WHY THE WEST WON'T WIN AFGHANISTAN: GAME THEORY IMPLICATIONS FOR POST-CONFLICT RECONSTRUCTION

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Why the West Won't Win Afghanistan:

Game Theory Implications for Post-Conflict Reconstruction

by

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Abstract

Since 2002, NATO and the Western powers have been waging a war in Afghanistan and attempting to vanquish the roots of terrorism in the troubled nation. The reconstruction efforts began even as war continued to be fought. A considerably pro-western government under President Karzai was installed through electoral processes in 2004. Nevertheless, in 2007 reconstruction efforts seem no farther ahead and successes are minimal. Foreign interveners view Afghanistan as a *tabula rasa* upon which they can defeat the enemy and impose a liberal-democratic political and economic order. But this will not happen. The country continues to struggle against the influence of neighbors, violence and corruption of warlords, the illegal opium trade, as well as ethnic and religious disparities. Above all, Afghanistan remains subject to violent political jockeying. The country continues to grapple with the Taliban insurgency, the threat of attacks from remaining al-Qa'ida, and instability. The game being played in Afghanistan is much more complex than the West ever envisioned. As long as they continue to neglect the numerous nested games, specifically games in multiple arenas, embedded within the situation and focus solely on the game in the principal arena - defeating the Taliban and forming a pro-liberal state in the Middle East - reconstruction will fail. Troops continue to filter into Afghanistan but reconstruction and peace are slipping out of reach.

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Introduction

"The idea that we could just hunt terrorists and we didn't have to do nation-building, and we could just leave it alone, that was a large mistake."
– Ronald E. Neumann, United States Ambassador to Afghanistan[1]

Afghanistan is a very troubled country. It has witnessed decades of war, which have devastated its social, political and economic fabric. Rule by various groups and individuals have proven disastrous and unfavorable to the Afghan people, and foreign intervention is proving unsuccessful. When the Americans entered Afghanistan in an effort to eradicate the threat of terrorism posed by the Taliban and al-Qa'ida after 11 September 2001, they believed they were fighting a "good war," one where the terrorists would be swiftly and authoritatively suppressed, locals would support and assist them, and reconstruction would begin in earnest once the threat was reduced. Unfortunately, the "good war" has gone bad. It has certainly not gone according to plan. The Taliban and al-Qa'ida are not eliminated and reconstruction efforts have proven unsuccessful to date.

Chapter one introduces the concept of post-conflict reconstruction. This is the obvious starting point for such research. After the West completed its initial military campaign against the Taliban and al-Qa'ida, the plan was to reconstruct the country of Afghanistan. Post-conflict reconstruction (PCR) activity is the foundation from which the rest of the research flows. One must first understand PCR before one can understand how it has gone "off course" and why it does not adequately describe the situation that exists within the country at present. Post-conflict reconstruction endeavors entail occupation with the purpose of restoring political infrastructure, facilities, and social

services to a country that has been ravaged by war. There is the desire for social change to occur through reform in political, economic, social, and security sectors. Reform is an incredibly complex process and will be executed differently in each distinct country. Post-conflict reconstruction is an ideal situation for a country rebuilding after war, but its inherent assumption that most countries can be reconstructed is flawed. PCR assumes the presence of a "one-on-one" game where those intervening can accomplish their task, in a manner devised by themselves, through cooperation with a unified domestic actor. However, all situations and countries are not like this; Afghanistan is a prime example.

Chapter one also introduces game theory, a well-known theory of international relations, as a more adequate tool for understanding the scenario in Afghanistan, why the interveners are failing, and how success may be more easily achieved. Game theory fills the void left by PCR. Whereas PCR sees two distinct sides in reconstruction, game theory, specifically nested games theory, allows for multiple actors and multiple arenas which may contribute to or prohibit successful reconstruction. The two concepts may complement each other but game theory is ultimately more useful. There is a game being played in Afghanistan, but it is not solely between the West and a unified Afghan people and government. There are 'nested games' being played in Afghanistan that must be considered. The concept of 'nested games' developed by George Tsebelis puts forth the idea that there may be multiple games being played out simultaneously in multiple arenas that will restrict the successful completion of the game being played out in the principal arena.[2] This is indeed the case in Afghanistan. The West, led by the United States, sees only one game in the principal arena where it works toward establishing pro-Western

liberal democracy within Afghanistan. Nevertheless, this is restricted by the fact that there are nested games ongoing, with actors seeking their own equilibrium that will not allow this achievement – ethnic disharmony, Pakistan-Afghanistan relations, Taliban resurgence, powerful warlord rule, and a surging drug economy. Post-conflict reconstruction does not allow the introduction of these nested games, however, game theory does. Understanding these theories is essential for setting up the Afghanistan game.

The Western coalition has not had the right focus for its reconstruction endeavors. Instead of trying to understand the internal dynamics of this complex country and its society, the interveners have gone in with their own interpretation of what should be done installing liberal-democratic political and economic institutions. The United States and other foreign interveners such as NATO are involved in a competitive game in Afghanistan, one that they want to win. When the strife is over, the West would like to see a friendly democratic government operating in Afghanistan. The West has focused on only one game of defeating the enemy and establishing such a government as its primary reconstruction concern. At the same time, they have ignored the embedded nested games that are being played out in the country that will restrict the successful achievement of the former. In August 2007, Afghan President Hamid Karzai was reported as saying that security in his country had "definitely deteriorated."[3] The West's reconstruction efforts are failing in Afghanistan, and they will continue to do so until these nested games are addressed.

Chapter two contains a brief history of Afghanistan's decades of never-ending war and strife. While the historic overview starts quite far into the past, the more in-depth review begins with the major Soviet involvement in Afghanistan beginning in the 1960s. This history is important in understanding the involvement of many other regional powers in Afghanistan as well as the formation of many groups within the country in opposition to the Soviet Union. This section of background continues until the terrorist attacks of September 2001. The timeline from 9/11 until the present day is given specific attention and detail, as it is vital for understanding the current game in Afghanistan.

The background and context helps one to understand the subject matter of this thesis – Afghanistan. As well, it assists in understanding why the country is in need of reconstruction; the 'conflict' of post-conflict reconstruction. Emphasis is on the rise of the Taliban and post-9/11, for both the Taliban and the United States are the key players in this new game. The history identifies the multiple players i.e. the Taliban, Mujaheddin, warlords, ethnic groups, and the role of foreign powers like Pakistan. It also gives an early understanding of the stakes of the game for each of these players (involved in nested games) before the outside players (U.S., NATO, ISAF, etc.) are introduced in the overarching game. Without this context, the nested games are not as understandable because the motivations of key actors seem irrational or unclear. However, many of these nested games existed before an intervention into Afghanistan began. Knowing the history of the country the West was intervening in would have been helpful; it might have

approached reconstruction differently or realized sooner that its game is not the only one being played.

From 2001 to the present situation in Afghanistan the West has been focused on only one game. This game in the "principal arena" is the subject of chapter three. This chapter introduces the outside observer of the game. This outsider is the West, composed primarily of the United States, as well as NATO/ISAF, other intervening countries, and the United Nations. The West sees Afghanistan as part of an overarching larger game. Chapter three elaborates on this idea and establishes the game framework for the rest of the paper.

What is the U.S. really trying to accomplish in Afghanistan? The West desires to establish liberal democratic political and economic institutions within the Afghan state. This ambition is evident in many U.S. policy documents such as the Security Strategy (The so called "Bush Doctrine") and documents relating specifically to Afghanistan, such as the Bonn Agreement and the Afghanistan Compact. These policies are analyzed as the chapter progresses. What is evident from these documents is that the U.S. is focused on democracy establishment in Afghanistan and ignores ongoing nested games. Democracy promotion with consideration of these nested realities would be more acceptable, and internal actors should play a pivotal role, but this does not appear to have been considered. The West has entered Afghanistan with a single strategy when there should instead be many more; different nested games are each going to involve distinct consideration and action. The Western game strategy is important to this analysis because it serves as a good contrast to the actual reality on the ground. Armed with the

knowledge of the West's game, when one examines the various nested-games it should be clearly evident why this strategy invoked by the U.S. and other interveners is not working.

Chapter four is the final and principal analytical chapter of this work. Here the argument moves to the nested problems plaguing Afghanistan. Understanding the nested games within the country helps explain why there is no success in the game of the West. The Western efforts are going to fail in Afghanistan. Why? Because of the nested games.

Table 1: Principal Arena		**Multiple Arenas**	
Actors	**Strategies**	**Actors**	**Strategies**
- The West (observer): U.S., NATO, UN, ISAF - Government of Afghanistan	- Defeat the Taliban/al-Qa'ida - Install pro-liberal, Western democracy - Ensure security	- Government of Afghanistan - Taliban/al-Qa'ida - Pakistan - Warlords - Opium Industry - Ethnic groups/tribes	- Gain/Maintain Power - Economic well-being - Regional power - 'Pashtunistan' border issue - Retain livelihoods - Ethnic dominance

While there are a multitude of nested games being played out simultaneously in Afghanistan, there are five major situations that are impeding the successful reconstruction of the country and which the West should be more diligently addressing. The first is the resurgence of the Taliban. The United States' reason for entering Afghanistan and waging war in the first place was to rid the world of the terrorists who so atrociously attacked their country. They were initially fairly successful in this endeavor but the Taliban are an embedded force within Afghanistan and it cannot be expected that they will be eliminated entirely from Afghan society solely by dropping bombs. The Taliban culture permeates the country and there are new Taliban consistently being

recruited. Reconstruction is not effective if such a violent threat continues to exist. Secondly, the relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan is not really understood by the West. Tension between these two states has existed for centuries and continues today for many of the same reasons and many new ones as well. There is an even greater threat as many neo-Taliban seem to be originating and training in Pakistan. Pakistan is an ambiguous ally for the West; it may need to deal more heavy-handedly with that country if violence in Afghanistan is to stop. Thirdly, warlords have too much control in the state. However, the West initially used them as allies in fighting the Taliban. They cannot be easily removed from the picture, but their power is undermining that of the central government which is gradually weakening. A more effective strategy needs to be formulated to deal with the warlords, who while helpful in some situations are also violent and key players in the narcotics economy; this is the fourth nested game. The great majority of revenue in Afghanistan is generated from an illegal economy the growth, production, and trade of opium. Many poor peasants, as well as conflict entrepreneurs garner a livelihood from such practices. The West has tried to address this situation through punishment and possibly eradication, but this hurts the smaller farmers and not just the warlords on top. A new economic strategy must be devised to handle this problem, but all the players in it must be considered. As long as the narcotics economy thrives there will be increased violence and a volatile economy. Afghanistan should depend on legal products, but it sees no other alternative at the moment. Reconstruction should address these issues. The final nested game relates to the history of Afghanistan and the conflict between its ethnic groups. Afghanistan does not have a homogenous

population; there are many different ethnicities and clans represented. For centuries, there has been tension and strife between the dominant Pashtun peoples and the other groups. This new chapter of war and violence in Afghanistan has not helped the tense ethnic situation. There has been anger over dominance of one group over another in the new government and these sentiments tend to permeate into society at large. Ethnicity is another issue that is hindering the West's game and one to which they need to pay particular attention. Failing to address all of these nested games will prolong conflict, but it is also going to end any hope of successful resolution to the primary arena game. In fact, this game should not be the goal to making Afghanistan a self-sustaining and more peaceful country. Trying to solve the nested games is more likely to achieve this goal and in the process will likely bring about an Afghan democracy.

Terrorism has become a very real threat in recent times and the war on terrorism in combination with the war in Iraq, is certainly going to occupy many countries in the Middle East, Southern Asia and beyond for the next decade. The situation in Afghanistan cannot be ignored, it now involves too many countries, and more and more troops continue to be sent there. Most people are concerned with the fighting alone in Afghanistan; soldiers are dying. There are generally two opinions, either stay the course and eliminate those who are doing so much harm or leave so that no more harm can be done. Little attention is paid to the reconstruction part of the war; in reality, however, a lot of attention should be given to it. The reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan have been getting progressively worse since the war began and are at risk of failing entirely. Preoccupation with the game of establishing pro-Western liberal democracy on the part

of the West, while ignoring nested games that are ongoing and prohibiting adequate reconstruction, is only going to lead to overall failure for the reconstruction efforts.

The final section of the paper discusses the role of Canada in Afghanistan. This addition is primarily for comparative purposes, but also to acknowledge other interveners. The decision for Canada to join in on the war was not made lightly and it was not favored by many Canadians, who viewed the war as "American" and part of their war on terror after 9/11. However, as a member and supporter of the UN, Canada responded to a UN Security Council (UNSC) resolution authorizing an international security assistance force, which called upon member states to contribute personnel, equipment, and resources. As a member of the UN but hesitant to outright support war, Canada appears to have paid more attention to reconstruction in a holistic way, rather than just the principal arena game. The Canadian teams in Afghanistan have been spending time working with the Afghan National Army, patrolling one of the most dangerous provinces in the country, making efforts in counter-narcotics, and so forth. Canada stands in contrast to many of the more Western centered efforts and is therefore a useful example of what reconstruction might become, but there is still more than needs to be done to take on the difficult task of nested games than just trying to fit Afghanistan into a preconceived mould. Indeed, Canada did enter Afghanistan in 2001 in support of the U.S. and ISAF in its endeavors to fight terrorism and work towards democracy, not with an initial goal to reconstruct a country. These are goals that ultimately derive from the Bush Doctrine.

The events in Afghanistan should not just be viewed with concern because of the "war," the deaths of soldiers and civilians, and the terrorist threat. An Afghanistan not properly reconstructed poses a threat to the stability of the entire region which may spark further conflict in the future. A holistic reconstruction approach will help in preventing the terrorist threat from having an even greater resurgence. Most importantly, not ensuring reconstruction is executed efficiently and successfully will only prolong the conflict for more years to come. Already the war has gone on far longer than many believed it would and it shows no sign of abatement. Reconstruction must occur or else the West will fail and Afghanistan will slide further into chaos. Nested game theory makes it evident why the West will not succeed in its game and why the post-conflict reconstruction literature is not a useful analytical tool for understanding the situation in Afghanistan and the failure of the West.

Chapter One - Understanding and Interpreting Post-Conflict Reconstruction

The goals of the U.S. led mission into Afghanistan were threefold: to defeat al-Qa'ida and Taliban forces through military operations, to begin a political process that would create a democratic government in the country, and to provide long-term aid for humanitarian relief and reconstruction.[4] While the military strategy embarked upon in Afghanistan scattered much of the al-Qa'ida network, it has not, however, produced the capture or confirmed the death of top al-Qa'ida leader Osama bin Laden. Since 2001 there have been many human casualties and atrocities committed by al-Qa'ida and the Taliban, nevertheless, the efforts of NATO and its partners within the country do not appear to be improving the Afghan situation sufficiently. The establishment of a nationwide Loya Jirga ('grand council') in 2002 and the subsequent election of Hamid Karzai as President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in 2004 signaled what should have been a new beginning for the war-torn country. It is becoming evident, however, that the government's exclusion of some groups and parties is resulting in failure.[5] Without reconciliation, the country remains a multi-party/multi-group state at odds with one another. Reconstruction efforts in other areas are likewise failing. Everyone would like to see post-conflict reconstruction (PCR) succeed and have a country ravaged by years of war and internal strife turn itself around and become an independent, properly functioning, democratic state. However, this is unlikely to happen. Post-conflict reconstruction, based on a normative construct, is reflective of an ideal situation. But not all countries are the same and will not be reconstructed similarly. Post-conflict reconstruction in its current form assumes a 'one-on-one game'; a game where there are

two sides: one to be reconstructed (willingly) and the other who does the reconstruction. This is naïve, especially in the case of Afghanistan where there are many players in the game.

1.1 The Nature of Post-Conflict Reconstruction

According to Derick Brinkerhoff, failing and failed states such as Afghanistan are characterized by three main features: a breakdown in law and order where the state loses its monopoly on the legitimate use of force; a weakened capacity to respond to citizens' needs; and a lack of a credible entity that represents the state beyond its borders. In such cases, reconstruction efforts may be undertaken to create a more legitimate and stable state, in the eyes of its own people and the international community.[6]

Though minimal reconstruction efforts are currently being undertaken in Afghanistan, this poses a problem in and of itself. Reconstruction efforts are generally considered to be "post-conflict." Once the state is relatively stable it is considered to be more conducive to reconstruction endeavors. But conflict is still a very prominent part of the Afghan reality. Rebuilding in Afghanistan has not been undertaken on the basis of a serious need to rebuild, or as part of a well planned process following a peace agreement within the country. Instead, reconstruction has been initiated as part of a "knee-jerk reaction" by external actors following 9/11.[7]

"Post-conflict rarely means that violence and strife have ended at a given moment in all corners of a country's territory. In practice, most post-conflict reconstruction efforts take place in situations where conflict has subsided to a greater or lesser degree, but is ongoing or recurring in some parts of the country."[8] Reconstruction requires

intervention with the goal of rebuilding political infrastructure, facilities, and minimal social services. As well, social change will occur when the political, economic, and social sectors are reformed. Reconstruction efforts are immensely complex; interventions strive to have "a rehabilitative dimension oriented to the past, a resolutive dimension oriented to the present, and a preventive dimension oriented to both present and future."[9] Quite obviously, post-conflict situations are not easily defined.

There are various ways of looking at post-conflict reconstruction. With respect to timing and development, Sultan Barakat explains that there are two schools of thought. The first is that peace is a precondition for reconstruction. The second believes that through the initiation of reconstruction at a point in the conflict, long-term recovery will result. Global experience has proven the second occurs more often, provided that rebuilding itself is approached as a national project.[10] It is vital that all national actors are considered and included in post-conflict reconstruction efforts.

In today's world, PCR is generally considered to consist of four distinct yet connected categories of tasks known as the "pillars" of PCR.[11] The first is security. This involves all safety initiatives that create a safe and secure environment while developing effective security institutions. The second is justice and reconciliation which addresses the need to heal the wounds of past abuses as well as address issues arising from war. Creating an impartial and accountable legal system is imperative to this pillar. The third pillar relates to social and economic well-being. This category is concerned with "restoring essential services, providing emergency relief, and laying the foundation for a viable economy." The final aspect consists of governance and participation. This pillar

deals with the need to create legitimate and effective political institutions and participatory processes. For any post-conflict reconstruction effort to succeed, it is believed that work in these four areas must be carefully integrated. As well, if the resources are lacking for any one of them, all the others may prove to have been pursued in vain. However, different groups, organizations and individuals vary on what they view as the priorities of post-conflict reconstruction efforts.

The implementation of governance reforms is vital to the post-conflict reconstruction process. But governance is a broad term. Governance reforms target three main areas which keep in line with the pillars of reconstruction: reconstituting legitimacy, re-establishing security and rebuilding effectiveness. Legitimacy refers to acceptance of a governing regime as appropriate or right. Without a degree of legitimacy, states function ineffectively. The reconstitution of legitimacy in post-conflict countries includes expanding participation throughout society, creating accountable government, reducing inequalities in society, fighting corruption, and holding elections.[12] Democracy is generally considered to be the most legitimate form of government worldwide. However, in many countries the road to democracy has been tumultuous and often disastrous. It is debatable whether reconstruction endeavors should aim to install democratic institutions or whether an individual country should be able to develop its own form of governance as long as it has the support of society.

Re-establishing security entails disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. Only when security has been established in the state can other reconstruction activities progress. An insecure environment is not conducive to effective governance creation. It

is a barrier to fostering legitimacy (especially in the eyes of the international community), impedes the restoration of basic services, and oftentimes conflict is ongoing making the task of reconstruction virtually impossible.

Finally, rebuilding effectiveness includes basic service provision coupled with effective economic governance, both of which require a properly functioning private sector and civil society as well as government.[13] Ensuring these three components is believed to be central to any reconstruction effort. However, this cannot just be an international undertaking or a solely national effort; both parties are needed for reconstruction to succeed. Likewise, internally, both national and subnational actors have an important role to play in post-conflict reconstruction. Little can be achieved without local involvement in the reconstruction process. It is important that both the foreign and national governments work together.[14]

Post-conflict reconstruction demands reconstruction of the central government of a country in trouble, and it tends to be assumed that foreign governments will generate such an outcome. However, national actors have a far greater understanding of the country in question than other intervening powers there to fight terrorism and for humanitarian reasons. Nevertheless, a state that is in a post-conflict situation will need assistance to start reconstruction. A balance must be struck between international and national actor presence. Within the country itself there is also a fine balance to be established for central governments may not represent all of the interests within a country. In many post-conflict states there are two governing entities. There is a *de jure* state that exists by fiat of the international community which recognizes them as

sovereign entities, regardless of whether or not they have a government which can effectively control and administer the territory. There is often also a *de facto* state that actually administers the territory in many respects.[15] As will be discussed, this is the case in the country of Afghanistan. The *de jure* state under President Karzai, has very weak institutions and lacks military and administrative control in many parts of the country. The *de facto* states are operated by regional warlords and local commanders who wield considerable power. These subnational groups have significant control militarily and economically. There is weakness on the part of the *de jure* state at this level.[16]

Post-conflict reconstruction is an incredibly complex process with no ensured outcome. Every post-conflict society varies in many ways and no one post-conflict structure fits every war-ravaged country. There is no universally accepted theory as to how post-conflict reconstruction should be executed, although the four pillars are widely considered to be vital components to any endeavor. Emphasis is often put on one pillar over another but they are all recognized as important. Nevertheless, there is great significance placed on the involvement and role of not just foreign actors in the reconstruction process, but national actors as well. Without the involvement of all parties with vested interests in the country, post-conflict reconstruction efforts will not succeed. Reconstruction is a fragile process ridden with multiple dilemmas that must be addressed.

First, long term political commitment from foreign actors should not assume that there is a national agreement on a vision for the country. Internal actors do not always share the idyllic notion that their country can be reformed by Western ideals and they

often have their own agendas. In many countries, like Afghanistan, there are so many different groups that are or should be involved, that reaching consensus is very difficult.

Second, at the current time there is no neutral space for debate to enable a vision for Afghanistan to emerge. Institutions must be developed at the national, regional and local levels, as a means for exchange and cooperation among these institutions and between them and international actors. The creation of political space is pivotal for the emergence of a representative and cohesive system. Political space requires both a physical area and a social environment where the various groups can meet together, negotiate, and plan for the future, away from the chaos of war.[17]

Third, it is dangerous to assume the current level of political support and commitment to the rebuilding of Afghanistan will continue indefinitely. While many were optimistic when the foreign intervention began, this optimism is waning. There has been some trouble receiving pledges of aid that have already been guaranteed, and there has been no sign of a cessation in armed conflict as more troops enter the country.

Fourth, there is a risk of external perception of war-torn societies that they are a blank sheet on which no remnant of former order exists and onto which actors can impose their externally devised solutions. This is occurring in Afghanistan as external powers seek to impose a liberal-democratic system on a country that is not receptive to it based on its internal realities.

Fifth, the way in which economic reconstruction is being approached is not working. Economic endeavors cannot focus solely on physical reconstruction; there must be a more encompassing approach undertaken. Support for livelihoods, small

communities, demobilized soldiers, women, people with disabilities, heritage, and structures of governance cannot be disregarded.

Sixth, the embedding of neo-liberal economics may not be in the long-term interests of the country. There is a fear that exploitation of natural resources by MNCs, healthcare and education with limited welfare provisions, and so on may lead to entrenched poverty.

Finally, reconstruction must benefit the urban and rural populations. The population of Afghanistan is seventy-five percent rural, and yet the focus of reconstruction is on urban centres, such as Kabul. This practice needs to be altered. However, it will be a difficult task since the government does not control the countryside.[18]

Post-conflict reconstruction is a normative framework for reconstruction. It is not a distinct and testable theory. Instead of being firm and specific, PCR explains what one can take from lessons of the past in reconstructing a country in the present. Rather than explicitly stating the conditions under which reconstruction will achieve success or failure, PCR is more a menu of options and ideas; recommendations for how reconstruction should be carried out. The literature relating to PCR is inherently limited, with unclear variables and little information about actor's strategies. These shortfalls make the PCR literature merely a set of guidelines and not a theory capable of predicting the success or failure of a PCR effort itself.

1.2 Game Theory and its Implications for Post-Conflict Reconstruction

Game theory is useful for theorizing the challenges of post-conflict reconstruction. Game theory is a theory of independent decisions – where the decisions of two or more individuals combined determine the outcome of a situation. The "individuals" can be persons or collective entities that make consistent choices. Individual's choices are often shaped by their social settings, which social scientists call "structure." Game theory can provide a method of formalizing structures and examining the effects of structure on individual decisions.[19] In the context of this research, one might ask, how does the structure in Afghanistan influence the success of foreign interveners' attempts to impose liberal-democratic political and economic institutions on the country? Game theory is complementary to and in fact enhances the post-conflict reconstruction literature, by specifying clearer conditions for success.

In any post-conflict reconstruction situation there is generally an outsider, intervening power that enters a country with a mission to reconstruct it. This may involve continued military involvement, development assistance, security measures, governance building, and so forth. In many cases the post-conflict country has been considered a threat of some sort to the intervening power. Afghanistan, for example, was seen as a source of terrorism and hence as a security threat. Where two entities come together under an atmosphere of hostility, there is the potential for conflict. Game theory is useful for examining these situations because it deals with relationships (games) between sides (players), the importance of the choices they make, and how these decisions affect the other players. Game theory is particularly relevant for examining

how players may change a situation of conflict to one of cooperation and it addresses the issue of multiple players, which is what needs to be accomplished and considered for post-conflict reconstruction to be successful. The post-conflict reconstruction literature proposes broad pillars to act as guidelines for reconstruction efforts but fails to specify the necessities for success.

Actors choose their actions within political situations. "Game theory forces us to confront the endogenity of behavior."[20] It naturally leads one to consider choices that are off the equilibrium path. Game theory provides a manner in which to understand the complexity of strategic interaction and helps to think about social structure. When one sees a situation as a game, they have specified the choices of the players and their consequences. That specification is a representation of social structure.[21] The concept of nested games, introduced below, further elaborates on the complexity of games with multiple players. A game often implies competition. Thinking of the situation as a game may help the actors to make strategically wiser decisions within the game.

For example, the West particularly needs to be aware of the game they are playing, who the players are, and what choices these players have if the West is to come out of Afghanistan with a success rather than the failure that looms ahead. "The ultimate goal is the achievement of a self-sustaining liberal democratic, economic and social order that does not rely on external monetary or military support."[22] Their job generally begins with rebuilding the government and political order, shifting the ideology and operations of the political structure, and drastically changing the pre-war political structure.[23]

However, efforts to impose liberal democracy in weak and failed states via occupation and reconstruction have largely failed.

1.3 The Intricacies of Game Theory: Nested Games

The concept of nested games has been researched quite extensively by George Tsebelis and is a very appropriate theoretic tool for understanding the challenges of post-conflict reconstruction and why reconstruction efforts in countries like Afghanistan teeter on the brink of failure. Game Theory in its basic form does not leave room for the possibility of sub-optimal action. Cases of apparently sub-optimal choice are cases of disagreement between actor and observer. Nested games take into consideration apparently sub-optimal choices by players and the reasons for them.

Nested games focus on games between observers and multiple actors. If, with adequate information, an actor's decision appears to be sub-optimal, it is because the observer's perspective is incomplete. What seems sub-optimal with relation to one game may in fact be optimal when the whole network of games is considered. There are two reasons for disagreement between the actor and observer: they are involved in games in multiple arenas or a game of institutional design.[24] Games in multiple arenas are the focus of this research.

In games in multiple arenas, the observer focuses on only one overarching game in the "principal arena", but the other actors are involved in a whole network of nested games.[25] The observer disagrees with choices made by the actor because the former sees the implications of the latter choices only for the principal arena. However, when the implications in other areas are considered, the actor's choice may be seen as a rational

strategy.[26] The observer does not take into consideration contextual factors; whereas the actor perceives that the game is nested inside a bigger game that defines how contextual factors influence his payoffs and those of other players.[27] Games in multiple arenas are games with variable payoffs; the game is played in the principal arena, and the variations of payoffs here are determined by events in the other arenas.[28] An optimal alternative in one arena (or game) will not necessarily be optimal with respect to the whole network of arenas in which the actor is involved. Contextual or institutional factors often have overriding importance.[29] An actor's actions and decisions may sometimes seem suboptimal, but it is often the case that the observer has an incomplete perspective. Most of the time these complex, "back and forth" multiple games are a complete and accurate representation of reality on the ground.

The usefulness of games in multiple arenas is in studying situations in which political context is important and the situation is so complicated that reference to exogenous factors is required. This is the case in post-conflict reconstruction. In Afghanistan, multiple groups within the country are the actors, while the West is the observer. Logically, under these conditions, nested game theory predicts that the West will fail to understand the strategies of the other players. As such, it will be difficult to move the game to an optimal situation. Failure to integrate the challenges of these nested games into post-conflict reconstruction will ultimately lead to failure.

Indeed, many countries have internal structures that do not allow for successful reconstruction. Tyler Cowen and Christopher Coyne cite Bosnia and Somalia as recent examples. Bosnia has a multi-layered structure consisting of numerous entities with

conflicting interests. The complicated structure of the Bosnian government, coupled with external influences, makes cooperation difficult to achieve, as conflict permeates all levels.[30] Somalia is another very useful example when trying to understand Afghanistan. Somali society consists of various clans and subgroups which are vitally important in understanding the evolution of the social, economic and political landscape. Somalia has no experience with centralized liberal democratic government – no such a game has ever evolved internally. There are multiple smaller games between clans, warlords, clergy, NGOs, etc. However, government under the particularly repressive Muhammad Sid Barre still functioned throughout Somalia and enabled most of the population to survive. The regime was effectively able to settle Somalia's principal arena game through force, coercion and repression.[31] During the time of foreign involvement by the UN in Somalia, the country collapsed into a state of chaos. With the UN's exit, widespread order was achieved with only pockets of conflict throughout the country. There are strong arguments that attempts by foreign governments to revitalize a central state since 1991, have only served to increase the level of armed conflict. There have been thirteen failed foreign-led attempts at national reconciliation in Somalia since 1991.[32]

In reality, each weak and failed state will be characterized by a unique set of nested games that preclude a "one-size-fits-all" policy by the international community. The specific nature of these smaller games will vary from place to place. Some may limit the ability to establish central liberal-democratic political institutions, while others may be conducive and supportive of this.[33] In the case of Afghanistan, the nested games are

limiting this achievement and are also proving that liberal-democratic norms are probably not the right answer for Afghanistan.

1.4 The Afghanistan War: Setting-Up the Game

As has been concluded above, the game being played out in Afghanistan is one in multiple arenas; no optimal solution has been reached in this game because this reality has gone unaddressed. The West has failed to recognize that the principal arena of action is not the only one in which the government of Afghanistan is involved. The West views the actions of Afghanistan as sub-optimal, but this is because their perspective as observer is incomplete.

The West has entered the country as foreigners, unaware of many of the internal realities of the state. It sees itself as dealing with only one actor – the government of Afghanistan. However, the list of actors is greater than this. In dealing with the government, it is also dealing with Pakistan, warlords, al-Qa'ida and the Taliban, multiple players within the drug industry, and numerous ethnic groups and tribes. Each actor in turn, is involved in a separate arena. The arenas are as follows:

- Principal arena – war; West vs. Afghanistan (terrorists and government)
- Al-Qa'ida and the Taliban vs. Government of Afghanistan (and the West)
- Pakistan vs. Government of Afghanistan
- Warlords vs. Government of Afghanistan
- Drug Industry vs. Government of Afghanistan
- Ethnic Groups vs. Government of Afghanistan

There are not one but six different arenas in which the government of Afghanistan is involved. Likewise, there are just as many different strategies of the actors associated with each of the arenas.

The Western strategy in Afghanistan is threefold: to ensure their security, to defeat the terrorists, and to install Western oriented democracy in the country. The Government of Afghanistan wishes to comply with the West and ensure security of the country and region, as well as defeat terrorism. However, this is unachievable as the West would desire because the government is dealing with other actors. Afghanistan would also like to be able to rule from the centre, but other power players have created a decentralized form of government. Al-Qa'ida and the Taliban would like to see themselves in power and bring about the defeat of their enemy, the West. Likewise, the warlords within the country wish to retain their autonomy and power, and continue to provide for Afghans as they always have. Pakistan is an ally of the West but simultaneously an enemy, as it seeks more power within the region and resolution to issues over the border. Members of the drug industry are fighting to retain their livelihood while the West seeks to destroy it. Ethnic groups and tribes continue to spar over age-old differences between each other and primary ethnic rule of the country. All of these issues face the Government of Afghanistan and are the multiple arenas with which it must deal. Mutually optimal strategies do not currently exist between the actors in the game and are unlikely to as long as the West is only focused on the game within the primary arena.

If the West desires to successfully initiate post-conflict reconstruction with Afghanistan, they too need to be involved in all six arenas. Or else, it needs to be realized that there will be no optimal solution to the game in the principal arena of which they are so concerned. Equilibrium is unlikely to be reached.

Conclusion

There is a game being played out in Afghanistan. Reconstruction efforts in the country have focused on resolving the principal arena game of creating self-sustaining liberal democratic institutions while neglecting the nested games embedded within the principal arena. This is the void left by the PCR structure. All situations are not cut and dry. Game Theory fills this void and helps better explain the success and/or failure of reconstruction efforts; it allows for games with multiple players and intertwining games. The actors in this game consist of the Western intervening powers and multiple groups within Afghanistan. The West appears to see itself as involved with only one other group – the Government of Afghanistan. With these two sides in mind they have attempted to resolve the game only within the principal arena. But the game is more complicated than that as there are nested games to consider. The West is playing not just against the Afghan government as a solitary entity, but a wide variety of other players – warlords, the illegal opium economy, ethnic disparity, and meddling neighbors. All of which have to be taken into consideration in order to bring resolution to the game.

Many reconstruction efforts focus on "lessons learned" for establishing future efforts. Such actions assume that foreign powers can achieve the desired result of sustaining liberal orders. However, it is unclear whether or not occupiers can generate peace and self-sustaining cooperation around liberal-democratic ends. Reconstruction suffers from a "nirvana fallacy."[34] Liberal democracy is widely held to be the governance system with the strongest form of legitimacy around the world. Nevertheless, in many countries the road to democratization has proven disastrous. In these cases,

traditional, internal and informal sources of authority and power compete for legitimacy, often creating an alternate "state" within a state. An example of this would be regional warlords within Afghanistan. Past state reconstruction endeavors have shown that external intervention to create liberal democratic societies out of the ashes of intra-state differences and divisions is extremely difficult. Some question whether governance in this form can emerge from the international designs of outsiders, regardless of how well meaning they may be. It is questionable whether "a standardized model of post-conflict democratic transition can be grafted onto societies with histories and traditions that may be inhospitable to such transfers."[35]

Chapter Two - The Roots of Conflict in Afghanistan

Any analysis of the Afghan conflict requires an understanding of the complex history of state formation and societal-state relations. The background helps one to understand why the country of Afghanistan is in need of reconstruction; the 'conflict' of post-conflict. It also provides the contextual factors for understanding the games currently being played. This historical review is not intended to give a particular perspective on the situation in Afghanistan; it is solely the facts needed for a basic understanding of the current situation.

Afghanistan is a mosaic of ethnic groups and a crossroads between the East and West; partially on account of this it has been invaded and conquered numerous times by Alexander the Great, the Muslim Arabs, Turkic and Mongol nomads, the British Empire, the Soviet Union, and the United States of America. These conquests have also served to create and transform the ethnic consciousness of a state which already had ethnic divisions of its own. Foreign invasions altered the indigenous population both by inflicting heavy native casualties and infusing new blood into the region. By the time of Soviet involvement in the late 1970s, there were significant populations of Tajiks, Uzbeks, Hazara, Aimaq, and Farsiwan in Afghanistan, as well as many other small groups. Since the nineteenth century there has been a great struggle for power between various clans, with no central authority exerting control. The Pashtun were the most dominant group, however. The word Afghan was originally nothing more than a variation of the word Pashtun. Therefore, Afghanistan meant "land of the Pashtun."[36] These primarily Sunni peoples have provided virtually all of Afghanistan's rulers since

the mid-1800s. In this nineteenth century period of anarchy there would develop an increased ethnic consciousness – although not a sense of nationalism – that would lay the foundation for the ethnic relationships in Afghanistan today.[37] The conflict that began in these early years has continued into the present with some new players but most remain the same. The history of conflict in Afghanistan helps to set up the game that is being played today – the players, their strategies, their payoffs, and their likeliness of success.

2.1 The Soviet Impact on Afghanistan

Anglo-Russian competition in Central Asia ultimately led to the creation of the modern Afghan state, created its ethnically divisive border, and contributed significantly to the series of wars within Afghanistan. The deadly combination of foreign invasion coupled with internal anarchy created a "state structure without a concomitant development of an Afghan nation."[38] When this phase of war ended, Afghanistan was free to conduct its own affairs without foreign involvement and ultimately became an independent state in 1919. This momentous occasion would not bring peace however. To the North, the Soviet Union was consolidating its own influence over the region.

The expansion of Soviet involvement into Afghanistan began under the rule of Mohammed Daoud (1953-1963), first cousin to King Zahir Shah. As Prime Minister, Daoud courted the Soviets in part because of his troubles with Pakistan and relative neglect by the United States.[39] Afghanistan was at odds with Pakistan over the Durand Line - the poorly demarcated border between the two countries. The border had been created by Britain and Russia many years before. It was a source of great hostility between Afghanistan and Pakistan for in Afghan opinion it divided its Pashtun people.

This disputed region, known as "Pashtunistan," was felt by Afghans to belong to them and it has been a continuous source of conflict between the two states.[40] In 1963, Daoud was forced to resign by the king due to his inflexibility with the Pashtunistan issue and subsequent lack of peace between the two countries.

The years between 1963 and 1973 saw an experiment with democracy in Afghanistan under the rule of Zahir Shah. He made numerous changes in the pursuit of the controlled democratization of politics, liberalization of social and economic life and rationalization of foreign relations, all under a constitutional monarchy.[41] While many positive changes were made, there were still many problems within the country. There continued to be a potent "Daoudist" network alive in the country. Daoud who had been forced to resign began to plan a return to power. Simultaneously, many informal groups were formed in opposition to the king's regime; *Parcham*, which was Kabul based, and *Khalq*, which was rural based, were the most vocal.[42] The "New Democracy" was thus greatly undermined.[43]

Parcham and *Khalq* joined forces in 1965 to form the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), modeled on the Russian Social Democratic Party but operating under a nationalist guise.[44] Its aim was the monarchy's eventual downfall, although it split on account of internal antagonisms in 1967. In 1971, with the fear that democracy would take over and there would be little room left for the Communists, the Soviets instigated an alliance between Daoud and *Parcham*. In 1973 Daoud returned to power in a coup, proclaiming Afghanistan a republic and himself as President, Prime Minister,

Minister of Defense, and Foreign Affairs. He initiated a foreign policy that the Soviet Union could feel comfortable with.[45]

Daoud had his own vision of a nationalist, modern, secular, and neutral Afghanistan. In pursuing this, he failed to make his program for the country acceptable to the traditional and Islamic element of Afghan society. Daoud also began to court both Egypt and Iran, a move that made the Soviet Union uneasy. He soon began an extensive purge of Parchamis and Khalqis who threatened his leadership and they soon came out in defiance against him.[46] The purge of Communists by Daoud threatened the Soviet Union and they reunited the PDPA against him. In 1978 a coup by the PDPA installed a pro-Soviet PDPA Marxist/Leninist government in Afghanistan.[47] Violence emerged as the determining factor in state-society relations.

2.2 Civil War – From Soviet Occupation to the Taliban's Rise

The current cycle of violence in Afghanistan can be traced back to the pro-soviet military coup of 1978 that plunged the country into what has become nearly thirty years of ongoing war. In 1979, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan. International opinion at the time of the coup was quick to respond and overwhelmingly negative, especially from the United States, but little was done to remedy the situation. However, a national rebellion erupted against the oppressive Soviet regime. When atrocities against Afghan civilians began and civil war ultimately broke out, the Soviet-fearing U.S. began to aid Pakistan and provide assistance and logistic support to Afghan Islamic resistance forces, known as the Mujaheddin. The period of Soviet occupation from late 1979-1989 was

marked by fierce resistance from the Mujaheddin, backed by the U.S. and the Pakistan Intelligence Service (ISI).[48]

When Mikhail Gorbachev became Soviet leader in 1985, the Afghan situation ceased being a Soviet priority. With Gorbachev's reforms of the USSR came a desire to end the conflict in Afghanistan and he initiated a series of peace talks in Geneva.[49] The final set of talks in March 1988 ended in an agreement and called for a nine-month phased Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan. This was completed on 15 February 1989. When the Soviet Union finally broke apart in 1991, the end of Communism in Kabul was at hand.

After the fall and withdrawal of the Soviets, rival Mujaheddin groups and militias could not settle on an acceptable power sharing arrangement, and fighting flared-up between groups who allied with each other in shifting arrangements. In 1992, the Peshawar Accord between many of these groups signaled the end of the pro-Soviet regime.[50] The accord provided for the establishment of an interim government in Afghanistan and the Mujaheddin took over Kabul and declared Afghanistan an Islamic state. Therefore, war did not end after the Soviet withdrawal but was transformed into a national civil war. Many became skeptical of the possibility that Afghanistan would ever have a peaceful transition to a legitimate national government.

The civil war was fought primarily between three Mujaheddin groups led by three powerful leaders of different ethnicities, all warlords and all wanting to rule the country. The leaders of these three groups were: Abdul Rashid Dostum, an Uzbek and Chief of Staff and Commander in Chief of the Afghan armed forces; Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, an

Afghan Pashtun warlord and former Prime Minister who was nurtured by the Pakistani ISI to head the post-Communist government; and Ahmed Shah Massoud, an equally powerful Tajik who worked alongside the King Burhanuddin Rabbani.[51] Massoud and Hekmatyar's groups in particular, were locked in a bloody power struggle instigated by Hekmatyar's excessive power ambitions, his rivalries with other leaders, and ethno-linguistic and ideological differences. *Jamiat-e Islami* was led by Massoud and was a regional and tribal cross-section. *Hezb-e Islami* was led by Hekmatyar and was predominantly Pashtun. He formed the group when he was in exile in Pakistan and it had the support of Pakistan and the ISI. While both groups had significant clout, Massoud was considered better positioned to takeover Kabul due to his well organized and disciplined forces. When he formed an alliance with Dostum, together they successfully seized Kabul.[52] Although the Peshawar Agreement was concluded between the Mujaheddin leaders, Hekmatyar still desired leadership of Afghanistan, and in the summer of 1992 he launched rocket attacks, increasing the violence of the civil war. The side-switching Dostum then formed an alliance with Hekmatyar and launched further attacks on Kabul. Hekmatyar wanted to ensure that Massoud could not consolidate power or expand his territorial control.[53] Hekmatyar was unable to wrest power from Rabbani and Massoud. For the Pakistani government, Hekmatyar was no longer as important. Pakistan now lacked a government in Afghanistan that would be receptive to settling the ongoing Pakistan-Afghanistan border dispute. Nevertheless, Massoud would not aid Pakistan in its regional ambitions and so they ultimately supported Hekmatyar in opposition to the Rabbani government that Massoud supported.[54]

The fragmentation deepened in 1994 with multiple groups vying for power, simultaneously desiring peace in Afghanistan but preoccupied with other games.[55] The continuing violence within the state angered Afghanistan's neighbors, particularly Pakistan, as it sought more influence in central Asia. Failure on the part of Hekmatyar to do what the ISI expected of him, prompted Pakistan to create a new surrogate force – the Taliban. The time was ripe for a new power to come in and take control. The ultra-orthodox Sunni Islamic militia of young Pashtuns, the Taliban, seized this opportunity.

In contrast to the chaos and lawlessness of the civil war under the Mujaheddin, the Taliban were able to restore order to most of the country, thereby meeting with much early acceptance. By March 1995, the Taliban controlled one-third of Afghanistan and were on the outskirts of Kabul. In retaliation, Massoud formed an anti-Taliban alliance which brought together powerful warlords and their forces, such as Dostum and Ismail Khan. Around 1996 he created the *Jabhi-e Mutahid-e Islami bara-e Nejati Afghanistan* (the United Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan) or what Pakistan dubbed the Northern Alliance.[56]

The Taliban's greatest public relations success was abruptly ending the chaos and misery of the civil war period, with the promise of peace. It was for this reason that they gained support. However, their conservative interpretation of Shariah Law, based on Sunni Islam, was unfavorable to many less traditional Afghans. Nevertheless, the Taliban continued to control more and more of the country.[57] The movement was strong with its Pakistani backing, powerful weaponry, funding, and training. Pakistan, with the support of Saudi Arabia and the approval of the United States, was responsible for the

support and maintenance of the Taliban. On the other side, India, Iran, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan supported the Northern Alliance. By early 2001, the Taliban controlled ninety to ninety-seven percent of the country.

2.3 The Current Crisis – Terrorism, the Taliban, and al-Qa'ida

The Taliban had begun as a spontaneous group in Kandahar around early 1994. Its members were religious students who felt outrage at the Mujaheddin leaders fighting for power within the city. They decided to take action to end what they viewed as corrupt practices, drawing on Islam as a justification for their intervention. Their ideology likely comes from the Islamic *madrasahs* in refugee camps, where Islam is taught on the basis of the Qur'an. This has proven to be a fertile ground for recruits.[58] There are many such camps along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border and this is a current issue of much debate. Madrasahs are religious schools that educate millions of students in the Muslim world and they have faced much criticism as the breeding ground for terrorism. Some Pakistani madrasahs served as de facto training grounds for jihadists fighting the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s. Many of these soldiers went on to fight in later campaigns and some of the schools have helped forge the Taliban and give support to Osama Bin Laden.[59]

The majority of Taliban supporters are Pashtun and many have questioned whether support of the movement has been an effort to reassert Pashtun dominance in Afghanistan as it existed before the wars. The Taliban have insisted that the movement is open to anyone, although it is exclusively Sunni in its interpretation of Islam and therefore does not embrace the Shi'a regions of the country. Within Afghanistan the

Sunni faith, of predominantly Pashtun membership, is at the top of a hierarchy. The Shi'a, residing in the centre of the state and Kabul, who belong to the Hazara ethnic group, are at the bottom.[60] The absolute leader of the Taliban is Mullah Mohammad Omar who has been given the religious title of "Leader of the Faithful." He is a Pashtun from the south and this may be part of the Pashtun attraction to the Taliban.[61] The objectives of the Taliban have much to do with their dissatisfaction with the power exercised by the Mujaheddin in Afghanistan and the belief that their rule by strict Islamic practice would be better suited for the population.[62] The aim of the Taliban was and is the purification of Afghanistan alone, to free it from the Mujaheddin and establish an Islamic state based on Shariah Law. They saw the ousted government as having failed to adhere to proper Islamic standards. Replacement by the Taliban was seen as justifiable.

It was the forces of al-Qa'ida, evolving out of select Mujaheddin groups, who took advantage of the Taliban to entrench their position within the country, in a new violent, anti-Western form. Many of these fighters were organized by Osama Bin Laden, who had come from Saudi Arabia to wage jihad in Afghanistan at the beginning of the 1980s and had been a deputy in the Mujaheddin Service Office.[63] But Bin Laden desired to expand his field of action to include the United States, perhaps under the influence of radical Egyptian Ayman al-Zawahiri. In 1987 he declared himself independent of the Mujaheddin Service and established al-Qa'ida to reflect his more radical principles.[64] Bin Laden used these al-Qa'ida forces to fight the Soviets during their occupation of Afghanistan. Al-Qa'ida aided the Taliban and created a secure base for themselves, and in September 2001 they launched their most recent terrorist activities on the U.S. In

retaliation, the United States and their allies, under the UN, invaded Afghanistan, launching a new phase of the never-ending internal war.[65] The objective of al-Qa'ida was to "radically change popular perceptions, in order to make the distinction between Muslims and non-Muslims a central element in political mobilization, leading in turn to a diminution of Western influence in the Islamic world."[66] Seen from this perspective it was necessary that the attack be extravagant to provoke anti-Muslim sentiment in the West. The considerable gap between the Muslim and the Western world seems proof that this objective was successful.

The attacks of 11 September 2001 were not immediately seen in Afghanistan as a major event. The population, especially in the rural areas, were preoccupied with another crisis – drought.[67] The Taliban continued to control most of the country with little opposition. The regime had indeed become more radicalized but Bin Laden's role in domestic politics was limited. There were significant ideological differences separating him from the Taliban and he was looked upon with hostility and disgust by many who believed he would not hesitate to sacrifice them for his greater objective.[68]

However, for Afghanistan, war began when the first American bombs were dropped on the country as the U.S. began its attack on the Taliban. It took a few months before there were any observable results from the Western attack. Therefore the United States changed their strategy toward giving greater support to the Northern Alliance. The campaign with this assistance lasted nine weeks. The use of proxy fighters from the Northern Alliance had clear advantages. It enabled the Americans to conduct bombing and dispatch commandos with limited numbers of conventional forces. The bulk of

ground fighting was conducted by the Afghan allies themselves, for they knew the terrain the best. Using the Northern Alliance also reduced the number of troops having to be sent overseas (at that time) and American casualties. The lower the number of casualties, the more likely it was the American public would support the war.[69] The loss of the North to the Americans and the Alliance only led to more defeats for the Taliban. In short, the events of 11 September 2001 were the beginning of the end for the Taliban. The U.S. demanded that the group hand over Osama Bin Laden, but they refused to expel him from their ranks. The Taliban waged a conventional war with the opposition instead of using guerrilla tactics and they were highly dependent on Pakistan and the ISI for military strategy. As a result of the strength of American bombing campaigns and the assistance of the Northern Alliance, the Taliban military structure eventually collapsed. This collapse of the military ultimately brought down the Taliban and without any political or social challenge.[70]

The Taliban was definitively defeated by the first week of December 2001.[71] But the collapse of the Taliban regime gave rise to a resurgence of locally-based power, independent of the Kabul government. This power was in the hands of local warlords and their armies, and others linked to the Mujaheddin. As well, a "neo-Taliban" continued to control Pashtun territory and al-Qa'ida found a social base and sanctuary on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border.

2.4 After the War - The Bonn Agreement

After the fall of the Taliban, the international community and the United Nations worked quickly to bring together the factions and their leadership who were dividing the country into power-sharing arrangements. The Northern Alliance warlord leaders wanted a hold on power, as did various ethnic groups. These efforts culminated in the Bonn Agreement of December 2001.

The Bonn Agreement was a framework for the transformation of the Afghan political system and it paved the way for the establishment of an Afghanistan Interim Authority. The leadership of this authority went to Hamid Karzai, a Pashtun, whose appointment was to give legitimacy to the authority in the eyes of Pashtun people. However, there continued to be debate over representation by members of other ethnic groups. The Taliban were also excluded. The Bonn Agreement provided for the convening of a nationwide *Loya Jirga* (National Assembly). This body would transfer the interim administration's authority to the Afghanistan Transitional Authority.[72] Besides beginning the process for creating a legitimate governing body for Afghanistan, the Bonn Agreement also attempted to address the volatile security situation of the country. First, it required that all Mujaheddin and armed forces would come under the command and control of the interim authority and be reorganized. Second, the international community would be asked for assistance in forming and training a new national army. Third, the agreement requested the UN Security Council establish a force to help maintain security in Kabul and surrounding areas. Finally, the Bonn participants would remove forces from wherever this new UN security force was deployed.[73]

The results of the Bonn Agreement were mixed. On the positive side, Afghanistan was relatively peaceful (at that time). However, it was a fragile peace and many of the agreement's provisions were fairly unrealistic. In the post-Bonn environment, armed warlords and militias still played a significant role in the country, particularly in the countryside and the Taliban were and are still resisting. The provision that all armed forces and armed groups would come under the command of the Interim Authority, was unlikely given their desire to retain power. Afghanistan also remained subject to extensive foreign involvement in its internal affairs. There was, and still is, a significant power vacuum. While the idea of the *Loya Jirga* held much promise for the country and brought some moderate semblance of legitimacy to the Afghan political process, it failed in many aspects as well. The opportunity to assist civilian leadership, promote democratic expression and draw authority away from the warlords was quashed. Preoccupation with establishing short-term stability led many Afghan leaders and international decision-makers to appease undemocratic sectarian demands.[74]

Nevertheless, in 2004 elections were held in Afghanistan and Hamid Karzai was elected President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. He then faced the difficult task of choosing a cabinet, having to satisfy powerful factions, including his main opponents from the election campaign, as well as his own tribal and regional supporters. With so many disparate groups in the country, Karzai's task was a difficult one.[75] Despite all of these difficulties, the U.S. supported the Bonn Agreement as visible proof it was trying to address the issues in the country, but it really did little to answer specific questions on how to proceed with the reconstruction of Afghanistan.

With international military and economic aid, Afghanistan met the benchmarks of the Bonn Agreement, which was officially concluded with the inauguration of the new National Assembly in December 2005. The new government would prove to have and interesting future ahead of it as former Taliban leaders rubbed shoulders with their Northern Alliance enemies, women vied for a voice in politics alongside Muslim fundamentalists, and Communists saw themselves next to Western-educated intellectuals.[76] While the Bonn process had come to an end, Afghanistan still had a long way to go before it would become "a self-governing state with functioning institutions and a level of development that could start ranking with even the poorest of other lesser developed countries in Asia."[77]

In early 2006, President Karzai and other international leaders convened in London and issued the Afghanistan Compact, setting forth both the international community's commitment to Afghanistan and Afghanistan's commitment to statebuilding and reform for the following five years. The Compact provides a strategy for building an effective, accountable state in Afghanistan, with targets for improvements in security, governance, and development, including measures for reducing the narcotics economy and promoting regional cooperation. The compact goes beyond the usual realm of poverty reduction and addresses Afghanistan's short-to-medium term challenges as much as is possible for such an agreement. Its principal recommendation is that all stakeholders fully fund and implement the Compact and the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS).[78] With respect to the war and security concerns, utmost in many Afghans minds, the Compact addresses the security situation and how security

measures should be carried out. In 2006, NATO troops took over the leadership of military operations in the South and in October of that year took control of the entirety of Afghanistan. Since the beginning of military operations in the country, both the US-led coalition and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) have operated with a 'light footprint,' placing the onus of the reconstruction burden on Afghans themselves. However, this has proven inadequate for providing security to the troubled nation. In practice, the light-footprint approach has amounted to "nation-building lite" or nation-building without sufficient resources.[79] There has been a general lack of coordination between the different forces and keeping Afghan regional commanders in line has been a challenge. When NATO came on board as leader of the ISAF it worked to get Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT) underway to reconstruct the country while war was ongoing. But insurgency has increased since 2006. Indeed, suicide bombings and more ruthless tactics have been utilized by insurgents within the country, often originating in Pakistan. U.S. and Afghan government casualties caused by the insurgency were higher in 2005 than any other year and the lethality of attacks has also increased.[80]

Although Afghanistan has made some progress since Bonn, in 2006, the security situation in the country had deteriorated significantly and Afghans appear to be losing faith in the international community's ability to assist them. The implementation of the goals outlined at the Bonn conference regarding governance, reconciliation and assistance in Afghanistan has proven to be slow and unsuccessful in some areas, further weakening the government's overall credibility. There is a lack of capacity in the judiciary and in public administration, as well as a great inability on the part of the

government to achieve broad representation of ethnic and social groups critical to the achievement of national unity and reconciliation.[81] All of these problems are exacerbated by the troublesome behavior of regional and factional warlords, and the illegal drug trade. This has been further compounded by the slow pace of economic reconstruction, linked to insufficient international funding and growing security problems. In this shaky environment, the Taliban, who were never a part of the Bonn process have begun regrouping.[82]

It is likely that disenchanted Taliban and al-Qa'ida feel left out of the reconstruction process and bitter about their lack of inclusion within the new government. Having never entirely been defeated they have regrouped on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. This 'neo-Taliban' is not without support. The Pashtun populations in both Afghanistan and Pakistan, who likewise feel only a minimal part in reconstruction, feel the Taliban may have something to offer. This decision to ignore the Taliban by the new Afghan government and the international community has tarnished the reconstruction process. Security and reconstruction difficulties have prevented sufficient progress in the areas of governance reform to promote public order and economic progress. By the fall 2006, these difficulties had led to an increasingly deteriorated situation, particularly in predominantly Pashtun areas of the South. This is a trend which should be of great concern to the Afghan government and the international community involved in reconstruction efforts.[83]

Knowledge of the history of conflict in Afghanistan is important for those involved in reconstruction of the state. The background identifies the players in the

"multiple games," i.e. the Taliban, the warlords, Mujaheddin, ethnic groups, and Pakistan. It also helps the observer to understand how events in the past influence the choices of actors in the future nested games, and why these choices and strategies may not be seen as optimal by the West. Awareness of the history of conflict gives an early understanding of the stakes of the game for those intervening before they themselves are introduced to the meta-game.

Chapter Three – Games in the Principal Arena: Liberal-Democratic Ambitions

"…The survival of liberty in our land increasingly depends on the success of liberty in other lands. The best hope for peace in our world is the expansion of freedom in all the world."[84] – George W. Bush, 2006

Over the past several decades, the hegemonic forces of economic liberalization, global capitalism and democratization have shaped the context with which nation-states govern. These ideas have converged into a common model which developed states, particularly the United States, use to reconstruct countries that are failing or have drifted away from a democratic institutions and processes. Defeating the Taliban has been the U.S. strategy from the start. After ousting the Taliban from power and weakening al-Qa'ida's operations in Afghanistan, the United States was expected to play a central role in the country's reconstruction. President Bush pledged to the Afghan people that the U.S. would take on a Marshall Plan-like effort to rebuild the country. Most Afghans hoped that the Americans would be guarantors of a more prosperous, peaceful, and promising future. Close inspection of post-9/11 reconstruction efforts are showing that the country has fallen short of these expectations.

Democratic governance with its elections, accountability and integrity, conflict resolution, and consensus building, is seen as the ideal form of governance by the Western world. Such a model addresses social equity and inclusiveness, diversity, legitimacy, and protection.[85] However, Afghan and international perspectives and key interests have not always been harmonious. The stabilization efforts have attempted to acknowledge ethno-political and Afghan agendas in combination with the international agenda, in an ambitious, centralizing state-building agenda under a "light footprint"

international presence. However, lack of agreement on one common political strategy has resulted in the favoring of elections and new institutions – regardless of how fragile and unprepared – over a holistic vision for state-building in the country.[86] This perception of democracy and liberal norms has been viewed by the Western interveners, headed by the United States, as an ideal to be implemented and enforced within Afghanistan. Ottaway and Lieven express great concern with such an approach, as the U.S. has "...embarked on ambitious projects to reconstruct the country in the image of a modern secular, multiethnic, and democratic state. None of these approaches should be used in Afghanistan."[87] Many analysts expect democracy promotion to fail. From an outsider perspective, Afghanistan seems an unlikely candidate for successful democratization. While it is developing a functioning political system, it does not possess the most basic of state institutions that are prerequisites for any stable political regime, let alone representative institutions and rule of law necessary for successful democratization. The only functioning industry in Afghanistan is the drug trade and the country is one of the most poverty-stricken on earth. It is divided by deep antagonisms among members of different ethnic, tribal and religious groups, and it is dominated by regional warlords. It is not surprising that the attempt to develop liberal democracy in Afghanistan has been labeled an "impossible fantasy."[88] While the game here is complex with many players and many arenas, the West, however, sees only one game of defeating the Taliban and installing democracy. What they want is the establishment of democracy in Afghanistan making it a more 'friendly' country. Therefore they have only one strategy. The reality is that there should be many. Establishing democracy is not possible while ignoring

nested games and multiple arenas within the larger framework. The West sees only one game in the principal arena – between themselves and the central government led by Karzai. However, there are many other actors. These are very ambitious plans by the West to turn a war-hardened, economically ravaged, and deeply divided country into a modern democratic state. Success in this endeavor is unlikely.

3.1 American Ambitions in Afghanistan – The Bush Doctrine

The "Bush Doctrine," the popular name given to a set of policies introduced by President Bush in a speech given in 2002, outlining a new phase in U.S. foreign policy that would place greater emphasis on military pre-emption, military superiority, unilateral action, and a commitment to extending democracy, liberty and security to most parts of the globe. The policy was formalized in *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*.[89] The Bush Doctrine marked a significant departure from the Cold War policies of deterrence and containment. The Security Strategy has four components: a strong belief in the importance of a state's domestic regime in deciding its foreign policy, and the related idea that the time is ripe to transform international politics; the perception of great threats to national interest, which can be usurped only by intense use of force; a willingness to act unilaterally if necessary; and an overriding sense that peace and stability require the United States to assert its primacy in world politics.[90] The National Security Strategy opens with the statement that there is one "...single sustainable model for national success: freedom, democracy, and free enterprise." The spread of these values makes "the world not just safer but better." There is the view that

a world characterized by democracy, economic openness, and individualism is not only good for America, but it is best for others.[91]

Bush and his government are realists in the large role they see for force in international politics. Realists believe that states find themselves in an anarchic system in which security cannot be taken for granted. It is therefore rational to compete for power and security. In a situation where security is not guaranteed, force, pre-emption, and military force may be utilized.[92] They are also liberals in their beliefs about what drives foreign policy. America has continuously pushed the liberal ideals of rule of law, rights, equality, and democracy.[93] The foreign policy presented by the U.S. in the Bush Doctrine is essentially an extension of its basic values.

At the release of the security strategy there was significant criticism of the new foreign policies being articulated by the United States. Many saw the Bush Doctrine as an imperial doctrine; their plan "is for the United States to rule the world. The overt theme is unilateralism, but it is ultimately a story of domination."[94]

Besides its emphasis on military power, military superiority and military pre-emption, the Bush security document emphasizes the ever-important American values of freedom and democracy. "The significance of the document resides in its capacity to link some of the most familiar themes in American history – freedom, democracy and entrepreneurship – to new perceptions of threat and a new inclination to exercise power."[95] However, these values are tough to export and often cannot be at all. The goal of exporting and establishing democracy is ultimately a democratized world but this does not mean exporting American style democracy. There are also many problems with

trying to export democracy in the midst of war. Democracy is unlikely to be imposed on a country at the point of a gun or in the troubled times of a war of aggression, even one launched in the name of regime change and freedom. "The *lex humana* in whose name internationalism and global democracy must be pursued will not be secured by trying to export *lex Americana* – America's own unique experience with law and democracy."[96] Democracy's most important virtue is patience. It is a slow-paced and thorough process that should be executed carefully. Nevertheless, many Americans and other outsiders to fledgling democracies seem to think that other people in cultures new to democracy should achieve in a few months what it took Americans and other mature democracies centuries to secure. They allow no time for mistakes and the many intricate and intertwined processes that develop a strong democracy.[97]

Apart from the multiple roadblocks to democratization within Afghanistan, efforts are unlikely to be successful due to the nature of U.S. military interventions. Not only do they infringe upon sovereignty and ignore the need for more internal involvement, the United States has also intervened to advance its material interests. The U.S. entered the war in Afghanistan to defeat the terrorists who attacked the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. It remains there to ensure that the country will not reemerge as a breeding ground for anti-American terrorists. Thus, one of the most crucial reconstruction tasks in the country is to construct a state governed by leaders who will serve the material interests of the U.S. and guarantee its security. Often democracy promotion is pursued in an effort to legitimate interventions in the eyes of international liberal allies, within the country where the United States has intervened, and to the domestic audience at home.[98]

The promotion of democracy is one of the most important tools that policymakers use to transcend contradictions involved in being a liberal power. Democracy promotion allows more aggressive foreign policy endeavors to appear more legitimate.

The U.S. strategy of the Bush Doctrine is the overall strategy of the Western allies in Afghanistan. The bottom line, however, is that this strategy is not conducive to solving a game with nested components.

3.2 Western Influence in the Bonn Agreement and the Afghanistan Compact

The Bonn Agreement, officially the *Agreement on Provisional Arrangements in Afghanistan Pending the Re-Establishment of Permanent Government Institutions*, was the initial series of agreements intended to re-create the state of Afghanistan following 9/11. The liberal-democratic vision is evident within the agreement even if not explicitly stated. Under the *General Provisions*, article four states that "...a fully representative government be elected through free and fair elections." Article four under *Final Provisions* speaks of the emergency Loya Jirga and the insurance of "participation of women as well as equitable representation of all ethnic and religious communities."[99] The components of democratic reconstruction include an agreement on a new permanent political system; elections as soon as possible; and a multiethnic, secular, and democratic dimension, all of which are purported in the Bonn Agreement, regardless of whether this has any basis in local tradition, or if the inhabitants want it. Support for free and fair elections in Afghanistan has become a grand strategic vision; liberal democracy is the central focus. The United States decided early on that Hamid Karzai would be its preferred candidate to rule Afghanistan. The U.S. supported his selection as interim

leader at the Bonn Summit. Some groups in the first Loya Jirga pushed to select another candidate, the former King, Zahir Shah, as new chief executive in 2002. However, a U.S. envoy intervened in the process and convinced the deposed king to decline the position, thus ensuring the success of the favored candidate to the U.S. – Karzai. As well, during the constitutional Loya Jirga, the United States encouraged delegates to support a centralized unitary republic with a strong presidency, a system that would serve U.S. interests best if it could ensure its candidate was elected. Bonn presents the idea of an Afghan Loya Jirga with liberal Western elections.[100]

Christopher Freeman further elaborates on the idea of Western democracy promotion but from the view that the West tries to export its variety of secular democracy to Islamic society. He believes that the war on terrorism can be seen as commensurate, though not exclusively, with a war on the Islamization of political units, particularly when they take a rejectionist stance to 'universal' Western ideals like liberal democracy. Exporting western tradition through democratization and international administration has undermined the evolution of the Afghan state.[101] As discussed in the previous chapter, in Afghanistan, many people identify strongly with different tribes, clans and groups, and maybe only weakly with the state. Oftentimes, keeping the state together requires repressive power. The Taliban was the power to do just that. It also had legitimacy based on one common thread between all different parties – Islamic tradition. Since intervention, the country is becoming more fragmented as the interveners pursue their ideals. Since Bonn, Afghanistan is formally known as the *Islamic Republic of Afghanistan*. However, the U.S. for a variety of historical reasons wishes to "play down"

the importance of Islam. Since 9/11, many Islamic states have been labeled 'rogue' by the U.S. Initiatives to abolish 'rogue' Islamic states and transform them into secular polities will not help successfully reconstruct Islamic countries like Afghanistan. It is more likely to exacerbate tensions because it radicalizes and adds legitimacy to Islamic movements. Dismissal of Islamism as a state-building ideology has been a longstanding problem.[102] The creation of an Islamic central authority can prevent the fragmentation of the government and society because of its play on common values and goals and the attachment of these to the state. Trying to shift a society into a system which the constituent parts are not willingly organizing themselves can cause it to snap violently.[103] There is a belief that liberal democracy is the proven route to peace, prosperity and social justice. Nonetheless, Islam no more prohibits the development of democracy than secularism assures it.

The Bonn Agreement states that the interim administration shall function "in accordance with Islamic principles, international standards, the rule of law, and Afghan legal traditions."[104] If one breaks down this statement there are two important phrases according to Freeman, "international standards" and "rule of law" Western imports sandwiched between the "allure of national expressions of ownership over the juridical model."[105] Islamic principles are weakened when international standards are enforced. The recommended return to the legal system that was in place under Taliban rule, shows a commitment to building a state with a legal system similar to the West, and it also disregards the "corruption and cronyism" inherent in such a system due to its inappropriateness for the political and social culture of Afghanistan.[106]

There are two misconstrued ideas held by the Western powers surrounding Afghanistan. Firstly, that it was a *de facto* failed state at the time of intervention. And second, that it needs to be rebuilt in the image of a secular, liberal-democratic state – Islamism was not the source of its political dysfunction. It is important not to disregard the humanitarian pursuits of intervention or to deny the harsh nature of the Taliban regime, but Islam offers a number of benefits in rebuilding Afghanistan.[107] Freeman gives six points about Islam that might be considered with respect to the reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan. First, he argues that "politicized Islam" is an alternative to failed attempts at other forms of governance, in the search for political stability and development. Given that Afghans are not receptive to Western style government, a strong Islamic party might have more support. Second, while Islamic fundamentalism may be seen as troublesome by most Western observers, it may indeed be a necessary step in forging a lasting state foundation. The creation of an Islamic central authority can prevent the disintegration and fragmentation of the state. Third, Islam is a shared identity for many people. Divisions within Islam should discourage the formation of an Islamic bloc. Fourth, shifting a society into a model that does not come naturally to it can be far more problematic than the existing situation. Fifth, the processes of democratization must develop internally. Sixth, the transition of Islamic states and societies towards greater liberalism is best aided through inclusion in the international system, not through isolation and exclusion.[108]

The point here is that if the United States or any other intervening power wants to promote democratization as part of a preventative democracy strategy aimed at

debilitating terrorism within Islamic states, they will have to proceed with greater patience, and with an understanding that the characteristics of tolerance and pluralism are intended "...not just to protect the state from religion but to protect religion from the state...liberals worry that religion will undermine their freedoms, but the religious wonder whether they themselves will be tolerated by those who call themselves free."[109] There are currently too many parties attempting to govern political developments in the country.

Like the Bonn Agreement, *The Afghanistan Compact* of 2006, as discussed in the previous chapter, is drafted along similar lines and also seems to support the Western game. Its three 'critical and interdependent areas or pillars of activity' are "1) Security 2) Governance, Rule of Law, and Human Rights, and 3) Economic and Social Development."[110] The agreement, drafted by numerous countries and groups including the U.S., Canada, Britain, NATO, and the UN, calls for "democratic governance and the protection of human rights [as the] cornerstone of sustainable political progress in Afghanistan."[111] The motivation behind the intervention into Afghanistan has not changed since Bonn was created in 2001. It is unlikely one will see an evaluation based on the political and social realities of Afghanistan anytime soon. As the leading international power in Afghanistan, the *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, puts it most clearly, "America must stand firmly for the non-negotiable demands of human dignity: the rule of law; limits on absolute power of the state; free speech; freedom of worship; equal justice; respect for women; religious and ethnic tolerance..." The U.S. will "actively work to bring the hope of democracy, development,

free markets, and free trade to every corner of the world."[112] Today's ideologues see a model society in the United States that is a combination of law, liberal freedoms, competitive private enterprise, and regular, contested elections with universal suffrage; they strive to remake the world in this image of 'free society.'[113]

Democracy promotion by outside observers has many limitations, and after initial stages of building democratic legitimacy – especially in war-torn societies such as Afghanistan's where mistrust is particularly acute – must be driven from within a country. Too much foreign involvement in the process of democratization makes democracy seem foreign-led, un-Islamic, and therefore un-Afghan in the eyes of Afghan people. Democratization must be carefully planned and feature great internal input.[114] The United States is trying to fulfill its foreign policy imperatives of ensuring national security while promoting democracy and free trade; liberal internationalists want to halt terrorism and continue democratization under the auspices of the United Nations; local political stakeholders – warlords and factional leaders – are trying to maximize their power in the new structure; and many ordinary Afghans want peace but continue their loyalty to clans and tribes.[115] Divergent agendas and strategies are culminating in a sub-optimal outcome to the game of the West.

Democracy, while rightly popular, will not work for everyone in its Western manifestation. There are also nested games and differing strategies to be considered (the subject of the next chapter). Ridding a state of terrorists, even a state reluctant to pursue this goal, can remove one obstacle from the process of democracy building and is a justification for counter-terrorist preventive strikes. But to rid a state of its sovereign

regime (like the Taliban in Afghanistan), however repressive and brutal that regime may be, is likely to create more obstacles rather than facilitate democracy building. And to ignore other actors and their games is poor strategy as well. This is a lesson that the U.S. government appears to be learning in Afghanistan and Iraq. Democracies are formed from the inside out and bottom up, not the other way around. This is how democracies should be formed and it is for this reason the process takes so long. This also suggests that the objective for those seeking a democratic world should not be "democracy" in the singular form, on the American model or otherwise, but "democracies" in the plural.[116] Or ultimately, democracy may be impossible. The strategy of democracy building and the reality of games in multiple arenas are contradictory. As long as the West is unclear of whom the other actors are, their strategies, and their payoffs, the principal strategy of democratization will not have an optimal outcome.

Chapter Four - Introducing the Nested Games: Restricting Western Success

Drawing on game theory, each weak and failed state will be characterized by a unique set of nested games that inhibits implementation of policy by the international community and simultaneously precludes the resolution of the principal game. The specific nature of these multiple smaller games will vary from place to place. Some may limit the ability to establish central liberal-democratic political institutions, while others may be conducive and supportive of such orders.[117] In the case of Afghanistan, the nested games are limiting this optimal achievement and are also ensuring that the liberal-democratic game of the West is probably not the right answer for Afghanistan. There are five particularly significant nested games that are proving to be impediments to reconstruction efforts within Afghanistan. These factors are long-term realities of the country and will have to be addressed. They are not problems to be glossed over in the West's desire to create a liberal-democratic state.

The nested games consist of many actors. The first and foremost nested game relates to the reality that the Taliban and al-Qa'ida groups are still very active within the country. However, they have been excluded since the very beginning of reconstruction in all processes for reforming the country and government. The Bonn Agreement of 2001 was signed by four non-Taliban groups. The Taliban is often very strongly equated with al-Qa'ida and terrorism. They are indeed zealous extremists and the beliefs they advocate are often at odds with the beliefs of many Afghans, and many use violence to achieve political ends. Despite this, there are many Pashtun people who support the group. They do this for a variety of reasons: the desire for stability and order,

disillusionment with warlords, discouragement at the slow pace of development, dislike of outsiders, a desire for Pashtun and not non-Pashtun leadership, distrust of Northern Alliance dominance, and so forth.[118] The Taliban and its support base are part of the nested game framework in Afghanistan. In excluding the Taliban from reconstruction efforts, the foreign powers are only hurting their chances of success in the principal arena. Simultaneously, the Taliban are not a defeated foe as once believed. Recent insurgency shows the threat has not yet died and a 'neo-Taliban' is on the rise.

A second nested game is the Pakistani influence in Afghanistan. Shared Pashtun background and culture is one of the greatest links between these two countries and Pakistan has supported the Taliban for many years. Pakistan has aspirations for greater power within the region and influence in Afghanistan has been a stepping stone in that direction. The role of Pakistan is pivotal to the direction insurgency within Afghanistan will take. While the interveners are aware and concerned of the role that Pakistan is playing in the country, their efforts are focused primarily on the ground in Afghanistan, rather than involving themselves in serious talks with Pakistan and other neighbor governments. Nation and state building in Pakistan may derive benefits from violence, economic interest and state disarray in another country such as Afghanistan. Persistent meddling of neighboring powers is the primary reason so many warlords and ethnic faction leaders remain powerful.

Concurrently, warlords and "conflict entrepreneurs" continue to have significant influence in Afghanistan; this is the third nested game. Many of the warlords in Afghanistan today come from the old Mujaheddin forces that fought the Soviet

occupation. While the term "warlord" is a contested one, the *United States Institute of Peace* claims it denotes "an individual who exercises a combination of military, political, and economic power outside a constitutional or legal framework."[119] Regardless of the chaos in society, warlords still operate to their economic advantage. In pockets of society there is intense economic activity based on their actions. There has been a resurgence of warlords, in many places they are the only real power on the ground, and there is little chance that they will be displaced soon. They furnish whatever local government there is; it is the warlords versus Kabul.[120] Warlords and regional commanders are turning to leadership roles in business and politics, which is promising, but most continue in organized crime, which seems logical, easy and profitable. The foundation of this organized crime is in the growing of opium poppies, the production of heroin from them, and the smuggling of heroin out of the country to regional and global markets.[121]

The drug economy and opium trade is a source of much conflict and the fourth nested game. The narcotics trade provides financial resources to both warlords and commanders. There has been a failure on the part of the central government to control the growth of poppy and the processing and transportation of opium.[122] In 2004, the size of the opium crop was 4200 tons – a figure that represents eighty-seven percent of the world total for the year. One tenth of the Afghan population is involved in growing opium.[123] The fast growth of this illicit economy is alarming. Until this economic mainstay of many Afghan people is put under control, the state will continue to be wreaked by internal struggles.

As well as these serious situations creating nested games within Afghanistan there are also many other interacting relationships that cannot be ignored. Conflict between ethnicities within Afghanistan is the final arena to be addressed. The Pashtun and non-Pashtun rivalry is exceptionally strong, as well as conflicts between Sunni and Shia, traditionalists and urban elites, and rural versus urban populations. The urban, educated elite were dependent on an externally-funded state sector, while the rural, illiterate population depended on subsistence agriculture. While the origin of the current conflict may not be ethnic, "the politicization of ethnicity has had a corrosive effect on the potential for national reconciliation."[124]

Although Afghanistan is ethnically mixed, the Pashtun are the core ethnic group in the country. When the U.S. began Operation Enduring Freedom in 2001, they chose the Northern Alliance to serve as "shock troops," because they were from non-Pashtun populations. Even the election of Pashtun Karzai did not put fears in the Pashtun community to rest of domination by a coalition of other groups. Since 2003, there has been a fear of alienation from the Karzai government and the international "Bonn Process." If the country's dominant ethnic group do not feel they have a stake in the reconstruction process, those attacks may be a sign of Iraq-like civil war to come.[125] The exclusion of certain groups from the new government and the dominance of other groups have exacerbated the ethnic tensions in the country. The ignorance of Islam has also posed a significant problem. Islam is in fact a unifying force within the state but neglect of its importance is only serving to create more friction. Nested games are not being understood nor approached appropriately. Equilibria achieved at the nested games level

is the actors' main concern. What this ultimately means for the principal arena game of the Western mission is failure.

4.1 Enemies Undefeated: The Taliban and al-Qa'ida

When the United States and its allies began their bombing campaign on Afghanistan in 2001, they had one objective in mind: to defeat and eliminate those who perpetrated the heinous crimes on 11 September – al-Qa'ida and later the Taliban linked to them. What was intended to be a swift campaign to root out these enemies of the U.S. and the Western powers, however, has become a six year ordeal with minimal success and no sign of Bin Laden. While coalition forces did a significant job of eliminating much of al-Qa'ida and the Taliban from Afghanistan in the early days of the campaign, since 2006, the Taliban once in retreat, are on the offensive again.

In the past year, a number of events have threatened the international effort in Afghanistan. There have been continuous troubles in Southern Afghanistan but recently, the Pakistan-based, Taliban-led insurgency has become bolder and more lethal in the southern and eastern parts of the country, extending all the way to the outskirts of Kabul. The Taliban have been showing increasing power and agility.[126] In some areas, there is now a parallel Taliban state, and locals are increasingly turning to Taliban-run courts, which are seen as more effective than the corrupt official system. Suicide bombings, something unknown to Afghanistan until now, have recently created terror in Kabul and other areas, and they are spreading throughout Afghanistan. When the Bush administration overthrew the Taliban after 9/11, it did so with a "light footprint." After a quick military campaign, it backed the UN effort to form a government and manage the

political transition. It also helped form the ISAF to provide security to the country. However, beyond that, the U.S. and NATO have done little to bring together the neighboring regions in the effort to eradicate terrorism. The government has not garnered sufficient resources and legitimacy to secure its own territory and develop a geopolitical identity unthreatening to its neighbors particularly Pakistan whose hand in Afghan politics and society is significant. Such an endeavor would have required more troops and greater emphasis on this facet of reconstruction. Too little of this has happened and Afghanistan and the international players are facing the consequences the Taliban is on the rise.[127] Failure in these endeavors is costing the West the meta-game.

As discussed in the history, the Taliban and al-Qa'ida are two separate groups both dangerous and both with violent behavior that needs to be halted. But it was al-Qa'ida who planned and carried out the 11 September attacks in the United States. Al-Qa'ida has a much more globalized agenda, aimed at a global Islamic jihad. It is somewhat of an imperialist agenda but with Islam as its ideology.[128] The Taliban leadership is comprised of ethnic Pashtun Afghans who grew up in refugee camps or madrassas in Pakistan during the Soviet occupation. The Taliban are an indigenous Afghan and Afghan-Pakistani organization with an agenda focused on governing Afghanistan.[129] While much of al-Qa'ida was defeated in initial attacks, the Taliban continued with al-Qa'ida's violent tactics which plague the Western coalition.

Although the initial U.S. bombing campaign after 9/11 had a significant impact on the Taliban, diminishing their forces and halting their progress, this stall was only brief. By the winter of 2002-2003 there was no question that the Taliban had re-emerged.

Taliban guerrilla forces were carrying out attacks against the U.S. forces and their Afghan allies. After some months of reorganization, the Taliban had resumed its leading role in the Pashtun provinces and at the head of the movement there appeared to be no challenge to the southern Pashtun Taliban leader, Mullah Mohammad Omar's, leadership. The strategy of the Taliban since 2003 has been to prevent the reconstruction of the central state, particularly in a manner envisioned by the West and the Karzai government.[130] An Afghanistan formed in the manner that the West envisions it, is an Afghanistan that excludes the Taliban and various other more militant groups. If a reconstructed Afghanistan allows the ignorance of the country's past leadership, as well as other groups who have support, it is not an Afghanistan that the Taliban would be willing to support. The payoffs are not significant enough. If the Taliban maintains this strategy for the duration of the war in Afghanistan, the West's strategy is unlikely to succeed. The Taliban are militarily strong and motivated. They do not want their country transformed into the Western democratic image and they will not give up fighting the war.

Since 2005, insurgent activities have also increased in lethality. Most of these new tactics mimic the deadly assault style of Iraqi fighters. Suicide bombings were once virtually non-existent in Afghanistan and now their use is on the rise. The use of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) has also led to many soldier deaths. On 4 July 2007, six Canadian soldiers driving on the forces' most protected vehicle were killed when they hit an IED. Some have called this an "Iraqization" of the conflict. The Taliban's increasing use of such bombs is also taking its toll on civilians. "They're

attacking the weak, they're killing women, they're killing children, they're killing policemen. These are not the tactics of anything other than terrorists."[131]

The coalition in Afghanistan has disagreed on the status of the insurgency and what strategy to use against it. They seem unable to deal with the Taliban's strategy because of their principal arena concerns. They cannot give the Taliban a chair at the table given their overall goals; one of which is the Taliban's defeat. The U.S. especially counts on military force and eschews negotiations. However, successes in defeating the Taliban have been minimal. The United States has largely been depending on cooperation with Pakistan for action against Taliban and al-Qa'ida bases, but their relations with Pakistan are another problem entirely. This will explained in the next section. The Afghan government also had some problems with the U.S., desiring them to reduce unpopular actions within Afghanistan, reduce unilateral actions, and instead focus on Pakistan. There is no real status of forces agreement between Afghanistan and the West, and there is merely a half-hearted counterinsurgency strategy, which is leading to tension between the two parties.[132] Insurgents are gradually adapting to the current strategies of coalition forces.

There are also questions about the effectiveness of the current Afghan government. An analysis of the situation in Afghanistan prepared for the Canadian government by the International Assessment Staff of the Privy Council Office warned that the country was becoming "two Afghanistans," with the situation in the South and West incessantly deteriorating and the position of President Karzai falling to a new low. The report draws attention to the unpredicted success of the Taliban's new ruthless tactics

and the growth in financial assistance, recruitment, training, equipping, and morale of the Taliban.[133] The Taliban are once again a formidable foe. They are no longer a weakened and disparate group; it is questionable if they ever were. The game in the Taliban vs. Afghanistan arena is a significant one.

The current increase in violence is merely the latest chapter of Afghanistan's long-lasting war. "The war started as a Cold War ideological battle, morphed into a regional clash of ethnic factionalism, and became the center of the broader conflict between the West and a transnational Islamist terrorist network."[134] Like the early chapters of this unfortunate story, the latest instalment shows no sign of resolution. The resurgence of the Taliban and al-Qa'ida is one of the nested games inhibiting a lasting solution to this very troublesome and never-ending war. The Western powers wanted a quick victory to the war and initially it appeared as if this would be the case. However, it does not appear that the foreign interveners developed a strategy that considers the long-term scenario or what might happen if their initial campaign failed. As well, they were diverted to Iraq. Although the U.S. never had a serious political approach, keeping troops and guns in Afghanistan could have had an effect. The Taliban were not included in Bonn talks and they are on the rise. There appear to be no payoffs for cooperating with the West in their game, which is why the Taliban strategy has been to undermine reconstruction, creating a sub-optimal outcome to this game. They are not getting what they want, they are not in power, and the country is still in chaos. It is unlikely that the Taliban will win, but if the current trend in warfare continues many more troops are going to be needed and many more will probably die, as well as Afghan civilians. The

violent campaigns of the Taliban need to be aborted but it must also be understood that they have significant support within the country. This is an issue that must be approached assertively, but with intelligence and consideration for the Afghan people, who can remember a life under the Taliban when things were less violent than they are now in 2007.

4.2 Enemy or Ally: The Problem with Pakistan

Pakistan is a decisive factor in the future of Afghanistan. Its influence on the troubled state has been considerable for some time. As Taliban insurgents and their al-Qa'ida allies regain strength, they are threatening the reconstruction process and U.S.-led coalition forces on Afghan soil. Pakistan-Afghanistan relations have been another casualty of the renewed violence. The resurgence of the Taliban movement and growing insurgency in the provinces on the Pakistan-Afghanistan border has generated tensions between Kabul and Islamabad. Both countries have begun accusing each other of meddling in their internal affairs. Afghanistan has put blame on Pakistan for fueling the insurgency in Afghanistan in order to destabilize the Afghan government and place a more cooperative government in Kabul instead.[135] There have been accusations that groups within Pakistan have been training militants who are ending up within the Afghan state.

The relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan has always been a precipitous one. This relationship has been tense for the past sixty years and the source of much regional instability. There has always been considerable debate around the territory surrounding the Durand Line - the poorly demarcated border between the two countries.

Because the Durand Line artificially divides the Pashtun people, it continues to be a source of conflict between the governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan.[136] Many Pashtuns on the Afghan side refuse to accept the border. In fact, Kabul lays claim to Pashtun territory located on the Pakistani side of the line. Since 2001, this situation has persisted, only now Afghanistan is backed by the United States and the international community. As well, Pakistan is supposed to be a key ally in the war on terror. It is a tricky dilemma for the Pakistan government.[137] Pakistan's involvement is one of the best examples of the two levels of the game being played in Afghanistan. They are part of the principal arena game as an ally of the West in efforts to eradicate terrorism. It would be to Pakistan's benefit to be viewed more favorably by the allies. Helping to execute one part of the Western strategy - eliminating the Taliban – would place them in better standing internationally. However, Pakistan is also involved at the nested level. The terrorist training and activity occurring on their border with Afghanistan makes them an inhibitor of Western success. The efforts to rebuild Afghanistan and eradicate terrorists from the country will undoubtedly be an uphill battle without the concerted efforts of Pakistan but it may be hard for them to give themselves one hundred percent to the Western effort.

Despite this, an even greater issue has formed as the war persists unceasingly insurgency. It is no longer a myth that the Taliban have been regrouping and attacking foreign troops as well as civilians. Insurgencies require logistical and support networks if they are to survive. The U.S. and Afghan governments, as well as many other international powers agree that, despite denial by the Pakistani government, the Taliban

have been enjoying "safe havens" there. Many warned that after the fall of the Taliban and al-Qa'ida in Afghanistan, many would escape to Pakistan, through its loosely controlled border, and set up command centers – they have. They now control large parts of the lawless tribal areas along the border. Continued sanctuary of Taliban, jihadists, and other extremists in Pakistan, has Afghanistan particularly incensed.[138] The persistence of tensions between Pakistan and Afghanistan should be a source of real concern for the West.

Madrassas are teaching a particular type of Islam that interprets religion in a violent way, and they are seen as the breeding ground for Taliban and al-Qa'ida.[139] It has been estimated that there may be thousands of these schools along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border. Students are most often recruited from the poor, children of Pashtun tribes, and Pakistani children who have no other source of schooling. The interpretation of Islam in the madrassas produces future suicide bombers who will kill Afghan civilians, other Muslims, and NATO forces.[140] The Afghan government has repeatedly accused Islamabad of not only sheltering the Taliban but also of helping them in order to make its presence felt. Many Afghans believe that the Taliban could not operate from Pakistan without official support. The insurgency has been taking place in a corridor along the border between the two countries but Pakistan claims it cannot control the border entirely on its own.

Peshawar, Pakistan, the capital of the Northwest Frontier and the birthplace of al-Qa'ida in the 1980s, now hosts the Taliban. The Pakistan government has little authority in such tribal areas and it is considered a "forbidden zone." The U.S. army has never

been there. The frontier, which encompasses five hundred miles and seven hundred districts, is being used by the Taliban to regroup and rearm.[141] The tribal area of Waziristan has become the most notorious for harboring hundreds of al-Qa'ida militants. Hundreds of Pakistani soldiers have already been killed there fighting local members of the Taliban and al-Qa'ida. When coalition forces moved into Afghanistan, this section of the border was kept open even though it was the most volatile. Both Taliban and foreign fighters are welcomed into Waziristan by the local Taliban and the Pakistan government has not stopped volunteers or jihadists from leaving there and entering Afghanistan. Even after December 2005 as the resurgence was gaining momentum, Pakistani military and civilian authorities did nothing to stop the militants.[142] The President of Pakistan, General Pervez Musharraf, attempted to negotiate a deal with one of the al-Qa'ida commanders, Nek Mohammad; they were to lay down arms or get out, but the militants wanted to be compensated as well. It is suggested that the Pakistan government paid the militants who in turn paid off their debt to al-Qa'ida. Not surprisingly, the agreement broke down and the jihad continued.[143]

Since 2005, the militants are continuing to move from Waziristan to attack Afghanistan. Jalaluddin Haqqani is considered responsible for the Taliban's current offensive and for introducing suicide bombing to the region. He possesses strong Arab connections for money and has deep roots in Saudi intelligence and the ISI. The ISI has done little to stem the tide of insurgency and many say that "the ISI is [only] on the ISI's side."[144] In the town of Quetta, a large Pakistani city on the border of the two countries and a place thought to be frequented by Mullah Omar, there are numerous madrassas for

training and the town has garnered itself the nickname "the factory," due to its record in churning out new Taliban by the hundreds.[145] There is clearly a significant problem that has been developing for quite some time in Pakistan.

President Musharraf admits that the Taliban have taken hold in areas near the Afghan border, but he defends his military's efforts in the region as well as his intelligence service's success in arresting al-Qa'ida leaders. Not only Afghans have been complaining about lack of action by the Pakistan government; the Americans have been as well. Pakistan is considered to be an ally with the U.S. in this war. However, they are saying that Pakistan simply is not doing enough. To that Musharraf had strong words, "Who the hell is doing anything if Pakistan is not doing enough?"[146]

4.2.1 Afghanistan, Pakistan and the Pashtun Question

As already noted, Afghanistan possesses a very significant population of Pashtun people; they have been the dominant group for many years. These people are spread over much of the country. There is also a large group of Pashtuns residing in Pakistan and this has become another source of conflict between the two countries in these violent times. The Pashtun question is an ethnic, political, and geopolitical problem. It is at the centre of Afghan nationalism but simultaneously has created nation-building problems for Pakistan. Both countries have had adversarial relations between their Pashtun populations and other ethnic groups. The return to Afghanistan of the Pashtun areas situated on the Pakistani side of the Durand Line has always been and continues to be an Afghan demand.[147] A 1947 referendum offered no choice to the Pashtuns of the Northwest Frontier Province other than to become part of either India or Pakistan.

Afghanistan insists that this was not a fair vote as many Pashtun boycotted it and Afghanistan was not consulted. Afghans have continued to maintain this position regardless of who holds power in Kabul. Pakistan's position, naturally, has always been the opposite. They have always considered the Durand Line a valid international boundary.[148] Pakistan leaders thought that the ideology supported by the Taliban might transcend Afghan ethnic divisions that were causing instability within the country. This, however, did not happen. Neither would the Taliban accept the Durand Line and Afghanistan became even more ethnically stratified. These areas of debate remain sensitive issues in Afghanistan today.

Some Pashtun groups are feeling excluded from the reconstruction process and for many, renouncing reunification of the Pashtuns would be to marginalize them.[149] The battle over the unification of Afghanistan and Pakistan Pashtun populations remains a major point of contention between the two countries today.

4.2.2 Pakistan: Tying it Together

Pakistan is a fickle ally, but the West seems hesitant to demand a diligent effort on the part of the Pakistani government to stop the Taliban. Pakistan is the key to advancing the regional development and stability goals because of its proximity to Afghanistan and its understanding of the region.[150] Stabilizing the region requires a comprehensive policy toward the Afghanistan-Pakistan relationship. The most immediate issues are the bases and support networks for the Taliban and al-Qa'ida on the Pakistan border. However, both Afghanistan and Pakistan will be unable to reduce the volatility of this situation without the assistance of the United States and other

international actors, to help them structure their relationship in a more cooperative direction.[151] To this point, however, there has been little headway made in creating a comprehensive strategy toward Pakistan with relation to Afghanistan, combating the Taliban, and the war on terror. In this dangerous setting, the U.S. and NATO's political and military leaders have neither a policy nor the capacity to manage the evolving internal trends in the Pakistan-Afghanistan centre of the war on terror. As well, their allies on the ground Karzai and Musharraf - are caught in internal conflicts that are radicalizing the politics of both countries and diminishing their options for bringing stability to the region.[152] Events in Pakistan not only affect the situation in Afghanistan, but they disrupt the stability of the entire region. The interaction of the Afghanistan-Pakistan relationship with the India-Pakistan one has been the root cause of much of the regions problems for decades and threatens global security. If Pakistan is not dealt with appropriately, conflict will be the reality of not only Afghanistan but future cooperation will be unlikely within the whole region. All of the problems lead to a convoluted strategy with respect to Pakistan. The West needs Islamabad as an ally but it has internal and regional preoccupations. It is hard for Pakistan to support Western strategy while also involved in the Afghanistan-Pakistan arena, leading once again to a sub-optimal outcome in the principal arena. If no steps are taken to deal with Pakistan in the near future, the weak relationship the two countries currently have will crumble and the war on terror will be prolonged well past the time any group of interveners would want to stay.

4.3 Government Instability and the Rule of Warlords

Four years after the Bonn Accord it remains the case that much of Afghanistan is still effectively governed by regional warlords. Hamid Karzai's central government's control remains tenuous outside of Kabul. Some observers claim that up to seventy-five percent of the country is controlled by warlords and regional leaders.[153]

Warlords can be particularly threatening when they exercise control over one or many distinct geographical regions.[154] In a properly functioning state, the government defines the legitimate sub-national territorial units. In Afghanistan, these units include thirty-two provinces. However, there are also *hauzas*, which are military zones the communist regime created in the 1980s. For the most part, the warlords operate from the *hauzas*.[155] Since 11 September, the war on terror and the ousting of the Taliban, the warlords have re-emerged. This is partially related to the American decision to support regional commanders (who could assist with U.S. military operations) with money and weapons, rather than supporting a central authority at the beginning of the campaign against the Taliban. At the centre of U.S. policy in Afghanistan, has been the empowerment of regional commanders and armed militias often with horrifying human rights records. This is another implication of the Western strategy. With the desire for a quick defeat of the Taliban and the democratization of Afghanistan, the West has taken on these allies. In engaging their assistance, the U.S. ignored everything but their willingness to fight in the interests of the United States. Engaging non-democratic allies in a pursuit for democracy has proven disastrous for a solution to the principal arena game.

As alluded to in chapter two, supported by the U.S. and its allies in the 1970s and 1980s, the Mujaheddin were used to eliminate the Soviet occupiers. During their war with the Taliban in the 1990s, groups led by commanders Ahmed Shah Massoud, Ismail Khan, Abdul Rashid Dostum, and Karim Khalili united to form the "Northern Alliance," or "United Front." The Alliance leaders came from the major non-Pashtun ethnic groups – Tajiks, Uzbeks and Hazaras – in contrast to the mostly Pashtun Taliban.[156] In the beginning, the Northern Alliance was the only U.S. ally with forces on the ground in Afghanistan. For the first few weeks after 9/11, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) executed a strategy in the South to find Pashtun warlords who would work with the U.S. against the Taliban. The U.S. desired more Pashtun representation because the Taliban were predominantly Pashtun and they needed support from this major group. Secondly, the Pashtuns are the largest ethnic group in the country and many would not support rule solely by the Northern Alliance without some of their own in a position of power.[157] The U.S. needed Pashtuns to replace the Taliban. The Pashtun who was most likely to unite his people against the Taliban was the former king, Zahir Shah. The United States encouraged Zahir Shah to work with the Northern Alliance to generate an interim government to replace the Taliban. Above all, the U.S. needed Zahir to legitimize their plan to overthrow the Taliban, especially among Pashtuns who had relative peace under the Taliban leaders.[158] After he had served their purposes, Zahir ended up with nothing more than a figurehead role in the new government.

While the Northern Alliance proved to be a useful ally in the initial ousting of the Taliban in 2001, many Afghans, as well as Pakistanis, were skeptical about having them

in a power position because of the past ruthlessness they had shown.[159] Memories of crimes at the hands of warlords were still fresh in many Afghans minds. Ultimately, the Northern Alliance quickly became a *de facto* government in Afghanistan with warlords wielding considerable power. In backing the Northern Alliance militarily and supporting their role at the Bonn Conference, Washington was primarily responsible for unleashing brutal warlords not only on the Taliban but also on the Afghan people. After the fall of the Taliban, Northern Alliance warlords obtained more power than the central government. For example, Ismail Kahn, powerful leader of one Northern Alliance group, controlled one of the largest private armies in the country, which in 2002 was estimated as thirty thousand strong. At that time, this was twice the size of the Afghan National Army (ANA).[160]

Afghanistan is a poverty-stricken country with few resources and no state monopoly on the use of force. Within the country economic power may be acquired in a few ways: stealing and controlling land, stealing taxes at border checkpoints, stealing humanitarian aid, and trafficking narcotics. In post-Taliban Afghanistan, warlords in the central government and local commanders have been making use of all four methods.

The warlords persist because the conditions that allow them to remain have not really changed. They also have a strong desire to retain power as long as is possible. The factor that contributes most to the persistent existence of the warlords is the continuing weakness of the centre vis-à-vis the periphery. The central government is not as strong as it should be as the warlords maintain significant power. After the Taliban was defeated, the key source of power for the central government was international aid. The lack of

adequate outside funds to the government, has led the warlords to question the government's ability to provide basic public goods to its people. The warlords have therefore developed there own illegal means of garnering resources including smuggling and drug dealing.[161] The lack of security structure outside of Kabul allows the warlords to consolidate their power without it being checked. The warlords and their militias represent a great challenge to Afghanistan's rehabilitation, but a confrontational strategy toward them will likely lead to widespread fighting.[162]

Warlords are a problem, but in some cases, particularly in rural areas, they provide the only stability. The warlords provide two services for their constituents – security and employment – which in turn generate support. Many claim that warlords have no place in the new political process because they do not exist in the political hierarchy; it is the provincial governors who are in charge. In reality, these governors are often selected by warlords and clearly many Afghans support both.[163] Warlords are not going to disappear any time in the near future; it may be useful to make a distinction between those who are militaristic and those who see the future of Afghanistan from a more political perspective. Warlords must be part of the process to determine how to deal with them, but they are a double-edged sword. Despite their service to Afghanistan, they and their armies are not yielding to the authority of the Karzai government. Ultimately, the central government wants to be the foremost authority in the country, but it risks provoking an uprising if it becomes too confrontational.[164] While there is no agreement as to how many armed men are outside the government, estimates are as high

as one hundred thousand and as low as thirty thousand.[165] Both numbers are significant and a cause for concern.

In 2007, many Afghans feel less secure then they did a year or more ago, including in parts of the country that have not been subject to the most violent attacks. There is considerable anxiety and frustration over the widespread corruption in both the national and local governments, as well as in the judiciary. A sizeable number of Afghans are becoming disenchanted with the Karzai government, particularly its apparent weakness and the endemic corruption of some of its leadership. Karzai himself is partly to blame for this disconcerting yet correct perception of his government. The circumstances of the primary arena game with the West have forced him to adopt a strategy of working with the regional warlords, but he has resisted efforts to purge the most corrupt officials from his administration.[166] The existence of warlords is the reality in Afghanistan; in many places, they are the only real power on the ground. The United States involved the Northern Alliance and the warlords in their strategy from the very beginning without really thinking through the repercussions this may have for their future reconstruction endeavors. Those involved in the reconstruction process are not dealing with one central government but a *de facto* one at the hands of the warlords as well. The warlords have a strategy too. They want to retain their power within the country, and it is likely they can with their current base of support. As a general rule, their strategy is not to rebuild the central authority, as is the mission of the West's game; the payoffs are not optimal, for by doing so they would lose their power.

Warlords in Afghanistan are another inhibitor to reconstruction efforts and the game of the U.S. and its allies. The U.S. brought the Northern Alliance and the warlords into the game and cannot just ignore their presence, as it further destabilizes the government and the country. It is hard at times to distinguish these groups as friend or foe. What is clear, however, is that they have been and will continue to be a key factor in Western success or failure in Afghanistan.

4.4 Illegal Livelihood: Narcotics in Afghanistan

Afghanistan is now a "narco-state." According to the latest UN World Drug Report, it produced ninety-two percent of the world's opium last year.[167] The illegal trade of opium involves everyone from poverty-stricken farmers, to warlords, to senior government officials. The drug money generated by the opium economy buys weapons that are used to prolong the conflict; it fuels incessant corruption; and diminishes the chances of building a viable economy and a national system of law and order. It also further impedes resolution to the overarching game.

There has been significant research conducted on the connection between natural resources and violent organized conflict. There are three general findings. First, continuous armed conflict often leads to increased levels of drug production and drug trafficking. Many insurgents seize the opportunity to engage in narcotics growth, production and trade. Second, some research suggests that the drug industry and economy usually lasts the duration of the conflict (if not longer). Lastly, there is a considerable link between an illicit drug economy and the fragility of states.[168] Afghanistan is certainly a country in conflict and has been for decades. For as long as

this, the drug economy has also been thriving. In its current form, it is also evident that without a strong central government commanding authority, Afghanistan is certainly fragile.

Currently there are two major sources of revenue into Afghanistan. The first comes from international aid, which is intended to support reconstruction and state-building in the poor and war-ravaged country. The second is the drug economy. Profit from the poppy economy is estimated to reach $2 billion a year.[169] At the 2006 London Conference that created the Afghanistan Compact, the donors pledged around ten billion dollars in reconstruction aid over the next five years.[170] Unless these groups keep donating on this level for many more years to come, Afghanistan will need the money the drug trade generates. With the high costs of running the country, it has become apparent that these resources are vital to Afghanistan. The narcotics economy consists of a long chain of people; it is a huge industry. At the very bottom of the ladder is the poor household farmer. Afghanistan is an agrarian society with most of its population living in rural settlements. These farmers and their families are principally preoccupied with ensuring that they themselves are fed and healthy. There are many incentives for farmers to cultivate poppy: it is highly marketable, well-suited for storage, and uses little water. It is also beneficial for the economy in that it injects cash into the economy, stabilizes the currency, and generates work in rural areas. About twenty percent of the income stays with the producers which is good news for poor farmers.[171]

But all is not positive for the drug economy. First and foremost, it is illegal. It can also be disruptive to societal relations at the community level. The cultivation and

production of narcotics is an illegal activity, regardless of the level of widespread acceptance for it. Furthermore, the more the drug trade is criminalized by the law, the more likely that it will be operated as a criminal activity, including the use of violence. The drug economy in most circumstances negatively impacts on local governance, de-stabilizing the country.[172] Second, the drug trade fuels armed conflict. President Karzai is noted as saying that alongside of terrorism, drugs are the biggest threat to Afghanistan's long-term security and development. "The trade in opium feeds the evil of corruption that, together, are the most corrosive elements in Afghan society."[173]

Indeed, there are many serious allegations that the Taliban and the poppy trade are considerably interconnected. *New York Times* reporter, Elizabeth Rubin, spent significant time in Afghanistan to get a better understanding of the situation on the ground. To find out how the opium trade worked and how it is related to the rise of the Taliban, she interviewed a medium-level smuggler. He explained how the whole country was at the services of the drug trade from national soldiers to national policemen.[174] The Taliban are connected to the trade, as well as many warlords who are now in the government. There is concern over what will improve this security situation.[175] Although farmers are drawn to poppy cultivation for a living, the majority of the profits go to the traffickers, warlords, militia leaders, and even the Taliban and al-Qa'ida.[176] While the Americans had more or less turned a blind eye to the drug-trade spree of their warlord allies, different countries like Iran have tried to crack down. To travel safely with the drugs the smuggler travels in convoys with considerable armed protection, often on loan from the Taliban.

The drug trade is related to the violence of the Taliban and permeates society, contributing to the endemic corruption.[177] Drug-related crime and corruption are rife in Afghanistan. In the south of the country, the drug trade and the Taliban insurgency are connected intrinsically and they share a common interest in resisting government authority and international forces. Defeating the drug problem will take immense leadership from the Afghan government and a prolonged commitment on the part of the international community.[178]

Afghanistan had record high opium production last year and it is expected to be even higher in 2007 if a more determined narcotics control program is not undertaken. But how does one wipe out an industry that employs an estimated 2.9 million people and causes so much conflict in the country? There have been three different solutions considered. The first is eradication where poppy crops are destroyed. The second is alternative livelihoods, where farmers are given support to grow other legal crops. The third is legalization, where opium is purchased from producers and used to make legal painkillers.[179] Thus far, the international actors have been unable to fix the problem or come to some sort of consensus on what the best way to deal with the issue is. Eradication is favored by the United States.[180] But this method hits poor farmers the hardest and not those in production and trafficking to where the most violence is attributable. As long as eradication is the plan, those in the trade will not buy into it since it is a great source of revenue for them. Other countries like Canada favor alternative livelihoods.[181] How to make this transition, however, is not clear. Legalization as an option requires a functioning government - something that Afghanistan does not currently

possess. This task seems even harder considering many government officials are involved in the industry themselves in one way or another. Part of a successful reconstruction effort must involve economic reform as well. While the interveners contemplate the best way to counter this threat it is getting significantly worse. The opium industry involves a complex web of actors, some of whom are the enemy the U.S., ISAF, and allies are trying to defeat. The illegality of this economy, coupled with the violence, corruption, and instability it generates threatens both the legitimacy of the Afghan government and the entire reconstruction process. The opium industry certainly is 'nested' as its network is embedded within society, having both obvious participants and those more difficult to pinpoint. The war on terror must also involve a war on drugs if this reconstruction effort is to succeed. To date, mired in its own strategy, the U.S. has not seriously grappled with this problem.

4.5 Ethnic Disharmony

Afghanistan has always been a country of many different tribes, religions and ethnicities, which at times has led to volatility and tension within the state. Pashtuns are typically estimated to comprise forty to forty-five percent of the current population.[182] The Pashtun have long dominated the national political scene, while Tajik, Uzbek and Hazara have significant regional autonomy. As previously mentioned, when the Taliban emerged, its members were embraced predominantly by the Pashtun population, less for their ideology and more because they brought stability and rule of law. There were very few of the other major groups within Taliban ranks. All of those groups had their own regional forces and leaders.

One of the effects of the war on terror and the American military intervention into Afghanistan has been to shift the balance of ethno-political power away from the Pashtun. Afghanistan is no longer a 'Pashtun state.' When the United States chose the Northern Alliance as an ally, its warlord generals (of Tajik, Uzbek and Hazara origin) found themselves in powerful positions in the new provisional government. The Pashtun population was wary of this and it has been difficult for many to accept. Furthermore, the Pashtuns themselves are an ethnically divided community, split along regional and ideological lines, as well as by loyalties to different leaders. For instance, there are numerous differences between the East and the South.[183] Political reconstruction cannot take place without addressing the concerns of the Pashtuns about security, participation, and representation. Be that as it may, the other groups cannot be ignored either. Many Pashtuns feel that other ethnic minorities have too much of a voice at the table, not because of political standing, but instead due to the support of international actors. A critical concern for the Pashtuns is security. In the early years of the intervention, there was significant settling of scores by the Hazaras, Uzbeks and Tajiks among themselves to control the once Taliban dominated territories. Many Pashtun are finding themselves internally displaced.[184]

Simultaneously, there are worries about how ethnicity and religion in surrounding countries may effect the shaky situation in Afghanistan. As previously discussed, there are close ties between Pashtun in both Afghanistan and Pakistan. The desire of many to have these groups unified by some could cause considerable upheaval. Pro-Taliban elements in Pakistan threaten the internal stability of Afghanistan. The recent emergence

of suicide bombing in Afghanistan, a practice notably common in Iraq, has become disturbingly frequent among 'neo-Taliban.' This new extremism can potentially cause great disruption in the country. If the country's largest ethnic groups feel that they do not have a stake in the reconstruction process, the attacks may become a sign of a worsening situation in the future.[185] For countries like Afghanistan, ethnicity can be an incredible source of conflict. This is certainly the case in the country as former ethnic lines of dominance are shifting and power is moving hands. Ensuring that all ethnic groups are included in government is vital to the success of reconstruction and to the eventual end of conflict. Instead of trying to bring unity to the country, the groups seem to be only further polarizing. The resurgence of the Taliban is very troublesome as well. The interveners cannot view the ethnic situation as Taliban and the rest. Different groups have different expectations and come from varying backgrounds and lifestyles. Not everyone is going to be so quick to accept the situation as is. It would be a rational strategy for local Pashtun elites to turn to support the resurgent Taliban if they fear a non-Pashtun dominated government. Likewise, other groups may support local warlords if they fear the opposite. While the Karzai government holds the responsibility for maintaining a fair and equitable government, the intervention must view the ethnic situation in the same manner. There is great tension between different parties and the situation could evolve into a powder keg if respect for these tribal differences is not taken into consideration by the foreign powers. The current Western strategy needs to come to grips with this arena and the actors involved; they are not dealing with a homogenous population. Afghans of different ethnicities are not going to support reconstruction

endeavors, a new government, and ultimately a Western strategy for Afghanistan that does not have adequate payoffs - one that does not represent them and their interests.

As is evident from the preceding analysis of the situation in Afghanistan, the reality on the ground is both complex and convoluted. What the nested games approach has made evident is that the irrational behavior of actors in the principal arena can be explained by successful strategies toward equilibrium at the nested game level. Given the nested games in Afghanistan and the desire to achieve optimal outcomes by actors at this level, it is unlikely there will be success and therefore equilibrium in the principal arena, since both observer and actors do not hold mutually optimal strategies toward post-conflict reconstruction. The West needs a multi-tiered strategy that addresses all arenas if they wish to see some success.

Chapter Five - Conclusion

"This nation is peaceful, but fierce when stirred to anger. The conflict was begun on the timing and terms of others. It will end in a way, and at an hour, of our choosing."[186]
– President George W. Bush

The United States of America and its Western allies entered the war on terror and the country of Afghanistan with a mission to rid the world of terrorists who threaten the peace and security of all and to reconstruct the state of Afghanistan into one that would be democratic and safe for its own people and for others too; a nobly planned endeavor. Although the intervention into Afghanistan might be justifiable, the motivations and purposes for doing so have not always been in the best interests of the country or executed in a manner that would lead to successful reconstruction. There has been self-interest guiding the policy of interveners, as well as an incomplete perspective of the actual issues inhibiting success of the Western intervention. Ensuring Afghanistan's stability is imperative for peace in the region. Southern Asia and the Middle East have always been two of the most volatile regions of the world. The threat of extremism and terrorism that exudes from this region is a concern not merely to neighboring countries, but states the world over. There was not a perceived threat from Afghanistan, there was a real threat. However, the intervention has been doomed to fail from the start because the Western strategy has failed to focus on any games outside of that in the principal arena.

The initial military action taken under Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and the ISAF response was successful in rooting out great numbers of al-Qa'ida and Taliban militants who had attacked the United States and were wreaking havoc on their own country. The reconstruction effort by external actors within Afghanistan, however, has

not been successful. In 2007, the future of NATO's mission is so uncertain that the possibility of withdrawal has even been considered. More frequently, there is discussion of extending the mission in Afghanistan and having a long presence there. This alone is evidence that reconstruction to this point is not working and has not been effective. Current NATO policies and programs in Afghanistan are not on course to achieve their objectives. Some policies are working, but many more are not. If major conflict occurs at the present rate, there is a real risk that the Afghan population will become increasingly frustrated by the lack of security and change, and that some allies will head home. This is an action that many Canadians would have their military take within the next year.

Expectations in Afghanistan have been high, but there are perceived and real differences in standards of governance and life between Afghanistan and the Western countries. The language of the Western intervention has been one of liberation, featuring rights, democratic statebuilding, and Marshall Plan tactics. The invasion was based on an understanding that while al-Qa'ida was a threat, the roots of the conflict and violence could be traced to an Afghan failure of governance. In the eyes of the West, it was therefore necessary for the Taliban to be defeated and for Afghanistan to begin the transition to democracy. Democracy has been the guiding ideal for the reconstruction efforts. Nevertheless, there has been a tension between the U.S. commitment to military operations under OEF, and internationally mandated security and peacebuilding activities. Reconstruction in Afghanistan has not been getting the commitment it requires. Simultaneously, insurgency has increased, growing numbers of soldiers are

being killed, and more troops are being sent overseas to fight in a war that is entering its seventh year.

As the situation in Afghanistan worsens for the interveners, failure and indeed withdrawal or mission extension have to be considered. The fact that this has been taken into consideration suggests that there has always been a strategy and a game being played. A game that could be the West's to lose. While the forces had been successful in eliminating much of the enemy, the country is still in chaos and is failing. "Failure" of the mission would most likely arise if, after one or two more years, participating members witness increased instability, greater enemy attacks, heightened NATO casualties, and a floundering central government – a course that will lead many member states to withdraw. Since 2004 all of these situations have become reality. Instability has increased significantly in the past few years, a new insurgency has threatened the lives of both troops and civilians, NATO has seen more losses in the past year than in any of the preceding ones, and the central government is losing control of the periphery and the support of its people. The central government elected in 2004 has done little to improve the political, economic and social situation within Afghanistan and the interveners have been overly caught up in military issues, though they have not addressed them properly, to work towards a holistic reconstruction effort.

The reality on the ground in Afghanistan is extremely complex and backed by an even more complicated and chaotic history. Reconstruction is not an easy task but neither has it been approached in a suitable manner. Reconstruction in Afghanistan has focused on solving the game in the principal arena of defeating the Taliban and installing

liberal-democratic political and economic institutions in the state. The West has set unrealistic goals for building state institutions, promoting liberal values, and promoting democracy within only one arena. It is impractical to expect Afghanistan to rebuild institutions as well as adopt and absorb liberal values at such speed. It is also out of sync with the historical and cultural legacy of the country. Democracy is a laudable goal and it may be the ultimate one in Afghanistan. However, democracy should be of Afghan design and not an imported Western version. Ultimately, people can only secure democracy for themselves; although they may have some assistance from outside parties. Imposing democracy from the outside is a recipe for failure. In the case of Afghanistan they were not even the best intentions.

The intervention into Afghanistan sees the game as a simplistic defeat of the Taliban and the implementation of liberal-democratic norms. The pre-emptive nature of the Bush Doctrine proves that the elimination of the Taliban is part of the Western strategy, as well as ensuring democracy. But defeating the Taliban is sometimes at odds with creating democracy; e.g. the use of warlords as Western allies, although they do not want democracy. There is the problem of a contradiction in the Western game to begin with. External powers seek to impose a liberal-democratic system on a country that is not receptive to it based on internal realities. There are numerous games in other arenas being played simultaneously, nested within the larger game, and they have not been taken into account. The nested games are many - Taliban and al-Qa'ida insurgents threatening foreign troops and civilians, warlords with great power who hold places in the central government and in the provinces, a drug economy that involves millions of Afghans, a

volatile relationship with neighboring Pakistan, and unstable relations among ethnic groups. While the Western powers are aware of these challenges, they have made only a minimal attempt, at best, to address them. The pillars of the Western strategy – defeating the Taliban and installing democracy - are at cross-purposes with each other even before the nested games are considered. Once the nested games are added into the equation, the Western strategy becomes completely unworkable. Contextual factors, of which the actors are aware, lead to different strategies between the observer and the actors. However, only when there are mutually optimal strategies will equilibrium be reached, and ultimately success in the primary arena. In trying to bring about successful strategies at the nested game level, the actors' behavior in the principal arena appears irrational to the observer, restricting the success the West desires.

5.1 Canadians in Afghanistan: Responding to Nested Games

One country that is considered to have had some success with reconstruction in Afghanistan is Canada. Within Canada debate over the country's involvement in Afghanistan is becoming increasingly heated. The recent deaths of Canadian soldiers at the hands of Taliban insurgents have many Canadians questioning the utility of the mission and calling for withdrawal of troops within the next few years.[187] The number of soldiers killed in battle is hard to ignore, but this does not mean that the Canadian mission is failing. The rising toll of casualties is drowning out any consideration of the real progress being made. Canadians are not just in Afghanistan to fight, they are also there to reconstruct. While Canada is part of ISAF and will therefore bear part of the weight of its success or failure, it has made positive inroads in acknowledging the nested

games in this war on terror, and in doing so have seen positive progress in their endeavors.

Since 2001, Canada, as part of ISAF, has applied the "3Ds" to expand its presence in Afghanistan – defence, development and diplomacy. A United Nations Security Council resolution at the end of 2001 mandated the ISAF to assist the Afghan Transitional Authority by providing security in Kabul. In 2004, Canada took responsibility for Kandahar province after NATO member countries volunteered to deploy to more secure provinces. Kandahar is one of the most dangerous of all the provinces in Afghanistan. Canadian forces took over the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) there. While the primary role of the forces stationed in Kandahar has been security, Canada has supported other stabilization and peacebuilding initiatives, particularly in the area of demobilization, disarmament, and re-integration of ex-combatants (DDR).[188] The best way to look at Canadian and Afghan operations in Kandahar province is to divide them into "shield" operations and "build" operations, which are interwoven. The "shield" function refers to the obvious security measures. The Kandahar Reconstruction Team (KPRT) working with the Afghan government and aid agencies is the "build" part of the equation.[189] There is redevelopment occurring across most of the country. Unfortunately, what is conveyed in the news tends to be of a negative nature, accentuating deaths over new beginnings.

Canada has been particularly diligent in the area of rule of law and justice, and they have coordinated their work around that. They have been helping local councils to make the government more legitimate, but it is a role of guidance where the Afghans

themselves choose the projects. They have assisted with everything from teaching how to write legislation to running ministries in this area. The Canadian army has been training the Afghan National Army (ANA) and in this endeavor they have had great success.[190] The army has definitely improved and is well on its way to being able to function independently. The RCMP has also been training police. While progress in this undertaking has been much slower, a police force is desperately needed. The Canadian government has been putting more of its money into these tasks, as it is a more effective use of taxpayer dollars. Real change is happening.[191] There has been a significant focus on the court system as well, and Canadians have been learning how to work with traditional justice systems. One cannot assume that the Afghans need the system Canada or other Western countries operate under. There is a fine balance to be achieved between enacting justice and making it a witch-hunt. It is hoped that with Afghans and Canadians working together on this project, that an adequate and fair system may be established.[192]

Of particular relevance to the nested games problem, Canada has attempted to respond to the narcotics problem. Canada favors the alternative livelihoods option. The belief here is that eradication hurts the poor. Therefore, concentration of efforts has been on apprehending the level above the farmer, thereby cutting off the trade, then working with these farmers on different crops they may be able to grow and harvest with success.

To deal with the warlord problem, Canada is involved with DIAG – Disarmament for Illegally Armed Groups. This has been a tougher challenge for Canadians in reconstruction, for as long as there is insecurity in the country it is hard to get groups to give up their arms. Nevertheless, Canada is a key player in this mission and it is not a

task they are willing to give up on just yet.[193] These are Canada's main contributions to the reconstruction process; however, there have been many great achievements in Kandahar province in the areas of health and education. Polio as been all but eradicated from the province and infant mortality in the region has taken a dramatic downturn.[194]

Kandahar is still a volatile province and the security threats continue to exist. Acknowledging this, the Canadian reconstruction team has not forgotten the other duty it is there to complete reconstruction. It will be many years before Afghanistan is 'reconstructed' if it ever is at all, but if these types of pursuits continue one should see a drastic change in Afghan society. The Canadian team at the very least has considered the internal dynamics and the relationships of different players in their attempts at reconstruction.

Nevertheless, Canada is still part of the West's principal arena game. They entered Afghanistan in 2001 to support the United States and ISAF in its endeavors to fight terrorism and make the country a more safe and democratic place. These are goals that ultimately derive from the Bush Doctrine, even if this is not the publicly stated intention. An imposed democratic rule of law and the pre-emptive removal of terrorist support networks fall in line with the pursuits of countries like the United States. Canada is undoubtedly making reconstructive progress in Afghanistan and they are at least somewhat aware of the nested games in the country, trying to solve these problems. The socio-economic situation is improving in Kandahar province and some incremental measures that have been undertaken are beginning to take effect. These successes should

not be undermined. However, the motivations and strategy appears to originate from the same ideals as the U.S. policies of pre-emptive security and forced democratization.

5.2 Final Remarks

Afghanistan has not been improving significantly since the intervention began. The primary arena game has been the focus to the neglect of nested games; this is a game in multiple arenas. There has also been an ignorance of the multiple players' payoffs. The payoffs from the nested games are often greater than compliance with the Western game. There is frustration on the part of the West that Karzai and his government are not able to adopt and implement a properly functioning democratic government. The choices of the Afghan government appear to be suboptimal in this game. This viewpoint is held because the interveners have an incomplete perspective, or they see what is going on but fail to approach the situation with an understanding of the other actors' interests. For example, the Americans want to eradicate the poppy crop but this is not workable because it hurts the rural poor who are only trying to survive.

The nested games constrain the achievement of what the West desires, as well as the effectiveness of policy choices, i.e. the relationship with warlords who were made part of the government but continue in their corrupt ways. Endogenous rules and mechanisms allow individuals to get things done at a local level. The people within Afghanistan are able to help with reconstruction because they know what it is they need. The rules of the principal arena game need to be altered and defined in the appropriate manner. Only then is cooperation possible and will reconstruction be successful. Occupying forces need to play a more mediating and less overbearing role.

Reconstruction efforts *must* be driven from within. When these nested games are addressed and internal powers are granted more involvement in reconstructing their own country, then more optimal outcome may be realized. It is possible for reconstruction to become more cooperative, but only when all stakeholders are involved. Reconstruction can be guided, but fundamentally intervention will enable a secure environment when indigenous Afghans work to create sustaining institutions.

The U.S. and the international community do not need Afghanistan to become a modern democratic state or even an internally united one to protect their key interests, namely security. They require a cessation of serious armed conflict and sufficient access to the country to ensure it does not once again harbour terrorists. However, to gain this access and reach an end to conflict they need to pay attention to Afghanistan's nested games and realize that liberal-democracy may not be the saving grace of every country they try and reconstruct.

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