Research Project C9

Aid, Minds, Hearts: A Longitudinal Study of Governance Interventions in Afghanistan

1   Project Director

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2   Description of Research Project

The project asks under which conditions the presence of external actors and their interaction with community and district level actors leads to effective and legitimate governance in North East Afghanistan. The project continues a longitudinal study of the impact of military and civil interventions on peace- and state-building processes in North East Afghanistan over the twelve year funding period of the SFB 700. This study is based on a mixed method approach, combining qualitative guideline interviews, fieldwork and case studies with quantitative household surveys which will be repeated in 2015 and 2017 during the third funding period of the SFB. The Afghan case represents an "once-in-a-lifetime" opportunity for researchers to observe in real time and in the field the impact of external policies on state-building and the dynamics of social order, and thus, to evaluate the SFB's overall research question concerning the scope and conditions of effective and legitimate governance in areas of limited statehood (*Rahmenantrag C.1.1/2*).

The US led Operation Enduring Freedom and the subsequent international engagement (ISAF, UNAMA) was a fundamental "game changer" for Afghanistan (2001-2002). The collapse of the Taliban state left the country without a government and meaningful state structures. Statehood as well as governance was local – or regional at best – with little legitimacy and rudimentary capacities (effectiveness) only. The international military and civilian intervention had to fill the void offering both state-like capacities and governance and from 2003 onwards while also assisting the Afghan government in developing state and governance capacities. The result was an *intervention society* – a hybrid structure – only partly independent and relying massively on external support (see Daxner et al. 2010). In 2014 this will all change. The Afghan Government will assume full sovereignty for both civilian governance and the provision of security. But is

it up to the task? To what extent will it be able to offer effective and legitimate governance to its population? And will its capacity suffice to ensure a minimum of stability (stable social order)?

In our research in Period I and II we noted significant regional and local variance regarding the modes of governance provision in North-East Afghanistan. We suppose that this observed variance is linked to differences in the *effectiveness* and *legitimacy* of governance in the research region. In line with the third central research objective of the SFB 700, in Period III we thus (1) intend to understand how the empirically observed variance in the quality and modes of governance emerges and how these differences lead to different outcomes regarding the *legitimacy* and *effectiveness* of governance. (2) In a subsequent step we will then explore how different degrees and forms of *legitimacy* and *effectiveness* of governance impact on the stability of social order. Ultimately we thus seek to understand the link between the quality of governance and the stability of social order in a conflict setting.

In the following we will discuss these two main research objectives in more detail.

3   Local modes of governance and the effectiveness and legitimacy of governance outcomes

The SFB 700 framework proposal (Rahmenantrag) identifies a number of context conditions that are assumed to lead to more effective and legitimate governance outcomes. Four of these context conditions are particularly relevant for the north-east Afghan context and will therefore be investigated further in Period III.

(3a) The institutional arrangements of the governance constellation (including the resources necessary for providing governance services); probably most important condition from the perspective of the planned research in Period III are the institutional arrangements of the governance constellation. Following the definition of the framework proposal the term "governance constellation" refers to the combination of the different modes of governance provision (how and what type of governance services are offered) and the different possible actors who happen to provide these governance services.

One of the main findings of our research in funding Period II was the empirical observation of six distinct governance constellations in North-East Afghanistan. Since these governance constellations had a clear geographic reach and could thus be mapped, we termed them "governance zones". (For a detailed description of the six governance zones see Koehler, Jan 2012).

In Period III we intend to further investigate the emergence of the above mentioned governance zones and how they lead to different outcomes in terms of the *efficiency* and legitimacy of *governance* provision in these zones.

(3b) (Residual) statehood of the relevant region and / or its respective functional equivalent; the Afghan state remains in many respects weak, and unable to establish a monopoly of violence. The state nevertheless plays an important in influencing the control of violence and the provision of security even when its official forces are not the only providers of these services. Hybrid forms of violence control and security provision are possible when local power-broker

allied with the state set up their own armed forces to augment the capacities of the state (e.g. militias, Afghan Local Police).

The formal and informal distribution of rents (partly through corruption) can be a further factor binding local power-brokers to the Afghan state. The manipulation of foreign aid flows can thus play a crucial role in keeping the system alive.

Lastly, the Taliban structures themselves can be understood as a form of residual statehood.

(3c) Empirical Legitimacy of local governance; so far the Afghan state has drawn a significant amount of its local legitimacy from the outputs it provided (with foreign donor support) to the population. Is this enough and can the provision of these outputs be maintained in 2014 and beyond? What are the sources of *input* and *throughput* legitimacy of the Afghan state? The 2014 presidential elections will be a crucial event to be observed in this respect.

(3d) Local integration and trust; the question of social embedding is crucial with regard to this context condition for effective and legitimate governance. Of particular importance is the social embedding of the externally induced Shura complex (see 1.a above) – a grand experiment in social engineering - which as our research in Period I and II shows, appears to have been successfully institutionalised in large parts of the north-east (cf. Koehler/Gosztonyi 2011).

A further key question relates to the social embedding (or the lack of it) of violent actors. With the withdrawal of international forces, the need for the local provision of security rises. Wherever the Afghan national security forces will be insufficient to guarantee security, communities are likely turn to local strongmen (in fact, this process has already begun in 2009-10). How these violent actors will be embedded into the local communities and integrated Afghan state structures (see also "residual statehood") will be a key determinant of the degree of effective and legitimacy governance on the local level.

4 Impact of the quality of governance (effectiveness, legitimacy) on the stability of the social order

So far we have asked questions regarding the emergence of effective and legitimate governance. In a second step we intend to investigate the interrelation between (a) different outcomes regarding the effectiveness and legitimacy of governance and (b) the degree of dynamic stability of the social order. A stable social order we define as consisting of four functional fields: the degree of *physical security*, the quality of *governance institutions*, the capacity of society to economically reproduce itself (*economic sustainability*) and its capacity to *adapt to changing conditions* (see Koehler et al. 2011). We intend to describe the "performance" of the research regions in these functional fields by way of empirical quantitative indicators.

When exploring the interrelation between the effectiveness and legitimacy of governance and the dynamic stability of social order we will concentrate in particular on three issues:

(4a) Can we identify fundamental preconditions for the emergence of effective and legitimate governance? Our assumption, which we will have to empirically test, is that a minimum of security and the control of violence is such a precondition for the emergence of any form of

governance. The degree of violence control necessary (or rather still sufficient) for the maintenance of effective and legitimate governance will thus be a key objective of our empirical research.

(4b) For which aspects of a dynamically stable social order is effective and legitimate governance a fundamental precondition? In other words, how does the degree and quality of effective and legitimate governance impact on the *four functional fields of a dynamically stable social order* (i.e. security, institutions, economic reproduction and development, and the capacity to adapt)?

(4c) Lastly, we will also intend ask a number of specific questions regarding how the four functional fields of stability are linked to effective and legitimate governance as outlined in the overall research framework of the SFB 700 (*Rahmenantrag C.1.1/2*).

Field I - Physical Security: We ask whether effective governance institutions are causally linked to sustaining security and whether bad governance (arbitrary rule, dysfunctional or absent institutions) is a main cause of insecurity? Our research feeds empirical evidence into the debate on the relevance of security for stability and the question of what and whose security counts within the context of state-building. We continue to focus on the impact of (shrinking) military deployment and development aid on local security perceptions over time. We continue to systematically assess the nexus between (1) subjective, perception based security indicators, (2) objective security indicators like coded incident lists, military operations, security forces and insurgency presence, and, as a new coded variable, (3) the variation and possibly changing semantics of local security. Finally, we investigate if an adapted, context-embedded concept of physical security is a primary marker for stability, preceding and predicting the other three functional fields of stability.

Field II- Governance Institutions: As explained above, this field will be treated with priority during the third funding period. Our guiding research questions regarding the field of governance institutions are: Which institutional arrangements cause effective governance? Does the degree and the quality of institutionalisation of governance predict its impact on the other stabilisation fields? Is security a pre-condition for or a consequence of effective governance? Specifically, is the security-capacity of statehood (monopoly of violence) causally linked to the sustainability of local (state and non-state) governance?

Our research feeds empirical evidence into the debate on how much statehood governance requires and if acceptance of the state in itself is a precondition for the emergence of sustainable governance structures. Statehood as a specific institutional order of society is defined by its capacities (territorial control, a legitimate claim to the monopoly over the use of force/violence, ultimate authority of law; cf. *A1 Risse, Börzel 2011*). In this context, we intend to focus on the impact of (shrinking) military deployment and development aid on statehood, i.e. on the capacities and legitimacy of the state (*Rahmenantrag, C.2.1*). Moreover, we seek to understand the dynamic process of rejection and appropriation in view of external transfers of governance and we want to find out what conditions are conducive for the cooperation between the local population, the state, and international actors. Finally, we seek to better understand the sources of legitimacy/ acceptance of constellations of governance: Is it function-based (output legitimacy) or participation-based (input legitimacy; *Rahmenantrag C.1.2*)?

Field III - Economic sustainability/development: In this context, we ask whether economic growth predicts stabilisation effects in the other two fields of security and governance and whether economic decline predicts de-stabilisation in those fields. Reducing poverty and improving basic goods and service delivery is a clearly formulated request of poor, post-conflict and conflict societies and it is widely assumed to have stabilising effects by development actors. Research by Collier and Hoeffler, for example, found that relative economic growth on the macro level matters more for stabilization than for measures of poverty (Collier/Hoeffler 2004). But the stability effects of economic development are not unquestionable: Development itself can become a bone of contention between communities. It can also trigger processes of social change that are highly destabilising, especially in combination with rapid economic growth. We will further explore these appearing contradictions. We shall look into opportunity costs of high-risk groups. We will investigate if cross-cutting ties between competing or hostile communities matter when stable common interests are involved.

Field IV - Adaptive change: Here, we ask whether high degrees of institutionalization and low levels of insecurity predict the willingness and capacity of local communities to "modernise." Does evidence for integrating (adaptive) or resisting (non-adaptive) change in terms of behaviour and discourse (participation, avoidance, resistance) correlate with stability-effects in any of the other three fields?

We know from our data that there is considerable variation in how the respondents make sense of recent as well as expected changes. With regard to development-induced modernisation we already know that there is great variation between districts and sometimes also between ethnic groups with regard to the associated hopes and fears. We are, however, not yet sure about the causal mechanisms that could explain the variance. We need to explore this stabilisation field further, including systematic qualitative research into the semantic concepts behind indicators we use to measure openness to change/modernisation (e.g. threat to local norms and Islamic values).

Using our dataset (a systematically gathered quantitative and qualitative timeline beginning in 2007 and reaching, hopefully, until 2016, i.e. two year after the intensive phase of the external intervention ends) we will be able to answer the above outlined questions. In doing this we will rely on regression models as well as on controlled comparative case studies relating to the different modes of governance. Our dataset provides us with a unique opportunity to empirically test key causality assumptions of the SFB 700 regarding the emergence of effective and legitimate governance and its impact on social order.

5   Implementation

As an empirical and inductive meso-sociological research project we are observing, assessing and analyzing a range of intervention effects on local societies in Afghanistan. In this final funding period we will use the wider inductive research results to develop and test the stabilisation model of interventions using the concepts of stability and social order introduced above (Koehler 2012; Koehler et al. 2011). We will investigate the impact of the changing intervention via the previously outlined four functional fields of stability. Each field is assessed by a range of quanti-

fiable indicators. The indicators measure those variables we will use for testing our hypotheses on the impact of the intervention. E.g., we hypothesize that (district level) effective governance increases development activities and reduces fear. Here, indicators to measure the independent (effective governance) and dependent (development, fear) variables need to be defined. The indicators are drawn from the database and relate to quantitative and qualitative original data. We will use indicators directly reflecting the four functional fields of stability (e.g. security incidents or subjective security assessment from the survey); or proxies (e.g. fear levels as proxy for security). Each indicator will be defined in its direct or indirect relation to the functional field it is meant to measure. We also account for intervening external variables that are likely to affect stability but do not fit into one of the four fields (like demographic, historical, or cultural context conditions). We will then test, for example, in how far a variable based on governance zones statistically predicts response patterns on security, development, or adaptive change. This approach will consolidate the qualitative descriptive analyses of governance in each target district with the statistical analyses in a systematic way and will help us to adapt our regression models in order to make them more robust.

In the following, we outline our multi-method approach.

Mass Surveys

Our longitudinal study offers the opportunity to overcome one of the most serious problems in researching post-conflict state-building: the availability of consistent data over time. Insofar, the project the data collection and successive interpretations. Our initial unit of analysis remains the village where we can establish representativeness when surveying. We will now increasingly compare village clusters, governance zones, and districts with each other (higher aggregated units of analysis). This is the main reason for increasing the number of the focal units of analysis significantly (from 4 to 27) in order to capture district-specific variance and specific context variables. For this purpose we have developed an approach approximating representativeness allowing us to compare districts and clusters with each other. This allows us to conduct a controlled comparison between those higher aggregate units examining the impact of the intervention on the four above mentioned functional fields (security, governance, economic development, and adaptation).

We have selected 120 communities (starting with 80 in 2007), which are being observed over eleven years. A first mass survey among 2000 households in 80 communities was conducted in spring 2007. The 2013 follow-up survey will continue with the enlarged procedure (i.e. 120 communities with 3600 households). We have added a baseline of 25 districts to our research. Here, the focus lies on the effects of infrastructure and governance-capacity building development programmes on stability. On the basis of survey and profile data as well as on external databases on security incidents we have already constructed and tested a range of stability indicators. The data are aggregated to the district level and analysed at this level. The main idea is to represent the target districts by assessing five village clusters in each district and, depending on the size of the cluster, one to two villages per cluster. The clusters were selected to offer maximum variation on five criteria: remoteness, ethnic and religious composition, access to natural recourses

(rain-fed and irrigated agriculture), and security. The idea behind the sampling method is that communities in one neighbourhood share more common features than communities further apart from each other. The sample size is sufficient to represent major trends and characteristics of each district.

During the third funding period, the 2013 mass survey will be replicated in 2015 and 2017. The methodology is to be refined as we learn from previous surveys. The principle questions of the questionnaire remain unchanged while some new questions, reflecting the changing framework conditions are added while question that did not work may be dropped. The main sections of the questionnaire are:

- security perception (perception of the security situation; subjective assessment of relevant actors and their potential to act; major threats to security),
- conflict at the communal level (violent conflicts within the community; role of state institutions in conflict resolution),
- household resource endowment, the political and social order of the community (power structures within the community; role of village *shura*; role of development *shura*; prevailing norms and practices of solidarity and trust facilitating collective action, mobility and networking of community members),
- state services and output legitimacy (perception of the state's capacity to deliver services),
- attitudes, norms and values (attitudes towards international actors, attitudes towards traditional or "Western" values),
- coverage and usefulness of development aid (perception of whether households and communities have been beneficiaries of development projects or not).

Triangulation of Data

Survey data will be supplemented by additional primary data (on levels of development aid, security incidents and military deployment, etc.) and secondary sources. Furthermore, a team of local researchers provides a semi-structured report on all surveyed communities in order to complement the survey data with qualitative background information on relevant developments affecting the respective communities. The semi-structured key informant interviews concentrate on empirical puzzles identified during the analysis of field data. We will conduct guided interviews with three categories of community representatives in each survey village (village intelligentsia, traditional elite, new elite) as well as with ten pre-defined positions at the district level. The guideline interviews follow functional fields of the stability matrix and add (codable) qualitative depth to our survey data on security, governance, development and adaptive change. They also include questions related to the local semantics of key concepts like security, fear, governance, justice or modernisation.

Moreover, we continue to collect data on our own available from statistics and research in other countries. We build village and district profiles which serve as a baseline and are updated every two years. They contain valuable background information for changes of basic demographic, political and economic framework conditions of villages, clusters and districts over the years.

In addition to the methods explained above we are using ethnographic fieldwork in order to refine our case studies. Each community and each district is treated as a particular case. During our fieldwork in 2015 (about 4 months), the project's postdoctoral researcher Jan Koehler will visit selected communities from our sample, conduct focus group discussions as well as interviews with Afghan and international stakeholders. Follow-ups on conflict and development case studies are envisaged. The case studies are inter alia used to identify relevant communication processes and semantic flows between communities, the state, and external actors (and two additional workshops in Mazar aim at gaining further insights on the intermediate level). Working with local teams will be extended. We will investigate if local young researchers recruited from regional tertiary institutions (in Mazar, Kunduz, Takhar, Faizabad) can be motivated to cooperate in basic field work. We will organize workshops with Afghan research assistants that we identify from within the growing local research community at provincial universities, institutes and, in some cases, research focused NGOs. We will also host another workshop with locally prominent Afghans from the districts under investigation and local colleagues from NGOs (as we did already in 2011).

We complement our data by extracting existing data from external sources such as CiMiC village profiles (a comprehensive incident database), baseline surveys of development programmes of Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), Aga Khan Foundation (AKF), International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), Afghanistan Country Stability Picture (ACSP) as of June 2010, National Risk & Vulnerability Assessment (NRVA) 2003-2005, Tracking System of the German governmental aid, and other sources. The focus is on socio-economic data that complete our own survey data on security related incidents and on aid inputs. We already started to code and standardize information from the various qualitative and quantitative sources for each case (using the programmes SPSS, NVivo and i2 for data collection and processing, specifically for the analysis of patronage networks and insurgents' networks, and *ARC GIS* for the collection and processing of spatial data).