Salobir, 2011).

However, while the British might have not deliberately set out to appropriate elements of Indian cuisine and construct curry in order to domesticate the colonial environment, they still managed to oversimplify Indian food and impose the notion of curry on India's food culture. For instance, while Indian cooks served the British Indian dishes like rogan josh, dopiaza, and qorma, the British "lumped all these together under the heading of curry" (as cited in Chaki, 2019, para.2). Instantly, the diversity and range of Indian cuisine were disregarded, and a British construction is created based on British terms. Furthermore, several instances prove that there was not much respect for the foodways of Indians. The army officers and the wives of the British Army used to refuse to eat the curry and rice served at dinners hosted by families of the Indian Army regiment (Leong-Salobir, 2011). Furthermore, the British gave French names to curry dishes as an effort to add prestige and sophistication to a menu, "further demonstrating that the British, having appropriated curry as part of their culinary repertoire, went one step further and formally legitimized it, by giving the different curries French names"(Leong-Salobir, 2011). This was a deliberate attempt to elevate Indian food, particularly curry, to high culinary art. For example, in Nancy Lake's book of 1930, the recipe of Kabobs à l'Indienne includes pieces of curried mutton on skewers with small whole onions and slices of tomatoes, served with rice and curry sauce (as cited in Leong-Salobir, 2011). By giving a French name to a dish that is supposedly Indian, the British further expanded the power structure that surrounds the appropriation.

For centuries, food culture has been heavily co-opted and appropriated, and this is not limited to Indian cuisine. Many other post-colonial, marginalized or minority cuisines have been appropriated and reinvented to appeal to other tastes to the extent of disregarding

were the origins of these foods came from. Once the acknowledgment of a country's traditional cuisine is taken away from it, the nation loses a part of its identity. Two other popular examples would be that between Palestine and Israel and China and the United States of America. Firstly, Israel has taken multiple Palestinian dishes such as jameed, freekah, and za'atar, and called them its own (Zion, 2019). Similarly, in the United States, elements of Chinese cuisine have been taken and reintroduced to suit the likes of the public (Cheung, 2019). This is harmful in that it takes away from the genuine recognition of Chinese identity and culture. In many cases, there is a lack of respect that goes hand in hand with cultural appropriation.

Conclusion

The process by which curry became one of the most popular dishes in the UK is a complicated one entailing appropriation, invention, and transformation. While many look into the incorporation of curry in British cuisine as a celebratory act of tolerance, it can still be argued that curry is a pure British construction. Although it is certainly common for cultures to borrow and recreate from one another, appropriating part of cuisine and representing it as one's own acts as a continued form of dominance and is disrespectful to its legitimate owners. By creating the term 'curry,' trading curry powder, and incorporating the dish into national cookbooks, the British misrepresented the complexities of Indian culture and overlooked the nuances of multiple Indian culinary paradigms. Many Indian culinary traditions have yet to be explored, and what is a rich and diverse cuisine remains reduced in foreign minds to the meaningless category of "curry."

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WOMEN'S POLITICAL REPRESENTATION IN LEBANON: AN ONGOING STRUGGLE AMID A CONSOCIATIONAL STATE AND A PATRIARCHAL SOCIETY

by Natasha Nazi

Abstract: The reasons behind the mismatch between women's economic and educational triumph and staggering low political participation rates in Lebanon have been debated extensively. They have been a focal point for many scholars who, in light of the achievements of Lebanese women in other sectors, consider Lebanon a fertile ground for women to succeed similarly in the political arena. However, the Lebanese political system is structurally inhospitable to women. A sectarian electoral system breeds hegemonic sectarian leadership, clientelist networks, and a patriarchal society. Various electoral reforms have been debated and applied, yet all have failed at addressing gender inequality. This paper argues that Lebanon's electoral law needs reform, and that the familial-political scene and patriarchal principles must be challenged. Based on all the factors hindering women from reaching political leadership, the paper suggests quotas as a way to remove the obstacles to a more gender-equal political scene in Lebanon.

Introduction

Amongst the several political predicaments Lebanon faces today, low political representation of women is one that withstood historical, cultural, and political developments. The existing dilemma is reflected in the disparity present between high levels of economic participation and educational levels amongst Lebanese women, and drastically low political representation.

This matter has become a focal point for many scholars who consider Lebanon ready for women to be effectively represented in the political arena (Sharif, 2017). However, despite the triumphs of Lebanese women in other sectors, adequate representation of women is the political sphere has yet to be realized.

The sectarian political system is one of the main reasons for the marginalization of women. Further factors include the patriarchal society and the familial affiliations that define Lebanese politics. It is important to note that during the most recent parliamentary elections of May 2018, the government reformed the electoral law to make the electoral process more democratic and inclusive. This came in the form of a major shift from the former majoritarian system to a new tailored proportional system (Lebanese Republic, 2017). However, the reform neglected to introduce much-debated reforms such as a quota for women and lowering the voting age from 21 to 18. Still, the latest election showed the eagerness of Lebanese women for expanded political representation: a striking 111 women ran for office, as opposed to 12 in the preceding elections of 2009.

However, despite this desire for participation, women's representation did not increase significantly. Women in Lebanon are still alarmingly restricted from entering the political sphere: without reform, no substantial change is likely to take place. The purpose of this paper is to suggest solutions.

Discrimination against Lebanese women within formal politics is a function of a sectarian electoral system and patriarchal and familial political culture. This structure is amplified and sustained by the consociational power-sharing elitist formula which supplements sectarian divides and sectarian leadership. This paper argues that Lebanon's sectarian electoral law, its familial-political scene, and its patriarchal principles help sustain an alarming gender inequality in politics. Based on the intricate system in place, this paper will suggest the introduction of a reserved seat gender quota to raise the low representation of women in the next election and to accustom the Lebanese society to women in political leadership. For the same purpose, it will also suggest the introduction of a voluntary party zipper quota.

Methodology/Approach

This paper will approach the analysis by answering the following questions: what are the most significant political reforms proposed in the literature? In what ways would they work? How would they address gender-bias in the electoral system? What are other impediments to Lebanese women's political participation in formal politics? These questions will be answered from an analytical feminist perspective In particular, the paper will utilize Farid Jalalzai's framework to analyze the challenges that women face when attempting to enter formal politics, which are institutional, structural, cultural and historical (Jalalzai, 2009).

Historical Overview/ Background

Lebanon's political and electoral systems have been historically based on sectarian patronage. With the tai'f reform agreement of 1990, the electoral law aimed to stabilizing the country after a long and bloody civil war (Najem, 2012). The ta'if agreement focused exclusively on reinforcing sectarian representation rather than anything else, including gender equality in political representation (Salloukh et al., 2015, p.22).Parliamentary seats are assigned based on sects (Salloukh et al., 2015, p.22). The Lebanese parliament consists of 128 parliamentary seats, of which 64 are assigned to Christians, and 64 to Muslims. Within these two primary groups, seats are further broken down into religious subgroups. Muslims seats are split between Shiites (27), Sunnis (27) Druzes (10) and the 'Alawis (2). Christian representation is much more dispersed: with Maronites making up the largest group with only 34 seats (Salloukh et al., 2015, p.22). Historically, Lebanon had been divided into 26 districts (qadaa), however, for the May 2018 elections, the number was reduced to 15. Within these districts, seats are distributed based on the number of citizens and their religious affiliations. Another reform introduced for the May 2018 elections was the replacement of the majoritarian system (winner-takes-all) by a proportional system combined with preferential voting.

Despite the reform and a ten-fold increase in the number of women candidates in the May 2018 elections, few women candidates were elected. The results can be explained by the lack of any specific attempt to address gender inequality as part of the reform. No quota system was introduced, and most major political parties did not implement voluntary party quotas either, hence no real change was seen. The issue has been extensively discussed by party leaders and in parliament, but no action was taken, suggesting that the discussion was geared toward maintaining a modern public image.

After being unrepresented for thirty years, women in Lebanon have held parliamentary seats uninterruptedly since 1992 (Abu-Zayd, 1998). Nevertheless, elected women have frequently played a descriptive role as part of continuing a family legacy or ask tokens within their political parties. Historically, the percentage of women in the Lebanese parliament has never exceeded 5%, which does not reflect the reality of women's active economic and social

presence (Abu-Zayd, 1998). Within the Middle East, Lebanon stands out as a country that enjoys relative political and social openness, religious liberty, and partial press freedom, and yet it has one of the lowest representation of women in politics in the region and the world (Henderson, Nelson & Chemali, 2015). For example, Algerian, Jordanian, Iraqi, and Moroccan women gained suffrage over a decade after Lebanese women, yet their countries have notably higher numbers of political representation of women (UNDP, 2017). Today in Lebanon, women account for 4.6% of the members in parliament, namely six women out of 128 members. Moreover, they account for only 13% of the ministers in the council of ministers, with four women out of thirty ministers.

The Sectarian Context

"There is an inextricable connection between women's discrimination and the sectarianism system" said Dr. Saadeh, a Lebanese professor of History. Many scholars agree this connection is a major obstacle to women's political participation (Kingston, 2011). With parliamentary seats molded into sectarian fronts, hegemonic sectarian leaders present themselves as the protectors of the sect and dominate elections. Such patterns have been continuous since the formation of Lebanon. Both Saadeh and Kingston (2011) argue that the lack of a civic identity in Lebanese politics makes non-confessional political parties and movements powerless, and entrenches sectarian identities within political parties. In turn, gender equality issues have been neglected, in the face of sectarianism and the sustenance of the sectarian system which is deemed as "existentialist" (Sharif, 2017).

Political parties have been inhospitable institutions for women in Lebanon; indications such as the exclusion of women from decision-making positions point to gender equality not being a main concern (Kingston, 2011). Kingston further explains that the sectarian electoral system in Lebanon works to reproduce the existing order because of the "locally based nature" of representation, which ties families and male figures in a "patron-clientelist" manner.

Moreover, democratic gaps within the existing majoritarian electoral system have been a subject of debate in the literature. The existing law was deemed as "outdated and controversial," undermining democracy, and exacerbating sectarian tensions (El Machnouk, 2017). Reforms to the Lebanese electoral law have been implemented since the formation of Lebanon in 1943 (El Machnouk, 2017). However none have addressed gender equality and women's low representation in parliament. In the May 2018 election, the electoral system shifted to a proportional law, which also granted voters a preferential candidate vote. Nevertheless, although many parties campaigned for the idea of introducing a quota for women, the reformed law did not include one, and women and women's issues remain marginalized in the political scene. Over the years, several reforms have been proposed, however, none publicly endorsed a gender quota. The main proposals included a mixed-member proportional law, an orthodox gathering proposal, and a nationwide PR proposal, all of which centered on sectarianism.

The orthodox gathering law, which was initially approved by the major Christian political parties in Lebanon, is said to have emerged from the roots of Christian grievances (El Machnouk, 2017). Based on the proposal, Lebanon would comprised one large district where every sectarian group would elect candidates from its own sect to parliament regardless of their district affiliations. The system calls upon a proportional law while preserving regional sectarian quotas. The Orthodox proposal has been characterized as "morally questionable" as it is seen as drowning Lebanon further into ethnic and sectarian divides. It would probably intensify tensions based on sectarianism by incentivizing candidates to "play the ethnic and sectarian card" while appealing to voters (Reilly, 2002, p. 156). Overall, the proposal is

is reflective of the preoccupation with sectarianism and neglects to address the gender inequality.

The abolishment of the sectarian system, as suggested by the nationwide PR proposal, was faced with backlash as it was said to aggravate sectarian and ethnic tension in a community ingrained in sectarianism such as the Lebanese community (El Machnouk, 2017). The nationwide PR proposal suggested an electoral reform whereby the proportional law would be applied to Lebanon as one district with no sectarian quotas in place. This proposal embodies the longing desire to abolish the contemporaneous sectarianism within the Lebanese political and electoral systems. Nonetheless, the proposal is not free from sectarian ambitions as it would benefit Muslim-majority groups present in Lebanon today (El Machnouk, 2017). Due to the rising share of the Muslim population in Lebanon accompanied by the Shia' religious parties large influence, this proposal falls into Lebanon's sectarian whirlpool. According to the literature, this system would help the main ethnic or sectarian community become hegemonic (Reilly, 2013, p. 1). In short, the nationwide PR reform, while masked as a way to leave the historical sectarian hole Lebanon has been trapped in since its formation, would leave Lebanon worse off, possibly on the verge of a new civil war.

Lebanon's deep-rooted sectarianism is usually debated as a chicken or the egg dilemma: should sectarianism be overcome by law, partly as suggested by the nationwide PR electoral law, or should it be eradicated from everyday life and people's self-segregation first? The literature suggests that one cannot entirely precede the other (El Machnouk, 2017), as the "complex, multi-directional system of causality" ties institutions and the culture in complex ways (Almond, & Verba, 1989, p.35). With people beginning to move away from the religious divides, with, for example, relative openness indicated by higher-level mixed religious marriages, now it might be a good time to reduce the sectarian composition from the house of parliament. This would come as the first step in a long journey of eradicating one of the major factors contributing to various difficulties Lebanon faces today, one of which is gender inequality.

Sharif (2017) explains "Attaining women's full rights in Lebanon would threaten the basis of the sectarian system and the correlation between sectarian and political interests." As such, gender equality and sectarianism are in divergence in Lebanon. Lebanese women lack full citizenship, as they are not sanctioned to pass their citizenship to their children and partners. This is due to the historical fear of Palestinian settlement which would "endanger the demographic distribution that the sectarian system is founded upon." Hence, Lebanese women are not given the same rights as Lebanese men. Sharif (2017) points out that "excluding women who would be competent at delivering change from high decision-making positions is arguably "safer" for maintaining the current political sectarian system and status quo".

The Patriarchal Society and Familialism

Patriarchal practices within societies worldwide have detrimental impacts on women and men. Patriarchy can be understood as "the privileging of males and seniors and the legitimating of those privileges in the morality and idiom of kinship." (Sharif, 2017). The centrality and domination of the "father figure" stems from the notion that the father is the head of the family and the household, thus responsible for all members of that family and their affairs (Library of Congress, 2004). Younger males are also reared to grow up and adopt such characteristics dictated by societal gender roles (Sharif, 2017). In the Lebanese context, some patriarchal practices which marginalize women's rights are clear in the political arena, as well as in personal status laws and religious institutions.

Jalazai explains that women's participation is bound to sets of challenges which restrict them from entering formal politics; such challenges include institutional, structural, cultural and specific views, and historical factors (Jalalzai, 2009). All of these restricting factors exist in Lebanon and obstruct Lebanese women's paths into political careers. Institutional factors are based on electoral systems as explained by Jalazai. The impediment of women's participation is clearly linked to the electoral system in place. Institutionally, with the system being governed by sectarianism, women and other marginalized groups in society do not have equal opportunity in representation. "Most men and women suffer from the sectarian system's disciplinary techniques, women far more extensively and violently than men" (Salloukh et al., 2015, p.7). Women, even if present as candidates on electoral lists, are usually positioned in unwinnable seats.

"Gender assessment identified the structural constraints that carry the seeds of discrimination and women's vulnerability, as rooted in laws and regulations, sectarian dynamics, socio-cultural values, decision-making structures, and public policies and development strategies ongoing conflict and security problems, and a rise in social conservatism" (Avis, 2017). In other words, structural constraints are rooted in various fundamental areas in Lebanon. Although the majority of people believe it is time for women to step into political roles (UN Women, 2017), in practice women are still discriminated. Jalalzai (2009) explains that "even when women's education and professions fit the background of politicians, women are still less likely than men to run for office, often feeling unqualified." Furthermore, women face additional pressures as part of the traditional "family demands" which often put a political career out of reach. In Lebanon, 92% of women say they are the ones who perform most of the household work, putting them at a disadvantage from perusing a political career (UN Women, 2017).

"The longer women have been habituated in political roles, the more likely they will be political contenders" Jalazai (2009) explains. Historically, women have never occupied more than six seats in the Lebanese parliament. As such, the continuous underrepresentation of women fosters continuous underrepresentation.

Helou argues that Lebanese political parties mirror the country's patriarchal and sectarian social characteristics. Most parties have a "central, patriarchal figure, who is the leader of the party" which reinforce patriarchal practices (Helou, 2011). Parties are viewed as a reproduction of the social system present in society. Familial-type loyalties which are present within the parties reflect society's male-controls. She explains that the social system gives males a privilege, especially those who are older and thus subsequently discriminating against women and the youth. Wafaa' Dikah Hamzeh, a former Lebanese minister remarked that gender stereotypes form a "key obstacle to women in politics"; especially since traditionally society does not assign women the role of political agents (Sharif, 2017). Kingston (2011) explains that the personal status laws and religious courts reflect the patriarchal notions present in Lebanon, which hinder women from having their full rights. Such practices along with institutionalized patriarchy are culturally obstructing women from making their way into the political arena.

The nature of Lebanon's political familialism factors into the historical exclusion of women in politics. Suad Joseph (2011), defines "political familialism" as:

> "The deployment of family institutions, ideologies, practices and relationships by citizens to activate their demands in relation to the state, and by the state actors to mobilize moral grounds for governance based on a civic myth of kinship and a public discourse that privileges family."

Recommendations

Women's political participation is one of the indicators of gender equality within a country. Despite being relatively open in its societal social practices, Lebanon ranks very low on the political indicators of women's participation because of a sectarian electoral system, patriarchal practices, and political familialism. Based on the influence of political parties in Lebanon, voluntary party quotas following a zipper system would make the most impact especially in parties which win high numbers of seats. The zipper system is defined by Hawkesworth (2012) as a system ensuring "men and women alternate from the top to the bottom of the list". Voluntary party quotas of 30%, which is the critical mass for women to represent a substantive role, alongside a zipper system is most likely to create the most substantive tip in the gendered political scene. Kingston explains political parties are "embedded within the country's political system" as such could play an intricate role in promoting gender equality. Being parts of the problem, political parties would transform to become part of the solution. Helou explains that parties, as well as men within these parties, have the responsibility to promote such internal quotas to raise the number of women involved in the Lebanese political life (Helou, 2011).

Alongside the voluntary internal quota, the literature points toward reserved seats quotas which would ensure a rise in the number of women representatives in the next election. Saadeh (2011) highlights the importance of "demolishing sectarianism" which is tied to women's advancements. Moreover, she suggests a quota system granting women a minimum level representation. A reserved seat quota may be beneficial to implement in Lebanon, however, only if the seats exceed 30 to 35% of the total number of MPs to reach a critical mass. Women in reserved seats are inclined to be more loyal to the men who appointed them than to an electorate. This, therefore, undermines chances of substantive representation for women (Hawkesworth, 2015, p.199). Thus, critical mass is needed to see a difference in women's behavior in political affairs. (Jalalzai, 2009). Although a reserved seat quota would ultimately lead to the promotion of women tied to political families into power, a critical mass of women in parliament could ensure otherwise. Moreover, the representation would accustom the Lebanese society to women in positions of political power, hence continuing the device of this representation with the election of substantive candidates in preceding elections. Furthermore, "women support policies that are beneficial to women and minority groups" (Jalalzai, 2009). As such, the inclusion of women, even if playing descriptive roles at first, would ultimately benefit the country's gender equality status.

Given that the main reason for women's underrepresentation in formal politics in Lebanon is the sectarian and electoral system in place, reform to the system on a structural and institutional level is the main solution to the issue of gender biases as well as other biases that affect people's representation in parliament (Salloukh et al., 2015). Reform of the electoral law would be the most transformational since even if a quota system is applied with the echoes of the sectarian system and the corruption currently in place it is doubtful that it would produce sufficient result by itself. A new and reformed non-sectarian electoral system is the way Lebanese women among other marginalized groups would get the chance to join the political life (Salloukh et al., 2015, p.176). Decentralization alongside other institutional and structural reforms would also be necessary to reach a "new kind of Lebanon" (Salloukh et al., 2015, p.176). Namely a Lebanon with a more open electoral system and a less sectarian approach to politics. However, as quotas have worked in other part of the world to raise the numbers of women in politics, quotas would be reasonable in the Lebanese context as an initial step towards resolving the issue in place.

Conclusion

Article seven of the Lebanese constitution states that “All Lebanese shall be equal before the law. They shall equally enjoy civic and political rights and shall equally be bound by public obligations and duties without any distinction” (The Lebanese Constitution, 1997). The dilemma Lebanon is facing today is one that displays a mismatch of the relative freedom it enjoys in both its democratic political system and its culture. As such, the question of why openness is not translated into formal politics with a high number of women’s representations is one that is critical. All the reforms suggested to the electoral laws are fixated on coinsurance of the elite to keep their political standing rather than on serious suggestions for better representation of the people, including women and the youth. As such, and with the electoral system, the patriarchal practices and the familialism preventing women’s advancement, quotas seem to appropriately disentangle women’s low representation in Lebanese politics. Through quotas such as the voluntary party quota, or the reserved seat quota a change could transpire.

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THE CONSOLIDATION OF PATRIARCHY IN KERALA AS A CONSEQUENCE OF BRITISH COLONIAL INFLUENCE

By Ashwati Kartha

Abstract: This paper examines the impact of British rule on the system of matriliny in Kerala in South India. The paper contends that British influence led to the decline of matriliny through shifting legal, economic, and social systems away from pre-colonial modes of governance, and through popularizing the patriarchal family structures.

Introduction

"Women… always had a voice; and in Kerala, a woman knew how to make herself heard" (Jeffrey, 1992). The rise of feminist consciousness in India has sparked new tangents within the discourse about the conditions of women within the subcontinent. Kerala, located in Southeastern India, currently boasts of exemplary statistics in gender parity indicators, such as highest female literacy rate, longest life expectancy, and lowest infant and maternal mortality rates. Most notably, Kerala boasts of a sex ratio of 1084 females per 1000 males, as opposed to the national average of 946. Kerala's developmental processes has been rather unique, as displayed by excellent performance in Human Development Indicators despite persistently low GDP per capita (Jeffrey, 2004). Further research on the "Kerala model" of development allows researchers to delve into the rich culture of matrilineal inheritance followed by large sections of the Keralite population. Within the context of feminist consciousness, Keralites, particularly Nair families, describe their matrilineal system with great pride.

The joint-family matrilineal inheritance system, called the marumukkatayam system, is a practice in which family property is passed down through the female line. It is markedly different from the rest of Kerala, which followed patrilineal and patrilocal systems of family governance. However, the significance of the system diminished sharply under British colonial rule. Today, the system has been abolished legally, and the joint family system is rarely ever practiced. This paper contends that British influence led to the decline of matriliny through shifting legal, economic, and social systems away from pre-colonial modes of governance, and through popularizing the patriarchal family structures. The paper begins by throwing light on the functioning of the matrilineal system, thereby establishing a base upon which the rest of the argument stands. The second section of the paper describes the reasons for the shift away from the marumukkatayam system towards a patrilineal inheritance system. Finally, the paper traces the legal reforms which led to the breaking up of joint families and the dissolution of matrilineal practice in Kerala.

Historical Background

The matrilineal system in Kerala, according to some historians, grew out of the martial significance of the Nair (Kshatriya) caste. It is hypothesized that this unique system of family governance grew out of an extended war between the Chola and Chera dynasties (11th century CE) (Jeffrey, 2004). The Kshatriyas gained training in the art of warfare from the age of eight until their (preferred) demise on the battlefield, which left little time for familial engagements. The men would conduct visits purely for sexual purposes (called sambandhams) and become fathers while continuing to focus on their military training. As a

result, the children would be under the sole care of the mother, and property would thus be passed down through the generations through the female line (Jeffrey, 2004; Pillai, 2016).

This *marumukkatayam* system meant that the freedom experienced by women in Kerala was unlike any other community or region in India. Women possessed the unique ability to manage their affairs largely independent of male influence. Women were not dependent on their husbands and were not considered transient members of their families, as they had the security of their familial home (their mother's house) throughout their lives (Saradamoni, 1999). They were further allowed a degree of sexual freedom, as displayed by the acceptance of polyandry and termination of *sambandhams* (Jeffrey, 2004).

The system followed in Kerala, however, was not matriarchal. The *karanavan* (the senior male of the family) controlled the assets of the joint family as though he was the sole owner (Menon, 2012). Originally, the broader decision-making authority was often split between the senior women of the family and the *karanavan*. Age was the determining factor in shaping the power relations within the family. If the *karanavan* was the son or younger brother of a senior woman, she would be the head of the family (or the *karnavatti*); otherwise, it would be the male (Gough, 1961; Pillai, 2016). The *karanavan*, in this case, was extremely important to the family structure and exercised extensive social and economic control over his nieces and nephews (Menon, 2012). The *karanavan's* children, however, lived with their mother, outside the realm of his influence. However, this system was in no way limited to Nair families. In an effort towards upward social mobility in the caste system, people of lower castes would also imitate higher castes. Prior to colonization, the matrilineal system had turned into a cultural tradition of the Malabar region, followed by a diverse group of individuals, including Muslims, such as the Mapillas[1] (Jeffrey, 2004; Menon, 2012). The matrilineal system was thus seen as a Malabar custom, largely free of religious affirmation (Saradamoni, 1999). "At the end of the nineteenth century, … 56 per cent of all families in Travancore, regardless of religion, were matrilineal. The proportion in Cochin and Malabar would have been at least that high. Obviously, the majority of Hindu families were matrilineal" (Jeffrey, 1992). Christians, however, exclusively followed the patriarchal system.

Pre-Conditions for the Shift to a Patrilineal Structure

This section of the paper traces the history of matriliny in Kerala's society, particularly in the case of Hindu Nair families, and the systematic destruction of the marumukkatayam system as a result of shifting familial structures brought about under British rule. It first describes the way in which British influence led to rigidity in political and social structures that were previously fluid and dynamic, thereby causing issues that may have naturally been circumvented. Next, it describes the economic reasons for the decline of the matrilineal system, owing to British policies of development and economic administration. Finally, this section discusses the effect of cultural imperialism by the British in shifting popular opinion in favor of a patriarchal system, similar to that of England between the 18th and 20th centuries.

Rigid Legal System

British theories of jurisprudence that gained significance during the Enlightenment were in stark contrast to the pre-colonial Indian legal system. While the British focused on rationality and a codified system of rules and regulations, Indians focused on a more contextual and discretionary approach (Jeffrey, 2004). The Malabar region of India was governed primarily by the Houses of Cochin and Travancore, where the rulers, internal administration committees in each village, or people of higher castes would be involved in

the arbitration of disputes and provision of justice. This was done on a case-by-case basis, keeping in mind the unique cultural traditions of each family (Jeffrey, 2004; Pillai, 2016; Galanter & Dhavan, 1989). The British, in turn, attempted to centralize the earlier modes of dispute arbitration into a multi-tiered judicial system. British rule, as well as British influence in the princely states, worked towards the systematic codification of laws pertaining to the governance of Indians, which was to be used in dispute arbitration along with customary law. In fact, it is theorized that a written legal text may not have come about if not for colonial perceptions of proper jurisprudence (Derrett, 1968). As a consequence, a series of changes were made in the Kerala joint families' modus operandi. For example, as described in *A Treatise on Malabar and Aliyasantana Law* (1922),

> While the law of property among the marumakkatayis was based entirely on usages, British exponents of the law allowed little weight to the views of the people and were guided by their own notions of a perfect system of marumakkatayam law. (p.13)

Thus, this codification led to rigidity in legally accepted methods of functioning. An example of this rigidity was the colonial-era law related to the division of the joint family. Prior to the law, large taravads (matrilineal joint families)would split into fragments as the number of members grew to a point where family affairs became difficult to control. The new law, however, required that matrilineal joint families are "impartible" units, where "no member can claim any specific part or share of it as his own". This put immense pressure on taravads, as all members of the family had to agree unanimously upon the mode of division of assets (Jeffrey, 2004). This made the matrilineal joint-family system highly impractical, as such issues could easily be circumvented by a shift towards a nuclear family system.

Further, the codification was often done within the context of British ideals of gendered power differences and "morality," which changed the power relations within the taravad. During the latter half of the 19th century, the Madras High Court issued a decree legitimizing only male control of the taravad, effectively stripping karnavattis of their authority. This was done as a testament to Western ideals of the "natural dominance of males." In fact, according to Arunima (1995),

> A landmark judgement of 1855 argued that it would be a "violent interference" on the part of the court to "allow a precedent for women" to head households, as there was insufficient proof to determine the authority of a female over a male. (p.160)

Arunima further explains that this law served as an avenue for exploitation, in which "petty disputes flared up into legal cases". Thus, this decree led to turbulence in the natural functioning of the taravad system where custom and legislation were in opposition to each other. Thus, the new rigid laws about the "perfect" matrilineal joint family system made the rather contextual working of this system difficult, which facilitated a shift towards the patrilineal system of inheritance.

New Economic System

The shifting economic structures further highlighted the futility of the matrilineal system, owing to the preponderance of salaried administrative jobs (Jeffrey, 2004). There were two primary modes of income for Nairs: military service and land revenue. Nair men would often be paid in cash by kings in exchange for military service. Landed income was also crucial to the maintenance of the joint family system. Traditionally, Nairs derived most of their income as land managers (long- term, non-cultivating tenants of land), who would receive rent from agricultural laborers and pay a smaller sum as rent to land owners, often Nambudiri Brahmins or kings. They would sometimes be outright owners of land. In this way, the

economic situation of Nairs mandated that all members were jointly dependent upon the karnawan (or the karanavatti) and land for their material needs. However, there was a significant shift to a capitalist structure in the 19th century, due to British efforts to expand their centers of manufacturing, and to increase their trade. This period was characterized by wage occupations and a variety of jobs in the rising industrial and agricultural occupations. These forms of salaried occupations allowed multiple people within the taravad to earn an income, which facilitated the split to smaller nuclear families. Nairs often found jobs in different towns, and their sole income allowed them to buy or rent houses and land, where they would live with a small section of the family that was dependent on them as the sole provider (Gough, 1952). The joint taravad system no longer held the same level of significance.

Further, a shift in Nair males' primary modes of employment from warriors to salaried occupations allowed them to live with their families and raise their children. The earlier need for a matrilineal system of property inheritance had declined considerably. Men now wanted their share of the ancestral property, as well as their individual property, to go to their children rather than their sisters' children. This was carried out in practice from time to time, but the idealized British notions of the marumakkatayam system considered this to be "against the law" (Jeffrey, 2004). This, particularly in cases of disputes, symbolized a new need for the legal recognition of patriliny in the Malabar region.

Cultural Imperialism

Finally, this period was characterized by an imposition of Enlightenment-era reasoning of correct family structures onto the Indian population. Enlightenment thinkers in Europe believed strongly in the natural dominance of males, which automatically put female-headed households in an inferior position. They also believed strongly in monogamy and the consecration of marriage, which was in direct contrast with Kerala women's sexual freedom, and the practices of polyandry and "divorce" (termination of sambandhams), followed by pre-colonial Keralites. There was also intense discourse about the proper place of women, which was believed to be in service of the surrounding males, which directly contrasted with Kerala women's independence (Hawkesworth, 2012). These schools of thought were brought to Kerala through the aid of Christian missionaries, who had grown in prominence and had begun to conduct sermons in an attempt to bring patriarchal family structures into the "backward" Keralite system of family governance. Their influence cannot be discounted as being aimed towards a select portion of Kerala's population, as they had set up schools which were attended by a large section of the people. Literacy had always been an integral part of Kerala's society, as even women received an education. It was in these schools that children were taught that matriliny is an abomination which would earn its practitioners a place in hell (Jeffrey, 1992). Thus, the blow to the matrilineal system through Christian influence in schools had been severe. However, matriliny was not only ridiculed by those under British influence. Hindus from other states and provinces who followed a patriarchal system were also highly critical of the marumukkatayis. Nairs were forced to deal with criticism from other caste-Hindus as well, who would say that "[Nairs'] wives are concubines and [their] sons are bastards" (Jeffrey, 1992).

Colonial influence in Kerala, in combination with the influence of other Hindus, constructed contemporary notations of morality and barbarity, which were slowly integrated into Nairs' identities. By the end of the 19th century, the Nairs' matrilineal kinship system began to take on negative connotations to the Nairs themselves. In line with the English ideology, Nair men too began to believe strongly in the importance of the family as a conjugal unit, characterized by control of female sexuality. Within the context of a newfound significance of

women's chastity and consecration of monogamous marriage, women also supported a shift towards the patrilineal structure, asserting that this would improve the "self-respect" of the Kerala woman (Jeffrey, 1990). The patrilineal inheritance system became popularly accepted as the proper method of kinship, and significant efforts were made to shift from the "barbaric" matrilineal system towards the "modern" and "progressive" patrilineal system (Arunima, 1995). In fact, one of the main goals for the Nair Service Society, a caste-based advocacy group, was the abolition of the matrilineal system in Kerala (Jeffrey, 1990). Thus, Christian European influence, combined with the other factors, served to convince large sections of the young population of the need to shift away from matrilineal systems to the system of patriarchy.

Legal Dissolution of Matriliny

Even after Indian independence in 1947, the rigid legal system and the negative attitudes towards *marumukkatayis* persisted. Numerous efforts had been made, by the Nair elites as well as the courts of Independent India, between the 19th and 20th centuries to reform Kerala's family law. As the matrilineal system came under scrutiny within the context of the larger system of family structure, efforts were made to "legitimize" *sambandhams*. One of the earliest instances of legal reform can be traced back to 1896, when the Malabar Marriage Act was passed, which allowed couples to register legally their marriage. However, this Act had little impact, as less than 100 marriages were actually registered (Arunima, 1995; Jeffrey, 1990). Those who practiced matriliny had little reason to begin registering their *sambandham*, except for particular cases of legal dispute. Thus, the Nair elites' effort to make matriliny "respectable" again had failed. The Travancore Marumakkattayam Act, or Nair Regulation Act I of 1912 was the next legal step towards the propagation of a nuclear, patrilineal family system, against the *marumukkatayam* system of bequeathal of assets in the princely state of Travancore. It describes laws for marriage as recognized by the state, the children's right to the succession of their father's separate or self-acquired property, and legal guardianship of the father to his minor children, and husband to his minor wife (Puthenkalam,1966). In 1914, Mannath Padmanabhan founded the aforementioned Nair Service Society (NSS), which advocated for further action on legal recognition of patriliny, legal rights to family property, and the abolition of the "evils" of the matrilineal practice. The NSS served as an organized front for the Nair community to engage in activism, particularly in a legal context. A second bill was set to be passed as per the request of what seemed to be the "community as a whole." As a result, the Nair Regulation Act II of 1925 was passed in Travancore, which facilitated the partition of the joint family into smaller units. Every adult member was now guaranteed a right to individual partition, with safeguards such as separate shares based on the number of children per nuclear unit. This Act was extremely successful to their cause. During the period of 1925 to 1947, over 100,000 partition deeds had been registered in Travancore (Puthenkalam,1966). The Malabar Marumakkatayam Act of 1933 then allowed men to claim their share of the ancestral property in the rest of the Malabar region. On 1st December 1976, the Kerala Joint Hindu Family System (Abolition) Act was passed, which considered joint families as simply co-tenants of land (Jeffrey, 2004). Thus, patriarchy in Kerala was fully consolidated.

It is crucial to reiterate the point that legislation passed during the British rule only solidified and consolidated this decline. It was not an imposition of legislation that signaled the customary end of the matrilineal system. Rather, the legal consolidation of the patriarchy was a consequence of Hindu efforts to counteract the negativity surrounding the matrilineal system, by shifting to the more widely accepted (and respected) system of patriliny (Jeffrey, 1990). Further, perhaps as a natural succession to matriliny, daughters were given the same right as sons to be inheritors of their father's property - a privilege unavailable to a large proportion of women in the rest of India until 2005.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper explains the ways in which British influence led to the systematic destruction of the matrilineal system in Kerala. First, British rule led to the imposition of rigid codified laws of the ideal type of the taravad system, which highlighted, if not created, impracticalities of a matrilineal kinship system. Further, the British expansion of their economy into Kerala had the effect of changing economic systems from joint income to individual salaried occupations, which allowed taravad systems to break down into smaller nuclear units. Finally, cultural imperialism by the British shifted public opinion away from matriliny towards the system of patrilineal kinship. In an effort to reform the system of family governance in Kerala, Nairs began to advocate for the legal dissolution of matriliny. Gradual systematic reforms were passed by the concerned legislative bodies, both in. Travancore and Malabar prior to independence and by the Kerala High Court after independence. These factors contributed to the consolidation of the patriarchy in Kerala, as Nair families today follow a patrilineal inheritance system.

Endnotes

[1] Mapillas are members of the native Muslim community in Kerala.

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NAGORNO-KARABAKH: THE HIDDEN MOTIVES BEHIND ETHNIC CONFLICT

By Dayana Shaybazyan

Abstract: This paper attempts to explain the persistence of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan by using instrumentalist and constructivist theories of ethnic identity. It argues that conflict resolution is impeded by the promotion of ethnic differences by the opposing states and also by international actors, who exploit the region for political and economic gains.

Introduction

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Caucasus region witnessed a number of disputes. Clashes over sovereignty, complex ethnic claims, and the growing hostility towards minorities and their legitimate demands dominated the political agenda of states. A number of studies have sought to explain the roots of post-Soviet conflicts and the failure of actors to come to a peaceful resolution. It is important to promote research and facilitate discussion on frozen conflicts, a persistent phenomenon in the international arena, as they pose significant security challenges, result in large numbers of refugees and fatalities, and worsen the economic, political and social conditions in opposing states (Pokalova, 2015).

The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan was one of the disputes that arose in the Caucasus in the late 1980s. With the weakening of the Soviet Union, the majority Armenian population in the Nagorno-Karabakh region, officially recognized as part of Azerbaijan, began to demand for its unification with Armenia. The protests led to a six-year war between the two states that left over a million Armenian and Azerbaijani civilians displaced. Both countries accused each other of committing war crimes. A Russian-brokered ceasefire, signed in 1994, led to numerous peace initiatives which aimed to negotiate a lasting solution to the conflict. Nevertheless, under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk group, set up in 1992 as the main institution responsible for the peace process in Nagorno-Karabakh, the dispute has not been resolved. The past 25 years have failed to produce stable peace, with continuous violations of the ceasefire and the refusal of Armenia and Azerbaijan to reach a peaceful agreement (Cornell, 1997).

Figure 1: Map of the Nagorno-Karabakh region.Reprinted from “Karabakh map”, Achemish, 2016, Retrieved from wikipedia.org/wiki/Nagorno-Karabakh_conflict#/media/File:Nagorno-Karabakh_Map2.png. Copyright 2013 by Achemish CC-BY-SA-4.0 (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/)

This paper aims to examine the underlying factors of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict by applying the instrumentalist and constructivist theories of ethnic identity. It also aims to test which of the two theories is more effective in explaining the failure to achieve a peaceful settlement. With no clear solution or foreseeable end to the conflict, world powers have ignored the issue until circumstances force them to act, while the danger of yet another violent uprising continues to plague the two nations. This paper argues that while the promotion of ethnic "hate narratives" by the governments of Azerbaijan and Armenia plays a significant role in preventing a peaceful conflict resolution, the ethnic conflict cannot be resolved until the international actors refrain from exploiting the region for political and economic gains. It further suggests that the failure to negotiate a lasting peace in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is best explained by the instrumentalist theory, as the conflict is the result of modern factors. Ethnic identity was used as a mere tool for acquisition of power and benefits by the international community and the two sparring governments.

Historical Background

The Nagorno-Karabakh War

In 1988, the population of Nagorno-Karabakh, an autonomous province within the Soviet Republic of Azerbaijan, was made up of a 75% Armenian population (Minority Rights Group International, 2018). The Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast (NKAO) was separated physically from the Soviet Republic of Armenia by a strip of land referred to as the "Lachin corridor." The corridor was exclusively inhabited by Azeris and Kurds, hence shaping the NKAO as an Armenian exclave. The Azeri community, a local minority within the region, was considerably smaller than the Armenian population, despite it being part of the larger Azeri majority in the Soviet Republic of Azerbaijan (Melander, 2001).

In an attempt to preserve the Soviet state and its communist ideas, Mikhail Gorbachev, the last leader of the Soviet Union, approved significant reforms in the 1980s, including the policy of glasnost, which called for openness and improved freedom of speech and the press in the Soviet republics. As a consequence of this policy and the reduction in Soviet control, the Armenian population in Nagorno-Karabakh began to freely express its resentment towards the Azerbaijani government, rioting against oppression with the claim that Azerbaijan neglects and discriminates against the Armenian community in the NKAO. As a result of continuous protests and the struggle to unite with Armenia, Armenians in the region were targeted by the Azeri community, with massacres and pogroms escalating into a full-fledged war.

In 1991, following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russia withdrew its troops from Nagorno-Karabakh: the development allowed Azerbaijani troops to intensify their attacks on the region. Despite continued fighting, Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh declared their de facto independence from Azerbaijan in 1992, which was never recognized (Volkan, 1998). Azerbaijan unsuccessfully attempted to restore control by launching a military operation against the capital of the NKAO in 1992; however, it witnessed major losses as the Lachin Corridor was lost to Armenians, and Nagorno-Karabakh was no longer separated from Armenia by Azerbaijani land. The continuous warfare between the years of 1988 and 1994 resulted in an estimated 35,000 deaths and approximately one million refugees on both sides (Kambeck & Ghazaryan, 2013).

History of Mediations

The international community expressed significant disapproval of the occupation of Azerbaijani territory by Armenia. Four UN Security Council resolutions were adopted after the war, instructing the occupying Armenian forces to withdraw from Azerbaijani land and reminding the warring parties of "the inviolability of international borders and the inadmissibility of the use of force for the acquisition of territory" (Cornell, 1997, p. 16). The UNSC resolutions also requested the return of the Azeri refugees, who had been driven out by Armenians, back to the region, and prohibited Armenia and Azerbaijan to provide any military assistance to the region. On the 5th of May 1994, the Republic of Armenia, the Republic of Azerbaijan, and the Nagorno-Karabakh de facto government signed a ceasefire agreement ending the war, but not the conflict itself, as Azerbaijan refused to accept the continued control of over 20% of their de jure territory by Armenians (Kaufman, 2016).

The OSCE Minsk Group, co-chaired by France, the Russian Federation, and the United States, was established as the focal point for multilateral consultations on Karabakh in 1992. In 1995, the OSCE passed a resolution calling for the "highest degree of autonomy" of Mountainous Karabakh within Azerbaijan, the territorial integrity of which was to be preserved. In 1997, it further proposed the withdrawal of the Armenian troops from occupied territories, along with a buffer zone to be patrolled by the OSCE peacekeeping force and an OSCE-administered lease of the "Lachin corridor" from Azerbaijan to Karabakh. Azerbaijan accepted the terms as a basis for negotiation, but Armenia and Karabakh refused them. Armenia and Azerbaijan further rejected the proposal by OSCE for a "common state", meaning a de facto independent Karabakh.

Despite some attempts to negotiate a resolution, , the momentum for a settlement has nevertheless been lost (Cutler, 2003) and sporadic fighting continues. In 2016, heavy fighting along the Nagorno-Karabakh frontline left over 350 soldiers and civilians dead on both sides (U.S. Department of State, 2016). As sporadic and low intensity fighting at the border continues, it negatively impacts the peace process. The Azerbaijani government maintains the position that Armenia is occupying part of its territory, thereby keeping the two neighboring states at war (Melander, 2001). The Armenian government claims that the conflict represents a struggle for independence and self-determination of the Armenian people. To understand the impasse, the next section will explore competing ethnic identities, which play a significant role in the ongoing tensions between the nation-states and act as barriers against a peaceful settlement.

The Role of Ethnicity in Generating and Maintaining Conflicts

Complex ethnic identities can generate conflict by associating different groups with different interests. However, as argued by Stuart J. Kaufman (2001), it is misleading to believe that ethnicity itself is the cause of any conflict, whether it is violent or not: in inter-state ethnic conflicts, political figures and international powers seek tangible interests. On the other hand, for the masses, the issues at stake are often purely symbolic ones. Psychocultural theorists point out that, in psychological experiments, people randomly assigned to groups tend to evaluate their own group more highly than other groups, even when they are told that they are not competing. Hence, what is at stake for the group is not just absolute benefits but group self-esteem, group worth, and legitimacy (Horowitz, 1985).

There is hardly consensus among scholars who have been studying ethnic conflicts and it is important to consider multiple schools of thought. The instrumentalist theory sees ethnic identity as a mere tool used by elites to pursue competition over tangible goods such as economic opportunities. This perspective suggests that there is no such thing as an "ethnic

conflict" at all and ethnicity does not generate conflict (Kaufman, 2001). The instrumentalist theory further argues that elites exploit the ethnic allegiance of the masses, stoke ethnic tensions and, in some cases, intentionally provoke ethnic violence as a method to seize power, protect existing authority, or as defense against group threats (Blanton, 2015). From an instrumentalist viewpoint the self-interest of international powers and the state promotion of ethnic hate narratives in Armenia and Azerbaijan are the principal obstacles in the way of peace.

Instead, primordialist theorists suggest that many ethnic identities have existed for thousands of years and that ethnic conflict is based on "ancient hatreds", which are impossible to eradicate and nearly impossible to manage (Isaacs, 1975). Finally, constructivists locate themselves somewhere in-between instrumentalism and primordialism by emphasizing the degree to which people create their own identities, pointing out that ethnic identities are "socially constructed" (Hardin, 2001). Constructivists argue that history, culture, and myths of ancient homeland provide motives for conflict and are not simply pretexts used for manipulation of the masses. They further believe that instrumentalists exaggerate the manipulating power of elites while neglecting the importance and genuine character of popular beliefs and mass action.

A constructivist theorist, Anthony Smith (1999) argued that social constructions are created through a "myth-symbol complex", which establishes the "accepted" history of the group and the criteria for distinguishing its members. Individuals identify heroes and enemies and glorify symbols of the group's identity, selecting "chosen traumas" to work as morally defining experiences for people (Volkan, 1998). While the myths do not necessarily arise from selfish interests and instead can be genuine in nature and can stem from the masses, the instrumentalist theorists might argue that the myths can be rediscovered and reinterpreted by the modern nationalist intelligentsias for selfish motives. However, it is important to consider the constructivist theory, because the manipulation of one's identity often succeeds only when it works in tandem with a previously constructed social perception of the conflict (Smith, 1999). The constructivist theory aids in understanding the claims made by opposing governments on an ancient homeland, and helps to explain how an "accepted" history of the group prevents the conflict from reaching a peaceful resolution. The next section of the paper applies these interpretative toolsto the frozen state of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Discussion

Role of the International Community

The persistence of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is largely a result of the lack of response from the international actors to the unfolding events. For over a decade, the conflict has served the interest of several powerful states, including the Russian Federation, Turkey and the United States, who have been very successful in influencing the actions of the international community.

The United Nations was involved in the conflict only superficially, allocating its resolution to the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), which established the OSCE Minsk Group, co-chaired by Russia, France and the United States in 1992. However, while the Group attempts to defend and justify the official recognition of Nagorno-Karabakh as Azerbaijan's territory, it has been unable to promote resolutions due to the self-interests of its powerful co-chairs. The OSCE Minsk Group has further proven to ignore the complex

nature of the conflict and failed to provide security guarantees (De Waal, 2013). In 1997, the Minsk Group proposed the withdrawal of Armenian troops from the occupied territories and a Karabakh self-government within Azerbaijan. As part of the proposition, all ethnic-Azeri displaced persons were to return to the occupied region. Azerbaijan accepted the document as a basis for negotiations, but Armenia responded that adequate guarantees of security were necessary to facilitate withdrawal from the occupied territories (Cutler, 2003). This proposition is one of many examples in which the peacekeepers have failed to recognize and incorporate the complexity of the conflict in carrying out decisions for peace.

When the economic status of Armenia and Azerbaijan is examined, the significance of security guarantees becomes evident. Over the years, Azerbaijan, propelled by oil and gas, embarked in a military build-up. In 2015 alone, Baku spent 3 billion dollars on its military, more than Armenia's entire national budget (Kambeck & Ghazaryan, 2012). Hence, OSCE's propositions to remove the self-government in Karabakh is seen as unmanageable for the local Armenian officials and does not provide the assurance of their secure withdrawal (Behlül, 2008). As the frozen conflict is continuously interrupted by violations of the ceasefire, the threat of escalation is always present (Melander, 2001). However, when considering the lack of security guarantees, it can be argued that a full-scale war can be avoided if strategic uncertainties and security dilemmas are addressed by the international mediators, which merely do not consider the resolution as beneficial for their own interests, exemplifying the instrumentalist theory.

Russia's direct interest in the conflict became visible soon after the independence of Armenia and Azerbaijan in 1991. Territorially, in its efforts to prevent competing powers, Turkey and Iran, from getting a foothold in the Caucasus, Russia found Armenia to be the single reliable ally in the region. The early presidents of Georgia and Azerbaijan, Zviad Gamsakhurdia and Abulfaz Elchibey, were strong anti-Russian nationalists who initially refused to join the newly formed Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Therefore, Armenia and the Karabakh Armenians acted as levers for Russia to bring Georgia and Azerbaijan into the CIS and consequently allowed Russian troops to develop stations near the Iran and Turkey borders in Armenia and Azerbaijan to "guard" the common CIS border (Goltz, 1993).

The lack of interest in the resolution of the conflict and the self-centered approach of Russia was similarly visible prior to the Nagorno-Karabakh war, when Joseph Stalin and the "Kavburo" of the Soviet Union made the decision to "leave" or "make" the Nagorno-Karabakh region as part of Azerbaijan. While the region was allocated to Azerbaijan, the Russian rule ordered official business to be conducted in Armenian, elevating a class of Armenian elite, which later sought to merge the region back with Armenia (Pokalova, 2015). Hence, Russia played a significant role in establishing the initial formations, which escalated into the conflict, but did not try to solve them, as under the USSR such problems could be contained. This Russian policy of first assigning the majority-Armenian Karabakh to Azerbaijan and then establishing a class of Armenian elite in the region is known as divide et impera, a strategy of asserting control over a territory by breaking up large concentrations of power into smaller and more manageable units.

Through the years of mediations, as a co-chair of the Minsk Group, Russia has demonstrated a general lack of interest in the joint mediation of the conflict. It considers the OSCE as an intruder in its sphere of influence and prefers to conduct a Russian-only mediation (Cornell, 1997). Russia's instrumentalist attempt to manipulate the conflict for its own territorial security and economic interests became particularly visible in 2016.Russia's Prime Minister Dimitry Medvedev stated that Russia would continue to sell arms to both

Azerbaijan and Armenia, and justified the decision as an attempt to preserve the existing balance of forces in the conflict (Puddington, Repucci, Dunham, Nelson & Roylance, 2016). This policy betrayes Russia's focus on its national interest: as the region witnessed renewed fighting in 2016, Moscow continued to sell its weapons to both sides as well as to provide extensive military support to Armenia, where it maintains a base. While Armenia expressed strong disapproval for Russia's supply of arms to Azerbaijan, the Armenian government cannot speak out against these selfish motives due to its dependence on Russia as a means of overcoming its territorial encirclement by Azerbaijan and Turkey. Hence, international powers outweigh Armenia's national leadership in the conflict. Russia supplies Armenia not only with military aid and territorial support but also with cheaply priced gas, goods, and acts as a primary destination for Armenian migrant labor (Torbakov, 2010). Russia's direct interest in maintaining positive ties with both Azerbaijan and Armenia prevents the country from implementing decisive strategies to end the tensions in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Another prominent actor in the resolution of the conflict is Turkey, whose role can be examined through its domestic appeal and its relations with the US and Russia. Turkey's initial interest in the conflict arose as an attempt to deal with domestic pressures, as huge anti-Armenian demonstrations took place in the country during the Nagorno-Karabakh war in 1992. Turkish people demanded its government to interfere on Azerbaijan's behalf, accusing the leaders of undermining Turkey's prestige in Azerbaijan and amongst the fellow Muslim states in Central Asia. Hence, in its efforts to improve its domestic public image, the Turkish government began to demonstrate its strong support for Azerbaijan (Behlül, 2008).

While Turkey's president Tayyip Erdogan remains very vocal on his belief that Armenian territories historically belong to Azerbaijan, the government has not provided decisive support to Azerbaijan. The lack of interference can be partially explained by Turkey's interest in gaining full membership in the European Union, which requires normalization of relations with Armenia. Furthermore, Turkey attempts to respect the neutrality of the US towards the conflict, fearing that if it extends further support to Azerbaijan and disrupts the current balance of powers in the region, the US will cut its military aid- which is vital for Turkey's fight against the Kurds (Pearson, 2018).

Turkish relations with Russia further play an important role, in particular with the recent improvement in military and economic relations between the two states. In 2017, Turkey purchased the S-400 surface-to-air missile system from Russia, a step which was condemned by the US but is beneficial for Turkish military development (Pearson, 2018). Turkey's interest in maintaining positive economic and military relations with both Russia and the United States prevents it from attempting to resolve the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The case of Turkey's involvement demonstrates the complicated web of relations between the international actors involved and the large number of hidden motives, which block them from an unbiased and fair mediation process.

As for the United States, who is also part of the OCSE Minsk Group, its policy towards the conflict has largely been defined by its recognition of the Caucasus as the "backyard of Russia" and a policy of non-interference (Mooradian & Druckman, 1999). Whilst ostensibly playing a significant role in conflict resolution, Russia, Turkey and the US have further cultivated tensions and used the conflict to pursue economic and military opportunities, and security guarantees (Blanton, 2015). The complex relations and pursuits of national benefits demonstrate that international actors, more importantly Russia and Turkey, play a more important role in sustaining the conflict than Armenia and Azerbaijan, where these external actors achieved a high level of dependency, power and guardianship. While Azerbaijan condemns Turkey's attempt to maintain positive relations with all the involved powers, and

while Armenia condemns Russia's sale of arms to Azerbaijan, both Russia and Turkey continue to value their own interests over their perception in Armenia and Azerbaijan and treat the tensions between the two ethnic groups as means for personal gains.

On the other hand, the constructivist theory of ethnic conflict helps in explaining the social constructs which arose from the failure of the international community to impose proper punishments for the war-crimes committed between 1988 and 1994 in Nagorno-Karabakh. As described by the International Committee of the Red Cross (1993), "there has been a complete lack of knowledge of international humanitarian law among the combatants. The conflict violated the law of war of the most gruesome kind and included mass killings of unarmed civilians, bargaining in dead bodies, de facto ethnic cleansing and restrictions imposed on the civilian population's freedom of movement." Upon the signing of the ceasefire, the participants of the conflict were not subject to firm punishments, which could have eased people's emotional trauma and attachment to the hostilities. Hence, the failure of the international mediators to impose proper punishments allowed for the creation of what constructivists call a "myth-symbol complex", which established an "accepted" history for both ethnicities and created a criterion through which they labelled each other's ethnicity as the "enemy."

The Armenian and the Azerbaijani masses feel that their enemies were not penalized for their atrocities and, hence, continuously push against any proposal of peaceful resolution that threaten their group identity while glorifying their opponents'(Pokalova, 2015). While the common people in Armenia and Azerbaijan do not have much influence on the trajectory of events, their "accepted history" and social constructs, which formed in the periods of ethnic violence, enable international actors and their respective national governments to pursue their selfish motives and promote ethnic hate narratives in both countries.

Promotion of Ethnic Differences in Armenia and Azerbaijan

While external factors and the selfish attitudes of the international community largely determine the negotiation process and impede the resolution of the conflict, the governments of Armenia and Azerbaijan have also exploited the conflict for national gains. To unite the country under one leadership and protect their existing authority, both governments promote ethnic differences, manipulate the ethnic allegiance of the masses and provoke ethnic tensions. Upon the collapse of the Soviet Union, the issues of independence from various Soviet Republics and the accompanying ethnonationalistic sentiments began to escalate as leaders strived to mobilize their masses in favor of the state (Blanton, 2015). The everchanging political climate in the region, which requires leaders to preserve the loyalties of the people, resulted in the promotion of common identity and a shared history by the governments of Azerbaijan and Armenia against those who threatened their existing authority. Because this promotion of ethnic differences has been exercised for over a decade and shapes the social constructs of individuals in both states, any just solution to the dispute today will entail painful compromises and will have to balance radically opposing principles.

As stated by Elkhan Mehdiyev, the director of Baku's Peace and Conflict Resolution Centre, in 2016, "Peace for Azerbaijan means the liberation of its territory, restoration of its sovereignty and peaceful coexistence with Armenia... a ceasefire is not peace" (Safarova & Grigoryan, 2016). However, the institutionalization of ethnic differences by the government of Azerbaijan and the anti-Armenian propaganda continues to close the remaining bridges between the two nations and their people. Ilham Aliyev, the acting president of Azerbaijan, actively uses academic circles to promote the myth of Armenia's occupation of its historic homeland territories. In "Nation and History in Azerbaijani textbooks" (2005), Yasemin Kilit

Aklar demonstrates that Azerbaijani textbooks misuse history to encourage hatred and feelings of ethnic and national superiority, by portraying Armenians as historical enemies. These ethnic hate narratives result in growing hatred within the masses and contribute to consolidates the long-standing enmity between the countries. From a constructivist viewpoint, these state-sponsored textbooks contribute to the “social construction” of political identities and “invented traditions.” They lead younger generations to embrace strong anti-Armenian sentiment, and ethnic hatred between the two groups (Horowitz, 1985).

The media serves as the most important outlet for the dissemination of the anti-Armenian propaganda by Aliyev’s government. The state distributes special grants to individuals and outlets who engage in the so-called “dissemination of truth about Azerbaijan.” The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), which published a report on Azerbaijan in 2016, studied hate speech in the media and concluded that out of the 679 Azerbaijani news items examined, 196 items were targeted directly at Armenians and connected directly with the conflict over the Nagorno-Karabakh region (ECRI, 2016).Furthermore, continuous rejection of the legitimacy of Armenian sovereignty is also promoted in the country, as visible through the quote by an Azerbaijani former Defense Minister, Safar Abiyev, in 2004, who stated that "Within the next 25 years there will be no state of Armenia in the South Caucasus. Modern Armenia was built on historical Azerbaijani lands. I think that in 25 years its territory will again come under Azerbaijan's jurisdiction” (The Caucasus: Frozen conflicts and closed borders: Hearing before the Committee on Foreign Affairs, 2008).

The purpose of Aliyev’s hate dissemination and his hardening confrontation with regards to the conflict can be explained by the interest of the state to use ethnicity as a tool for distraction against the flaws of the authoritarian Azerbaijani government in light of the democratic revolution in the near-by Armenia (Blanton, 2015). The prime minister of Armenia, Nikol Pashinyan, supports this argument, as he stated in his interview with Al Jazeera in 2018 that “Azerbaijan became more aggressive in its push for the Nagorno-Karabakh region after the Armenian democratic revolution against the corrupt government, because Ilham Aliyev has a fear that Azerbaijani people will likewise rebel against his authoritarian rule” (N. Pashinyan, personal communication, July 27, 2018). When the instrumentalist theory is applied to Aliyev’s fear of losing power, it is clear that the promotion of ethnic differences by the state is intended to exploit the ethnic allegiance of the masses and defend the existing regime by uniting the people against a common enemy and under a common goal of acquiring the contested lands in Nagorno-Karabakh.

The tools used by Azerbaijan to promote ethnic differences have been successful in influencing the public opinion. The ECRI report (2016) demonstrated that 91% of the surveyed Azeris perceived Armenia as their state’s greatest enemy. The anti-Armenian sentiment in the country is visible through frequent demonstrations organized in Baku. At one of such events in 2016, Islam Shikhali, an Azerbaijani freelance reporter, said “Karabakh is the value that connects all Azeris. Everyone with different backgrounds, from different political groups, come together and become one nation when it comes to Karabakh” (Safarova & Grigoryan, 2016). While most Azerbaijanis refuse to cooperate with Armenia, some civil society organizations and individuals attempt to maintain ties; however, they do not have the power to do so, as Aliyev prohibits such contact. This demonstrates the lack of influence of the common people, who attempt to establish peaceful communication with Armenians, in fostering the peace negotiations.

In Armenia, the conflict sits deep within the public national consciousness. In 2018, the charismatic Nikol Pashinyan came to power after leading a successful democratic revolution. However, he was faced with the problem of preserving his public support and maintaining the

the anti-Azerbaijani construct in the country while refraining from angering its security patron, Russia. While in the beginning of his term, he was seen to be a cautious diplomat interested in democratic negotiations with Azerbaijan, the strong national consciousness turned him into a nationalist leader. His recent rhetoric includes powerful messages about the "Armenian cause", and he began to incorporate the Armenian name for Karabakh, "Artsakh", as well as chants for the union of Karabakh with Armenia in his speeches (Kucera, 2019).

Pashinyan's interest also lies in the economic benefits, which the potential unification of Karabakh would bring to Armenia. During his Nagorno-Karabakh visit in August 2019, Pashinyan stated that "In the period until 2050 we have to manage to solve the following issues – increase the population of Armenia to at least 5 million, create 1.5 million jobs, and eliminate poverty, transform Armenia into an industrial country…". When asked about his failure to comment on his future vision of Nagorno-Karabakh, he added "'The answer is very simple, Artsakh is Armenia and there is no alternative" (Kucera, 2019, para. 10). Pashinyan's attempt to link the myth of "ancient homeland", and his belief that Karabakh belongs to Armenia, with his future economic goals in Armenia was effective in impressing the Armenian public. His statement was highly condemned by all of the involved actors, and Azerbaijan in particular, further impeding the negotiations which began to flourish when he first started his term.

The ECRI report on racism and intolerance in Armenia, points out that, similar to the government of Azerbaijan, Armenian leaders have demonstrated intolerance by actions such as the prohibition of screenings of Azerbaijani films in the Armenian capital and the lack of efforts to adopt priority housing programme for persons forcibly displaced from Azerbaijan (ECRI, 2016). Such actions are also actively supported by the public in Yerevan, which, through the state-sponsored promotion of ethnic "hate narratives", continuously glorifies its group identity by diminishing the powers of the "enemy" group (Kaufman, 2001). The effectiveness of the promotion of ethnic differences in Armenia could also be seen earlier in 1999, when the presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan came close to an agreement somewhat resembling a common state. However, the political situation in Armenia became stalemated after a Yerevani journalist entered the Armenian Parliament building, while it was in session, and assassinated numerous members of the national leadership who took part in the peaceful negotiations (Cutler, 2003). This demonstrates the constructivist theory, as Armenians identify as enemies not only the Azerbaijanis, but also the Armenians who went against the group and tried to shift the constructed understanding of the accepted history in favor of a compromise.

Territorially, the reasons provided by the Armenian government for the violations of the ceasefire usually include protection and security of the Armenian population. However, the Armenian troops in the region have actively pushed for more territories and continue to engage in military engagements, moving away from simple defense towards strategies of deterrence. This further showcases the presence of national interests in extending the sphere of influence, resources, and power under the claim of ethnic protection (Volkan, 1998). The interconnection between constructivism and instrumentalism is visible in both states. They exploit the social constructs of the public on the existence of a common enemy and manipulate ethnic allegiances and sentiments to secure their power. Hence, although the international actors who have influence in Armenia and Azerbaijan largely decide the outcomes of the conflict, the state promotion of ethnic differences in both countries further impedes the mediation process.

Conclusion

As demonstrated by the arguments on the role of the international community and the promotion of ethnic differences in Armenia and Azerbaijan, the failure to reach a peaceful resolution in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is best explained by the instrumentalist approach. While the constructivist theory of ethnic identity is useful in explaining the deep-rooted beliefs and social constructs which prologue the conflict, instrumentalism powerfully demonstrates the use of ethnicity as a tool by the Armenian and the Azerbaijani governments and by the international community to attain political, economic and territorial gains. Armenia and Azerbaijan face difficult decisions that potentially carry political risks; however, the establishment of a dialogue is critical as any additional delay will only further strengthen the ethnic conceptions within each country and make an already difficult decision-making environment even more challenging. Therefore, the co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group and the international community as a whole should shift their attention away from pursuing hidden motives and towards maximizing efforts to help Armenia and Azerbaijan in reaching fruitful agreements as the start of a lasting peace.

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‘T’ IS FOR ‘TOPAK’: HOW THE TALIBAN ARE WINNING THE PROPAGANDA WAR

By Rija Habib

Abstract: September 2017 marked sixteen years since the start of the War on Terror, America’s longest war. In 2001, US-led coalition forces successfully toppled the Taliban government and ended the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. Many years later, despite the continued American presence in the country, the Taliban have managed a remarkable resurgence and their territorial control is strengthening. This paper argues that the insurgency’s increasingly sophisticated propaganda efforts, including the effective exploitation of dominant Pashtun and Islamic principles, have largely contributed to their resurgence. The paper uses content analysis to study the effectiveness of propaganda methods used by the insurgency including madrassas, poetry, and shabnamas (night letters) as well as the underlying themes of their messages. Findings suggest that Taliban propaganda is extensive and continues to adapt to the changing social and political conditions of its target population—the Pashtuns. American and Afghan anti-Taliban propaganda efforts, on the other hand, have been limited and often culturally and religiously insensitive, leading to further backlash against foreign intervention and the Afghan government.

Introduction

Since the fall of the Taliban in 2001, the regime’s remnants have persevered and made significant efforts to re-establish themselves as a political and military force. The war in Afghanistan has become the longest war in U.S. history. The Taliban have returned to power in many parts of the country from which they had been earlier expelled. Reports from The Long War Journal, an agency reporting on the War on Terror, show that as of September 2017, the Taliban control areas in 16 of the 34 provinces of Afghanistan (refer to Appendix 1). The Taliban have managed not only to survive after the fall of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan but also steadily expand their influence and authority over the Afghan population, despite continued American military presence.

The economic and political conditions in Afghanistan have empowered the Taliban and facilitated its resurgence. James Fearon and David Laitin have argued that financially, structurally, and politically weak governments assist the rise of insurgencies due to weak local control or inept counterinsurgency practices.[1] Similarly, Kareem Kamel pointed out that the rise of the Taliban can be partially attributed to the failure of state-building and the inability of the Afghan government to secure and stabilize the rural areas of the country in order for development and reconstruction to proceed.[2] Instead, Tim Foxley argued that Pakistani financial and military assistance as well as strategic planning from the Pakistan Inter-Services intelligence (ISI) (as part of its attempts to sustain influence in Afghanistan) have played a crucial role for the survival and resurgence of the insurgency.[3]

At the core of an insurgency is a battle of wills and determination to retain power and not military might. In most conflicts, effective use of media to advance and promote goals, activities, and intentions can be key in winning the population’s support. Retired British general, Rupert Smith, argued that most contemporary battles are primarily about winning

the will of the people on whose land a conflict is being fought.[4] The Taliban have realized this and devised a sophisticated propaganda operation that capitalizes on local frustration toward foreign presence and the corrupt Afghan government. They have also exploited the weakening support for future involvement in Afghanistan among the public opinion of the countries involved. The Taliban insurgency has been able to survive due to its ability to garner genuine support for its mission, notably from villagers in rural areas of Afghanistan willing to sacrifice themselves for its cause.[5] The tone and narrative of the Taliban propaganda also resonates with pre-existing values and traditions (Pashtunwali) of the Pashtun people—the target audience of Taliban propaganda.

Pashtuns are the largest ethnic group of Afghanistan and have been the dominant ethno-linguistic group for more than 300 years. The Pashtun language, Pashto, is one of the official languages of Afghanistan. The majority of Pashtuns are followers of Sunni Islam and adhere to pakhtunwali, their traditional lifestyle or ethical code.

There are several key components of pakhtunwali that are widely practiced and strictly followed. Melmastia (hospitality) entails the providing of hospitality to all visitors, regardless of race, religion, national affiliation, or economic status. Nyaw aw badal (justice and revenge) refers to seeking justice or taking revenge against the wrongdoer. Turah aw sabat (bravery and loyalty), according to which a Pashtun must be loyal to his country, family and tribe, and must defend them from incursions.[6] Groh (faith) entails a wider notion of trust or faith in god (ibid.). Disloyalty to any of these principles results in shame for any non-abiding individual and his family

Tribal culture is very strong in Afghanistan and the shifting of allegiance by powerful tribes and warlords can be crucial to determining victory and influencing people's perceptions and support for the Taliban. Crucial to the shaping of popular opinion is the manner and nature of the Taliban's efforts to communicate their goals, views, and values. This paper analyses the message Taliban propaganda seeks to present and the means used to do so. It also evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of the Taliban's efforts to communicate with and influence local Pashtun communities, both supporters and opponents alike. The paper argues that Taliban propaganda in the Pashtun regions of Afghanistan has evolved with increasing sophistication and has adapted its message to evolving local conditions by taking into account the political, economic, and socio-cultural predicaments of its intended audience.

Literature Review

The Taliban insurgency has a complicated past with many successes and failures. Gohari traces the origins of their ideology to the madrassas of Pakistan during the 1980s. Gohari's discussion of the hardships that Afghan refugees faced during the Soviet invasion has helped understand the conditions that allowed the Taliban to gain a strong footing amongst the Afghan population in its early days. The author describes the miserable state of refugee camps and the lack of schools and employment opportunities in refugee areas which led to radicalization of Afghans and growing hatred toward foreign military presence and interference in Afghan affairs.

Kareem Kamel argues that Taliban's success lies in their capacity to act as resourceful ethnic entrepreneurs through selective usage of dominant Pashtun and Islamic mythomoteurs (constitutive myth that gives an ethnic group its sense of purpose) in the process of symbolic cultivation. He shows the ability of the Taliban to adapt their propaganda means and fine-tune their messages to appeal to local sensitivities and grievances. In addition, the report by the International Crisis Group "Taliban Propaganda Winning the War of Words" sheds light on

both the messages the Taliban wish to convey to the public and their media strategies. Thomas Johnson has showed how the shabnama have a long history in Afghanistan and are still effectively used today to deliver threats and instill fear. Johnson's discussion of Taliban poetry identified several themes present in their chants and poetry. He also highlighted the Afghan government's failure to address these efforts and its naïve dismissal of these poems as simply "entertainment." To the contrary, the Taliban exploit these inexpensive but effective tools to successfully spread their propaganda. Of a different opinion is Tim Foxley who argues that Taliban propaganda is neither particularly complex nor even effective, but appears so because of the inefficacy of both foreign and government propaganda.

Since the rise of the Taliban in 1996, propaganda means have evolved over time. From the use of traditional methods targeting limited audiences to adopting more advanced approaches reaching larger numbers of people in Afghanistan and the world over, the Taliban have shown increasing sophistication in their media tactics. The Taliban issue print magazines but also operate their own website and social media accounts, including Twitter and Facebook. However, high rates of illiteracy in rural areas compel the Taliban to rely on more traditional means of communication, such as issuing pamphlets, delivering sermons in mosques, teaching Taliban ideology in madrassas, issuing of threats in shabnama, and circulating poetry.[7]

Madrassas

In the 1980s, hundreds of Afghan refugees in Pakistan enrolled their male children into madrassas or religious schools. According to Neamatollah Njoumi, attending these schools provided a source of income for many refugee families as they offered free rooms, daily meals, and a monthly stipend, which the students used to support their families.[8] Since refugee camps were often located far from town, finding jobs was almost impossible and families relied on this type of income.[9] Over the course of the Afghan conflict, mujahideen groups such as Hezb-e-Islami and Jamaat-e-Islami became involved in these schools and even opened their own.[10] Gradually, madrassas became affiliated with the war effort and provided military training to students, who often went on to fight in Afghanistan against the Soviets.[11]

The ideological formation of the Taliban has historical roots in the emergence of thousands of madrassas across Pakistan. Like other mujahideen groups, members of the Taliban including the senior leadership such as the former supreme commander Mullah Mohammad Omar, have received their education and training in these institutions.[12] When the Taliban came to power in 1994, public schools were shut down and replaced with madrassas and it was declared that students of these schools would be entrusted with the duty of jihad-fi-sabeelillah (War in Allah's path).[13]

Although the Taliban initially banned girls from attending classes and threatened any individual who would teach girls privately, they have softened their stance in recent years. Women and girls now attend segregated classes at these madrassas or in separate schools for girls.[14] Their curriculums are typically limited to Quran memorisation, the study of Hadith, Islamic law as well as languages such as Arabic and Pashto[15].

In most rural areas, madrassas are the only form of institutionalized education and a critical means to promote Taliban ideology. Since secular knowledge is unavailable and literacy rates are low in these regions, children easily absorb these schools' teachings. Additionally, for the poorest families, it is the added benefits of free daily meals and basic provisions that make these institutions attractive for their children.

Poetry and Chants

Poetry and chants form a strong component of Pashtun culture; throughout history they have been a means of entertainment, art, and storytelling. Even during Taliban rule, despite the ban on several forms of entertainment and media (such as music and television) poetry and chants were permitted - in particular religious chants and taranas oremotional, martial, nationalistic songs without musical accompaniment.[16] Over time, these became a powerful Taliban tool for "instructing" and intimidating the Afghan population.

The Taliban regularly compose powerful lengthy poetry and chants on a variety of topics, including the importance of jihad, the long and honourable history of Afghanistan's struggle against foreign "infidels," Pashtun traditions, Islam, and even love.[17] While some poetry points directly to Taliban activities, others aim to intensify and applaud resistance to foreigners and appeal to nationalism. Since Taliban members are primarily Pashtun, these poems and chants are mostly composed in Pashto (and sometimes in Dari), thus making them easily accessible to the population.[18]

Johnson and Waheed described Taliban chants as melodic with catchy tunes; often with repeating sections that have a tendency to persist in people's consciousness.[19] The authors claim that the catchy rhymes, rhythm, and lyrics of the chants are easily memorized and passed on as they are one of the key sources of entertainment in communal gatherings and celebratory events. As such, poetry has become a crucial means of promoting propaganda, especially for the illiterate. According to Johnson and Waheed, several local singers and musicians have also decided to sing Taliban chants, thereby further increasing their popularity. They have also come to the attention of an increasing number of Pashtun youth, especially in areas where the Taliban have a substantial presence.[20]

The Taliban have been able to keep up with the modernizing population by ensuring that these chants and poems are widely available to rural and urban populations through a wide variety of mediums such as poetry books, Taliban magazines, CDs, audio cassettes, websites, and YouTube. Chants are now also available as downloadable ringtones on the internet.[21]

Shabnama

Shabnama (night letters) are a traditional means of communication in Afghanistan. These letters consist of printed or handwritten pages delivered to targeted individuals, distributed throughout towns and villages, or even blanketed over entire provinces. The letters are usually posted to the walls of mosques, government buildings, or other important landmarks, and promise death to anyone who disobeys their threats and instructions.[22] Night letters were a particularly useful technique employed by the mujahideen to influence and intimidate their recipients chiefly during times of turmoil, such as during the Soviet invasion. Nelofer Pazira, in her book A Bed of Red Flowers, describes the use of night letters to coordinate shop closings or similar activities intended to generate solidarity among the Afghan population in their anti-Soviet conflict.[23]

The Taliban adopted this highly cost-effective means to deliver threats to warn villages of the "wrath" they would face if they cooperated with international forces or the government. Often the targets of these letters are the villagers seen talking to ISAF soldiers, or the victims of local Taliban settling old tribal scores. While such methods do not win the hearts of local villagers, they are successful in instilling fear and making villagers reluctant to engage with the international community or the Afghan Government.[24] The Taliban rely on the educated populace to communicate the shabnama to illiterate villagers. Typically, shabnama are

directed to figures of authority and supporters of the current government and often read as the following: “Once this government falls, we will be in power. We have your documents, your names and your addresses. We will come and punish you.”[25]

Night letters are often accompanied by direct action, such as school burnings and the execution of locals accused of spying for American forces. There have been countless cases of Taliban beheading villagers and innocent children for “spying for the government.” For instance, in 2013, the Taliban beheaded two boys aged 10 and 16 as a warning to villagers not to cooperate with the Afghan government.[26] The increasing use of such means demonstrates the Taliban’s ability to learn from other insurgent groups and benefit from the growth of local industries for the production of audio-visual propaganda.

Themes and Messages of Taliban Propaganda

While the means of propaganda is important to reach the intended audiences, it is ultimately the message that will determine whether intentions will turn into actions. There are clear recurring themes within Taliban’s propaganda that are directed toward the local population, including the call to jihad, resistance to foreign forces, and the local government. The Taliban use their interpretation of Islam as a basis to back their ideology and claims.

Foreign Presence and Afghan Government

The Taliban promote the notion that it is the Islamic duty of Afghans to attack the foreign military presence thus undermining the legitimacy of foreign presence and boasting its ability to attack it.[27] Exaggeration and distortion on the following issues are commonplace: (a) the numbers of casualties inflicted on foreign forces, (b) the numbers of casualties inflicted on Afghan civilians by foreign forces, (c) claims to have brought down foreign aircraft, (d) kidnappings or capturing of military personnel, and (e) weapons systems available to the Taliban.[28]

The following is an extract from an online publication on the Taliban website and entitled “Intelligence Ploys of the Enemy, a Sign of their Despair and Failure,” published on October 2, 2017:

> We want to remind America and their stooges that when you had 150,000 troops in Afghanistan in 2010-2012 and turned to all kind of terror and brutalities, did any leader of the Islamic Emirate seek asylum in any other country? Did they abandon their resistance? It is to be mentioned that all leaders of the Islamic Emirate have been refined and hardened in the furnace of time. Have your generals not admitted many a times that defeating Taliban is not an easy task. They are resilient, always emerging with new tactics to confront us. Therefore, do not waste your money on such failed intelligence efforts and meaningless wars anymore. It is not worth it.
>
> Readily, America seeks to extricate herself of due financial share in the NATO and the United Nations under one pretext or the other because of economic problems. This is the result of your meaningless wars in Afghanistan and other Islamic countries which have made you weak and discredited to such an extent… So, there is still time to realize and abandon your imperialistic schemes before you face the same fate of the former Soviet Union.[3]

The publication includes several significant messages directed toward the American government, but also to the local population. Firstly, it aims to commend the strength and resilience of the Taliban for not abandoning the fight despite the heavy presence of foreign

soldiers. Secondly, it hopes to make apparent the growing weakness of the Americans by revealing their reluctance to financially contribute to NATO and the UN as a consequence of their "meaningless wars." Lastly, the publication seeks to remind the Americans and more importantly the Afghan population, of its earlier victory against the Soviet Union in an attempt to further illustrate the nation's success against foreigners.

Taliban strength is also demonstrated in their poems.

> *wali pa gondo shwali?*
> *sar pa narido shwali?*
> *ta kho wel che za super kuwat pa tol jahan ki yem*
> *nan kho sta makhi ta watalei nagyalei Talib,*
> *har chata warzi da nangyali Talib*.[30]

Translation:

> Why did you go to your knees?
> Began to drop on your head?
> You claimed you are the superpower of the world.
> Today, you encountered a young Talib,
> Facing everyone proudly, this young Talib.

The poem is from the viewpoint of a talib (single of Taliban) fighter and is addressed to an American soldier who drops down to his knees in agony upon the death of his comrade. The talib asks the Americans why they drop to their knees after claiming to be all-powerful. He further explains that it is because the soldier saw a Talib, who courageously faced him and brought him to his knees.

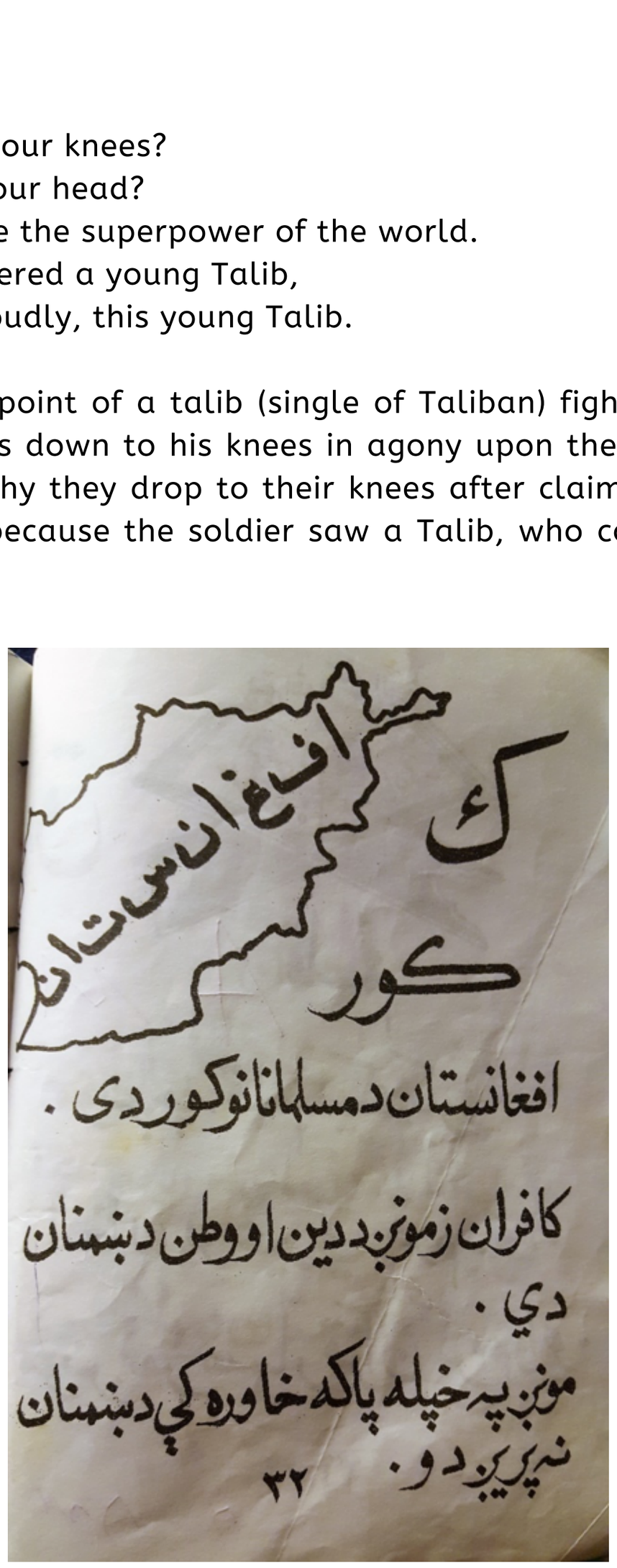

Figure 1: A page from a fourth grade Pashto textbook used by the Taliban

Anti-foreigner propaganda is also present in madrassas, where textbooks used by the Taliban are filled with violent messages and images, exposing children from an early age to a culture of violence. Figure 1 shows a page for the letter “K” from a Pashto alphabet book. The text reads “K” for Kor (house/home), “Afghanistan is the home of Muslims. Kaafirs are the enemies of our religion and our nation. We will not let enemies enter our pure home.”[31]

The Taliban perceive the Afghan governments succeeding their rule as “puppets” of the Americans and have devoted much of their efforts to shifting local support and opinion against the government. The Afghan government, particularly under Karzai was presented as corrupt, as run by non-Muslims who are directing Afghanistan toward un-Islamic western values. This is further evident from the highly degrading language used by the Taliban when referring to government forces. Members of the Afghan National Army (ANA) and the Afghan National Police (ANP) are labelled munafiq (hypocrite), and other members of the administration are called ghulam (slave/servant), ajir (agent), and gawdagai (puppet)[32].

The Taliban seeks to portray itself as resolute and its violence as legitimate. The growing discontent with corruption within the government further fuels grievances and presents the Taliban as a viable alternative, even to people who do not like the Taliban. The Taliban have realised this and have created parallel governments that enforce Sharia law and established Islamic courts to solve disputes among residents.[33] Taliban courts are perceived as quicker, fairer, more effective and less corrupt than the secular courts, a further proof of the Afghan government’s inability to impose law and order, and its negligence of the rural areas.[34]

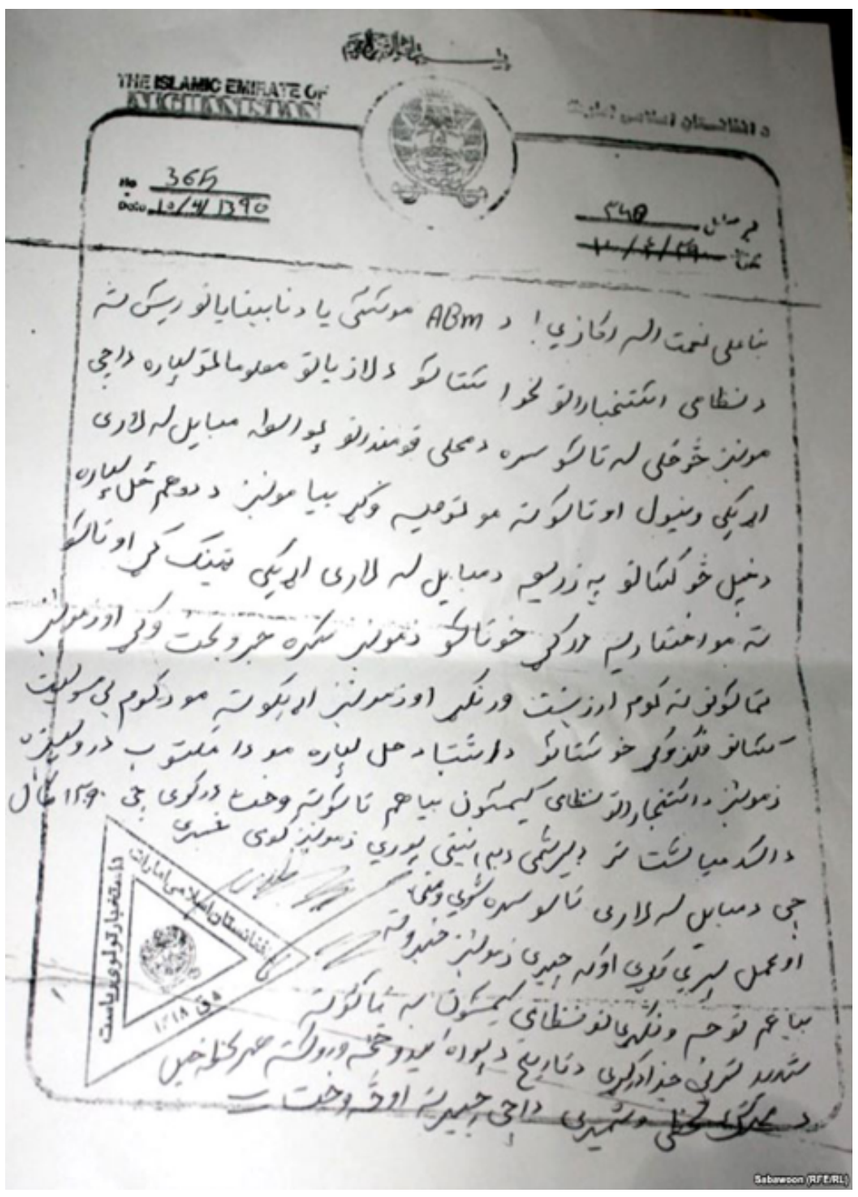

Figure 2: A Taliban shabnama threatening an individual seen to be cooperating with foreigners

Taliban shabnama are also used to threaten any individuals, groups or organizations that are cooperating with foreign forces. Figure 2 shows a shabnama with the Taliban seal on the top of the page. The shabnama is addressed to Neamatullah Rekazai, working for an aid organization, “ABM,” which helps women find work.[35] The text threatens Neamatullah to stop cooperating with foreigners or “face the consequences.” It further clarifies that the Taliban are aware of where he lives and works. In a culture that emphasizes loyalty to the state and tribe, such public shaming of individuals is an effective tool for the Taliban.

Jihad and Islam

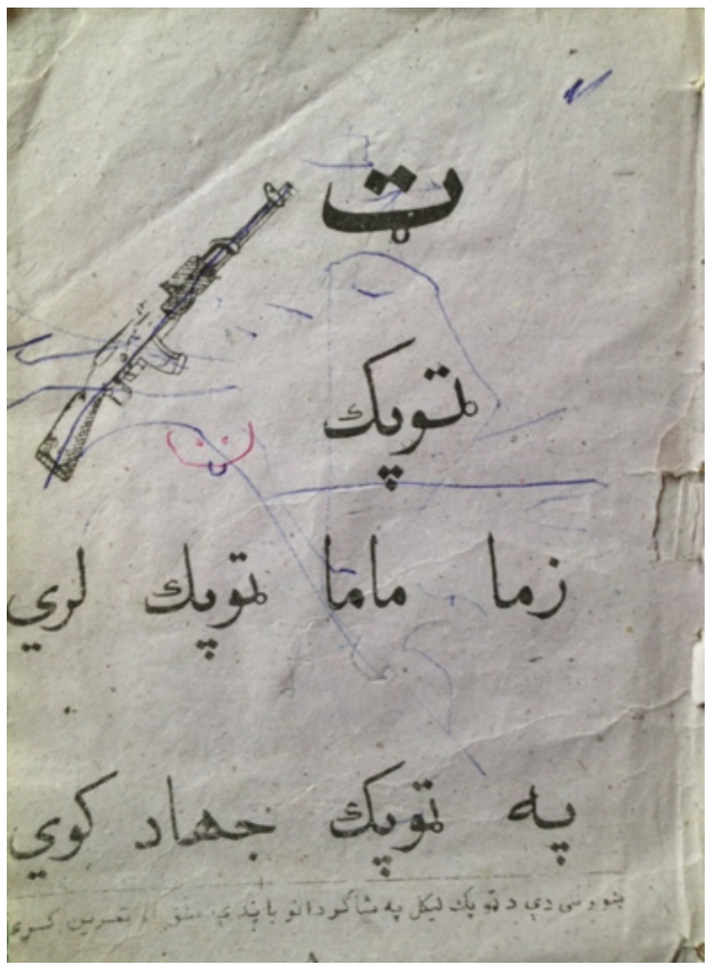

Figure 3: A page from a Pashto textbook

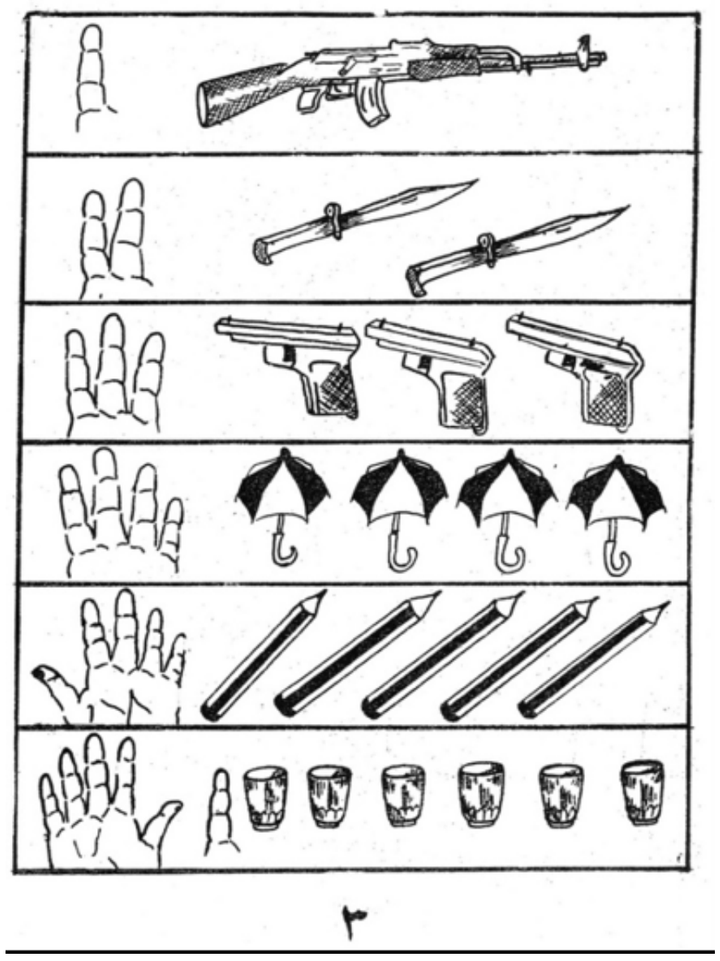

Figure 4: A page from a children's math book

Another major topic of discussion in Taliban propaganda is jihad and the duty of every Afghan and Muslim to perform it. The Taliban present jihad as a vital part of one's belief in Islam and an "honor" for a Muslim. Figure 3 is a page discussing the letter "T" from a children's Pashto textbook used in madrassas. The text reads "T" for "Topak" (weapon/gun), "My uncle has a gun. He does jihad with the gun."[36] Figure 4 shows a page from a mathematics book which teaches children to count using images of Kalashnikovs, handguns, knives and bullets.[37] Such messages are specially designed to instil a culture of violence in young minds and teach children from a young age their "duty" as a Muslim and an Afghan.

Na ba Jari grani mori sta zakhmuna me che giri,
Za shahid pa Shariat yet pa winu ke lat pat yam,
Janaza ta me ratel ka spin pagrei and stergei ye tori.
Handagha khafar de bad dei,
nan sa ham na dei hawas dei,
Ghbargi hoori mi tarsang di,
pa ma kri da zulfo syuri[38].

Translation:

Don't cry my dear mother when you see my red scars,
I am shaheed (a martyr) by Shariah all covered in blood,
Gather white turbans and black eyes for my funeral,
This is enough pride for you,
Today isn't a day of sorrow it is a celebration,
There are Hoori around me,
their long hair is giving me shade.

Jihad and Islam are also strong themes in Taliban poems and chants. Poem 2 is a chant from a talib fighter's viewpoint telling his mother not to cry because he is a shaheed (martyr) in the name of Islam. The mention of "red scars" and "blood" is intentional to instill a sense of pride a soldier or martyr should feel from their battle wounds. The soldier tells his mother

that his martyrdom or jihad should be a cause for celebration and that he is now in paradise surrounded by hoori, the women of heaven.

Evaluating Taliban Propaganda

Reliable information in Afghanistan is scarcely available and high levels of illiteracy coupled with poor access to modern media lead to reliance on messages spread through word of mouth. This means that information is often imprecise, out of date, and second hand. For such an audience, any claims of military success by the Taliban will be deemed credible. Secondly, the Taliban have dominated the narrative as its spokesmen reach out to journalists and media outlets with detailed accounts of insurgent attacks in real-time while the Kabul government stays silent.[39] Bureaucratic lethargy often prevents Afghan officials from issuing timely responses to Taliban claims. Government forces cannot publish photos and videos from the battlefield and must follow formal approval procedures prior to any publication, which limits their ability to contest Taliban's claims. Their prompt responses along with their ability to threaten journalists, allow the Taliban to claim attacks and present exaggerated accounts of incidents to their benefit.[40]

In addition, the Taliban benefit from the damage and civilian casualties resulting from foreign military operations and from the perceived lack of respect for local people, property and tribal customs by Western military tactics. The Taliban publish monthly reports detailing the number of casualties per day along with the location and a brief description of each incident. The following is an excerpt from a post on the Taliban website titled "War crimes of savage foreign invaders and their internal mercenaries" for the month of September 2017:

> "On Wednesday 13th September, main gates of civilian houses were blasted in bombs; the houses were thoroughly searched out; local people were badly beaten; their valuables were stolen; and eventually 4 innocent villagers were taken away as prisoners during a brutal raid of the savage foreign invaders escorted by their internal stooge forces in Abu-Bakar village of Wazir area in Khogyani district of Nangarhar province."[41]

Often the figures in these reports are highly exaggerated in an attempt to create resentment toward the foreign forces. These reports are not only published on the Taliban websites but also in the Taliban magazines and broadcasted on Taliban run radio stations.

Taliban propaganda has shown to adapt to the changing conditions within Afghanistan and address contemporary issues, in particular on the role of women. Mullah Omar guaranteed that the new Taliban regime would "respect the rights of all people in the country, including women." Accordingly, in Taliban controlled regions, the number of girls' madrassas has been growing. Jelani Zwak, an Afghan political analyst who studied Taliban propaganda stated that "these days their propaganda has changed. They are not only talking about the occupation and civilian casualties. They are acting like an alternative to this government."[42] Referring to the Karzai administration, which many Afghans perceived as corrupt, Mullah Omar had vowed that the Taliban would also "bring about administrative transparency in all government departments."[43]

Although Taliban propaganda has evolved and strengthened over time, it does have its limitations. The message is often inadequate and lacking clear insight as little effort is made to appeal to a wider Afghan and western audience. Though the means used reach a wide international audience, the message is nevertheless directed toward the local Pashtun population. While the Taliban have gradually embraced modern communications technology,

they struggle to modify and develop their message. Most importantly, the Taliban do not appear to propose any clear political or governance ideas and policies and seem to lack a broad strategic overview.[44] There seems to exist minimal interest in, or understanding of, wider global issues that could potentially assist them. As medical and food aid as well as reconstruction efforts reach larger parts of the country, the Taliban argument which claims foreign and government forces seek to cause destruction in Afghanistan are beginning to lose weight amongst the population. In addition, the messages are often muddled and contradictory. A spokesman would claim an attack only to have another spokesman counter the claim, particularly if the incident resulted in civilian casualties. In June 2005, then Taliban spokesman Hakimi, denied that the group had carried out a suicide attack at a funeral in Kandahar that killed at least 20 Afghans. He instead falsely claimed that the Taliban had only assassinated one target at the funeral, the man for whom the funeral was being held.[45]

However, little effort has been made to counter Taliban propaganda, particularly in rural regions. Opposition propaganda (chiefly American propaganda) has only assisted to further the Taliban's cause as it is severely limited in terms of both quantity and quality. American anti-Taliban propaganda has often backfired, where any efforts to portray a negative image of the Taliban have instead resulted in insulting Islam or local values, something the Pashtun people cannot tolerate. For instance, in early 2017, American forces distributed leaflets to homes in Parwan province (north of Kabul). The leaflets depicted a lion representing the American-led coalition forces, chasing a dog (an animal considered impure in Islam) wrapped in the Taliban flag. The writing on the flag is the shahada, the most sacred of texts in Islam, the foundational declaration of faith in God. The leaflets worked in the favour of the Taliban, sparked anti-American anger and violence, and led to the suicide bombing at the American air base in Bagram[46].

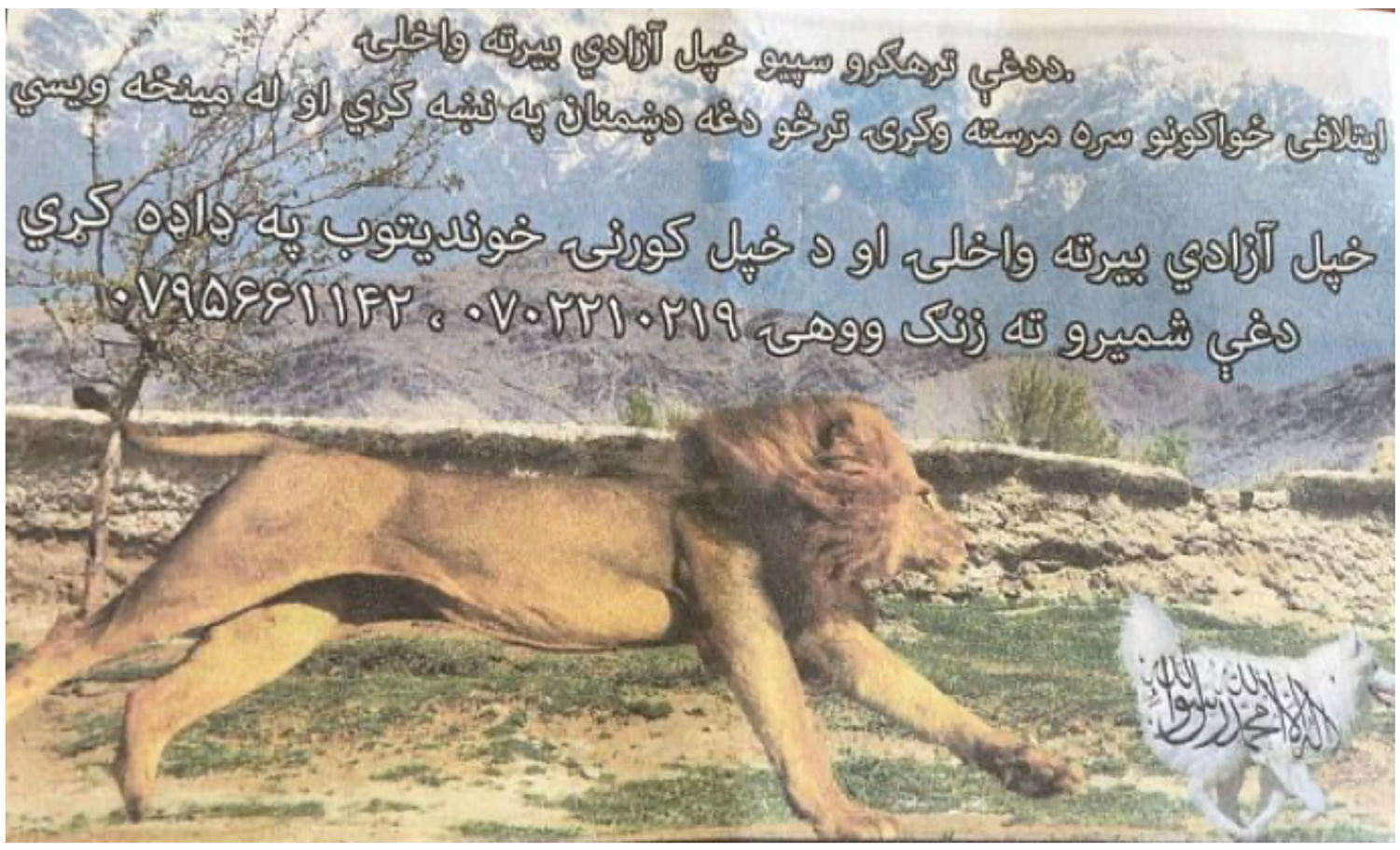

Figure 5: American anti-Taliban leaflet depicting a lion chasing a dog which has the Shahada printed on it.

Arturo Munoz, studied American anti-Taliban propaganda in Afghanistan and found that most efforts produced no significant results. Munoz argues that early propaganda disseminated in 2001, immediately after the War on Terror was declared, attempted to justify the war to the Afghans but failed to gain local support as they felt Al-Qaeda was to blame and not the Taliban. The Afghans held the "Arabs" accountable and felt the war was unjust. American propaganda then evolved to include pictures of the plane crashes of September 11. Munoz states that due to lack of televisions and other media outlets, many Afghans had never seen tall buildings before and could not comprehend the images. Furthermore, the

concept of commercial airplanes did not resonate with the locals who had largely seen American fighter planes in their skies. Therefore, many Afghans were perplexed as to why American fighter planes were crashing into their own buildings. Eventually American anti-Taliban propaganda sought another approach by portraying pictures of the Taliban crossed out with bright red ink or images of rockets directed toward a talib. Figure 6 shows an American anti-Taliban leaflet where Afghan men are seen to be buried in underground caves due to American missiles. The images do not distinguish these men as Taliban fighters and to the average Afghan it seemed like the Americans were targeting ordinary Afghan men. Several variations of these leaflets emerged with images of Taliban members however, since the locals had not seen the faces of any of the Taliban members, they could not recognise them, and the leaflets were misinterpreted[47].

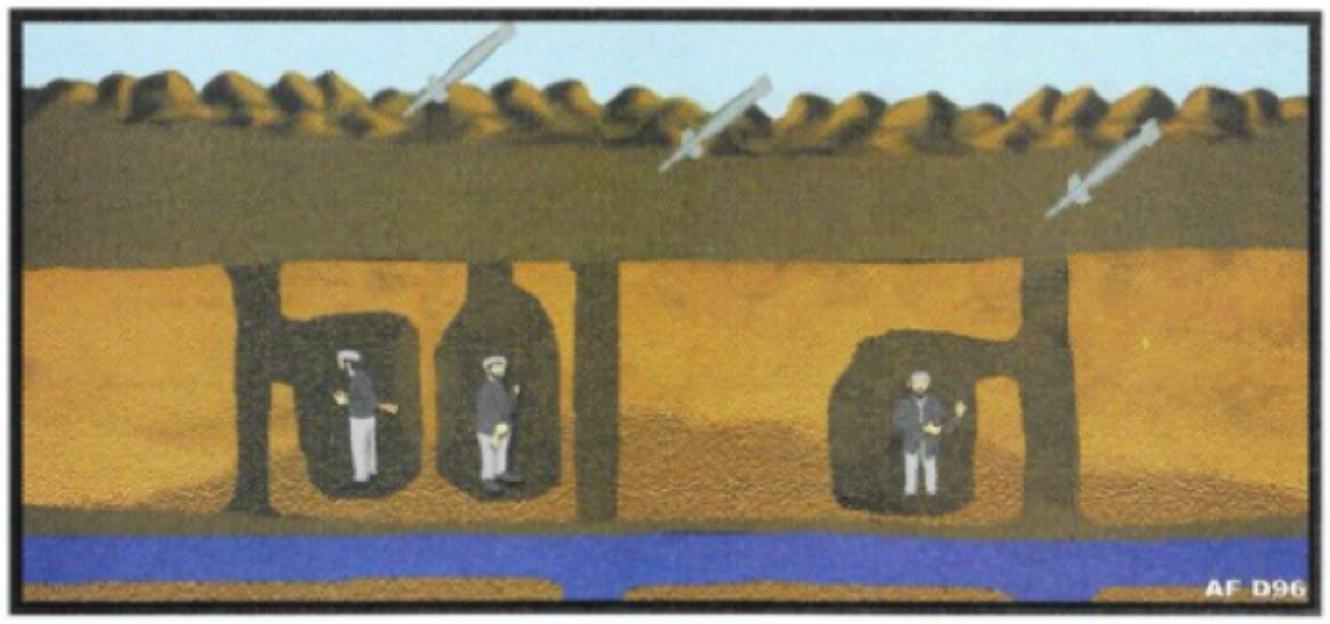

Figure 6: American anti-Taliban leaflet depicting Taliban members trapped in underground caves due to American missiles

However, the opposition's costliest propaganda mistake had been made before the Taliban even came to power. Beginning in the 1980s, the Americans spent millions of dollars to produce anti-Soviet textbooks for Afghan children, which served as useful propaganda against the Soviets during the cold war.[48] The very books examined previously in the paper under "messages of Taliban propaganda" became part of the core curriculum of Afghan schools and encouraged a jihadist outlook against Soviet "infidels."[49] They were produced with the support of the U.S. Agency for International Development by the University of Nebraska at Omaha and smuggled into Afghanistan through networks built by the CIA and ISI, Pakistan's military intelligence agency.[50] The very tools created by the Americans to influence Afghan opinion on the Soviets were later used by the Taliban to shift public opinion against Americans. The Taliban continue to use the millions of copies still circulating in the madrassas they control.

Conclusions

The Taliban have demonstrated remarkable success in projecting themselves as much stronger than they actually are in terms of numbers and resources. The group seem to be learning from its mistakes and is quick to exploit the weaknesses of its opponents. The Taliban are increasingly controlling more land and constructing a parallel administration, while Afghans in conflict-hit areas are evaluating options amid a sense of insurgent momentum.

American and Afghan government forces tend to view information operations as complementing military operations, whereas for the Taliban information objectives tend to drive military operations: most military operations are designed to influence attitudes or perceptions. The American War on Terror has focused on military victories and neglected the fight to win Afghan hearts and minds. The Americans are highly capable of producing effective propaganda as demonstrated by the extensive textbook program of USAID. However, recent efforts have been careless and ineffective. The Taliban, on the other hand, cannot win on the battlefield, but they do not have to. All they must do is wear out their opponents and influencing perceptions at home and abroad are a vital component of this strategy.[51] For the Taliban, the battle for the Islamic emirate of Afghanistan is one worth fighting, and all efforts are directed toward achieving this goal.

The Taliban have proved skilful at fuelling existing grievances and uncertainties in their attempt to turn the Afghan people against the “puppet” government and its international supporters. However, the Afghan government and American forces did not make much of an effort to exploit Taliban weaknesses and winning over the population. The Taliban must be confronted to explain their actions, tactics and intentions as well as their authority and interpretation of Islam. The Afghan government must be truly accountable and act in the best interests of the people. It must work on development of institutions and provide services and security in the rural areas which will garner public support and thus deny any opportunities for insurgents to exploit local frustrations and grievances.

Simply increasing military troop numbers is pointless if there is not a strategic plan in which building local capacity is the priority. US President Donald Trump recently announced that he will be sending more troops to Afghanistan as part of his strategy to “win” the war. Trump stated that “We are not nation-building again. We are killing terrorists.” Such a policy is bound to create further destruction and instability as well as alienate the rural population even more.[52] International forces must also demonstrate accountability to the public for their actions and create more transparency in investigating civilian casualties. If this is not achieved, talks of long-term foreign military presence will only feed into nationalistic resistance and further strengthen Taliban support.

Afghans are a pragmatic people and flexible with their allegiances, therefore their assessment as to the strength of the Taliban is crucial in determining whether they will take a pro-, anti- or neutral stance towards them. The focus must shift from a military victory towards a battle for the hearts and minds of the Afghan people.

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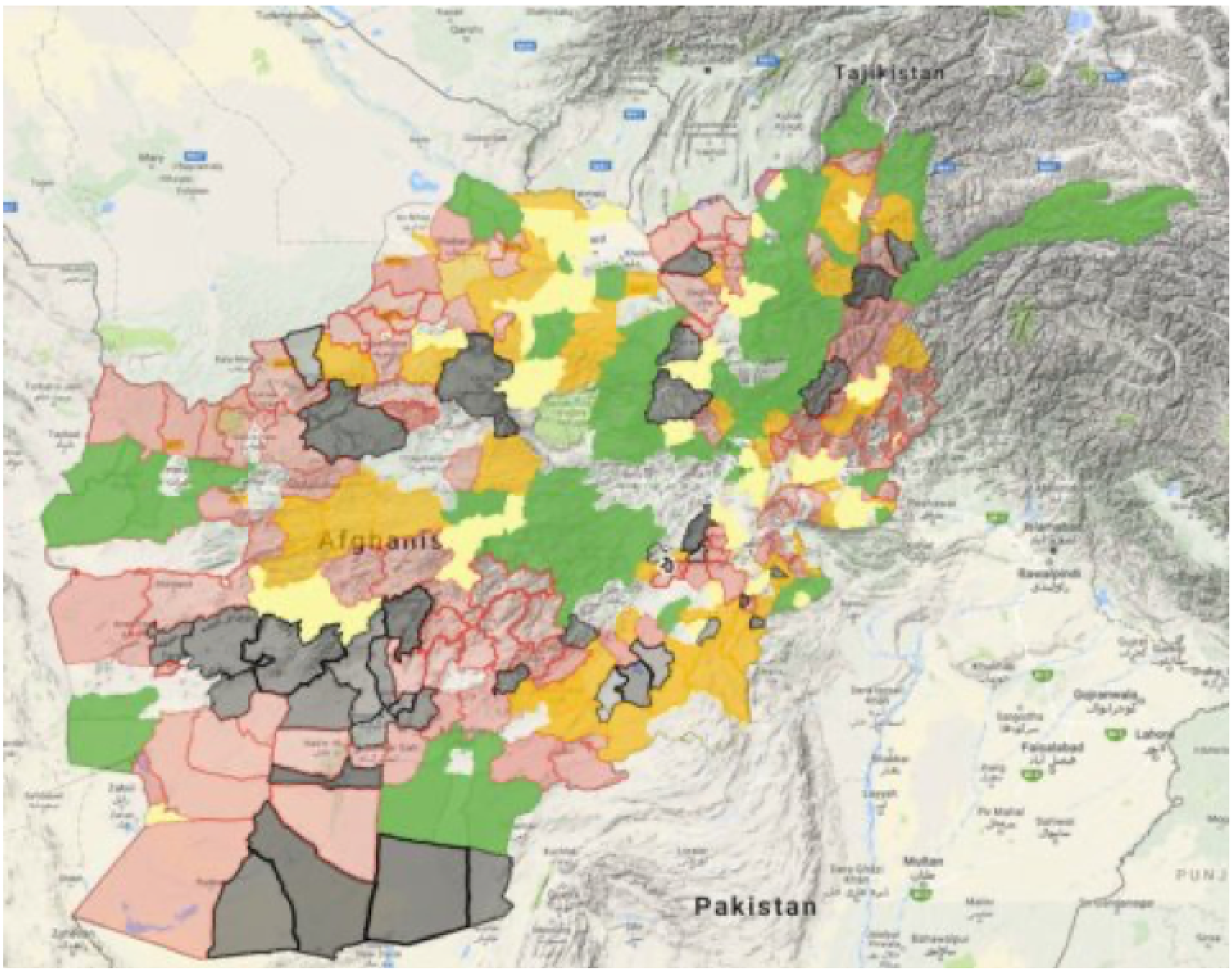
Appendix

A map from a Taliban report which accurately replicates results as those from the Long War Journal depicts the extent of Taliban control in Afghanistan.



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