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THESIS

LOCAL SECURITY IN AFGHANISTAN

by

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LOCAL SECURITY IN AFGHANISTAN

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requirements for the degree of

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ABSTRACT

This thesis seeks to determine how the United States should facilitate and advise the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) regarding local Afghan security forces. Through in-depth analysis of relevant case studies (Afghan Local Police, Indian Territorial Army, Peruvian Rondas Campesinas, Afghan Arbakai), this thesis gleans critical lessons, positive and negative, to inform the development of an appropriate local security program for modern-day Afghan society. Given Afghanistan's tribal nature, challenging geography, and the inability of GIROA to secure its population with national forces, there is a need for effective local security elements that can protect their communities without challenging the survival of the central government. When developing local security elements, GIROA should incorporate traditional governance, establish an appropriate link between local security elements and the military, and adapt force structures to judiciously selected areas. Additionally, GIROA should create training and employment regimens for local security elements that preserve their intended use as small, defensive forces and impose minimal disruption to community life.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ALP	Afghan Local Police
ANA	Afghan National Army
ANATF	Afghan National Army Territorial Force
ANDSF	Afghan National Defense and Security Forces
ANP	Afghan National Police
AP3	Afghan Public Protection Program
CDC	Civil Defense Committee (Peru)
CFSOCC-A	Combined Forces Special Operations Component Command— Afghanistan
CSTC-A	Combined Security Transition Command—Afghanistan
GIRoA	Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
ITA	Indian Territorial Army
MoD	Ministry of Defense (Afghanistan)
MoI	Ministry of Interior (Afghanistan)
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NSOCC-A	NATO Special Operations Component Command—Afghanistan
USSOF	United States Special Operations Forces

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM

When the United States intervened in Afghanistan in 2001, it did so in the middle of a civil war between tribal militias led by regional powerbrokers and the Taliban, which brutally sought to maintain strict control over the Afghan people. Following the rapid toppling of the Taliban by a small contingent of American Special Forces and intelligence operatives partnered with Afghan guerrilla elements, the United States, NATO, and the United Nations assisted in the establishment of a transitional central government.¹ Potentially counter to the tribal nature of Afghan society, the United States and its allies shaped the fledgling Afghan government and its security forces into organizations resembling its own composition.² After seventeen years of sustained combat, the United States continues to commit troops and resources in an ongoing effort to achieve a stable Afghanistan free of insurgent and terror organizations.

Afghanistan remains a predominantly rural and tribal society with a long history of militias and warlords that have both stabilized and disrupted regions of the country.³ As recently as America's involvement during the War on Terror, Afghanistan endured multiple militia-based security programs, with varying levels of success. The development of local security forces is not without risk. There exists legitimate concern about shifting loyalties and co-optation of forces by warlords to create militias for personal gain. For a

¹ Mark Fields and Ramsha Ahmed, *A Review of the 2001 Bonn Conference and Application to the Road Ahead in Afghanistan* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2011), 5, <http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a577629.pdf>.

² Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction. *Reconstructing the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces: Lessons from the U.S. Experience in Afghanistan* (Arlington, CA: SIGAR, September 2017), 168.

³ Jonathan Goodhand and Aziz Hakimi, "Counterinsurgency, Local Militias, and Statebuilding in Afghanistan" (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2014), 6, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2013/12/counterinsurgency-local-militias-and-statebuilding-afghanistan>.

security solution to achieve some level of effectiveness, it will have to address, or at least consider, the will of the people, the tolerance of the Afghan government, the interests of the United States, and the tribal nature of Afghan society. This thesis seeks to evaluate the potential benefits and challenges of local security initiatives and will make recommendations for employment to complement Afghanistan's formal security structure and maintain the confidence of the Afghan people.

B. RESEARCH QUESTION

How should the United States facilitate and advise the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) regarding local Afghan security forces?

- (1) What factors brought about the failure of previous local security attempts?
- (2) What control measures must exist for a local security program to remain resilient to corruption, misuse by local power brokers, or being co-opted by GIROA's adversaries?
- (3) Can GIROA decentralize security efforts and maintain a legitimate central government?
- (4) What conditions are necessary for successful implementation of a local security program?

C. METHODOLOGY

Through in-depth analysis of relevant case studies, this thesis intends to glean critical lessons learned, positive and negative, to determine whether a version of local security is indeed an appropriate solution for modern-day Afghan society. This thesis will primarily focus upon four case relevant comparative studies: the Afghan Local Police (ALP), the Indian Territorial Army, the Peruvian *rondas campesinas*, and the Afghan *arbakai*.

Since its creation under the guidance and resourcing of United States Special Operations Forces in 2010, the ALP has become a permanent and controversial entity of the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces.⁴ Despite isolated examples of success, research overwhelmingly paints the ALP as a largely ineffective organization more likely to abuse rather than protect the local population.⁵ This case study will provide insight into the challenges and shortcomings of pursuing a local security initiative. Understanding the faults of the ALP may highlight issues unique to Afghanistan in the context of culture and social dynamics. Furthermore, studying the ALP should prove particularly valuable, considering the organization still exists today. Any proposed solution, therefore, will enter an environment plagued with the same ongoing challenges confronting the ALP. Given the ALP became operational over eight years ago, there are many examples of deficiencies and attempted fixes on the part of the Afghan government and its American advisors that may inform future attempts to either shape the organization or abandon it in favor of a new solution.

The decision to analyze the Indian Territorial Army as a case study stems from ongoing efforts to create a similar organization in Afghanistan, currently referred to as the Afghan National Army Territorial Force (ANATF). The Indian Territorial Army was a home defense force created by the British in India to augment security while troops were committed to World War I.⁶ Because the ANATF concept is still in the developmental stage, there is value for this thesis to continue with an objective analysis to influence the

⁴ International Crisis Group, “The Future of the Afghan Local Police,” *Asia Report*, 268 (4 June 2015): i, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-asia/afghanistan/future-afghan-local-police>.

⁵ International Crisis Group, “The Future of the Afghan Local Police,” ii.

⁶ T. A. Heathcote, *The Military in British India: The Development of British Land Forces in South Asia (1600–1947)* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1995), 231, <https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=YSK8AAAAIAAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PR5&dq=indian+territorial+army+history+british&ots=NzQkNjOTdG&sig=nKMJOq7v9UOobGckUKItQZqKaOc#v=onepage&q=indian%20territorial%20army%20history%20british&f=false>.

ANATF's proper implementation, validate the existing plan for the program, or refute the concept altogether. A study of the Indian Territorial Army will not only provide an example for developing such an organization's structure and roles, but will also aid in identifying whether the program can be successful. More importantly, further study of both the Indian Territorial Army and Afghanistan may help determine what elements of the program are transferable to Afghanistan, if any. Mimicking a program that worked in a different culture and different time period may prove problematic if not thoroughly and honestly assessed.

The third case study analyzes the Peruvian *rondas campesinas*, which are traditional local security elements that have provided protection and justice in rural communities for centuries.⁷ Specifically, this study will focus on the *rondas*' role in defeating the Partido Comunista del Perú-Sendero Luminoso (Communist Party of Peru-Shining Path), a Maoist insurgent organization that was most active in Peru between 1980 and 1995.⁸ Though culturally distinct from Afghanistan, Peru's situation during this timeframe was similar in that the country faced a protracted insurgency with a central government struggling to control its rural regions. This case study will address the long-term consequences of creating militias without proper control measures in place, as well as consider the value of working through existing traditional security structures. Analyzing the effective employment and associated challenges of the *rondas* may inform future decisions in Afghanistan regarding incorporation of traditional local security elements into a greater security strategy.

⁷ German Nuñez Palomino, "The Rise of the Rondas Campesinas in Peru," *The Journal of Legal Pluralism and Unofficial Law*, 28, no. 36 (1996): 112, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07329113.1996.10756468>.

⁸ David Scott Palmer, "Countering Terrorism in Latin America: The Case of Shining Path in Peru," *Countering Terrorism and Insurgency in the 21st Century*, edited by James J. F. Forest, Vol. 3: *Lessons from the Fight Against Terrorism. International Perspectives* (1996): 293.

The final case study seeks to draw lessons from previous unofficial local security organizations inside of Afghanistan. There are myriad examples spanning Afghanistan's history of formal and informal local defense forces, to include the *arbakai*.⁹ By evaluating Afghanistan's *arbakai*, it may be possible to determine what previously worked within specific factions of Afghan culture. Given the ethnic and tribal diversity of Afghanistan, a blanket approach to security that the majority of the population will accept and consider legitimate may not be feasible. This study will assess cultural and environmental commonalities between successful *arbakai* elements to inform decisions for the potential employment or support of similar Afghan local security elements.

To guide analysis and provide structure for comparison, this thesis will examine each case study utilizing established evaluation criteria. The subjects of each case study are assessed against the following categories: security/effectiveness, popular support, sustainability, government control, and criminal activity. Security and effectiveness speak to the capabilities and proficiency of the security force, as well as the security of the area within the context of the threat it faces. Popular support assesses the attitudes and actions of the communities toward the security force. Sustainability is a key consideration for evaluating a local security element. Determining if a resource-constrained nation like Afghanistan is capable of maintaining the security program, regardless of external support, may affect implementation. The level of government control considers how regulated a local security element is and if it strictly takes orders and guidance from the government. Finally, assessing the criminal activity level may establish whether or not a security element is doing more harm than good to the community it is charged with serving. Table 1 describes the rating system and characteristics of each category's assessment to facilitate analysis:

⁹ Dee Dee Derksen, "The Politics of Disarmament and Rearmament in Afghanistan," *United States Institute of Peace, Peaceworks*, 110 (2015): 37, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2015/05/politics-disarmament-and-rearmament-afghanistan>.

Table 1. Analytical framework for assessing local security elements.

Criteria:	Poor	Acceptable	Desired
Security/ Effectiveness	• Little impact on enemy • Inactive/fails to address threats	• Security contested, but local security element is active	• Area free of enemy activity • Local security element proactively maintains security
Popular Support	• People fearful of local security element • Provides support only if coerced • Grievances brought directly to distant government entities or other informal militias • Members contribute little to their community outside of operations	• People accept local security element's function and tolerate its presence • People seek assistance only in emergencies • Members are a mix of full and part-time	• People regularly report issues/request help • Members are part of their communities; local security is an additional activity
Sustainability	• Poor equipment accountability and maintenance • Poor recruiting	• Functions, though heavily dependent upon government for support	• Independent and adequate recruiting • Equipment accountability • Low cost • Adequate tactical and logistic support from the government
Government Control	• Local security element serves local/individual interests first	• Local security element mostly follows government guidance, though still uses power for local objectives	• Government control measures are in place to ensure proper function • Fast/reliable lines of communication
Criminal Activity	• Rampant abuse of population/predatory behavior	• Minimal predatory behavior; legal system works to punish violations	• No predatory behavior

D. CHAPTER OVERVIEWS AND FINDINGS

1. Literature Review—Milicias and Local Security in Afghanistan

The literature review discusses existing research surrounding Afghanistan's history of militia-based security as well as recent efforts to implement local security programs. This chapter summarizes arguments for both supporters and critics of employing local security elements in Afghanistan. Those in favor of local security view it as an inevitability given the country's tribal nature and widespread tradition of community defense. Opponents, however, focus upon the inherent challenges of government control and the risk of misbehavior.

2. Case Study—Afghan Local Police

This chapter provides a background for the Afghan Local Police program and considers the advantages and risks of the current model. Analysis of the program reveals how the failure to develop accountability mechanisms led to misbehavior and a lack of government control. The varying degrees of effectiveness for ALP elements also highlights the need to consider security and cultural factors when selecting areas to develop such a program.

3. Case Study—Indian Territorial Army

Studying the Indian Territorial Army's history and structure presents a positive example of local security employment. Analysis of both the successes and challenges of the ITA produced valuable lessons for local security program development. The ITA's experience emphasizes the need to establish durable control measures at the outset of a local security element's creation, as well as the advantages of enforcing part-time service for its members to minimize social disruption. The ITA also demonstrates the value of regular security forces enhancing local security element capabilities through consistent standardized training.

4. Case Study—Peruvian *Rondas Campesinas*

This chapter considers the effective employment of the Peruvian *rondas campesinas* and draws parallels to the histories of local security in both Peru and

Afghanistan. The *rondas* contribution to defeating the Shining Path emphasizes the criticality of a government establishing a link to enhance effectiveness, provide support, and influence behavior. Analysis of the *rondas*, however, also illuminates the detrimental long-term effects of government-sponsored local security elements upon traditional societies.

5. Case Study—Afghan *Arbakai*

This case study looks to historical and recent examples of traditional security in Afghanistan to provide insight into a security model that accommodates Afghan culture. Studying the *arbakai* reveals the importance of working through traditional governance to influence local security element employment and bolster accountability while preserving their legitimacy. Furthermore, this case study highlights the need to consider the security situation and customs of a specific area prior to developing a local security element.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

Analysis of local security elements from distinct cultures and times produced critical lessons for the development of community defense programs in Afghanistan. This study identified the need for GIRoA to incorporate traditional governance, establish an appropriate link between local security elements and the military, and adapt force structures to judiciously selected areas. Additionally, this study determined that GIRoA should create training and employment regimens for local security elements that preserve their intended use as small, defensive forces and impose minimal disruption to community life.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW—MILITIAS AND LOCAL SECURITY IN AFGHANISTAN

The current state of the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF) is such that they likely will not survive or adequately function without the direct support of the United States.¹⁰ Furthermore, the ANDSF is not large enough to effectively control Afghanistan's expansive and challenging geography, especially in the more remote rural regions. According to the most recent Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) quarterly report (January 2018), the United States Department of Defense estimates 64% of the Afghan population is under governmental control or influence, while the insurgents own 12%, and 24% remains contested.¹¹ Though difficult to validate such figures, assuming accuracy emphasizes the challenge in holding controlled areas and expanding influence with current resources. This challenge has spurred a great deal of debate regarding the potential development and employment of local security elements with supporters and critics from both Afghanistan and its allies. Those in favor of pursuing local security programs consider the option unavoidable and consistent with the structure of Afghan society. Others, however, view local security forces as a liability, creating militias that serve the objectives of regional warlords vying for power.¹²

The argument for creating some version of localized security in Afghanistan largely focuses upon the tribal nature of Afghan society as well as the sheer size of the country in relation to the number and effectiveness of available security forces. Following the transition to NATO's Resolute Support Mission in 2015, coalition presence was reduced as the Afghan National Army consolidated forces in prioritized locations, leaving security

¹⁰ *Reconstructing the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces: Lessons from the U.S. Experience in Afghanistan*, 115.

¹¹ Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, *Quarterly Report to the United States Congress, January 30 2018* (Arlington, VA, 2018): 86, <https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/quarterlyreports/2018-01-30qr.pdf>.

¹² Anna K. Jarstad, "Unpacking the Friction in Local Ownership of Security Sector Reform in Afghanistan," *Taylor & Francis, Peacebuilding*, 1, no. 3 (September 2013): 384, <https://doi.org/10.1080/21647259.2013.813179>.

vacuums, thereby exacerbating the issue.¹³ Though the Afghan people may benefit from basic services typically provided by a functioning centralized government, advocates assert that security should be partially decentralized to enhance legitimate governmental influence and complement regular ANDSF elements. An advantage to this enabling role, as highlighted by RAND in a study on local security forces throughout history, is enhanced intelligence collection capabilities.¹⁴ The level of understanding local forces have of the human and physical terrain surrounding their own homes far exceeds that of any external element conducting temporary security operations in their areas. The information gleaned from positive cooperative relationships with local security forces may better focus the efforts of the central Afghan government.

The case for decentralized security also seeks to address longstanding ethnic tensions that exist throughout segments of Afghanistan. The current ANDSF model results in Afghan soldiers being sent to unfamiliar regions, potentially operating among ethnic populations different than their own and with whom historical friction exists. At the height of NATO presence, with fighting heavily concentrated in the southern and southeastern portions of Afghanistan, the majority of Afghan soldiers came from the north.¹⁵ Local forces may have more stake in the game, as their own families and villages suffer the consequences of failure. If properly employed, decentralized local security forces have the potential to contribute to the internal stability the United States and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) have sought for seventeen years. Critics, however, consider local participation a liability rather than a strength.

There exists a strong, historically-based fear that pursuing a local security force program operating on the fringe of direct central government control will set the stage for greater instability. Analyzing previous attempts to implement such programs, Jonathan

¹³ *Reconstructing the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces: Lessons from the U.S. Experience in Afghanistan*, 113.

¹⁴ Austin Long, Stephanie Pezard, Bryze Loidolt, and Todd Helmus, *Locals Rule: Historical Lessons for Creating Local Defense Forces for Afghanistan and Beyond* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2012), 171. <https://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG1232.html>.

¹⁵ Najim Rahim and Mujib Mashal, "Afghan Army Recruitment Dwindles as Taliban Threaten Families," *New York Times*, November 18, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/18/world/asia/afghanistan-taliban-army-recruitment.html>.

Goodhand and Aziz Hakimi warn of the dangers of local security forces in their article, “Counterinsurgency, Local Militias, and Statebuilding in Afghanistan.” With the intention of creating home guards to protect members’ villages and families from the coercion and violence of insurgent elements, such programs often devolve into enabling militias that exploit their power for predatory violence or personal gain.¹⁶ Through previous attempts at decentralizing security and reversing efforts to demobilize existing militias, the United States and the Afghan government essentially created a security market replete with competition and a lack of regulation.¹⁷ Instead of promoting stability by extending the reach and influence of the Afghan government, some local security initiatives instead injected destabilizing elements imparting various forms of illegitimate governance.

Of the multiple local security programs implemented by the United States and GIRoA since 2001, critics most often refer to the Afghan Local Police (ALP). Created as part of an experimental United States Special Operations initiative in 2010, the program has expanded into a significant, though questionably effective, element of the Afghan security apparatus.¹⁸ This was done despite the reservations of senior Afghan government officials. Many believed, including at the time President Hamid Karzai, that the ALP resembled the militias that led to Afghanistan’s civil war in the 1990s as well as thwarted central government control.¹⁹ Additionally, all of the ALP’s predecessors had either failed or were abandoned due to perceived insurmountable challenges. The mixed record of ALP forces serves as a rallying point for both supporters and critics. Though the program experienced successes in certain regions of Afghanistan where conditions were favorable, many of the forces remain plagued by corruption, incompetence, and a lack of trust from the people they are supposedly protecting.²⁰ Those opposing local security consider the ALP representative of the unavoidable issues inherent to militia-based security initiatives and warn of investing in future programs destined for failure. Regardless of past failures

¹⁶ Goodhand and Hakimi, “Counterinsurgency, Local Militias, and Statebuilding in Afghanistan,” 3.

¹⁷ Goodhand and Hakimi, “Counterinsurgency, Local Militias, and Statebuilding in Afghanistan,” 6.

¹⁸ International Crisis Group, “The Future of the Afghan Local Police,” i.

¹⁹ International Crisis Group, “The Future of the Afghan Local Police,” ii.

²⁰ International Crisis Group, “The Future of the Afghan Local Police,” ii.

and successes, the topic warrants continued research to better guide American and Afghan policy.

Much of the research with respect to local security initiatives tends to focus on an “all or nothing” approach. Opponents focus on the inherent challenges and historical failures of previous initiatives, while advocates cite the inability of the central government to exert complete control. There appears to be room for a more hybrid approach that satisfies both sides of the debate and takes into account the distinct operating environments found throughout Afghanistan’s diverse human and geographical landscape. Rather than starting a new initiative from the ground up, further research and study may offer insight into shaping existing initiatives and only implementing them where conditions are favorable. Even the International Crisis Group, which is highly critical of the ALP, acknowledges in its 2015 report the danger of completely abandoning current local security programs and instead considers reform.²¹

The concept of localized security forces remains a politically sensitive issue, and there has been little progress toward successful implementation. The tension between a burgeoning central government desperate to hold onto power and a predominantly rural society with tribal loyalties makes for an exceedingly complex environment. Given the political challenges of encouraging GIRoA to divest some authority coupled with the prevalence of violence in Afghan society, it is not surprising there is hesitancy for militia-centric security propositions. Considering the United States has been deeply involved in Afghanistan for over sixteen years with little prospect of exiting in the near future, it is critical that the United States and Afghanistan break the cycle of repetitive and familiar action and start seeking more creative security solutions. If the United States does not advance more effective ways of achieving acceptable stability in Afghanistan without the presence of American forces, it will continue to expend blood and treasure in a stalemate for years to come.

²¹ International Crisis Group, “The Future of the Afghan Local Police,” 25.

III. CASE STUDY—AFGHAN LOCAL POLICE

The Afghan Local Police (ALP) program is the product of a United States Special Operations Forces initiative begun in 2010 and is currently a significant, though controversial, piece of Afghanistan's security apparatus.²² The intent of the program was to encourage communities to protect themselves in the absence of adequate Afghan military and police presence. In theory, local Afghans joining the ranks would be motivated to protect their own villages and families and bring intimate knowledge of the region to assist other Afghan and coalition forces. There were a number of organic Afghan examples that played influential roles throughout the region's history before the official establishment of the ALP, as well as similar American-initiated efforts during both the Soviet occupation in the 1980s and the current War on Terror. Subsequent chapters will address some of the more significant militia-based programs and informal organizations. To more narrowly focus on the ALP and its direct origins, this section begins with the program's immediate predecessor to establish an adequate background for analyzing the ALP's challenges, failures, as well as successes.

A. HISTORY

Following the end of the Cold War, the United States began to codify doctrine that shifted its counterinsurgency focus from being a purely military endeavor to one of a struggle for governance.²³ As the American experience in Afghanistan and the Global War on Terror progressed, counterinsurgency doctrine morphed and became the foundation of United States military efforts. By 2009, American military leadership began to acknowledge the inherent challenges of imparting central government rule over a land where isolated rural communities functioned in a rather autonomous manner. Frustrated by the level of progress during the first eight years of war, the idea of expanding the official support and funding of irregular local security elements came to fruition.²⁴ In keeping with

²² International Crisis Group, "The Future of the Afghan Local Police," ii.

²³ Goodhand and Hakimi, "Counterinsurgency, Local Militias, and Statebuilding in Afghanistan," 9.

²⁴ International Crisis Group, "The Future of the Afghan Local Police," 6.

such principles, United States Special Operations Forces (USSOF), in conjunction with the Afghan Ministry of Interior (MoI), initiated and funded a pilot program in 2009 known as the Afghan Public Protection Program (AP3).

The AP3 began in Wardak Province with the intent of creating one to two hundred “guardians” in four districts with a cap of 1,200 personnel for the entire province.²⁵ In theory, the AP3 were integrated into a security program with “four elements: deployment of U.S. troops that were part of the surge, training of locally based ANP (Afghan National Police) officers..., the recruitment of an AP3 cadre, and provision of development assistance from the Commander’s Emergency Response Program (CERP).”²⁶ Intimately familiar with the history of militias in Afghanistan and the associated risks, Afghan leadership within the MoI pushed to establish measures to exercise an acceptable level of control by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) as well as mitigate corruption. Ideally, the growth of AP3 would begin with a local shura (Afghan council) identifying recruits from the area whom the government would subsequently vet. These recruits would then receive training from USSOF, be paid by the MoI, and report directly to the district police chief, which, in theory, would prevent AP3 commanders from using their subordinate members for personal gain.²⁷ As the AP3 program developed, American military leadership viewed it as an opportunity to change the course of the war and leverage its potential effects on the battlefield.

In 2009, General Stanley McChrystal, commander of International Security Assistance Forces (ISAF) and U.S. Forces Afghanistan, initiated an assessment of the war that showed an increase in Taliban control over the country’s rural regions.²⁸ Tasked with identifying rural areas conducive to establishing militias that would reverse this trend, Brigadier General Edward Reeder, commander of Combined Forces Special Operations Component Command-Afghanistan (CFSOCC-A), deployed U.S. and Afghan “special

²⁵ Goodhand and Hakimi, “Counterinsurgency, Local Militias, and Statebuilding in Afghanistan,” 10.

²⁶ Goodhand and Hakimi, “Counterinsurgency, Local Militias, and Statebuilding in Afghanistan,” 11.

²⁷ Goodhand and Hakimi, “Counterinsurgency, Local Militias, and Statebuilding in Afghanistan,” 11.

²⁸ Goodhand and Hakimi, “Counterinsurgency, Local Militias, and Statebuilding in Afghanistan,” 11.

operations teams to live and operate in villages that had decided to resist insurgents.”²⁹ Under the initial framework, “the militia had to number fewer than three hundred, be defensive, fall under the oversight of village jirgas, and be closely monitored by the Afghan government and NATO.”³⁰

Parallel to the AP3, the USSOF established a similar village-level security program in June 2009. Initially called the Community Defense Initiative and later renamed the Local Defense Initiative, the program sought to raise local defense forces without the involvement of the Afghan MoI due to its cumbersome bureaucratic processes.³¹ The program started in Day Kundi, Herat, Nangarhar, and Paktiya and placed USSOF in villages to directly interact with local leaders that chose to resist the Taliban.³² Concerns over the creation of uncontrollable militias persisted as USSOF continued to expand the program without expressed permission from Hamid Karzai, the Afghan president at the time.

In 2010, General David Petraeus assumed command of ISAF and Brigadier General Austin S. Miller took charge of CFSOCC-A, which brought continued pursuit of village-based security programs.³³ Despite reservations about ceding power and control to potential warring militias, especially in non-Pashtun areas, President Karzai accepted an initial proposal of a 10,000-man force. President Karzai, however, would only permit the force’s establishment under the condition that the element be labeled a police force under the command of the interior ministry with a termination date two to five years from creation.³⁴ The program was initially called “Village Stability Operations,” describing the expeditionary efforts to create village defense forces, and now officially named Afghan Local Police. Once established, the ALP attempted to absorb all other militias from

²⁹ Goodhand and Hakimi, “Counterinsurgency, Local Militias, and Statebuilding in Afghanistan,” 11.

³⁰ Goodhand and Hakimi, “Counterinsurgency, Local Militias, and Statebuilding in Afghanistan,” 11.

³¹ Long, Pezard, Loidolt, and Todd Helmus, *Locals Rule: Historical Lessons for Creating Local Defense Forces for Afghanistan and Beyond*, 180.

³² Long, Pezard, Loidolt, and Todd Helmus, *Locals Rule: Historical Lessons for Creating Local Defense Forces for Afghanistan and Beyond*, 180.

³³ International Crisis Group, “The Future of the Afghan Local Police,” 6.

³⁴ International Crisis Group, “The Future of the Afghan Local Police,” 6.

previous Afghan and U.S. programs, to include those under the Local Defense Initiative, legitimizing their existence and expanding their level of support. In a little over a year, the ALP grew to a force of 10,000 men spread across fifty-seven districts.³⁵

Similar to AP3 process, an ALP element stands up when village elders request assistance from the Afghan government and meet with representatives from MoI, the Independent Directorate for Local Governance, and elements from the U.S.-led Coalition at a shura. If validated, the MoI creates a tashkil (manning authorization) for the district, which typically allows for a maximum of 300 policemen per district distributed amongst the villages.³⁶ Since the program intended to recruit ALP members from their communities, policemen serve part-time and continue working elsewhere, if desired. ALP fall under the same rules and restrictions as the Afghan National Police. They report directly to the Deputy District Chief of Police (Afghan National Police) and are partnered with U.S. forces, typically USSOF, as well as other Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF) elements.³⁷

Today, the ALP continues to be a significant part of the Afghan government's security network. According to a January 2018 report from the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), the Afghan government declared that as of November 2017, the ALP had 28,911 members, 24,858 of which had attended formal training.³⁸ These ALP members were present in 199 districts distributed throughout Afghanistan's thirty-four provinces.³⁹ Though the ALP program continues to receive support and funding from USSOF, it is not without criticism, as the history of the program is rife with examples of failure, abuse, and corruption.

³⁵ Goodhand and Hakimi, "Counterinsurgency, Local Militias, and Statebuilding in Afghanistan," 13.

³⁶ Long, Pezard, Loidolt, and Todd Helmus, *Locals Rule: Historical Lessons for Creating Local Defense Forces for Afghanistan and Beyond*, 181.

³⁷ Long, Pezard, Loidolt, and Todd Helmus, *Locals Rule: Historical Lessons for Creating Local Defense Forces for Afghanistan and Beyond*, 182.

³⁸ Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, *Quarterly Report to the United States Congress, January 30 2018*, 99.

³⁹ Kate Clark, "Update on the Afghan Local Police: Making Sure They Are Armed, Trained, Paid and Exist." *Afghanistan Analysts Network*, July 5, 2017, <https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/update-on-the-afghan-local-police-making-sure-they-are-armed-trained-paid-and-exist/>.

B. SECURITY/EFFECTIVENESS

A security element's overall effectiveness and impact on the security situation of its assigned area of responsibility is a reasonable starting point in assessing the element's worth. The ALP continues to struggle with the challenges inherent to establishing security in a predominantly rural and tribal society. The geographic location and cultural landscape in which an ALP unit is formed certainly matters, as Afghanistan's diverse and ethnocentric society imposes challenges unique to each location. While some areas may be conducive to establishing an effective local security element, others may pose insurmountable hurdles. Assuming the Afghan government and USSOF properly select a location willing to provide ALP recruits and accept the unit, the ALP must still receive sufficient training, contend with an inadequate logistics system, and face enemy activity with the possibility of no reinforcements. These challenges may have resulted in significant casualties, as the ALP has suffered a disproportionately high number of dead and wounded when compared to other elements of the Afghan security apparatus. From its beginnings, the Taliban took particular interest in countering the ALP's effectiveness, launching attacks and information campaigns specifically targeting ALP officers and the elders who backed them, leading to more ALP officers being killed proportionally than their Afghan National Army counterparts.⁴⁰

It is difficult to discern whether these casualties are primarily attributed to targeted enemy activity or some combination of minimal formal training and their persistent presence in the villages with constant exposure to insurgent activity. Such high attrition rates create a hurdle for recruiting and raise doubts about their proficiency, given their intended defensive posture. Without the prospect of guaranteed rapid tactical support from nearby military and police units and the lack of adequate material support, ALP officers may be inclined to serve local interests or yield to insurgent threats for the sake of survival.

Aside from the documented abuses, which are addressed later in this chapter, the ALP's effect on security remains questionable with only approximately one third of their

⁴⁰ Clark, "Update on the Afghan Local Police: Making Sure They Are Armed, Trained, Paid and Exist."

areas experiencing improved levels of security.⁴¹ This problematic impact on security is documented in a study by the Belgian International Crisis Group focusing on ALP performance in Kunduz Province in northern Afghanistan. At the introduction of the ALP into Kunduz in 2001, the province had approximately 200 to 300 members per district in four of its seven districts. By 2014, the program expanded with an additional 200 authorizations in a fifth district.⁴² Despite the expanded presence of ALP throughout the province by 2015, Taliban elements were able to inflict significant casualties upon the ALP, imposing control and influence throughout much of the province. According to NSOCC-A, in Dashte Archi District alone, the reported strength of 278 assigned officers was reduced to 130 within six months of fighting in 2015.⁴³ Further analysis of Kunduz during this time period points to a lack of correlation between ALP efforts and improved security. Of the districts containing ALP, four experienced a 25–30% increase in violence between 2010 and 2014, whereas the violence levels in the two provinces without any ALP presence remained constant.⁴⁴ Though it follows that more fighting will occur with the existence of security forces opposing insurgent activity, the lack of improvement in peace over a four-year period and the staggeringly high ALP casualty rates point to an ineffective security system.

Though overshadowed by reports of challenges and failures, there have certainly been examples of the ALP improving a community's security situation, especially in Afghanistan's most vulnerable areas. Kandahar Province in southern Afghanistan stands out as one of the more effective ALP locations in terms of both impact on security and capabilities. Through persistent incorporation into police and military operations, the ALP in Kandahar have been credited with preventing the Taliban from being able to expand into Kandahar City. This contribution to security, however, was achieved at the expense of

⁴¹ Mujib Mashal, "U.S. Plan for New Afghan Force Revives Fears of Militia Abuses," *New York Times*, September 15, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/15/world/asia/afghan-local-police.html>.

⁴² International Crisis Group, "The Future of the Afghan Local Police," 14.

⁴³ International Crisis Group, "The Future of the Afghan Local Police," 14.

⁴⁴ International Crisis Group, "The Future of the Afghan Local Police," 15.

purely operating as a local defense force and instead augmenting offensive operations under the strict control of Kandahar police chief, Lieutenant General Abdul Razik.⁴⁵

The ALP in Kandahar have actively pursued the Taliban, though doing so revealed their propensity for violence and illegal activities. Despite the ALP's successes in combating the Taliban in Kandahar, levels of violence increased in their districts. Five of Kandahar's districts where ALP was originally implemented have had violence levels double, whereas violence was halved in the seven districts that never had ALP during the same timeframe.⁴⁶ Likely contributing to this violence is the aggressive nature of the Kandahar ALP. Though Lieutenant General Razik's strict code of discipline has largely averted the defection of ALP elements, it has not prevented them from regularly committing human rights violations in dealing with the Taliban. Widespread reports of torture and summary executions by Razik's ALP have brought about mixed reactions by the community and the Afghan government.⁴⁷ The ALP in Kandahar has clearly developed a reputation for proactively opposing the Taliban, though they are not without many of the same issues plaguing their counterparts throughout the rest of Afghanistan.

The ALP program in its current form has not proven to be a widely effective security model. Though the concept and intent of the ALP has merit as a critical line of defense for geographically remote and vulnerable villages, the implementation of the program detracts from the desired effectiveness. The inherent challenges of employing local security elements are not adequately addressed by the current program and have created a security apparatus with minimal positive impact on the communities in which they are tasked to serve.

C. POPULAR SUPPORT

The varying levels of effectiveness as well as rampant abuse allegations make for wavering levels of popular support for the ALP across Afghanistan. Predatory behavior on

⁴⁵ International Crisis Group, "The Future of the Afghan Local Police," 19.

⁴⁶ International Crisis Group, "The Future of the Afghan Local Police," 19.

⁴⁷ International Crisis Group, "The Future of the Afghan Local Police," 20.

the part of the ALP as well as similar militia-based programs of the past have instilled distrust and fear amongst many Afghans. Instances of militias turning on their local communities or having their services unofficially sold to local warlords and powerbrokers further contribute to the Afghan people's wariness of militia programs. Similarly, though, areas where ALP and other local security forces enhanced security without reports of abuse naturally promoted positive opinions among the community.⁴⁸ This variance in impact on security and community acceptance largely rests upon the ethnic composition of a region as well as the local politics at play.

When looking to the local politics present in the typical Afghan village, "the structure, composition, history, and insider-outsider relations all significantly influence how well-behaved a local self-defense unit will be."⁴⁹ The more homogenous and vulnerable to abusive Taliban activity a village is, the more likely it will support creating an ALP unit that increases the security level. This was the case in the early days of the ALP's expansion when parts of Kandahar were requesting ALP prior to USSOF and the Afghan MoI starting to recruit in the region.⁵⁰ Villages already suffering Taliban abuse were understandably willing to accept any form of security augmentation to improve their situations.

Without the support of the local population, the ALP program cannot function. Given that the ALP recruits prospective officers from the local community in which they will serve, each village must have men willing to join the ranks with the approval of their elders. If the reputation of the ALP in the neighboring areas is one of abuse and incompetence, garnering the support of recruits and their communities poses a significant challenge. The current level of popular support for the preponderance of ALP units is not acceptable for the continuation of the program in its present form. The apparent

⁴⁸ Vanda Felbab-Brown, "Afghanistan Trip Report V: The Afghan Local Police: 'It's Local, So It Must Be Good'—Or Is It?" The Brookings Institution, Foreign Policy Trip Reports (May 9, 2012), <https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/afghanistan-trip-report-v-the-afghan-local-police-its-local-so-it-must-be-good-or-is-it/>.

⁴⁹ Felbab-Brown, "Afghanistan Trip Report V: The Afghan Local Police: 'It's Local, So It Must Be Good'—Or Is It?"

⁵⁰ Felbab-Brown, "Afghanistan Trip Report V: The Afghan Local Police: 'It's Local, So It Must Be Good'—Or Is It?"

apprehension to accept the ALP in many communities across Afghanistan is telling of the program's performance and relationship with the community.

D. SUSTAINABILITY

The longevity of the ALP hinges upon the Afghan government's commitment to the program as well as continued support from the United States. The current state of the ALP suggests that the Afghan government may not be able to support proper maintenance of the ALP program should U.S. funds and advisors disappear. MoI's ability to maintain tribal balance, ensure professionalism within the ranks, and properly vet recruits continue to be a concern.⁵¹ The question of commitment includes tactical support to the ALP officers at the local level. ALP officials remain dissatisfied with and skeptical of the quick reaction forces the local ANP and ANA elements are supposed to provide.⁵² If ALP officers lack faith in the government's willingness and ability to provide combat reinforcement, the organization will continue to face challenges in operations and recruiting.

Funding may be one of the most critical factors for the future of the ALP. The United States continues to fund the ALP with an estimated \$96.6 million required to sustain the program during fiscal year 2018 in accordance with the 30,000-member cap, as reported by the NATO Special Operations Component Command-Afghanistan (NSOCC-A).⁵³ Assuming these costs are necessary to the survival of the program in its current form, it is unlikely GIRoA could, or would be willing to, continue to independently fund the ALP. Afghanistan remains heavily reliant upon donors to sustain its government. Its low internal revenue generation combined with a myriad of other debilitating issues, such as insufficient

⁵¹ Jefferson P. Marquis, Sean Duggan, Brian J. Gordon, and Lisa Miyashiro, *Assessing the Ability of the Afghan Ministry of Interior Affairs to Support the Afghan Local Police* (Santa Monica: Rand Corporation, 2016), 7. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1399.html.

⁵² Marquis, Duggan, Gordon, and Miyashiro, *Assessing the Ability of the Afghan Ministry of Interior Affairs to Support the Afghan Local Police*, vii.

⁵³ Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, *Quarterly Report to the United States Congress, January 30 2018*, 100.

job creation, poor infrastructure, and struggling government capacity, make it unrealistic for GIRoA to prioritize the ALP and continue allocating funds.⁵⁴

The current logistical model of the ALP leaves the organization dependent upon U.S. support to properly function and mimics a system foreign to Afghan society. American advisors established a “pull” logistics system similar to most Western militaries in which the lower level recipients accurately account for on-hand supplies and request materials in accordance with projected needs.⁵⁵ The Afghans currently lack the administrative ability and institutional experience to have such a model. A “push” system in which supplies are sent out on a schedule may be simpler and reduce administrative requirements, though it can lead to greater costs from distributing unneeded supplies and does not mitigate corruption. Additionally, the reduction in coalition forces across Afghanistan has further hindered logistical support, as the ALP were forced to more independently exercise their own underdeveloped communication and transportation networks.⁵⁶ If the Afghan government cannot improve its logistics system, the ALP must adapt to operate in a manner that leverages local resources.

Given its current funding source and support system, the ALP in its present form is not a sustainable option for Afghanistan. Without logistic and operational support from the U.S. military, the program will likely disappear. Furthermore, the lack of accountability for both equipment and personnel makes it exceedingly difficult for the ALP to maintain sufficient and functioning equipment to support continuous defensive security operations. Barring a change in prioritization from GIRoA and improved methods of logistical support, the ALP will not be a viable security option post-U.S. involvement. Though much of the ANDSF faces a similar prognosis, the ALP as a local security element should operate in a manner that requires minimal assistance.

⁵⁴ “The World Factbook: Afghanistan,” United States Central Intelligence Agency, 2018, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/af.html>.

⁵⁵ Marquis, Duggan, Gordon, and Miyashiro, *Assessing the Ability of the Afghan Ministry of Interior Affairs to Support the Afghan Local Police*, viii.

⁵⁶ Marquis, Duggan, Gordon, and Miyashiro, *Assessing the Ability of the Afghan Ministry of Interior Affairs to Support the Afghan Local Police*, viii.

E. GOVERNMENT CONTROL

Though, in theory, the ALP program should produce forces committed to the protection and well-being of the local communities, reality shows less idealistic results. The history of the ALP demonstrates trends of corruption, abusive behavior, an inability of the Afghan government to exert control over the units, as well as the misuse by local Afghan powerbrokers.⁵⁷ There have been numerous occurrences since the ALP's inception of it operating outside the bounds of Afghan law and instead favoring ethnic identities and tribal loyalties. According to the 2018 SIGAR report, the ALP's coalition advisors assessed that as of August 2017, 395 ALP officers were operating under the influence of local powerbrokers, serving their interests instead of securing their communities and enforcing Afghan law.⁵⁸ Reported abuses range from extrajudicial killings to ALP checkpoints preventing certain ethnicities from passing or requiring illegal payments.⁵⁹

The absence of adequate government oversight of the ALP extends to personnel and equipment accountability. Specifically, the MoI's lack of control over key personnel in command of ALP is a significant underlying issue affecting support shortcomings.⁶⁰ ALP officers not receiving their full pay due to superiors and MoI officials taking portions of their salaries has been a widespread concern since the ALP's inception. Additionally, equipment and supplies easily go missing, making the ALP vulnerable to exploitation by regional warlords and the Taliban.⁶¹ Since the local district and provincial police chiefs work for their respective governors as opposed to maintaining a strong link to the MoI deputy minister of security, those chiefs "are able to exercise considerable discretion over

⁵⁷ Clark, "Update on the Afghan Local Police: Making Sure They Are Armed, Trained, Paid and Exist."

⁵⁸ Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, *Quarterly Report to the United States Congress, January 30 2018*, 100.

⁵⁹ International Crisis Group, "The Future of the Afghan Local Police," 9.

⁶⁰ Marquis, Duggan, Gordon, and Miyashiro, *Assessing the Ability of the Afghan Ministry of Interior Affairs to Support the Afghan Local Police*, xi.

⁶¹ Clark, "Update on the Afghan Local Police: Making Sure They Are Armed, Trained, Paid and Exist."

the provisioning of ALP.”⁶² District and provincial officials “have hoarded or diverted a significant amount of equipment and supplies intended for ALP guardians in villages.”⁶³ Such behavior only weakens legitimate ALP elements and adds to the power and corruption of government officials and regional power brokers.

In recent years, GIRoA and the United States have employed control measures to mitigate the issues associated with loose government control over the ALP. As part of the 2016 Bilateral Commitment between NATO’s Combined Security Transition Command – Afghanistan (CSTC-A) and the Afghan MoI, GIRoA established a set of benchmarks and oversight mechanisms to address issues with personnel, pay, equipment, training, and misuse of ALP by local powerbrokers and other Afghan government entities.⁶⁴ To ensure salaries only go to authorized ALP officers that actually exist, the U.S. military implemented a computerized personnel accountability system, only paying ALP officers that are validated in the system.⁶⁵ As of 2017, 70% of ALP officers are enrolled in the system with 80% being paid electronically through mobile bank transfers.⁶⁶ Although such measures focus upon accountability rather than performance, they assist GIRoA in exerting control and influence over the organization. If money is a motivating factor to exploit the system for personal gain, these mechanisms act as barriers to behavior detrimental to the ALP’s purpose.

Efforts to formalize ALP service and ensure units are operating in accordance with GIRoA’s laws and intent are a step in the right direction, though they still fall short of achieving a professional and effective local security element. Because of the wide range of ALP units spanning the spectrum of government control, the ALP as a whole moderately

⁶² Marquis, Duggan, Gordon, and Miyashiro, *Assessing the Ability of the Afghan Ministry of Interior Affairs to Support the Afghan Local Police*, 7.

⁶³ Marquis, Duggan, Gordon, and Miyashiro, *Assessing the Ability of the Afghan Ministry of Interior Affairs to Support the Afghan Local Police*, vii.

⁶⁴ Clark, “Update on the Afghan Local Police: Making Sure They Are Armed, Trained, Paid and Exist.”

⁶⁵ Clark, “Update on the Afghan Local Police: Making Sure They Are Armed, Trained, Paid and Exist.”

⁶⁶ Clark, “Update on the Afghan Local Police: Making Sure They Are Armed, Trained, Paid and Exist.”

contributes to stability and degrading the Taliban insurgency. Without GIRoA further implementing mechanisms to maintain adequate control of the ALP, local security forces will continue to be susceptible to corruption and improper employment.

F. CRIMINAL ACTIVITY

Despite being members of their local communities, ALP officers routinely face allegations of abusive behavior, preying upon the people whom they are supposed to protect. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan highlights the predatory behavior exhibited by the ALP in a recent study indicating that in 2017 alone, the ALP was responsible for fifty-five documented incidents causing 114 civilian casualties. Additionally, forty-five casualties were known to be the result of ALP officers purposefully targeting civilians for personal reasons.⁶⁷ Though accidental civilian deaths are regrettable and jeopardize the trust and legitimacy of the ALP, the predatory behavior of ALP officers within their own communities may be even more damaging to local security.

The criminal activity present within the ranks of the ALP has negatively impacted local governance in communities across Afghanistan. Reports of ALP extorting their communities, stealing land and goods, and imparting violence upon ethnic rivals have fostered a sense of fear and distrust of the ALP and other government-backed militia programs.⁶⁸ Such criminal activity has even extended to the illicit drug trade. Given that illegal drugs contribute to a third of the Afghan economy, it follows that an under-regulated militia element reporting to corrupt government officials with drug smuggling ties would also become involved in this disruptive, though profitable, activity.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ United Nations Mission in Afghanistan, *Afghanistan: Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict* (Kabul, Afghanistan: 2018): 49, https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/afghanistan_protection_of_civilians_annual_report_2017_final_6_march.pdf.

⁶⁸ Vanda Felbab-Brown, "Hurray for Militias? Not so Fast: Lessons from the Afghan Local Police Experience," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 27, no. 2 (March 21, 2016): 265, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2015.1129169>.

⁶⁹ Felbab-Brown, "Hurray for Militias? Not so Fast: Lessons from the Afghan Local Police Experience," 271.

The lack of legitimate oversight of the ALP has established an environment conducive to abuses and criminal activity. At the outset of the ALP, such oversight was primarily provided by USSOF elements living within close proximity to ALP units. These USSOF elements provided the supervision and training necessary to mitigate predatory behavior. With fluctuations in U.S. troop presence, however, many ALP elements lacked American oversight or fell under the purview of conventional American troops, who were not as suited for such a mission.⁷⁰ The reduced American involvement coupled with an Afghan government plagued with corruption has allowed criminal behavior within the ALP to persist.

G. LESSONS LEARNED

The ALP experience provides numerous lessons for the United States and GIRoA to consider for the potential evolution of the ALP or future implementation of similar programs. The shortcomings and successes of the ALP highlight the associated costs and benefits of creating militia-based local security elements. Though far cheaper, less resource intensive, and faster to develop than formal conventional security forces, the expediency comes at a price. If the United States is to pursue the creation of such forces, whether it be out of necessity or convenience, it must do so understanding the short versus long-term consequences and implement control mechanisms up front to mitigate the anticipated challenges.

Prior to standing up a local security element, the sponsor should consider accountability measures to punish or disband elements that become problematic or unnecessary. The lack of formal processes for disarming ALP units that exhibit predatory behavior within their communities has propagated the effects of rogue elements.⁷¹ The Afghan government's inadequate control of both personnel and equipment has made it exceedingly difficult to recover weapons and encourage unwanted ALP officers to return to their normal civilian lives. Completely dissolving existing ALP elements without

⁷⁰ Felbab-Brown, "Hurray for Militias? Not so Fast: Lessons from the Afghan Local Police Experience," 266.

⁷¹ Felbab-Brown, "Afghanistan Trip Report V: The Afghan Local Police: 'It's Local, So It Must Be Good'—Or Is It?"

creating groups of unemployed armed men ripe for Taliban recruitment may not be possible, though establishing control measures for future ALP and other security elements may mitigate such risk.

The employment of local security elements must be tailored to each individual region and community. Initial successes of ALP in some areas encouraged the United States to rapidly expand the program and apply a generalized formula across various regions of Afghanistan. As demonstrated by the ALP experience, some communities were far more conducive to establishing local security elements than others. A multitude of factors affect location and implementation, to include: ethnic and tribal disposition of the area, geography, presence of other government security forces, history, and enemy activity. The sponsor must thoroughly assess a potential local security element location considering such factors, as well as working alongside local leaders, both formal and informal.

Local security elements require a direct and trusted link to the central government to ensure acceptable control and prevent misuse by local powerbrokers. The structure and reporting mechanisms of the ALP have created an organization vulnerable to co-optation by nefarious elements and exploitation by corrupt Afghan government officials. Incorporating regular security forces personnel into key ALP positions can assist in coordination with the ANP/ANA and training. Though the opportunity for corruption and misuse remains, utilizing ANA personnel mitigates the risk, as they may not have any personal connections to the area, potentially offering relatively objective oversight. This should be done in a manner that avoids overpowering the ALP and does not diminish its perception and role as a community defense force. Furthermore, the ANA enjoy greater approval by the Afghan people; therefore, direct ties within the ALP may provide legitimacy as well as assist with tactical and logistical support.⁷²

⁷² Tabasum Akseer, Mohammad Shoaib Haidary, Rebecca Miller, Sayed Masood Sadat, Christina Satkowski, Helen Seese, Mohammad Jawad Shahbi, Kris Veenstra, Warren Zachary, and Fahim Ahmad Yousufzai, "Afghanistan: A Survey of the Afghan People 2006-2017," *The Asia Foundation* (2017): 53, <http://surveys.asiafoundation.org/Dashboard?SurveyCode=AGSAP&SampleName=GP&SectionName=Default&LanguageName=English#Full-Report-4>.

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IV. CASE STUDY—INDIAN TERRITORIAL ARMY

The evolution of the Indian Territorial Army provides an example with parallels to the American experience in Afghanistan following its intervention in October 2001. India's internal unrest and global operational requirements during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries surpassed the capacity of both the occupying British force and the Indians, making the establishment of a local security element necessary. The result was the creation of a home defense force that could augment security while regular troops were committed to World War I, which developed into the Indian Territorial Army (ITA).⁷³ The ITA remains in existence today, continuing to provide additional security for communities and assistance to the Indian Army when called upon.⁷⁴ Given the similarities in the dynamics in which the ITA came to fruition and the current state of Afghanistan, the ITA presents potential lessons for the successful implementation of a similar concept in Afghanistan, or at least provides guidance to reform existing local security entities. The principles contributing to the longevity and professionalization of the ITA may prove worthy of application to Afghanistan while taking caution not to blindly mimic instances of success without paying proper attention to context and cultural variances.

A. HISTORY

The British have a long history of imperial conquest and establishing order in distant lands to maintain control over acquired territory and resources. Such experiences shaped the British approach to achieving stability in the geographically vast and highly populated country of India. British influence in India began through commerce and the global reach of its trading companies. By the mid to late 1700s, "the East India Company, operating out of London, was in the novel and highly ambiguous position of collecting

⁷³ Heathcote, *The Military in British India: The Development of British Land Forces in South Asia (1600-1947)*, 231.

⁷⁴ "History and Introduction," Indian Territorial Army, accessed July 3, 2018. <http://www.territorialarmy.in>.

revenue and so administering a large and prosperous part of eastern India.”⁷⁵ Those serving under the umbrella of the company found themselves integrated into India’s social and authoritative structure, laying the groundwork for the establishment of official British rule, known as the Raj.⁷⁶ Until the mid-eighteenth century, the Moguls maintained stability and control over the Indian people. As their influence waned, especially in the more remote regions of India, regional politics became unstable and negatively impacted trade. Understanding the implications of political instability, to include the disruption of trade routes, the cutting of supplies from the source, and the threatened safety of commercial personnel, the British government decided to intervene.⁷⁷

Beginning in 1744, the British entered a series of conflicts with the French and local Indian factions challenging British economic interests in the region.⁷⁸ By 1857, increasing unrest and mistreatment of the Indian people spawned violent resistance against the occupying British forces and merchants. The violence was mainly characterized by two conflicts: one pitting the British against their Indian auxiliaries, and the other categorized more as counterinsurgency operations conducted by small British detachments against rural Indian rebels.⁷⁹ Determined to reestablish order and maintain control of its Indian territory, Britain committed 46,600 British troops and 58,000 loyal Indians to the conflict.⁸⁰ Instability in the rural regions of India remained a constant threat to British interests. Any removal or shift of British authority resulted in localized insurrections, highlighting the true lack of influence and control by the British and the Indian governance structure they supported.⁸¹ The British ultimately succeeded in suppressing the revolt in 1858 through the

⁷⁵ Judith M. Brown, *Modern India: The Origins of an Asian Democracy* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1985), 37.

⁷⁶ Brown, *Modern India: The Origins of an Asian Democracy*, 37.

⁷⁷ Brown, *Modern India: The Origins of an Asian Democracy*, 42.

⁷⁸ Brown, *Modern India: The Origins of an Asian Democracy*, 42.

⁷⁹ Lawrence James, *Raj: The Making and Unmaking of British India* (New York: St. Martin’s Griffin, 1997), 254.

⁸⁰ James, *Raj: The Making and Unmaking of British India*, 254.

⁸¹ James, *Raj: The Making and Unmaking of British India*, 274.

brutal application of military force, resulting in the abolition of the East India Company and placing India directly under the rule of the British Crown.⁸²

Though the British were able to maintain their position of power through strict rule following the transition to the Crown, political opposition and the beginnings of unrest in the early 1900s prompted the British to shift methods to a more indirect and influence-based approach.⁸³ Lord Lytton, viceroy in India during the 1870s, demonstrated this sentiment, stating “we can hold India securely by what they call good government: that is to say, by improving the condition of the [people], strictly administering justice, spending immense sums on irrigation works, etc.”⁸⁴ This marked a step towards the British seeking population-centric options to exert control rather than resort to pure force and intimidation, which may not provide sustainable or durable stability.

In pursuit of a low-cost option to provide security and protect imperial interests, the British created the Indian Army, which was comprised of British officers and soldiers leading Indian troops.⁸⁵ The British understood that control of the population hinged upon the ability to enforce law and dispense justice at the local level while maintaining a perception of legitimacy in the eyes of the Indian people. The Indian Army was constantly dispatched throughout rural India to augment civil authority and remind the people of its power, though doing so was expensive, unpopular, and at times not feasible due to limited numbers.⁸⁶ In response to these challenges, the British attempted to rely upon civil police forces to maintain local security. These forces, however, proved ineffective, as they were largely disorganized and had a reputation for corruption and oppression. The British went a step further to strengthen the police through creating small armed reserves within each province that could respond to issues overwhelming the police, though these elements were eventually absorbed by the police.⁸⁷

⁸² Brown, *Modern India: The Origins of an Asian Democracy*, 91.

⁸³ Brown, *Modern India: The Origins of an Asian Democracy*, 91.

⁸⁴ Brown, *Modern India: The Origins of an Asian Democracy*, 99.

⁸⁵ Brown, *Modern India: The Origins of an Asian Democracy*, 95.

⁸⁶ Brown, *Modern India: The Origins of an Asian Democracy*, 132.

⁸⁷ Brown, *Modern India: The Origins of an Asian Democracy*, 132.

Britain's attempts at local security were further strained as the world erupted into global conflict at the start of the twentieth century. Britain, and consequently its imperial forces, were fully committed to World War I from 1914 to 1918, pulling vast amounts of personnel and resources away from the homeland and its colonies. By the end of the war, "nearly 1 ½ million Indians had been recruited into combatant and non-combatant services," with approximately 1,400,000 British and Indians being sent overseas.⁸⁸ Britain's struggle to balance resource allocation for maintaining stability in its colonies while fighting a major war forced a new restructured approach to achieving local security in India.

Formalizing attempts to provide local security during World War I, the British established the Territorial Army through the Indian Territorial Act of 1920, creating two wings: the Auxiliary Force for Europeans and Anglo-Indians, and the Indian Territorial Force for Indian volunteers. Following its independence from Britain, India officially retained the Territorial Army through the Territorial Army Act in 1948.⁸⁹ Falling under the control of India's regular army, the ITA remains an integral part of the Indian security apparatus and has made significant contributions to security, at home and abroad. In its current form, the ITA's approximately 40,000 personnel serve to relieve the regular forces of static domestic duties, assist in civil administration, provide aid to communities struck with natural disaster, and may support the Indian Army in times of grave threats to security.⁹⁰

B. SECURITY/EFFECTIVENESS

Similar to the efforts of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) and the United States to achieve acceptable peace and stability across Afghanistan, India struggled to assert governance and control over its rural tribal areas. British officer accounts of operations entering the twentieth century describe them as achieving "little beyond demonstrating the muscle of the Raj," with over six hundred raids

⁸⁸ Brown, *Modern India: The Origins of an Asian Democracy*, 188.

⁸⁹ Indian Territorial Army, "History and Introduction."

⁹⁰ Indian Territorial Army, "History and Introduction."

being recorded between 1899 and 1906 and no significant improvement in security.⁹¹ The area's geography also presented significant challenges, as India's northwest region is mountainous and was, at the time, largely uncharted. Acknowledging these issues, the British came to espouse that they could achieve stability and regional security through creating and working with locally recruited police and militia. They believed that such local "arrangements would, in time, eradicate disorder and finally lead to the area's integration with more settled regions."⁹² To better confront the challenges of instability, the British revised their frontier policy in 1901, replacing Anglo-Indian garrisons with locally recruited tribal militia serving under British officers.⁹³ The British carried this model forward to create the ITA.

Efforts to professionalize the ITA resulted in the evolution of a force capable of contributing to stability on the home front and augmenting Indian national security when called upon. From the inception of the ITA, the British, as well as the Indian government following its independence, recognized the necessity of professionalizing the local security elements. This became readily apparent during the First World War, as highlighted by the precarious security situation in India's Northwest Frontier Province. With the majority of longstanding, well-established territorial units deployed to France, the remaining troops were largely inexperienced and lacked sufficient formal training.⁹⁴ By 1915, the territorial troops operating in the Northwest Frontier Province were struggling to control the region, prompting the British to open the Mountain Warfare School. This school was specifically designed to centrally train Territorial Army officers and noncommissioned officers who could return to their units and share their knowledge.⁹⁵ The effects of such standardized training translated into the continued development and markedly better performance of the ITA.

⁹¹ James, *Raj: The Making and Unmaking of British India*, 403.

⁹² James, *Raj: The Making and Unmaking of British India*, 406.

⁹³ James, *Raj: The Making and Unmaking of British India*, 409.

⁹⁴ T. R. Moreman, *The Army in India and the Development of Frontier Warfare, 1849-1947* (London: Macmillan Press LTD, 1998), 99.

⁹⁵ Moreman, *The Army in India and the Development of Frontier Warfare, 1849-1947*, 99.

Through the expanded centralization and standardization of training, the ITA aimed to achieve levels of professionalism and knowledge similar to that found in India's regular military units. Eventually, ITA soldiers began attending regional training centers and conducted local training in accordance with established Indian Army practices. Currently, ITA officers undergo ten weeks of initial officer training at the Indian Military Academy to ensure the ITA's leadership is of similar caliber to their regular Indian Army counterparts.⁹⁶ In doing so, the ITA became capable of effectively functioning independently to address local security issues and could serve under the command of the regular Indian Army in times of crisis.

Recognizing the value of a local security program, especially in the early days of its existence as an independent state, India invested in the ITA's effectiveness and its further development. The ITA's history of contribution to achieving stability in India solidified its role as part of the larger security apparatus. The ITA in its current form continues to serve as a potential model for achieving local security in communities that span both urban and remote rural regions.

C. POPULAR SUPPORT

The truly local and part-time nature of ITA soldiers likely contributes to the ITA's support from the Indian people as well as the longevity and legitimacy of the program. The ITA has officially been a part of the Indian security apparatus for almost one hundred years, and continues to be an accepted element within Indian society with participation across the country.⁹⁷ From its official inception in 1920, the ITA as a new local volunteer force gained popularity in India's more remote rural regions.⁹⁸ Presently, ITA soldiers are assigned to units based upon established zones of responsibility, serving in units closest to their civilian places of work. The intent of determining assignments in this manner is to better allow ITA

⁹⁶ Surender Singh, *Territorial Army: History of India's Part-Time Soldiers* (London: Macmillan Press LTD, 1998), loc. 180 of 3550, Kindle.

⁹⁷ *Daily News and Analysis—India*, "Territorial Army Facing a Severe Shortage of Officers." accessed August 2, 2018, <http://www.dnaindia.com/bangalore/report-territorial-army-facing-a-severe-shortage-of-officers-1765171>.

⁹⁸ Singh, *Territorial Army: History of India's Part-Time Soldiers*, loc. 1154.

soldiers to maintain focus on their civilian careers.⁹⁹ Current ITA requirements only permit gainfully employed civilians to serve, as the organization purposely does not offer fulltime employment to its members.¹⁰⁰ Consequently, the part-time status of ITA soldiers does not equate to wages substantial enough to live on, and normal duties do not significantly interfere with members' civilian lives, making them very much members of their own communities.¹⁰¹

Unlike members of the Afghan Local Police (ALP), the ITA soldiers are forced to rely upon outside employment in their communities to support themselves and their families. Given the ITA intends to pose minimal disruption to community life and its members do not maintain legal authority while off-duty, enrollment in the ITA likely has little impact on the social acceptance or status of its members. Additionally, members of the police force are disqualified from serving in the ITA.¹⁰² This forces ITA soldiers to continue living as contributing members of their communities without maintaining a sense of authority over their fellow citizens when not performing duties in an official capacity. In practice, the ITA construct diverges from the ALP program in this manner. Though the ALP program originally intended for members to participate part-time, in reality, some members maintain permanent roles in their villages as ALP officers, unnecessarily wielding power and influence in their own communities and offsetting the balance of power.¹⁰³

The ITA's long history of Indian citizens contributing to security along with sustained recruitment from local Indian communities is indicative of an aptly supported local security program.¹⁰⁴ The ITA is not a conscript force, forcing the organization to rely on volunteers and support from the communities they serve. The ITA's current

⁹⁹ Singh, *Territorial Army: History of India's Part-Time Soldiers*, loc. 169.

¹⁰⁰ Singh, *Territorial Army: History of India's Part-Time Soldiers*, loc. 156.

¹⁰¹ Singh, *Territorial Army: History of India's Part-Time Soldiers*, loc. 326.

¹⁰² Singh, *Territorial Army: History of India's Part-Time Soldiers*, loc. 156.

¹⁰³ Felbab-Brown, "Hurray for Militias? Not so Fast: Lessons from the Afghan Local Police Experience," 273.

¹⁰⁴ "Territorial Army Facing a Severe Shortage of Officers."

organizational model encourages valued service to the Indian people while retaining the popular support necessary to continue functioning as a local security element.

D. SUSTAINABILITY

The level of resources and support required to maintain the ITA is inherently less than that needed for regular security elements, creating a sustainable organizational model to complement security.¹⁰⁵ The ITA was initially a low-cost option to expand British efforts to maintain control in India.¹⁰⁶ This concept of supporting internal security without the expenses associated with maintaining a standing regular military unit continued after India's independence. Preserving the ITA as a volunteer force with ITA soldiers only being paid when performing their duties eliminates the need to pay full salaries and logistically sustain units in between scheduled training events and operations.¹⁰⁷ The ITA's contribution to Indian security at a reduced cost continues to spur debate in which supporters call for further investment in, and the expansion of, the ITA. Doing so would allow the Indian government to maintain security while simultaneously freeing up financial resources for other critical projects.¹⁰⁸

The intentional minimal interference of ITA membership with civilian life allows for broad voluntary participation without significantly impacting Indian's private sector. The modern ITA's emphasis on continued contribution to society through its members' civilian careers preserves this facet of maintaining a sustainable security model.¹⁰⁹ This is a critical aspect of security force sustainability a government must consider. The Indian government's attention to balancing the requirement to maintain a ready force sizeable enough to be effective with the need to support the economy demonstrates a forward-thinking approach to enhancing a nation's defense capabilities. Additionally, the minimal

¹⁰⁵ Singh, *Territorial Army: History of India's Part-Time Soldiers*, loc. 115.

¹⁰⁶ Singh, *Territorial Army: History of India's Part-Time Soldiers*, loc. 124.

¹⁰⁷ "How to Join," Indian Territorial Army, accessed July 31, 2018, <http://www.territorialarmy.in>.

¹⁰⁸ "Giving Ground to Territorial Army." Tribune India News Service, December 7, 2014, <https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/kaleidoscope/giving-ground-to-territorial-army/15240.html>.

¹⁰⁹ Singh, *Territorial Army: History of India's Part-Time Soldiers*, loc. 169.

impact on community life facilitates recruitment efforts to sustain the force and local defense capabilities, as there has been no shortage of ITA volunteers in recent times.¹¹⁰

E. GOVERNMENT CONTROL

The assignment of regular British and Indian Army soldiers to territorial elements ensured proper control and development of the ITA. Starting from the creation of India's early local security elements, the British ensured the permanent presence of an experienced cadre within the ranks. This presence was formalized initially by attaching five British officers to each ITA battalion during training. British officers formed the command teams and filled critical roles with Indian officers falling under their charge.¹¹¹ The direct oversight by regular British and Indian Army officers ensured the ITA operated above local disputes, as these officers were not indigenous to their operational areas. Such social separation of the key leadership insulated the ITA from the potential of unlawful influence and misuse of forces by local powerbrokers.

Control over the ITA through professional military officers also ensured the ITA conducted operations directly in line with British and Indian government interests.¹¹² Rather than allowing each local security element to independently pursue its own objectives that may interfere with adjacent elements or produce results counter to the government's interests, the presence of regular army officers helped to guide and coordinate efforts. These officers not only provided leadership and military expertise, they were also the direct links to the regular forces and the government, improving communication and situational awareness for higher commands.

The inclusion of a permanent professional cadre marks a distinct difference between the ITA and the various local security programs implemented in Afghanistan. For example, ALP elements may interact with regular Afghan security elements, though they continue to lack a persistent professional presence or relationship. This lack of oversight

¹¹⁰ "Territorial Army Facing a Severe Shortage of Officers."

¹¹¹ Singh, *Territorial Army: History of India's Part-Time Soldiers*, loc. 1165.

¹¹² Brown, *Modern India: The Origins of an Asian Democracy*, 95.

equates to mixed results in ALP effectiveness and professionalism.¹¹³ Though multiple factors certainly influence the performance and behavior of local security elements, the ITA's inclusion of objective professional personnel in the organization's critical leadership positions may assist in steering security elements towards activities and behavior that have a more positive impact on stability.

F. CRIMINAL ACTIVITY

The part-time nature of the ITA may be a crucial factor in counteracting the propensity of militia-based security elements to pursue criminal activity. Because ITA soldiers must maintain civilian jobs to earn a living wage, any criminal behavior committed while serving in the ITA could jeopardize their civilian careers. Furthermore, ITA soldiers serve in the same areas in which they live. Unlike some fulltime ALP officers who embraced their elevated community status, ITA soldiers are only permitted to serve part-time with intermittent training and employment. Given ITA soldiers spend the majority of their time as civilians in their communities, aside from legal punishment, there are social consequences to misbehavior.

The ITA's established vetting and selection process assesses the suitability of applicants for service, increasing the likelihood of accepting quality personnel and refusing entrance to potential or past criminals. Applicants must now pass the Preliminary Interview Board as well as the Services Selection Board. The Preliminary Interview Board consists of both written examinations and an interview, allowing military and civilian experts to evaluate an applicant's personality, mental capabilities, and personal background. If successful, applicants then face the Services Selection Board, which also recommends select personnel for commissioning as officers.¹¹⁴ This process ensures some level of mental capacity for each applicant and provides the ITA with the ability to turn away applicants that may have a history of misbehavior or personality traits not conducive to working well with the Indian people and fellow ITA soldiers. Although standards of service comparable to that of a developed country's military may not be feasible in Afghanistan

¹¹³ Mashal, "U.S. Plan for New Afghan Force Revives Fears of Militia Abuses."

¹¹⁴ Singh, *Territorial Army: History of India's Part-Time Soldiers*, loc. 156.

today, establishing a more stringent process for entrance into a local security organization may curb the trends of predatory behavior exhibited by elements like the ALP.

G. LESSONS LEARNED

The evolution of the ITA from local militias supervised by the British Army to a professional and permanent local security element within the Indian security apparatus highlights critical lessons for similar programs in Afghanistan. Though there are certainly cultural and circumstantial differences between India and Afghanistan, the principles for establishing local security exhibited by the ITA may guide implementation and reform in Afghanistan. The British and Indian governments' efforts to establish control measures, professionalize the force, and encourage ITA members to maintain strong ties to their communities are all critical aspects of ITA effectiveness.

Establishing durable control measures from a local security program's inception is essential for maintaining government control. As demonstrated by the ALP, a central government attempting to reign in rogue security elements and implement control mechanisms after the appearance of pervasive control issues is challenging. If a government creates these mechanisms from a program's inception, organizational culture and momentum may more easily institutionalize such practices. For the ITA, relying upon regular military officers to provide leadership and guidance untainted by local politics likely prevented ITA elements from becoming the personal militias of local powerbrokers. This concept has been largely lacking in Afghanistan's previous local security initiatives, making it difficult for the government to adequately control militia-based elements like the ALP. Implementing this practice, however, must be done carefully, as a lack of sufficient local representation in respected positions may induce resentment or loss of legitimacy.

Centralized and standardized training plays a significant role in the creation of a professional force capable of providing internal security. The ITA has evolved to training its leaders alongside their regular Indian Army counterparts and maintaining scheduled training periods for its units.¹¹⁵ This method supports the ITA in achieving capabilities

¹¹⁵ Singh, *Territorial Army: History of India's Part-Time Soldiers*, loc. 180.

comparable to fulltime security elements and facilitates regular forces absorbing ITA units in times of need. Though the United States and GIRoA attempted to pursue centralized and standardized training at various points in the ALP's existence, there has yet to be complete implementation across the organization, and the level of proficiency achieved during training remains questionable.¹¹⁶ Acknowledging the ITA has had a much longer lifespan to develop such processes and is not battling an ongoing insurgency, Afghanistan can still take steps to pursue such a model.

Forcing local security members to serve part-time and continue living lives as members of their communities may prevent abuses and foster popular acceptance. If members of a local security element are permitted to retain power over their fellow community members at all times, opportunities for relationships to change and abuses to occur exist. The temptation for misbehavior may be too great for some volunteers. Implementing a mechanism to force local security members to continue contributing to their communities as civilians while remaining ready to address threats to security may reduce the criminal activity often associated with militia-based security models.

¹¹⁶ Marquis, Duggan, Gordon, and Miyashiro, *Assessing the Ability of the Afghan Ministry of Interior Affairs to Support the Afghan Local Police*, 82.

V. CASE STUDY—PERUVIAN RONDAS CAMPESINAS

The Partido Comunista del Perú-Sendero Luminoso (Communist Party of Peru-Shining Path) is a Maoist insurgent organization that was most active in Peru between 1980 and 1995.¹¹⁷ The internal unrest brought about by this insurgency was a trying time for Peru, as the people endured hardship while the government underwent a series of transformations and pursued multiple counterinsurgency strategies. Seeking to leverage traditional local security elements, known as *rondas campesinas*, the Peruvian government successfully incorporated these formations into the national security apparatus to eventually defeat the Shining Path.¹¹⁸ Though the *rondas* significantly contributed to ridding the country of its insurgents, their service was not without controversy due to abuses and their long-term social impacts on rural communities. As in Afghanistan, Peru faced a protracted insurgency with a central government that struggled for widespread control beyond the boundaries of its urban centers. Analyzing the effective employment and associated challenges of the *rondas* illuminates lessons learned for potential application to bolstering local security in Afghanistan.

A. HISTORY

The *rondas campesinas* have origins tracing back through centuries of Peru's long tradition of rural societies raising their own local security elements. The term *rondas campesinas* translates to "peasant rounds" and far predates their role during Peru's most recent struggle with communist insurgents. During the sixteenth century under Spain's colonial rule, rural Andean communities embraced the use of *rondas* to provide local protection and justice outside the purview of the perceived illegitimate Spanish system.¹¹⁹ The more modern rendition of the *rondas* appeared in the 1900s when the owners of Andean haciendas (large plantations) created security elements from their workers to

¹¹⁷ Palmer, "Countering Terrorism in Latin America: The Case of Shining Path in Peru," 293.

¹¹⁸ Mario Fumerton, "Rondas Campesinas in the Peruvian Civil War: Peasant Self-Defence Organisations in Ayacucho," *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 20, no. 4 (October 2001): 470, https://www.jstor.org/stable/3339025?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents.

¹¹⁹ Palomino, "The Rise of the Rondas Campesinas in Peru," 112.

defend their properties from thieves and rival land owners.¹²⁰ Such arrangements lasted until changes in the Peruvian government brought about a shift in the functions of haciendas.

The evolution of the *rondas* was heavily influenced by the various forms and actions of the Peruvian government. Since Peru's independence from Spain in the 1820s, the military has played a key role in politics and government with brief periods of civilian leadership running the country.¹²¹ This history of strong military influence significantly impacted governance and its relationship with the people. Immediately preceding the emergence of the insurgency between 1968 and 1980, the military-controlled government at the time, the Revolutionary Military Government, attempted to make sweeping social, economic, and political changes. Lacking sufficient resources for its ambitious plans, the government failed and returned power to civilian leadership.¹²² These changes included the Agrarian Reform of 1968, which affected the ownership and function of Peru's many haciendas.¹²³ The law prompted a shift in the role of the *rondas*, who began breaking ties with the haciendas and focusing on voluntarily providing security within their local communities to prevent violence and criminal activity in the countryside, namely cattle theft. By the 1970s, these informal peasant organizations spread throughout the entire Andean region and into the Amazon, serving their communities and fulfilling their "ancestral principles of communal work and solidarity."¹²⁴ Aside from providing some form of security and rule of law in Peru's most remote regions, the true utility of the *rondas* became clear following the rise of the Shining Path.

The Shining Path traces its origins back to the early 1960s in Ayacucho, a remote state in Peru's highland region that historically received little attention from the central government.¹²⁵ Leveraging an already growing attraction to communism, Abimael

¹²⁰ Palomino, "The Rise of the Rondas Campesinas in Peru," 112.

¹²¹ Palmer, "Countering Terrorism in Latin America: The Case of Shining Path in Peru," 293.

¹²² Palmer, "Countering Terrorism in Latin America: The Case of Shining Path in Peru," 293.

¹²³ Palomino, "The Rise of the Rondas Campesinas in Peru," 113.

¹²⁴ Palomino, "The Rise of the Rondas Campesinas in Peru," 113.

¹²⁵ Palmer, "Countering Terrorism in Latin America: The Case of Shining Path in Peru," 293.

Guzmán Reynoso, a professor at the National University of San Cristóbal de Huamanga, organized a student organization to promote radical Maoist ideology. Guzmán remained at the helm of his organization, which became the Shining Path, and expanded his militant group's reach beyond the university where his Maoist ideology resonated in the surrounding poverty-stricken region.¹²⁶ The Shining Path continued to clandestinely construct its political, military, and support networks leading up to 1980 when it “launched its self-declared ‘people’s war’ on the eve of the most open and democratic elections in Peru’s political history.”¹²⁷

At the beginning of Peru’s civil war, the Shining Path focused on the countryside, sabotaging economic infrastructure, assaulting isolated police outposts, and assassinating government officials.¹²⁸ For close to three years, the Peruvian government underestimated the growing insurgency, devoting little attention and resources to the issue.¹²⁹ The Peruvian government eventually committed its armed forces to the conflict in December of 1982, leading to two years of brutal and often indiscriminate military repression.¹³⁰ The lack of effective government intervention and the increasing costs and abuses imposed upon the people by both the Shining Path and the government inspired villages to rely upon *rondas* for local security and justice.

By the mid-1980s, the Peruvian government realized it could not defeat the insurgency through military might alone, so it significantly altered its counterinsurgency strategy and pursued efforts to co-opt and formalize the *rondas*. By training and equipping these local security elements, the Shining Path faced another frontline, experiencing a

¹²⁶ Palmer, “Countering Terrorism in Latin America: The Case of Shining Path in Peru,” 294.

¹²⁷ Palmer, “Countering Terrorism in Latin America: The Case of Shining Path in Peru,” 293.

¹²⁸ Lewis Taylor, “Counter-Insurgency Strategy, the PCP-Sendero Luminoso and the Civil War in Peru, 1980-1996,” *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 17, no. 1 (January 1998): 41, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3339664>.

¹²⁹ Taylor, “Counter-Insurgency Strategy, the PCP-Sendero Luminoso and the Civil War in Peru, 1980-1996,” 42.

¹³⁰ Fumerton, “Rondas Campesinas in the Peruvian Civil War: Peasant Self-Defence Organisations in Ayacucho,” 482.

diminished support and recruiting base.¹³¹ Efforts to further develop the *rondas* arose in 1991 with congressional legislation directing their arming and training, organizing them into Civil Defense Committees (CDC) under the army's control.¹³² The Peruvian government's decision to leverage the *rondas* and bolster other capabilities, to include intelligence collection, showed evidence of success and eventually led to the capture of Guzmán in 1992. The Shining Path immediately started to crumble, and by 1994 posed little threat to the Peruvian government.¹³³ The *rondas campesinas* continue to play a role in Peruvian society, contributing to security and conflict resolution in line with the traditions of rural Peruvian culture.

B. SECURITY/EFFECTIVENESS

Though the performance and capabilities of the *rondas* were not uniform across Peru, they were an integral part of the Peruvian government's counterinsurgency strategy to defeat the Shining Path. The Shining Path drew its support from Peru's most remote, rural regions. Initially, the Shining Path enjoyed and relied upon the favor of the peasant class, who were lured by promises of a better life and elevated social status. This support, however, waned as the Shining Path's uncompromising Maoist ideology brought about a social structure inconsistent with Peruvian heritage and a political cadre using tactics of terror and intimidation to eliminate resistance.¹³⁴ The increasing hardships imposed upon the people by the Shining Path, as well as the Peruvian government's early tepid response, encouraged *rondas* to take responsibility for their own communities' security.

The organically developed *rondas* in Peru's remote Andean region laid the groundwork for local security elements to confront the Shining Path and eventually gain the Peruvian government's support. The first *rondas* to take action were far from adequately armed and trained to truly enhance security in their communities. Some *rondas*

¹³¹ Witold Mucha, "Securitisation and Militias During Civil War in Peru," *Conflict, Security & Development* 16, no. 4 (August 2016): 328, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14678802.2016.1200316>.

¹³² Palmer, "Countering Terrorism in Latin America: The Case of Shining Path in Peru," 298.

¹³³ Palmer, "Countering Terrorism in Latin America: The Case of Shining Path in Peru," 299.

¹³⁴ Palmer, "Countering Terrorism in Latin America: The Case of Shining Path in Peru," 297.

had nothing more than slings, knives, and stones when opposing visiting Shining Path members.¹³⁵ Though the *rondas* were certainly incapable of independently destroying the Shining Path in this manner, they inspired communities to resist by all means possible, to include denying sustenance, safe haven, and recruits. The *rondas*' defiant actions instigated the Shining Path to employ methods of greater violence and abuse, further alienating the people. Consequently, the *rondas* attracted governmental support to continue pressuring the Shining Path and secure their communities.

The decision of the Peruvian government in the late 1980s to view the *rondas* as potential tools in the counterinsurgency fight rather than guerrilla sympathizers was crucial to successfully adjusting its strategy. The government understood the *rondas*' potential contributions in its rural areas as both sources of intelligence and as armed forces.¹³⁶ The initial support to the *rondas* came in 1983 when the Peruvian Army informally encouraged rural villages to form *rondas*, which was well-received in the provinces of Ayacucho and Cusco, despite there being a strong insurgent presence.¹³⁷ Initial successes gave way to the Rondas Campesinas Act of 1986 in which the Peruvian government legally recognized *rondas* as autonomous local security elements and began officially providing arms.¹³⁸ The government's support was critical in the survival of the *rondas* and their ability to match insurgent capabilities.

Formal inclusion into the Peruvian security apparatus and efforts to professionalize the force enabled *rondas* to protect their communities and degrade the Shining Path. Seeking to expand the *rondas*' impact and improve capabilities, the Peruvian government, led by President Alberto Fujimori, made *rondas* members of the Peruvian armed forces in 1991.¹³⁹ In doing so, the government organized *rondas* into Civil Defense Committees under the control of the army. With this construct, *rondas* received enough formal training

¹³⁵ Fumerton, "Rondas Campesinas in the Peruvian Civil War: Peasant Self-Defence Organisations in Ayacucho," 481.

¹³⁶ Mucha, "Securitisation and Militias During Civil War in Peru," 334.

¹³⁷ Palomino, "The Rise of the Rondas Campesinas in Peru," 117.

¹³⁸ Palomino, "The Rise of the Rondas Campesinas in Peru," 117.

¹³⁹ Mucha, "Securitisation and Militias During Civil War in Peru," 331.

and arms to not only defend their communities, but also offensively pursue Shining Path elements operating in their areas.¹⁴⁰ By 1993, there were more than 4,200 *rondas* elements throughout the Andean highlands with almost 236,000 members. At this strength, the *rondas* were often able to hold off Shining Path attacks long enough for the Peruvian Army to respond and destroy or repel the insurgents.¹⁴¹

Overall, the *rondas* proved effective in their contribution to the Peruvian government's greater counterinsurgency strategy. The organic nature in which *rondas* developed contributed to a local security element capable of fully integrating with their communities to deny the Shining Path much needed sources of support. The *rondas*' desire to protect their families and properties from brutal Shining Path tactics meshed with the Peruvian government's commitment to extinguishing the insurgency, which resulted in material and organizational support to the *rondas*.

C. POPULAR SUPPORT

The long history of *rondas* as part of Peruvian society and the local services they provided were sources of legitimacy and support from the people. The *rondas* originally emerged within rural peasant communities as a response to the central government's inability to provide protection from criminal activity, settle local disputes, and administer swift and fair justice.¹⁴² The needs of these communities directly contributed to the *rondas*' popularity and their increased involvement in community life. Initially, the *rondas* were merely a means of defending their villages from cattle theft and petty crime. As the Peruvian security situation grew more precarious, the *rondas* "evolved into local administrative authorities in the face of the state's incapability in providing basic services in matters of the rule of law," necessitating coexistence agreements with local authorities.¹⁴³ The distant and often corrupt nature of the Peruvian government led rural communities to place more trust and confidence in their traditional, informal forms of

¹⁴⁰ Mucha, "Securitisation and Militias During Civil War in Peru," 332.

¹⁴¹ Palmer, "Countering Terrorism in Latin America: The Case of Shining Path in Peru," 299.

¹⁴² Palomino, "The Rise of the Rondas Campesinas in Peru," 117.

¹⁴³ Mucha, "Securitisation and Militias During Civil War in Peru," 333.

governance that functioned in a manner consistent with local customs and values.¹⁴⁴ Acknowledging this widespread sentiment and understanding the critical role of maintaining popular support, the Peruvian government chose to work with the *rondas* rather than continue relying solely upon government forces.¹⁴⁵

Though the expanded implementation of *rondas* contributed to heightened security, their disruptive impact on the traditional social structures of Peruvian society spurred mixed levels of support in some communities. By officially incorporating the *rondas* into the government security apparatus and providing formal training and authority to its members, Peruvian villages adopted a military logic that transformed daily life.¹⁴⁶ Military training and tasks overshadowed the necessary and usual work associated with maintaining crops and estates. Contrary to previous practices, women were assigned responsibilities to contribute to security. Though their roles were often downplayed by their male counterparts, some women assisted through vigilance and patrolling while continuing to care for children, prepare food, and tend to animals.¹⁴⁷ Even traditional social order shifted to accommodate military hierarchy. The young *rondas* commanders assumed positions of authority and influence typically reserved for the elder generation, causing the abandonment of traditional ruling in Andean communities.¹⁴⁸ These changes to the fabric of Peruvian society called into question the institutionalization of the *rondas* system. Such grievances, though, were seemingly overshadowed by the proximate threat posed by the Shining Path.

D. SUSTAINABILITY

Considering the *rondas*' organic nature and their contributions to local security throughout generations of Peruvian history, their continued existence requires minimal government resources to function at an acceptable level. The *rondas*' early successes in

¹⁴⁴ Palomino, "The Rise of the Rondas Campesinas in Peru," 121.

¹⁴⁵ Kees Koonings, "Armed Actors, Violence and Democracy in Latin America in the 1990s," *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 20, no. 4 (October 2001): 407, JSTOR.

¹⁴⁶ Mucha, "Securitisation and Militias During Civil War in Peru," 335.

¹⁴⁷ Mucha, "Securitisation and Militias During Civil War in Peru," 336.

¹⁴⁸ Mucha, "Securitisation and Militias During Civil War in Peru," 335.

independently fending off Shining Path insurgents prompted the Peruvian government to supply only modest assistance to sustain the effort, at times only providing hunting rifles, vehicles, and small amounts of money.¹⁴⁹ Such resources pale in comparison to the requirements of a professional standing army. The largely voluntary nature of the *rondas* also meant that most members were not paid for their efforts, as serving in *rondas* was a communal duty rather than a career.¹⁵⁰ Even after the *rondas* officially became part of the Peruvian armed forces in 1991, the government did not have to allocate unsustainable levels of resources to retain the capability. The primarily defensive nature of the *rondas* allowed them to deter and resist Shining Path influence with relatively small numbers of villagers armed with rifles.

The rapid spread of *rondas* across Peru is indicative of a sustainable program the Peruvian government may still rely upon in times of internal unrest. The catalyst for villages establishing new *rondas* varied. Some *rondas* formed organically as the result of peasant communities self-organizing for defense, while others were coerced into existence by the military or the *rondas* of neighboring communities.¹⁵¹ As Shining Path escalated its campaign of violence across the countryside in the mid-1980s, *rondas* increasingly formed without the pressure of external entities. Looking to the south-central Andean states of Apurímac, Ayacucho, Junín, Huancavelica, and Pasco, the region's approximately 700 *rondas* elements in 1989, grew to more than 1,200 in 1991. By 1997, Ayacucho and Huancavelica alone had 2,500 committees overseeing more than 120,000 personnel.¹⁵² Regardless of motivation to join the *rondas*, the ability of the government and local *rondas* to recruit sufficient numbers of personnel for the counterinsurgency campaign is indicative of a society willing to maintaining this local security model.

¹⁴⁹ Taylor, "Counter-Insurgency Strategy, the PCP-Sendero Luminoso and the Civil War in Peru, 1980-1996," 49.

¹⁵⁰ Palomino, "The Rise of the Rondas Campesinas in Peru," 112.

¹⁵¹ Fumerton, "Rondas Campesinas in the Peruvian Civil War: Peasant Self-Defence Organisations in Ayacucho," 487.

¹⁵² Fumerton, "Rondas Campesinas in the Peruvian Civil War: Peasant Self-Defence Organisations in Ayacucho," 487.

E. GOVERNMENT CONTROL

The Peruvian government's decision to co-op existing *ronda* formations rather than create a new system resulted in an effective approach to local security and counterinsurgency, though doing so presented challenges of control. After official incorporation into Peru's counterinsurgency strategy, many *rondas* continued to act in an autonomous manner. Efforts to exert complete control over them were "met with limited success, and patrol commanders took on local prominence in many communities."¹⁵³ Not only did this disrupt traditional social order, it provided greater opportunity for *rondas* to pursue objectives outside the scope of the Peruvian government's campaign to defeat the Shining Path. Evidence of intercommunal violence began to appear in the early 1980s as *rondas* expanded and the Shining Path continued its movement. Though these communities may have been historical rivals, conflict did not typically rise to the level of violence seen when the *rondas* became more active in battling the Shining Path. The government's program for co-opting and organizing existing *rondas* provoked greater resentment between villages not accustomed to interacting with each other.¹⁵⁴ The existence of a common enemy in the Shining Path was at times not compelling enough to overcome the loyalties and grievances of the traditional *rondas*.

Despite the inherent challenges of exerting absolute control over the *rondas*, the government's actions to mitigate risk and channel efforts were sufficient in degrading the Shining Path. After officially taking responsibility for the *rondas*, the Peruvian Army created CDCs to establish order and hierarchical systems that could better integrate with the military. Upon identifying areas with active Shining Path elements and communities requesting military assistance, the army unit responsible for the region established a CDC command consisting of ten to fifteen peasants, providing them with training, weapons, a uniform, and an alias. The selectees then assumed responsibility for coordinating activities between the army and the *rondas* to defend against the Shining Path.¹⁵⁵ These men

¹⁵³ Koonings, "Armed Actors, Violence and Democracy in Latin America in the 1990s," 407.

¹⁵⁴ Mucha, "Securitisation and Militias During Civil War in Peru," 334.

¹⁵⁵ Palomino, "The Rise of the Rondas Campesinas in Peru," 115.

represented the government's direct link to the population and militia activity. Once the CDC commanders were ready, the army registered their village populations, asking all residents to cooperate with the *rondas* and encouraged men ages fourteen to sixty to join the ranks. Each *rondas* element consisted of approximately forty to sixty men and, through the CDC, coordinated patrols with neighboring village *rondas*.¹⁵⁶ The army's interaction with the *rondas* through the CDCs facilitated the development of enhanced capabilities as well as provided the opportunity to influence action in the absence of continual government supervision.

F. CRIMINAL ACTIVITY

Although *rondas* were effective and widely employed, evidence of misbehavior and abuse highlight the unintended consequences associated with utilizing militia-based security elements. By 1984, the *rondas* were very much involved in the conflict. Though primarily focused on defending their communities, the fighting at times resulted in the accidental killings of non-combatants, to include wrongful targeting.¹⁵⁷ Due to the ambiguous nature of insurgents, paranoia and inaccurate information led some *rondas* to misidentify and kill innocent civilians suspected of being Shining Path members. Such accidents sometimes extended to unfamiliar Peruvian security forces, as demonstrated by an incident in Huánuco province in 1985 when *rondas* used machetes to kill three plain-clothed police officers thought to be insurgents.¹⁵⁸ Not all non-combatant killings were accidental, as the insurgency became an excuse for the unwarranted application of violence.

The heightened role of *rondas* in Peruvian society during the Shining Path insurgency altered the typical means and consequences of local conflict resolution. The shift in rural Peruvian culture towards militancy, combined with the security vacuum created by the Peruvian government's inability to secure the countryside, created an

¹⁵⁶ Palomino, "The Rise of the Rondas Campesinas in Peru," 115.

¹⁵⁷ Mucha, "Securitisation and Militias During Civil War in Peru," 334.

¹⁵⁸ Mucha, "Securitisation and Militias During Civil War in Peru," 334.

environment in which disputes and personal grievances were settled through violence.¹⁵⁹ Traditional peaceful processes of conflict resolution exercised by informal village leaders and *rondas* became arguably barbaric in some areas. *Rondas* faced accusations of unjustly detaining and torturing suspected Shining Path members, forcing false confessions, and dispensing harsh public justice.¹⁶⁰ These *rondas* elements were operating outside of Peruvian law with little consequence during this time, allowing for misbehavior that was not limited to violence.

The remote nature of the *rondas* and their established ties to the military and Peruvian government created opportunities for corruption. The *rondas*' newly formalized relationships with both Peruvian civil and military authorities led to all parties leveraging each other for illegal or self-serving means. For instance, some politicians used *rondas* to buy votes by handing out ammunition in return for support, promising future favors for *rondas* that influenced their villages to vote accordingly.¹⁶¹ The largely autonomous *rondas* overseen by an often-corrupt central government unsurprisingly resulted in some elements taking advantage of the system for personal gain.

G. LESSONS LEARNED

The *rondas* exemplify the concept of militia-based local security elements effectively battling an insurgency, though the price of employing such a model may include detrimental long-term social consequences. The *rondas* were certainly a critical aspect of Peru's counterinsurgency campaign. Though their actions in confronting the Shining Path aligned with the government's objectives enough to ultimately defeat the insurgency, they were not completely obedient proxies. Additionally, the Peruvian government failed to plan for their role and composition in a post-conflict environment.¹⁶² When establishing or permitting the existence of militia-based local security elements, a central government

¹⁵⁹ Mucha, "Securitisation and Militias During Civil War in Peru," 334.

¹⁶⁰ John Stephen Gitlitz, "Justicia Rondera y Derechos Humanos, Cajamarca: Understanding Conflict Resolution in the Rondas of Northern Peru," *Boletín IRA* 28 (August 2014): 202.

¹⁶¹ Orin Starn, "To Revolt Against the Revolution: War and Resistance in Peru's Andes," *Cultural Anthropology* 10, no. 4 (November 1995): 564, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/656257>.

¹⁶² Mucha, "Securitisation and Militias During Civil War in Peru," 337.

must consider the costs and benefits of doing so. Leveraging militia formations to address an existential threat may prove necessary and decisive. Failing to plan for and mitigate the potential long-term effects, however, can inadvertently lay the groundwork for future instability and conflict.

The Peruvian government's decision to co-opt existing local security elements rather than impose a new system upon its rural population demonstrates the value in working through traditional customs to achieve stability. Like Afghanistan, Peru had a large rural population that relied upon local forms of governance, as the central government was often unable or unwilling to extend services and security to the countryside. The *rondas* had met the population's need for security long before the appearance of the Shining Path. Already trusted by the people, the *rondas* proved to be a logical option for the Peruvian government to incorporate into their overall counterinsurgency strategy. Working within the context of existing culture, as opposed to forcing an unfamiliar system, increases the likelihood of popular support and allows for a more rapid and widespread employment of security elements.

The official connection of the *rondas* to the Peruvian armed forces illustrates the importance of a central government establishing formal mechanisms and relationships to exert a modest level of control over local security elements. Though some *rondas* certainly strayed from the guidance of the Peruvian government, the majority operated in a manner suitable for achieving the ultimate objective of defeating the Shining Path. The *rondas'* success and expanded capabilities was largely due to the organizational oversight and professionalization provided by the army. The Peruvian government's approach to the *rondas* provides insight into how a central government can achieve sufficient control without undermining a local-security element's legitimacy. *Rondas* received training and guidance from the Peruvian Army, though they were mostly permitted to operate autonomously. Although such autonomy at times resulted in abuses of power, it prevented many *rondas* from being perceived as puppets of a less-respected central government. As shown by the *rondas*, local security elements should have an appropriately established link to the central government to encourage faithful service and bolster effectiveness.

VI. CASE STUDY—AFGHAN ARBAKAI

The concept of communities establishing their own security forces has long been imbedded in Afghan culture. As a rural tribal society, the Afghan people have rarely had a strong and capable central government that could reliably provide security and basic services. Born of this history and tradition were multiple versions of local security, to include the *arbakai*. Primarily a Pashtun approach to local security practiced in southeast Afghanistan, *arbakai* acted as volunteer police and defense forces at the behest of tribal governance.¹⁶³ Though similar organic initiatives are present in other ethnic groups and regions of Afghanistan, this chapter focuses specifically on the *arbakai* due to its primarily defensive nature, alignment with cultural traditions, and divergence from the problematic militias controlled by warlords. Analyzing the *arbakai*'s function and historical contribution to stability provides lessons for the potential incorporation of traditional local security into the larger Afghan security apparatus.

A. HISTORY

Local forces have played a significant role throughout Afghan history, and in more modern times, various forms have both contributed to and detracted from Afghanistan's stability. The term *arbakai* refers to organically-developed local security elements that uphold the laws and communal decisions of a traditional society. It is a broad title for such entities and does not include formal government initiatives or official security forces. Though the exact origins are unknown, *arbakai* have participated in community policing in southeast Afghanistan for centuries.¹⁶⁴ Specifically, *arbakai* have primarily existed in

¹⁶³ Mohammad Osman Tariq, "Community-Based Security and Justice," *IDS Bulletin* 40, no. 2 (March 2009): 21, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1759-5436.2009.00018.x>.

¹⁶⁴ Mohammad Osman Tariq, "Tribal Security System (Arbakai) in Southeast Afghanistan," *Crisis States Research Centre*, Occasional Papers, (December 2008): 1, <http://www.lse.ac.uk/international-development/Assets/Documents/PDFs/csrtc-occasional-papers/OP7-Tribal-Security-System-in-South-East-Afghanistan.pdf>.

the Loya Paktia region, consisting of the provinces of Paktia, Paktika, and Khost, where strong Pashtun tribal systems exist.¹⁶⁵

Pashtun customary tribal code, known as Pashtunwali, heavily influences the actions of the *arbakai*, having greater impact upon the lives of Pashtuns than the laws of the central government. Pashtunwali has been passed orally from generation to generation and provides direction for social behavior as well as establishes laws to “guide decision-making by all communal institutions, such as jirgas (tribal gathering), shuras (tribal/community council), and the *arbakai*.”¹⁶⁶ The *arbakai* primarily exist to perform three functions: implement the jirga’s decisions, maintain law and order, and protect its tribal borders.¹⁶⁷ Unlike standing militias, *arbakai* are ad hoc in nature and form as the result of a jirga directive to address a specific issue or threat, placing geographic and temporal limitations upon their existence.¹⁶⁸ They also differ from militias in that they are defensive in nature and focus on matters of community, security, and the protection of its resources. They are inherently tied to a communal area and traditionally do not pursue offensive objectives beyond their boundaries.¹⁶⁹

Since the late 1800s, some Afghan rulers sought to harness the influence of such forces while others suppressed them. For instance, during his time in power from 1890 to 1901, Abdur Rahman Khan made one of the first attempts to establish a national standing army, though he relied upon the local tribal elements in Afghanistan’s Pashtun regions for security. In doing so, Abdur maintained order and stability.¹⁷⁰ Other governments, however, failed to understand the natural order of Afghanistan, seeking to achieve control

¹⁶⁵ Seth G. Jones and Arturo Muñoz, *Afghanistan’s Local War: Building Local Defense Forces* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND National Defense Research Institute, 2010), 31, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7249/mg1002mcia>.

¹⁶⁶ Susanne Schmeidl and Masood Karokhail, “The Role of Non-State Actors in ‘Community-Based Policing’ – An Exploration of the Arbakai (Tribal Police) in South-Eastern Afghanistan,” *Contemporary Security Policy* 30, no. 2 (August 1, 2009): 321, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13523260903060193>.

¹⁶⁷ Tariq, “Community-Based Security and Justice,” 21.

¹⁶⁸ Michael Stevens, “Community Defence In Afghanistan,” *The RUSI Journal* 156, no. 3 (June 1, 2011): 43, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03071847.2011.591089>.

¹⁶⁹ Schmeidl and Karokhail, “The Role of Non-State Actors in ‘Community-Based Policing’ – An Exploration of the Arbakai (Tribal Police) in South-Eastern Afghanistan,” 329.

¹⁷⁰ Jones and Muñoz, *Afghanistan’s Local War: Building Local Defense Forces*, 33.

through strong central governance. Amanullah Khan, who ruled from 1919 to 1929, fell into this trap, striving to establish a central government similar to that of Ataturk's in Turkey and Reza Shah in Iran. Amanullah's ambition prompted rural societies to muster local forces and revolt, forcing him to step down from power as Afghanistan deteriorated into a brief phase of anarchy.¹⁷¹

The unrest resulting from Amanullah's abdication brought about a period of stability under Nadir Shah and his successors, Zahir Shah and Daoud Khan, collectively referred to as the Musahiban dynasty (1929 – 1978).¹⁷² Nadir Shah harnessed the influence of tribal forces, leaning upon them to seize and maintain power. Though Nadir did create a central government armed with strong security forces and a modern national army to confront large-scale conflicts and tribal disputes, he also continued to leverage *arbakai* and similar local security elements to maintain order through traditional tribal law. During this time, the Afghan government “used these systems as a form of indirect rule in areas where they lacked administrative capacity.”¹⁷³ This practice and the special accommodations afforded to tribal governance was largely effective. The government permitted each of the major Pashtun tribes in southeast Afghanistan to supervise their own *arbakai*, providing “tribal authorities privileged status, property, money, advisory roles, and exclusion from military service.”¹⁷⁴ The peaceful power balance between the central government and traditional tribal governance deteriorated as Afghanistan began its war against the Soviet Union.

By 1978, communities had already begun mustering local forces to resist the Soviet-backed central government of Afghanistan. When the Soviet Union invaded in 1979, militias and local security elements supporting both sides of the conflict saturated the battlefield.¹⁷⁵ Within the context of this complex and dangerous environment,

¹⁷¹ Jones and Muñoz, *Afghanistan's Local War: Building Local Defense Forces*, 40.

¹⁷² Seth G. Jones, “It Takes the Villages,” *Foreign Affairs* 89 (June 2010): 5, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/reviews/review-essay/it-takes-villages>.

¹⁷³ Jones and Muñoz, *Afghanistan's Local War: Building Local Defense Forces*, 42.

¹⁷⁴ Jones and Muñoz, *Afghanistan's Local War: Building Local Defense Forces*, 42.

¹⁷⁵ Jones and Muñoz, *Afghanistan's Local War: Building Local Defense Forces*, 44.

communities created *arbakai* for the sake of village protection. For instance, in Afghan refugee camps located in the Haripur area of the Pakistani North-West Frontier Province, refugees volunteered as *arbakai* to help maintain order and prevent abuses and theft.¹⁷⁶ Examples of such efforts continued through Afghanistan's internal struggle with the Taliban.

Following the start of the United States' intervention in Afghanistan in 2001, *arbakai* once again appeared in the greater-Paktia region. The rapid toppling of the Taliban from power created a vacuum for local powerbrokers to exploit, laying the groundwork for instability. Within three days of the Taliban's ousting, multiple communities within Paktia assembled a jirga consisting of leaders representing each sub-community level. The purpose of the gathering was to ensure the proper conduct of governance until the establishment of a new formal state. As a result, each community agreed to raise an *arbakai* element in accordance with the jirga's guidance.¹⁷⁷ *Arbakai* continue to be an accepted facet of Pashtun culture, serving their communities in times of need and guided by tribal customs and code.

B. SECURITY/EFFECTIVENESS

As expected of an informal, decentralized security organization, the capabilities and performance of *arbakai* vary among elements. The *arbakai* most successful in maintaining order operate in areas where the enemy threat is not overwhelming and the central government and its national security forces provide a quick-reaction force capable of supporting distressed elements in a timely manner. Additionally, successful *arbakai* originate from legitimate tribal institutions at the local level and remain small and defensive in nature.¹⁷⁸ In conjunction with these conditions, geographic and cultural factors also contribute to the *arbakai*'s prevalence and success in southeast Afghanistan.

¹⁷⁶ Jones and Muñoz, *Afghanistan's Local War: Building Local Defense Forces*, 44.

¹⁷⁷ Schmeidl and Karokhail, "The Role of Non-State Actors in 'Community-Based Policing' – An Exploration of the Arbakai (Tribal Police) in South-Eastern Afghanistan," 320.

¹⁷⁸ Jones and Muñoz, *Afghanistan's Local War: Building Local Defense Forces*, 33.

The *arbakai*'s long contribution to local security in southeast Afghanistan's Loya Paktia region is due to the area's relative isolation, thriving tribal institutions, and minimal presence of independent warlords. Geography has much to do with the physical isolation of Loya Paktia and the resulting survival of tribal traditions. The remote, mountainous characteristics of the region have made it particularly difficult for a central government to fully exert influence and replace tribal structures with state administration.¹⁷⁹ When compared to the rest of Afghanistan, the southeast historically maintained a power balance largely driven by the influence of tribal leaders as opposed to the dominance of warlords leading personal militias. As a result, tribes more closely adhered to the code and customs of Pashtunwali, using *arbakai* for their intended purpose of providing local security and protecting their communities' interests.¹⁸⁰ Consequently, the region's tribal system is more homogeneous and cohesive, contributing to more effective community policing.¹⁸¹

Though *arbakai* have in many cases prove able to promote stability and local security, they do have inherent limitations due to their traditional customs, roles, and composition. The level of insurgent activity threatening a community significantly impacts the effectiveness of the *arbakai*, as areas predominantly controlled by insurgents are hostile environments that may surpass the *arbakai*'s ability to maintain security. This was apparent in the Loya Paktia districts of Gera, Serrai, Waza, and Shwak, where the Haqqani network, an organization closely tied to the Taliban, maintained strong influence over the community following the United States' involvement after 2001, weakening traditional tribal structures.¹⁸² The *arbakai* are characteristically small and defensive. While typically adept at policing their local villages, combating large, well-established insurgent elements without assistance from government security forces can exceed their capabilities.

¹⁷⁹ Tariq, "Tribal Security System (Arbakai) in Southeast Afghanistan," 2.

¹⁸⁰ Tariq, "Tribal Security System (Arbakai) in Southeast Afghanistan," 2.

¹⁸¹ Schmeidl and Karokhail, "The Role of Non-State Actors in 'Community-Based Policing' – An Exploration of the Arbakai (Tribal Police) in South-Eastern Afghanistan," 334.

¹⁸² Schmeidl and Karokhail, "The Role of Non-State Actors in 'Community-Based Policing' – An Exploration of the Arbakai (Tribal Police) in South-Eastern Afghanistan," 333.

The Taliban's realization of the threat posed by the *arbakai* and its concerted effort to diminish the *arbakai*'s influence demonstrate the true impact and value of an effective local security element. Despite the varying levels of competence across *arbakai* elements, they have long been a source of great concern to the Taliban. Local security elements that receive support and perceived legitimacy from their communities directly challenge the strength and veracity of the Taliban insurgency.¹⁸³ These forces have the ability to inflict disproportionate harm upon the Taliban through their intimate knowledge of their geographic areas, their communities, the local Taliban networks, as well as the Taliban's commonly used ambush and safe haven locations. Additionally, when confronted with an existential threat or ideology counter to their core beliefs, local forces tend to fight harder than their state security counterparts, as they are defending their own families and homes with no option for retreat.¹⁸⁴

The impact of informal and state-sponsored local security elements, to include *arbakai* and Afghan Local Police (ALP), prompted the Taliban to aggressively vilify, destroy, and even co-opt them.¹⁸⁵ Initially, the Taliban viewed such forces as ineffectual and a negligible disruption to their operations. As the menace of their presence became evident, the Taliban resorted to heavy-handed methods and targeted information operations to destroy them and break their community ties.¹⁸⁶ The Taliban's aggressive approach, however, proved counterproductive, further promoting the adoption of *arbakai* and other local security elements. Consequently, the Taliban shifted toward a strategy based on influence, attempting to co-opt local security elements and their communities.

The *arbikai*'s overall impact upon stability throughout Afghanistan's history is indicative of an effective system with the potential for continued development. Despite the

¹⁸³ Clark, "Update on the Afghan Local Police: Making Sure They Are Armed, Trained, Paid and Exist."

¹⁸⁴ Kate Clark and Borhan Osman, "Enemy Number One: How the Taleban Deal with the ALP and Uprising Groups." *Afghanistan Analysts Network*, July 19, 2018, <https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/enemy-number-one-how-the-taleban-deal-with-the-alp-and-uprising-groups/>.

¹⁸⁵ Clark and Osman, "Enemy Number One: How the Taleban Deal with the ALP and Uprising Groups."

¹⁸⁶ Clark and Osman, "Enemy Number One: How the Taleban Deal with the ALP and Uprising Groups."

arbikai's limitations, their capabilities are likely sufficient for the Afghan government to rely upon with reasonable expectations and leverage where appropriate. Though typically unable to offensively pursue massed Taliban formations, the *arbakai*'s mere presence and utility in daily Afghan life is a valuable instrument in the current struggle against the Taliban.

C. POPULAR SUPPORT

The *arbakai*'s operational procedures, which are deeply rooted in Pashtun culture, create a local security apparatus that is legitimate in the eyes of their communities. Not only do *arbakai* contribute to local defense, they also play a key role in community conflict resolution. The *arbakai* are inherently tied to local tribal governance through the jirgas, obeying and enforcing their decisions. Jirgas traditionally provide quick decisions to resolve conflicts and implement culturally acceptable solutions, utilizing *arbakai* to ensure immediate compliance. In doing so, the community receives rapid, legitimate justice from a traditional institution, which is implemented through an organic and ever-present force.¹⁸⁷

The process by which men are selected for *arbakai* duties promotes community acceptance of the *arbakai* as a legitimate local security element representative of the people. When a jirga musters an *arbakai*, it draws men from the community whose elders called for the force. If necessary, the jirga may require each family to provide one man if able to do so. Though involvement with an *arbakai* is voluntary, the decision for a man to serve is made as a family or community, not as an individual.¹⁸⁸ This communal approach to security ensures *arbakai* members do not become their own elevated caste of warriors. Rather, they perform their duties and return to their lives as villagers.¹⁸⁹ Jirgas have even been known to practice a vetting process for potential *arbakai* members. Men considered

¹⁸⁷ Tariq, "Community-Based Security and Justice," 24.

¹⁸⁸ Schmeidl and Karokhail, "The Role of Non-State Actors in 'Community-Based Policing'—An Exploration of the Arbakai (Tribal Police) in South-Eastern Afghanistan," 325.

¹⁸⁹ Jones and Muñoz, *Afghanistan's Local War: Building Local Defense Forces*, 31.

immoral or physically weak may be barred from inclusion in *arbakai* duties.¹⁹⁰ The creation of *arbakai* elements through broad participation, shared hardship, and selection of trusted community members promotes acceptance and support by the villages they serve.

D. SUSTAINABILITY

The *arbakai*'s traditional role as an organic, local security element responsible for communal policing requires few external resources for sustainability. Participation in the *arbakai* is voluntary and its existence is ad hoc, so there is no guaranteed salary associated with membership. Additionally, the policing and defensive activities typically performed by *arbakai* do not require the advanced weaponry or resources vital to a modern army. *Arbakai* primarily receive funding and support through the jirga calling for the force. When the need for an *arbakai* mission arises, the jirga selects men and collects money from members of the community or tribe. Families that are unable to provide personnel or funds contribute through other means, such as offering food or assisting with other communal tasks.¹⁹¹ In doing so, community members share the burden of local security and have a vested interest in its conduct. To further cover expenses, the jirga permits *arbakai* to make use of money collected through fines for criminal punishment.¹⁹² Following this support model, *arbakai* eliminate reliance upon the central government to provide personnel and funds required for local security operations.

Though the *arbakai* is a local voluntary force, the Afghan government has on occasion paid elements to perform specific tasks that benefit the state. For example, since 2001, the Afghan government utilized discretionary funds to pay *arbakai* to assist with election security. The government worked through provincial governors who engaged with community leadership to ensure proper distribution of payments and control.¹⁹³ Use of

¹⁹⁰ Schmeidl and Karokhail, "The Role of Non-State Actors in 'Community-Based Policing'—An Exploration of the Arbakai (Tribal Police) in South-Eastern Afghanistan," 325.

¹⁹¹ Schmeidl and Karokhail, "The Role of Non-State Actors in 'Community-Based Policing'—An Exploration of the Arbakai (Tribal Police) in South-Eastern Afghanistan," 324.

¹⁹² Tariq, "Community-Based Security and Justice," 25.

¹⁹³ Schmeidl and Karokhail, "The Role of Non-State Actors in 'Community-Based Policing'—An Exploration of the Arbakai (Tribal Police) in South-Eastern Afghanistan," 324.

arbakai in this manner was prominent “during the 2004 and 2005 presidential and parliamentary/provincial elections, when donors through the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the provincial governors paid the *arbakai*.”¹⁹⁴ Though such instances are not common, they do represent opportunities for funding and collaboration between traditional and state institutions to sustain an effective local security model.

E. GOVERNMENT CONTROL

Afghanistan’s central governments have historically recognized the *arbakai*’s potential contributions to stability in its remote regions, allowing communities to autonomously employ local security elements that pose little threat to the government. Traditionally, the central Afghan government exerted influence over *arbakai* when necessary through tribal elders rather than directly engaging with the local security elements.¹⁹⁵ Maintaining relationships with the *arbakai* in this manner allowed for the central government to indirectly influence the *arbakai*’s contributions to security. Furthermore, this approach preserved the Afghan people’s perception of the *arbakai* being their force and not a proxy for the central government, which they may value less than their traditional governance structures. Collaborative efforts, however, have only been successful “when tribes and local communities believed in the central government’s legitimacy and felt confident that it could deliver the services required.”¹⁹⁶ When these conditions have been absent, and interests do not align, communities turned solely to traditional governance and security mechanisms, at times offering support to groups that appear capable of providing such services and outperforming the central government.¹⁹⁷

Afghan culture and the current state of the national security apparatus present challenges concerning legitimacy and function when seeking to strengthen the Afghan

¹⁹⁴ Schmeidl and Karokhail, “The Role of Non-State Actors in ‘Community-Based Policing’—An Exploration of the *Arbakai* (Tribal Police) in South-Eastern Afghanistan,” 324.

¹⁹⁵ Ali Jalali, “Winning in Afghanistan,” *Parameters* 39, no. 1 (2009): 15, <https://ssi.armywarcollege.edu/pubs/parameters/articles/09spring/jalali.pdf>.

¹⁹⁶ Jalali, “Winning in Afghanistan,” 15.

¹⁹⁷ Jalali, “Winning in Afghanistan,” 15.

government's control over the *arbakai*. Given the government's centralized characteristics and endeavor to establish modern rule of law, attempts to exert complete control over the *arbakai* have been at odds with traditional institutions, which predate the current Afghan government.¹⁹⁸ This is exemplified by the Afghan Local Police program, which attempted to mimic and formalize the *arbakai* concept, even incorporating existing *arbakai* elements into the force.¹⁹⁹ Issues of control and legitimacy quickly arose. Accountability for ALP action shifted away from the traditional control mechanisms governing *arbakai* to the distant state, which lacked the presence of local governance institutions. Ironically, state attempts to directly oversee local security elements, to include *arbakai*, introduced factors that reduced control, fostered instability, and degraded the central government's legitimacy in some areas.

F. CRIMINAL ACTIVITY

The traditional accountability mechanisms incorporated into the *arbakai* system mitigates the risk of criminal activity associated with local security forces. *Arbakai* are held accountable for their actions through both upward and downward-oriented means. Looking upward, *arbakai* answer to the jirga that called for its creation, which is responsible for providing guidance and leadership.²⁰⁰ As for downward accountability, *arbakai* are compelled to maintain the trust and favor of the people they serve. Jirgas are comprised of community members and often operate in a transparent manner when making decisions and supervising *arbakai*. The people's understanding of the distinct responsibilities of the jirga as a decision-making body and the *arbakai* as the entity that implements said decisions brings clarity to the accountability process.²⁰¹ Furthermore, the people's material support to the *arbakai* bolsters their influence, as *arbakai* may receive equal financial shares from all members of the tribe for their service. Consequently, the people have greater ownership over the *arbakai*, and it is in the best interest of the *arbakai* members to avoid

¹⁹⁸ Tariq, "Community-Based Security and Justice," 26.

¹⁹⁹ Felbab-Brown, "Afghanistan Trip Report V: The Afghan Local Police: 'It's Local, So It Must Be Good'—Or Is It?"

²⁰⁰ Tariq, "Community-Based Security and Justice," 25.

²⁰¹ Tariq, "Community-Based Security and Justice," 26.

alienating their community through criminal activity. Additionally, *arbakai* members maintaining equal social status while serving also serves to strengthen accountability, as there are no social barriers for fellow community members to seek justice should misbehavior occur.²⁰²

Despite the existence of traditional accountability measures, some *arbakai* elements are guilty of abuse and human rights violations. *Arbakai* and similar militia-based local forces were especially problematic during Afghanistan's civil wars of the 1990s. During this time, militias engaged in atrocities and abuses that tarnished the reputation of local security elements, to include the *arbakai*.²⁰³ Evidence of misbehavior continued through Afghanistan's post-2001 period with *arbakai* and other local security elements being accused of exploiting their communities, stealing land and goods, and committing violent crimes, to include murder and targeting rival ethnic groups.²⁰⁴ Due to the unofficial nature of the *arbakai* and other local security elements, it is difficult to acquire exact data measuring the prevalence of such criminal activity. Notwithstanding, communities continue to turn to *arbakai* to provide security and their version of justice.

The *arbakai* provide traditionally legitimate justice in their communities, though in doing so, concerns of human rights abuses arise. Given *arbakai* are guided by tribal institutions and customs, their practices are not always compatible with the Afghan government's laws. This leads to situations that raise human rights and legal issues for *arbakai*, specifically in the realm of individual and women's rights.²⁰⁵ Punishments and methods of conflict resolution decided upon by a jirga, and carried out by *arbakai*, are potentially acceptable in their local communities, but they may cross the threshold of what the Afghan government or its sponsors are willing to tolerate. Though local communities might not classify such activity as criminal, the government may contend otherwise.

²⁰² Tariq, "Community-Based Security and Justice," 26.

²⁰³ International Crisis Group, "The Future of the Afghan Local Police," 4.

²⁰⁴ Felbab-Brown, "Hurray for Militias? Not so Fast: Lessons from the Afghan Local Police Experience," 265.

²⁰⁵ Schmeidl and Karokhail, "The Role of Non-State Actors in 'Community-Based Policing'—An Exploration of the *Arbakai* (Tribal Police) in South-Eastern Afghanistan," 332.

The risk of misuse by influential community members and co-option by nefarious elements remains when relying upon *arbakai* to provide local security. Under the umbrella of traditional tribal structures, dominant elders may attempt to manipulate *arbakai* to pursue their own interests, such as settling personal and community feuds or obtaining resources. For instance, communities in Khost province stood up *arbakai* to prevent Kuchi (Afghan nomads) from accessing what they viewed as their territory.²⁰⁶ This is less of a security issue and more of a competition for land. In some cases, the Taliban have also managed to influence and recruit *arbakai* for their cause.²⁰⁷ For example, in 2014 the Taliban began an information campaign in Ghazni District to convince local security members to “come in from the cold,” assuring them and their families that they would be welcomed by the Taliban.²⁰⁸ The Taliban reinforced their messaging and attempts to co-opt local security elements by staying true to their guarantee of safety and even holding celebrations honoring Afghan security personnel that turned their backs on the Afghan government in favor of the Taliban. Though the Taliban continue to target local security elements in many areas, overall, trends point to them taking a less violent approach to degrading their threat and winning their support.²⁰⁹

Despite instances of misuse and co-option, *arbakai* have largely operated in an acceptable manner while serving their communities. When considering their widespread use within the Loya Paktia region, “the *arbakai* appeared relatively free from the corruption of the militias and apparently effective at preventing Taliban encroachment.”²¹⁰ Furthermore, their persistent use by Pashtun tribes over hundreds of years is itself indicative of their actions remaining within their communities’ tolerance for permissible behavior.

²⁰⁶ Schmeidl and Karokhail, “The Role of Non-State Actors in ‘Community-Based Policing’—An Exploration of the Arbakai (Tribal Police) in South-Eastern Afghanistan,” 332.

²⁰⁷ Jones, “It Takes the Villages,” 124.

²⁰⁸ Clark and Osman, “Enemy Number One: How the Taleban Deal with the ALP and Uprising Groups.”

²⁰⁹ Clark and Osman, “Enemy Number One: How the Taleban Deal with the ALP and Uprising Groups.”

²¹⁰ Stevens, “Community Defence In Afghanistan,” 43.

G. LESSONS LEARNED

Successful instances of *arbakai* implementation demonstrate the importance of balancing the inclination for the central government to exert control with the necessity of maintaining local legitimacy. The concept of Afghanistan as a nation-state is relatively new in its long history of tribalism and ethnic division. These conditions created a society that perceives local, traditional governance as more valuable, effective, and legitimate than Afghanistan's historically weak central government. This being the case, the *arbakai* exhibit the need for the central government to provide them with a reasonable level of autonomy, maintaining influence through ties with traditional local governance structures. When done successfully, the central government was able to rely upon local governance to assist with accountability. In doing so, the government did not become too heavily involved in local matters and avoided diminishing the *arbakai*'s legitimacy in the people's eyes. Such an arrangement can even bolster the central government's legitimacy and influence, as the Afghan people will likely create *arbakai* when necessary, regardless of the Afghan government's laws. Additionally, studies indicate that when faced with disputes, 80–90% of Afghans prefer traditional resolution over the government's judiciary system.²¹¹ Failing to formally accommodate such activity creates a situation where the government risks the perception of being undermined or ignored by its own people.

Attempts by the central government to enhance local security element capabilities potentially risk inadvertently perverting the traditional system and diminishing effectiveness. Recent efforts to professionalize some *arbakai* elements and formally incorporate them into the national security apparatus, as demonstrated by the ALP program, have been largely counterproductive. Doing so shifted loyalties and accountability away from the community to a weak central government, creating forces rife with criminal activity and members abusing their elevated social statuses. Although there is certainly benefit to the government taking steps to improve local security elements' capabilities, effective *arbakai* demonstrate the importance of the government assisting

²¹¹ Tariq, "Tribal Security System (Arbakai) in Southeast Afghanistan," 13.

without significantly altering their traditional nature, which is to be defensive, ad hoc, and closely tied to local governance.

Arbakai are successful under specific social and security conditions, therefore broadly implementing a program in its exact image nationwide may not achieve the desired stability. The ALP and its immediate predecessors again demonstrate this point. These programs looked to the *arbakai* as a model for application across Afghanistan. In these cases, the Afghan government and its advisors applied a blanket approach to establishing local security elements without a full appreciation for the cultural and organizational factors that have allowed the *arbakai* to work. Historically, *arbakai* are most effective in areas with strong traditional tribal structures and communities with the means to independently resist insurgent threats.²¹² Though overarching principles exist, the details of local security execution must be thought through within the context of the current operational environment and cultural norms of a specific location.

²¹² Jalali, “Winning in Afghanistan,” 16.

VII. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Afghanistan's culture, history, and precarious security situation all contribute to the need for effective local security elements that can protect their communities without challenging the survival of the central government. The Taliban's widespread insurgency, coupled with the remote and isolated nature of many Afghan communities, make it nearly impossible for GIRoA to secure the population and achieve stability with the current state of its national forces. Though some ANDSF elements operate in an expeditionary manner to address insurgent threats in remote regions, such operations are often short in duration and lack holding forces that can remain in areas to maintain and exploit gains. Local security elements can effectively fill this void if properly developed and employed. Through the application of an analytical framework to four separate cases (see Table 2), this study identified lessons for the incorporation of local security elements into a nation's larger security apparatus.

Table 2. Local security element assessments by evaluation category

Criteria:	Afghan Local Police	Indian Territorial Army	Peruvian <i>Rondas Campesinas</i>	Afghan <i>Arbakai</i>
Security/Effectiveness	Poor	Desired	Desired	Acceptable
Popular Support	Poor	Desired	Acceptable	Desired
Sustainability	Poor	Acceptable	Desired	Desired
Government Control	Poor	Desired	Acceptable	Acceptable
Criminal Activity	Poor	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

There is no standard blueprint or universal solution to local security that can adequately account for all variations in culture and circumstance. There are, however, principles that likely contribute to success and warrant consideration when utilizing local security elements. While the principles for local security elements apply to Afghanistan, the country's complex operational environment may necessitate adaptation for specific

areas. The following principles address the creation or reformation of local security elements in Afghanistan, to include the burgeoning Afghan National Army Territorial Force.

A. PRINCIPLES FOR LOCAL SECURITY

- (1) Incorporate traditional governance structures into local security element employment.

Afghanistan's history of weak central governments has preserved the importance and legitimacy of traditional governance structures. Failing to accommodate this deeply imbedded facet of Afghan culture when establishing local security elements greatly diminishes popular support and effectiveness, as demonstrated by the Afghan Local Police. GIRoA should formally incorporate traditional governance entities, such as shuras and jirgas, into local security element functions. This would require granting traditional governance an acceptable level of autonomy and permitting them to utilize security elements within the bounds of established guidance and law. Such an arrangement would involve GIRoA primarily communicating with local security elements through traditional governance structures, offering respect and legitimacy to these culturally significant entities while avoiding the perception of local security elements becoming "puppet" forces. Through this relationship, GIRoA can influence local security element activity and preserve local customs, creating forces that contribute to stability and operate in a manner that directly serves their communities. Surrendering direct control of local security elements may meet resistance within GIRoA, though doing so could promote legitimacy and popular support for both the security elements and the government.

Elevating the role of traditional governance ensures local security elements remain accountable to their communities through established social mechanisms that influence acceptable behavior. If local security elements receive guidance, resources, and punitive action through their traditional leadership, they may be compelled to behave in a manner in line with communal values. The *arbakai* demonstrated this principle, as decisions and guidance for local security elements were made by communities in a transparent manner, discouraging members from engaging in abuse that jeopardized their social statuses.

- (2) Establish an enduring relationship between local security elements and the Afghan military to influence behavior, maintain accountability, and enhance effectiveness.

One of the greatest advantages local security elements have is their intimate knowledge of their communities and environments. With this local expertise, however, comes the risk of elements pursuing tribal or personal objectives incongruent with legitimate security objectives. It is necessary for the central government to maintain regular communication and contact with local security elements for the sake of passing guidance, receiving intelligence, and coordinating efforts with state security forces. The Afghan military may be the most appropriate link between GIRoA and the local security elements, as it remains one of the more respected entities in the Afghan government.²¹³ The continued presence of Afghan military personnel can assist GIRoA in establishing a productive relationship with local security elements that provides outside influence potentially removed from local issues or biases.

The strength and composition of a link between the central government and local security elements heavily depends upon culture and the legitimacy of both traditional governance and the state. Given the value of traditional governance and community in Afghanistan, GIRoA must avoid establishing an overbearing relationship. While the British were successful in filling most of the Indian Territorial Army's critical leadership positions with regular British and Indian Army officers, such a practice may not be appropriate in Afghanistan. Forcibly placing regular Afghan National Army personnel directly in charge of local security elements may foster resentment and lead to the Afghan people viewing security entities as unwelcome forces unjustly imposing the central government's will. A potential approach could entail Afghan National Army Special Forces primarily interacting with local security elements, as they are likely the best suited for the task given their years of experience working with American special operations advisors. Such a relationship may involve Afghan Special Forces teams being centrally located to multiple local security elements and regularly training and operating with them. As local security elements

²¹³ Akseer, Haidary, Miller, Sadat, Satkowski, Seese, Shahbi, Veenstra, Zachary, and Yousufzai. "Afghanistan: A Survey of the Afghan People 2006–2017," 53.

develop, Afghan Special Forces soldiers can serve in permanent liaison positions within each element, allowing for persistent influence without commanding elements.

The persistent presence of the Afghan military would provide a formal accountability mechanism to address misbehavior in conjunction with traditional systems. Having a clearly defined process for controlling and holding local security elements accountable encourages members to operate within the bounds of Afghan law and allows for GIRoA to have greater influence over their behavior and impart disciplinary action for infractions. A critical component to any accountability process is the presence of honest government officials willing to utilize the established system to provide just guidance and impose fair punishment for violations of established law. To be effective, the Afghan military itself must be generally free of misbehavior and hold the people's respect. If consistent and impartial in promoting Afghan law, the military can demonstrate a legitimate function on behalf of the central government and garner popular support.

Aside from issues of control, a direct link between local security and the Afghan military assists with developing capabilities and providing operational support. The Afghan military can oversee the development of defensive military skills as well as facilitate coordination for necessary resources. Additionally, close ties with the military can equate to emergency tactical support, providing reinforcements to local security elements in danger of defeat by insurgents. Such support can bolster confidence and recruitment while demonstrating the central government's commitment to securing the population.

- (3) Utilize training programs to enhance local security element capabilities that focus on defensive operations with minimal disruption to community life.

For a government to expect local security elements to defend their communities, it has to invest in their development. In the cases of both the Peruvian *rondas campesinas* and the Indian Territorial Army, standardized training run by regular security forces greatly improved local security performance. The state must consider the costs and benefits associated with bolstering capabilities, however, and take care not to drastically alter the intended nature of local security elements as community defense forces. Local security

elements tend to be most effective in serving their communities when they remain small and defensive in nature.²¹⁴ Institutionalizing elements in the mirror image of regular state forces may diminish the ties to their communities, as demonstrated by the Afghan Local Police. Large-scale centralized training programs that pull volunteers away from their homes for extended periods may prove unnecessary and counterproductive. Though the ALP program has generally failed to contribute to local security, its attempt to establish regional training centers is worthy of continued development.²¹⁵

A potential model for Afghanistan may call for local security elements to attend regional training centers for short periods with the majority of training being led by Afghan National Army Special Forces within the communities. Training in this manner imposes minimal cost to community life and allows elements to learn on the terrain they will defend. This method may also offer adequate standardization of capabilities and allow GIRoA to broadly communicate the expectations and legal limits associated with service in a local security element. The Indian Territorial Army experienced success through standardized regional training centers and minimizing disruption to communal life, allowing the program to develop into an element more closely resembling a national guard or reserve force.²¹⁶ Though Afghanistan may not be ready for a local security program congruent to the ITA's current scale, adopting the Indian training concept could prove beneficial.

- (4) Tailor the composition and function of local security elements to judiciously selected areas.

Afghanistan is ethnically and culturally diverse and therefore requires an adaptable approach to local security. Given Afghanistan's tribal nature and history of local security, co-opting existing tribal security structures may be more effective and expedient for fostering stability. As demonstrated by the Peruvian *rondas campesinas*, relying upon familiar communal security systems facilitates rapid expansion if necessary. Enhancing existing capabilities and organizations may prove more advantageous than developing a

²¹⁴ Jones and Muñoz, *Afghanistan's Local War: Building Local Defense Forces*, 33.

²¹⁵ Marquis, Duggan, Gordon, and Miyashiro, *Assessing the Ability of the Afghan Ministry of Interior Affairs to Support the Afghan Local Police*, 67.

²¹⁶ Singh, *Territorial Army: History of India's Part-Time Soldiers*, loc. 180.

new system. Allowing communities to maintain familiar and customary systems can also contribute to popular acceptance and greater participation. GIRoA can develop local security element capabilities and maintain influence through similar principles of employment throughout Afghanistan without imposing a standard structure.

Prior to creating or adopting a local security element, GIRoA must conduct a thorough analysis of the cultural factors as well as the overall security situation. Historically, local security elements in Afghanistan have been most successful in its more ethnically homogenous areas where local security members are recruited from and operate among their own communities.²¹⁷ Additionally, the security levels of a given region impact the likelihood of success for a local security element. Local security elements are small, defensive, and are not professional troops. Expecting communities to stand up in the face of overwhelming enemy activity may prove costly and diminish the chances of future local security element recruitment and employment. Instead, GIRoA should look to contested areas where communities have already resisted insurgents or expressed a willingness to do so. Ideally, these sites have regular troops operating in the area that are capable of supporting local security elements. For insurgent-controlled areas, committing regular troops first to degrade enemy strength may be necessary.

(5) Employ local security elements part-time to mitigate social disruption.

Establishing conditions for service in a local security element that are conducive to members maintaining their community roles fosters acceptance of the force. The Indian Territorial Army exemplifies this principle, as its members are not permitted to serve full-time and are expected to maintain employment within their communities.²¹⁸ This practice mitigates the risk of members achieving an elevated social status and inappropriately imposing authority upon their communities. Failing to prevent local security elements from leveraging their positions can lead to misbehavior, as demonstrated by elements of both the *rondas* and the Afghan Local Police. Additionally, part-time service minimizes the cost

²¹⁷ Schmeidl and Karokhail, “The Role of Non-State Actors in ‘Community-Based Policing’ – An Exploration of the Arbakai (Tribal Police) in South-Eastern Afghanistan,” 334.

²¹⁸ Singh, *Territorial Army: History of India’s Part-Time Soldiers*, loc. 156.

of participating and may assist with recruitment, as members can volunteer without jeopardizing personal and family affairs. For Afghans residing in rural communities, which is the majority of the population, the notion of part-time employment may seem inconsequential.²¹⁹ The people's perception of power, however, matters for social order. The Afghan military link to local security elements should influence adherence to duty schedules to avoid having members pursue permanent positions of authority within their communities.

B. U.S. MILITARY'S ROLE

Efforts to develop a local security program must be Afghan-led, though the U.S. military has an important role for such a program's initial employment and monitoring. Just as Afghan Special Forces should be the lead in this endeavor, USSOF should assume responsibility for advising local security implementation. Initially, small teams of Americans will need to accompany Afghan Special Forces as they recruit, train, and employ local security elements. The concept is reminiscent of Village Stability Operations, though in this instance, Afghan Special Forces are directing the program with American advisors influencing the application of the above principles, increasing the likelihood of creating effective local security elements that avoid the pitfalls of the Afghan Local Police. Close partnership at the tactical level during the early stages of a program will allow the United States to shape the establishment of enduring systems that contribute to stability and promote U.S. objectives in Afghanistan. Furthermore, the additional combat power and logistical support associated with U.S. presence may prevent early catastrophic failure. As local security elements develop capabilities and solidify their relationships with GIRoA, the U.S. can reduce its footprint, maintaining influence and situational awareness through its connections with the Afghan military and intelligence networks.

²¹⁹ United States Central Intelligence Agency, "The World Factbook: Afghanistan."

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