

Weak state, strong society? Looking beyond the poverty statistics in Afghanistan

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Sources of Paper

- Drawn from ESRC funded research from panel established 2002/03 – revisit 96 hhlds, 11 villages, 4 contrasting provinces 2008/09;
- Enquiry into livelihood trajectories
- Paper focuses on durability & significance of local social order/ context – aspects of the lower levels of the institutional landscape that persists and their variability
- Responds to lack of state building interest in what is there ...rather than what is not
- Paper first draft on material

Conceptual/ empirical underpinnings

- History & geography
 - The long history & durability of regional identities around four regional centres & centres of surplus (Barfield)
 - The contrasts between the societies of the margins and the centre (ibn Khaldun & Scott)
- The regionalisation & equilibrium of limited access orders/ natural states (North et al)
 - Beyond the failure to build a developmental state does not lie chaos
- Reconstruction practice, institutional transplants, ignoring context & the informal
- The puzzle of **not** 'why are things so bad?' **but** 'why are they not worse?'
- All lead to an interest in more local social orders

Figure 1 Four Provinces Compared

Province	Geography & Economy	Major Ethnic Group	Political History & Actors	Opium Economy	Social Inequalities
Badakhshan	Borderland; Marginal Mountain economy	Tajik	Opposition to Taliban & Karzai	Significant	Medium
Kandahar	Borderland Intensively irrigated plain agriculture	Pashtun	Karzai stronghold & opposition to Taliban	Significant	Large
Sar-i-Pul	Marginal Foothill economy	Largely Uzbek	Marginal	Moderate	Small
Faryab	Borderland Foothill & plain economy Downstream	Mixed	Marginal	Slight	Medium

Village Republics

- The village & 'its mud curtain' ...releasing it from its tradition burdened past
- Villages & corporate identities (Wade, Scott, Hayami, Popkin ...to Ben Jones, Uganda)
- Village variabilitycausal v derivative factors (India)
- The National Solidarity Programme (NSP) of Afghanistan

Figure 2 Key features of study villages* and summary of public goods provided

Province / District	Village	Features	Public Good provision
Kandahar			
Dand	Lalakai	-resource rich but gross inequalities land holdings -politically connected	Dependent internal security through patron-client relations
Dand	Julan	-self interested landed elite -resource rich	Limited security limited education
Badakhshan			
Yamgan	Shur Qul	-resources marginal; -long term support for education -well connected	External & internal security; education, health, water supply
Jurm	Toghloq	-relatively resource rich -politically strong -late starter education	External security, internally insecure
Jurm	Khilar	-ethnic minority -resources marginal -poorly connected	Dependent external security, internally secure

Figure 3. Relative strength of key determinants of study villages characteristics and characterisation of the nature of the village republic

Province / Village	Land Inequalities	Ratio Irrigated / Rainfed	Education	Village Public Goods	Characterisation of Village Republic
Kandahar					
Lalakai	+++++	++++	- -	+	Autocratic
Julan	++++	++++	- -	+	Autocratic
Badakhshan					
Shur Qul	+	+	+++	++++	Developmental
Toghloq	+++	++	+	+	Warrior
Khilar	+	+	+	+	Dependent

The significance of village variability

- Evidence for it & its potential determinants
- The significance of external context
- The degree of public good provision & its limits
- The need for patronage relationships with the regional social order
- Do preconditions matter?
 - Given logic of local social orders & incentives that maintain them, unlikely to replace by institutional transplantsmore institutional 'bricolage'
 - Customary structures & public good provision
 - Separation of powers, checks & balances, economic veto players & capacity to raise revenue (Brick)
- Responding to pre-conditions