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# State-Society Incompatibility and Forced Migration: The Violent Development of Afghanistan Under Socialist, Islamist, and Capitalist Regimes

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## **State-Society Incompatibility and Forced Migration: The Violent Development of Afghanistan Under Socialist, Islamist, and Capitalist Regimes**

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### **Abstract**

The state-centric theory of forced migration presents the nation-state as the ultimate sanctuary of citizen rights. It posits that forced migration results from state instability, which is caused by geopolitical or national identity conflict. In either case, it contends that the sources of forced migration are exogenous to the state. This paper argues that under certain conditions the state becomes an endogenous cause of refugees and internally displaced persons. These conditions occur when the state deploys violence to dominate society. Using the case of Afghanistan, we document that since 1973 a series of Socialist, Islamist, and Capitalist regimes have engaged in *violent development*: coercive material modernization and social modernity which led to societal resistance followed by state repression and forced migration. This recurring pattern calls into question the state as protector of citizens and instead suggests that the state causes forced migration under conditions of state-society incompatibility.

### **Keywords**

Forced migration, Refugees, Afghanistan, State building

The prevailing theory of forced migration assumes that refugees and displaced persons are an episodic aberration in an otherwise functional nation-state system. In this state-centric model, the state is portrayed as the guarantor of security through the institution of citizenship (Betts and Loescher 2011; Owens 2011). To explain forced migration, the theory identifies an exogenous cause that disrupts the ability of the state to protect its citizens. From the 1950s through the 1980s, this cause was thought to be decolonization and super-power proxy wars (Gordenker 1987; Loescher 1989; Zolberg, Suhrke, and Aguayo 1989). Explanations of forced migration then shifted from international geo-political conflict between states to

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internal societal conflict that led to state failure (Keely 1996; Toft 2007).

While not altogether dismissing the state's role as a guarantor of citizens' rights, we argue that under certain conditions the state itself produces refugees, internally displaced persons, and other victims of forced migration. Drawing on the state-society relations literature (Castells 2004; Foucault 1995; Touraine 1971, 1977; Weber 1964), we argue that forced migration can become endogenous to the state because the state as an organizational form was from the beginning an institution that encoded domination and resistance into its most basic structure. Using the case of Afghanistan since 1973, we document one cause of state-society incompatibility which we term *violent development*. We define violent development as the state's coercive transformation of material conditions (modernization) and social institutions (modernity). These violent changes to society produce forced migration. But they also produce popular resistance by non-state actors. The state then applies additional coercion and this repression leads to more forced migration.

We select Afghanistan as a case for three reasons. First, Afghanistan is the single-largest source of refugees since World War II and accounts for about one in four of all refugees on earth. Second, forced migration in Afghanistan is frequently attributed to causes exogenous to the Afghan state, such as geopolitical conflict or ethnic rivalry. Third, since 1973 a series of different regimes--Socialist, Islamist, and Capitalist--have attempted to create various states in Afghanistan. All efforts resorted to repression as they failed, producing millions of Afghan refugees and displaced persons. By documenting a reoccurring pattern of violent development in Afghanistan, we demonstrate that state-society incompatibility is a cause of forced migration overlooked by the state-centric theory which focuses on the state as a guarantor of citizen rights.

#### THE STATE-CENTRIC THEORY OF FORCED MIGRATION

The UN's first Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees only applied to refugees in Europe who fled events occurring before January 1, 1951 (UNHCR 2000). It assumed that forced migration would become rare in the new and more stable nation-state system. The 1951 Convention thus defined a refugee as a person who "owing

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to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country" (UNHCR 2000:23).

This definition's emphasis on state persecution and national borders appeared self-evident given the forced migrations in Europe during World Wars I and II (Marrus 1985). But in 1964, the number of refugees in Africa and Asia surpassed those in Europe. In 1967, the UN's Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees removed the geographic and time limitations from the 1951 definition (UNHCR 2000). By 1990, the number of refugees had fallen below the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs): people forced from their homes--but who do not cross an international border--due to local violence that is ignored, condoned, or even fomented by their state (IDMC 2008). Eight years later, the UN adopted the Guiding Principles on International Displacement (Cohen and Deng 1998). By 2009, the global ratio had surged to 26 million IDPs and 16 million refugees, while some 9 million people were not considered nationals by any country and thus "stateless" (UNHCR 2009a).

The close connection between refugees and the state was identified in the early 1990s (Hein 1993) and it remains central to social science and public policy thinking about forced migration. According to the UNHCR (2000:276) : "The current structure of refugee protection was designed in and for a state-centric system." This model draws heavily on political science classics such as Aristotle, Hobbes, and Arendt to argue that states benefit society through the institution of citizenship (Owens 2011). As summarized by Betts and Loescher (2011:6):

The normative basis of the state system is the idea that all people have a state that is responsible for ensuring their most basic rights and protection. The most salient characteristic which connects different categories of the vernacular "refugee" is not geographical movement *per se* [emphasis in original] but rather the inability or unwillingness of the country of origin to ensure citizen's protection.

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According to this state-centric theory of refugee production, an event beyond the state's control prevents it from carrying out its function to protect citizens. Decolonization and the Cold War were once cited as the primary causes of state instability and thus forced migration (Zolberg, Suhrke, & Aguauo 1989). With the end of the Cold War explanations shifted to various forms of societal conflict that lead to fragile, failing or failed states (Toft 2007). The first book-length analysis of IDPs (Cohen and Deng 1998) argued that "wars within states often reflect a crisis of national identity in a society" (6) and thus "most conflicts that lead to mass displacement have a strong ethnic component" (22). The UNHCR (2000:275) agreed, stating that with the end of the Cold War "the ideological motivation for conflict diminished. Often, it was replaced by identity-based conflicts built around religion, ethnicity, nationality, race, language or region."

Based on this review of policy and social science models of refugees, we draw two conclusions about the state-centric theory of forced migration that are very similar to those of Haddad (2008):

- 1) The state is a defining feature of forced migration since a refugee has to have a state to flee from to have refugee status;
- 2) The state is also seen as the guarantor of citizens' rights.

We draw two additional conclusions that are not found in Haddad's (2008) "between sovereigns" thesis since she focuses on how refugees are constructed as "others" to reinforce state sovereignty. The state-centric theory of forced migration implies:

- 3) The nation-state system is a mechanism that can prevent or at least limit refugee production;
- 4) Post-World War II refugee production is due to geopolitical events or identity conflicts that are exogenous to the state.

While recognizing that the state does play an important role in protecting citizens, we argue that the state itself becomes a source of refugee production when state-society relations are incompatible.

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## STATE-SOCIETY COMPATIBILITY IN THE NATION-STATE SYSTEM

The modern nation-state system was first formulated in Europe by the Treaty of Westphalia (1648) to end the Thirty Years War. The watershed year of 1648 culminated many trends favoring the view that the rights of citizens derive from the sovereignty of the territorial state, which offers citizens protections and liberties. Perhaps the greatest development was the Enlightenment's notions of individual freedoms from oppressive feudal authority (Israel 2011). The Enlightenment produced a political model which held that human rights are inalienable rather than based on wealth and power, such as in a plutocracy, oligarchy, feudal lords, and emperors. Since these elites came from society, the growth of the state as the guarantor of rights implied that the more the state was autonomous from society the more rights it could provide for all people now conceptualized as a nation or "country" (Somers 2008).

Given that more than nine-tenths of human history passed before the state evolved, a system which posits that states are autonomous from society and should have primacy over society will lead to a tension in state-society relations. The tension between state and society is managed by what Weber (1964) calls the state monopoly of violence whereby non-state actors are prevented from using coercion thus protecting citizens. In the Weberian state, the deployment of such violence is legitimate simply because it is sanctioned by the state. Its legitimacy is in fact consecrated when the state's authority is challenged by non-state violence, which is deemed a threat to what the state calls "law and order."

By virtue of the state's monopoly over violence, states attempt to centralize ever more power which produces resistance from non-state actors (Touraine 1971, 1977). In political-sociological terms, the state's centralization of power triggers societies' default mode of decentralization and thus a contradiction in state-society relations. Often this struggle takes the form of social movements that push back the "disciplinary state's" (Foucault 1995) occupation of the Habermasian lifeworld (Castells 2004) or what Bourdieu (1990) calls objective "field" and even his subjective habitus.

We use the above insights about the incompatibility of state-society relations to identify the set of conditions under which the state

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becomes an endogenous cause of forced migration. We term these conditions *violent development* by which we mean the state's coercive transformation of material conditions (modernization) and/or social institutions (modernity). This coercive social change causes forced migration but it also yields popular resistance by non-state actors. The state then applies additional force and this repression leads to more forced migration.

#### IS THE STATE THE SOLUTION OR CAUSE OF THE WORLD'S BIGGEST REFUGEE CRISIS?

In one of the first overviews of the Afghan refugee crisis, Centlivres and Centlivres-Demont (1988:71) remarked: "The case of the Afghan refugees is unique in the twentieth century: they make up the greatest population of the same origin ever transplanted outside of their own borders." The same could still be said twenty years later. Estimates of the proportion of all living Afghans who have been refugees at one point in their lives range from one-third to 64 percent and possibly even two-thirds, but even using the lowest figure "more Afghans have lived as refugees than any other population in the world's recent history" (Kronenfeld 2008: 57).

A comparison with other refugee crises helps us appreciate the magnitude of forced migration in Afghanistan. In no year since 1981 has any refugee group outnumbered Afghans (UNHCR 2000). During the peak of the Mozambique refugee crisis in 1992 (1.3 million) there were 4.6 million Afghan refugees. At the height of the Rwanda refugee crisis in 1994 (2.3 million) there were 2.7 million Afghan refugees. When the Bosnian refugee crisis erupted in 1996 (893,000) there were 2.7 million Afghan refugees. Although more than 4 million Afghans returned to their homeland from 2001 to 2005, some 3.5 million remained abroad, suggesting that the Afghan refugee population numbered almost 8 million at its peak (Kronenfeld 2008). Other sources estimate the peak number to be 8.3 million (Margesson 2007). In 2009, Iraq became a leading source of refugees (1.9 million). But there were still 2.8 million Afghan refugees (UNHCR 2009b).

A wide range of causes have been invoked to explain the Afghan refugee crises (see table 1). Some focus on the cultural characteristics of Afghan society which have historically promoted migration and a disregard for states and international borders. Others

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emphasize geo-political conflict in which violence inside Afghanistan serves the interests of neighboring states and superpowers. Still others argue that state failure is the underlying cause since without a strong national government there is no check on local warlords.

Table 1. Explanations for Afghan Refugee Migrations.

Cause	Citation
Tribal marginality and autonomy	Edwards 1986
Islamic asylum traditions	Centlivres and Centlivres-Demont 1988
Revolution and super-power conflict	Zolberg, Suhrke, and Aguayo 1989
State failure	Rubin 1995; Keely 1996; Goodson 2001
Ethnic rivalry	Cohen and Deng 1998
Foreign intervention and civil war	Tomsen 2000; Khattak 2003
Warrior communities, warlord culture	Schiedl 2002; Wali 2004
Diaspora adaptation	Jazavery 2002
History of cross-border migrations	Kronenfeld 2008
Instability in regional security complex	Harpviken 2010

In the wake of 9/11, the state failure argument gained many adherents (Rotberg 2002; Fukuyama 2004). They unambiguously stated that Afghanistan needed a strong central state to counterbalance the chaos in society. Cramer and Goodhand (2002:885) argued that "neither peace nor economic development will hold without a centralized, credible and effective state, that the emergence of such a state is a political problem more than a technical problem, and that it will depend on a monopolization of force by the

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state." According to Suhrke, Harpviken, and Strand (2002: 875): "Rebuilding the coercive capacity of the state is essential to overcome strong centrifugal tendencies." Wimmer and Schetter (2003:525) agreed and stated: "The programme of reconstruction should have a clear strategic focus and be designed as a state-building project. The main problem Afghanistan faces is the absence of a monopoly of power and of other basic state functions." Afghanistan was deemed so deficient that it required a completely new nation-state:

It is worth distinguishing state building—the creation of the institutional capacity to govern—from nation building, which involves bringing together disparate and antagonistic social groups in a common government. But in cases like Somalia and Afghanistan, both are necessary, and the two probably have to be attempted at the same time (Engelhart 2003:19).

Evaluations of US nation-state building in Afghanistan suggest they have failed (Nurussaman 2009; Rashid 2008). But we also draw a larger lesson: they failed because they pursued a policy of violent development quite similar to that of previous regimes. In the remainder of this paper, we account for the Afghan refugee crises since 1973 by documenting a recurring pattern of incompatibility in state-society relations. We periodize our argument using five phases of violent development. For each period we identify the state actor, state name, state goal, and primary societal groups that were targets of violent development (see table 2).

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Table 2. Phases of Violent Development in Afghanistan by Year, State Actor, State Name, State Goal, and Primary Societal Targets.

Year	State Actor	State Name	State Goal	Primary Societal Targets
1973-78	PDPA	Republic; Democratic Republic	Marxism- Leninism	Clergy and tribal chiefs
1979-92	USSR	Democratic Socialist Republic	Socialist Modernization and Modernity	Rural and religious Afghans
1992-96	Jamiat & Hizb	Islamic Republic	Islamic Community	Middle and upper class; feminist movement
1996-2001	Taliban	Islamic Emirates	Islamic Orthodoxy	Tajiks; women; Shiites
Since 2001	US-NATO	Islamic Republic	Capitalist Modernity and Modernization	Pashtuns

#### VIOLENT DEVELOPMENT I: THE PDPA AND MARXISM-LENINISM

The People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), founded by Noor Muhammad Taraki in 1965, was a political progenitor of the anti-monarchist movement in Afghanistan (Tarzi 2008). It supported Sardar Mohammad Daoud Khan, then Prime Minister of Afghanistan. Although a cousin of the Afghan King Mohammed Zahir Shah, Daud was a republican in his political outlook. In a clandestine pact with the PDPA, he deposed the monarch when the latter was on a visit to Italy, declared Afghanistan a republic, and became its first president.

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Daoud was fully backed by the PDPA in all of his moves from the monarch's deposing to the declaration of Afghanistan as a republic.

The PDPA immediately unrolled its own agenda to build a democratic Afghanistan out of the ashes of its monarchical past. It violently purged major government institutions, including the military and civil service. It then attempted to replace religion with Marxist-Leninist ideology as a prelude to economic modernization.

But the PDPA was an urban social movement and had lost touch with the reality of Afghan society (Ewans 2002). Rural Afghans resisted modernization and modernity, but not for ideological reasons. For centuries they had organized themselves into economically and socially self-sufficient extended families, clans and tribes independent of a nation-state. In a giant leap of time, they were now thrown under the growing weight of an ever-expanding republic that violently pursued control over their private and public lives. Impatient with the slow pace of republican modernity under the Daoud government, the PDPA staged a coup in April 1978 to speed up the process of modernization and modernity. President Daoud, together with 22 of his family members, was assassinated and dumped in an unmarked mass grave. The PDPA fielded its founding leader Noor Mohammad Taraki to become President. He installed two of his comrades, Hafizullah Amin and Babrak Karmal, as his deputies.

Soon after assuming the Presidency, Taraki signed a Treaty of Friendship with the Soviet Union and then launched radical reforms that encompassed not only the urban centers of Afghanistan but its remote rural districts as well, where they met with resounding rejection (Rubin 2002). Undaunted, Taraki continued with his modernity agenda and renamed the "Republic of Afghanistan" the "Democratic Republic of Afghanistan." The Taraki government came down hard on the rural population for their putative backward religious beliefs. Its chief targets were the clergy and tribal chiefs, for whom Taraki had unreserved contempt.

The PDPA, however, could not stay united because Afghan society was split along ethnic lines (Tarzi 2008). The Pashtun faction called itself the PDPA-Khalq (Pashtu for masses) and non-Pashtun took the name PDPA-Parcham (Persian for flag). Then a further split developed in the PDPA-Khalq, dividing it into the Red Khalq (adherents of Taraki) and the Black Khalq (followers of Hafizullah

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Amin, Taraki's deputy). Eventually, this divide took Taraki's life as well as that of Amin. By late 1979, the Soviets no longer trusted their proxies and sent the first contingent of 20,000 troops to Kabul to take direct control, eventually increasing the number to 120,000 (Ewans 2002).

#### VIOLENT DEVELOPMENT II: THE USSR AND SOCIALIST MODERNIZATION AND MODERNITY

The Soviets chose Babrak Karmal as their puppet and put him in the Presidential Palace. For the Soviets, Afghanistan itself meant little. They wanted to use Afghanistan as a stepping stone into neighboring Balochistan, Pakistan's coastal province on the Arabian Sea (Harrison 1981; Rais 1986; Hopkirk 1992). Landlocked Soviet Republics needed access to the year-round warm waters of the Arabian Sea and by extension the Indian Ocean. The Soviets' ultimate goal was to establish an unrivaled maritime presence over the Persian Gulf, including the key shipping lane at the Strait of Hurmoz and the Strait of Malacca (Niazi 2008). At the time, the only Western naval presence on the Indian Ocean was a British base in Diego Garcia, to which the U.S. had access as well.

To achieve this goal, the Soviets first needed to put down the growing Afghan resistance movement. They attempted to counter the movement with modernization, portraying the farmers, herders, and religious authorities who resisted them as economically unproductive and primitive (Kakar 1995; Rubin 2002). In contrast, they presented socialist development as a means to usher medieval Afghanistan into the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The benefits of socialist development were assumed to be a modern economy and society on par with Iran and Pakistan. Unlike the Taraki regime, the Soviets argued that economic modernization should precede modernity (the social transformation of Afghanistan). They initiated major projects in the country's agricultural, industrial and mineral sectors of the economy. In addition, gigantic modernization projects included the fabled Salang Pass, irrigation in the Helmand Valley, road networks, and new telecommunication infrastructure. As part of modernity, Marx and Marxism came to dominate the curricula in educational institutions, pushing traditional religious instruction into the background.

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Both modernization and modernity, however, threatened Afghans' traditional culture, subsistence economy, hundreds of years of history and customary practices, and were fiercely resisted. In 1989, the Soviets retreated in humiliation, leaving the country in the hands of Afghan physician Dr. Najibullah Khan. In 1992, the Khan government fell as his top military commanders began to defect to the anti-Soviet "freedom-fighters" who were waiting in the wings to form an Islamic government.

### VIOLENT DEVELOPMENT III: THE JAMIAT-HIZB AND ISLAMIC COMMUNITY

While militarily effective, the freedom fighters were hardly unified. Their two major religious parties mirrored traditional Afghan social divisions (Shahrani 2008). The Jamiat-e-Islami, led by Burhanuddin Rabbani, was dominated by ethnic Tajiks. The Hizb-e-Islami, led by Gulbadin Hekmatyar, was dominated by ethnic Pashtuns.

To minimize conflict, Pakistan brokered a peace deal between the Jamiat and Hizb for power-sharing in the post-Soviet Afghanistan (Rashid 2000). Although Pakistan had long favored the Pashtun-dominated Hizb over the Tajik-dominated Jamiat, the deal it brokered gave the Jamiat the upper hand in the interim. Under the deal, both parties were to share power until the mutually agreed elections were held within one year to choose a permanent government. In the interim, Rabbani became President and Hekmatyar Prime Minister.

Despite their differences, Rabbani and Hekmatyar agreed on one thing: they should rename the country the "Islamic Republic of Afghanistan." As Islamic modernists, they also agreed to reverse the Soviets' development model in which modernization preceded modernity (social transformation). Instead, they gave primacy to culture over the economy (Kakar 1995). This sequential reversal in the development agenda reflected the lack of expertise and material means to initiate modernization (i.e., material transformation of society in its economy and economic infrastructure). On the other hand, they were quite conversant with low-cost or no-cost cultural transformation.

For the Jamiat-Hizb alliance, Islamic modernity meant state control over human behavior to cultivate "virtue" and eliminate "vice" with violent enforcement when necessary. They first purged what they

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called "communists" in Afghan institutions. This witch-hunt triggered the forced migration of hundreds of thousands of middle and upper-middle class Afghans to neighboring countries, Europe, and North America (Shahrani 2008). But the major casualty was the Afghan feminist movement (one of the rare bright legacies of the Soviets) which was completely ousted from the country (Azarbaijani-Moghaddam 2004). Some feminists took refuge in Pakistan, and their resilient survival is a remarkable event of Afghan history that deserves a full accounting of its own.

These violent purges were followed by institutional change. Schools and curricula were returned to Islamic tenets and the limited media technology amplified a nation-building message using the concept of "Umma" (Ewans 2002). Best translated as "Islamic community," Umma as a doctrine attempts to transcend social variation, such as national identity, among Muslims and build in its place a universal solidarity around a common faith.

Afghans did not object to the idea of Umma, as Islamic communitarianism fit well with traditional Afghan society in which individual interests were subordinate to communal interests. But they did resist the building of an Islamic nation-state, which they found divisive and exclusionary within the Afghan social context. For instance, Hazaras, who subscribe to the Shiite faith and number approximately 1.5 million of the Afghan population, felt excluded from the Sunni-dominated Islamic modernity project (Shahrani 2008). This exclusion led to resistance in central Afghanistan.

There were also ethnic splits among Sunnis. Pashtuns, as the founders of Afghanistan, considered it their birthright to rule the country (Rashid 2000). They could not imagine, let alone accept, a non-Pashtun (Tajik) President served by a Pashtun Prime Minister. In the mid-1990s, this simmering conflict erupted into a civil war that killed 20,000 Afghans (Shahrani 2008). Eventually, the Rabbani government fell in 1996. A far more hard-line group of Islamists took its place. They were the first generation of Afghan refugees who had fled the Taraki and Soviet regimes. Religiously trained in seminaries in Pakistan, they were known as the Taliban (students).

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#### VIOLENT DEVELOPMENT IV: THE TALIBAN AND ISLAMIC ORTHODOXY

The Taliban entered Afghanistan in 1996 and based themselves in Kandahar, the traditional center of Pashtun power and the birth place of Mullah Omer, the movement's founding leader (Rashid 2000). They then advanced on Kabul, which was already deserted by the crumbling Jamiat-Hizb coalition government. After entering Kabul, the Taliban captured Dr. Najibullah Khan, the last Afghan "Communist" ruler. Khan was publically tortured to death and his mutilated body hung from a tower in the main square of the city for three days before he was allowed a Muslim burial.

Like the Jamiat-Hizb coalition of Islamists, the Taliban had nothing to offer Afghans that would improve their material standard of living. They rather opted for ideological state centralization via religious orthodoxy (Rashid 2000). They set out on their "transformative agenda" by tinkering with the country's name – the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. To them a republic was a transgression against Islam. Borrowing its nomenclature from the United Arab Emirates (UAE), one of their sponsors, they named the country the "Islamic Emirates of Afghanistan." But the Taliban took more than nomenclature from the UAE. They also incorporated and internalized its religious conservatism. Combined with their literalist interpretation of Islam, the Taliban set out to create a disciplinarian state that quickly triggered another wave of forced migration, especially from northern, eastern, and central Afghanistan (Shahrani 2008).

Under the Taliban, Afghanistan degenerated into a virtual prison, especially for women (Rashid 2000). The Taliban banned women from working outside their homes, although, in an ironic twist, they allowed them to beg in public. To enforce these and other regulations, the Taliban state created an army of young Virtocrats. These zealots used TV antennas to beat women who dared step out of their homes unescorted. The

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Taliban state also outlawed male sports, such as cricket and football, and replaced them with violent public entertainment orchestrated by the Virtocrats. Each Friday, “adulterers” and “adulteresses” were brought to the Sports Stadium in the heart of Kabul and stoned to death by the watching crowd.

Not content to hold sway in Kandahar and Kabul, the Taliban pushed into northern Afghanistan, where leaders of the Jamiat-e-Islami and its supporters had retreated and established their internationally recognized capital in Mazar-i-Sharif (Rashid 2000). The Taliban mounted several offensives against the city, but were repulsed. Finally, in 1998, they captured Mazar-i-Sharif and massacred thousands of prisoners and civilians. Among the many consequences of the Taliban's almost total control of Afghanistan was increased international recognition by other Islamic social movements. One of them was al-Qaeda founded by Osama Ben Laden, whom the Taliban welcomed after his expulsion from Sudan. Ben Laden turned Afghanistan into a training ground for al-Qaeda, his global terrorist network. After the 9/11 attacks, the US demanded that the Taliban turn Bin Laden over. They refused. In September-October, 2001, the US launched an air blitzkrieg and within weeks dislodged the Taliban.

#### VIOLENT DEVELOPMENT V: US-NATO AND CAPITALIST MODERNITY AND MODERNIZATION

Before the first US soldier set foot in Afghanistan, the Taliban, Bin Laden, and al-Qaeda had already fled. Since then, US and NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) troops have sought to keep them from returning by creating a new Afghan state (Jones 2006).

The early US victory was only made possible through a partnership with the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance (NA), of which the Jamiat-e-Islami was the dominant force (Chayes 2007). Not surprisingly, US forces were beholden to the NA for its military support against the Taliban. But the US-NA

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partnership did not sit well with nationalist Pashtuns because the NA is dominated by ethnic Tajiks. The NA's hostility towards the Taliban is shared by many Pashtuns, but Pashtuns regarded the NA as an anti-Pashtun force. It is noteworthy that most of the Taliban are Pashtuns, but all Pashtuns do not have allegiance to the Taliban. Nonetheless, Pashtuns continue to be suspect in the eyes of US and NATO forces, as well as non-Pashtun Afghans.

These social contradictions presented insurmountable challenges to the US-NATO effort at nation building and state centralization (Tarzi 2008). The US and NATO have diligently worked to build the Afghan military, paramilitary, police, and civil service. Yet the institutions they have created are marred by ethnic imbalances. For example, the ethnic Tajik minority is disproportionately overrepresented in the Afghan National Army and Afghan Police, while the ethnic Pashtun plurality is disproportionately underrepresented in these institutions. The significance of these social contradictions does not register with western observers who assume state institutions operate by bureaucracy, not ethnicity.

Yet Afghan society requires members of clans and tribes to share resources with kith and kin regardless of national law. What is nepotism to the state is custom to the ethnic group, in this case, the Tajiks. Pashtuns, who constitute 45 percent of the national population, can hardly be expected to support national institutions which benefit rival ethnic groups. Pashtuns' real or perceived exclusion from state institutions does not augur well for peace-building because it is inhibiting the return of millions of Afghan refugees in Pakistan and Iran. The expansion of the US-NATO mandate into nation- and state-building has ignored what Kagan (2012) now describes as a primer for U.S. foreign engagements: history. First, US-NATO forces assumed the existence of an Afghan national identity which transcends ethnic, religious, and regional divisions. Second, they

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consistently ignored the group interests of clans and tribes in favor of individual interests.

The most glaring example of failed nation-state building by US-NATO is the introduction of national elections. For centuries, Afghans have had a robust local democratic forum of Loya Jirga (the grand assembly of elders) in which each tribe and faith has due representation (Rubin 2002). This Jirga serves as the electoral college, as well as the highest forum of consultation on matters of national importance (Niazi 2007). One-person-one-vote runs counter to this centuries-old institution. Yet as evidenced by the 2009 presidential election, it was only with the blessing of the Jirga that President Karzai won a second term in office. Although the US and NATO alleged that the election was fraudulent, it merely reflected the profound influence of the Afghan social system that was being challenged by a transplant of the state system unknown to Afghan society.

All of the US-NATO's efforts at nation-building were accompanied by massive spending on Afghanistan's economic modernization. Just the U.S. alone spent \$38 billion in 2001-2009 on the country's infrastructure-building that included, among others, the development of agriculture, water reservoirs, roads, schools and private sector businesses (Tarnoff 2009). To put this number in perspective, the \$38 billion in economic aid is almost 270 percent of Afghanistan's annual GDP of \$15 billion. Prominent among key U.S. agencies that execute modernization efforts are the Department of Defense, Agency for International Development, the Department of State and the Department of Agriculture. These efforts, however, are resisted with insurgent violence in which members of construction crews are routinely kidnapped or killed, and schools are regularly bombed, not to mention that NATO forces come under insurgent attacks on a daily basis. This top-down development is meeting bottom-up violence. The result is collateral damage in fatalities and forced migration, when security forces raid villages

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to hunt insurgents or insurgents attack villagers for aiding security forces.

The futility of this experimentation has caused a change of heart even among those who were once ardent advocates for such efforts. A case in point is Robert Kagan, who fervently supported U.S. efforts at nation-building in Afghanistan as well as Iraq. In his latest book, he cautioned the United States against engaging in any such effort without due regard to the history of the place (Kagan 2012). The Obama administration seems to be listening. It has now moved away from building a Good Afghanistan to a “Good Enough Afghanistan” (Sanger 2012).

#### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The state-centric theory of forced migration was codified by the UN in 1951 and it remains the dominant model for understanding refugees, displaced persons, and other people who flee political violence. According to this theory, the state protects citizens unless it is destabilized by some external force. The refugee and forced migration studies literature has documented one exogenous cause after another: decolonization, the Cold War, the War on Terrorism, ethnic rivalry, national identity conflicts, and most recently "chaos" that leads to fragile, failing, or failed states. But there is a blind-spot in this approach because the theory privileges the state over society. Although the state will always play some role as a guarantor of protection for its citizens, we have argued that the state itself becomes an endogenous cause of forced migration under certain conditions. These conditions occur when the state creates incompatible state-society relations and then uses force to maintain them.

To empirically document incompatible state-society relations, we analyzed coercive modernization and modernity in Afghanistan under three very different regimes. Whether the regime was Socialist, Islamist, or Capitalist, there was a similar pattern of violent development. Forced migration resulted because the state forced society to change in ways that violated

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preexisting material practices and social institutions. But forced migration in Afghanistan continued because non-state actors resisted state domination. State repression of this resistance produced more refugees and displaced persons. The fact that such different regimes engaged in such similar behavior supports our contention that the causes of forced migration can become endogenous to the state rather than the type of regime produced by exogenous factors.

Additional evidence that forced migration can result from state-society incompatibility is the wide variation among the groups persecuted by the state as it engaged in and then reinforced violent development. In some phases of violent development in Afghanistan the state targeted rural and religious segments of civil society. In other phases the targets were the middle class and comparatively secular urban populations. Several regimes targeted women and/or specific ethnic populations and religious faiths. The fact that virtually every group in Afghan society has been subject to state persecution at some point since 1973 suggests that the underlying mechanism of forced migration in Afghanistan is state domination of society. Inter-state conflicts and intra-society rivalries merely determine who wins the state and with it the power to enforce violent development.

There are some historical features of Afghanistan which may limit the generalizability of our conclusions, such as the fact that the British wanted Afghanistan to serve as a buffer state rather than an ideal of the modern nation-state. Nonetheless, we justify our focus on Afghanistan in two ways. The first reason is methodological and the second theoretical.

The case study method which we have pursued is particularly appropriate for research on forced migration. While refugees and internally displaced persons are a global phenomenon, they are also highly concentrated. More than two-thirds of all refugees originate from Afghanistan, Iraq, Sudan, Somalia, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (UNHCR

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2009a). Three countries account for 45 percent of the world's internally displaced persons: Sudan, Columbia, and Iraq (IDMC 2009). Thus rather than develop a universal theory that attempts to account for all forms of forced migration, it is methodologically appropriate to identify a set of conditions that explain the largest and longest crises. Estimates of more than 8 million Afghan refugees have led some observers to call the crisis the biggest since World War II or even the biggest of the twentieth century. In conventional social science terminology, it would indeed be quite an accomplishment if a causal explanation (violent development) accounted for 25 percent of a dependent variable (the proportion of Afghan refugees among all refugees).

Theory is the second and most important reason for focusing on Afghanistan. The prevailing explanation of forced migration emphasizes causes external to the state. This theory has been applied to Afghanistan since the 1980s. Numerous books and journal articles attribute Afghan refugees and displaced persons to state instability due to ethnic strife, religious divisions, inter-state conflicts, and civil wars. The most recent line of reasoning argues that "chaos" has caused the state to fail. All of these arguments have some validity but they miss the larger pattern. Since 1973, a series of regimes have created an incompatibility between state and society by engaging in violent development. Forced migration will continue in Afghanistan, and the world, whenever the state dominates society through the deployment of violence.

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