Approaching Study of Political Culture in Afghanistan with Institutional Analysis and Development (IAD) & Social-Ecological Systems (SES) Frameworks

M. Nazif Shahrani

(Indiana University-Bloomington)

<u>An Overview of Approaches to the Study of Political Culture:</u>

In a 1997 review of current literature on politics and culture for the *Annual Reviews of Sociology*, Mabel Berezin suggests that four distinct sub-areas of research have crystallized. She labeled them as studies of "political culture", "institutions", "political communication and meaning", and "cultural approaches to collective action" (1997, p. :361, also see Berezin 1994). Richard W. Wilson, however, has remarked that, "The debate about political culture is an old one, yet at the same time it is in its infancy" (2000,:p. 273). Debates and discussions about the analytical utility of the concept or theories of political culture have been persistent in the social sciences literature and more intense in recent decades. Therefore, in order to contextualize what I propose to explore in this short essay, allow me to outline very briefly the history of efforts in studying this critical aspect of the socio-cultural systems.

Interest in understanding the role of culture in politics, hence political cultures, goes back to the classical antiquity. The foundations for the modern explorations of political culture, however, according to Jeffrey Olick and Tatiana Omeltchenko (2008, p.300), are said to have been grounded in two important developments connected to the French Revolution:

First is the demise of absolutism based on claims of divine rights--expressed infamously by Louis XIV's saying "I am the state"; then the re-location of sovereignty in popular will by French Revolutionaries proclaiming: "We are the people". This momentous rapture in the traditional conception of power led Max Weber (1922, also see Gerth &and Mills, 1946) a century later to theorize that *legitimacy* in society is not based only on what is considered legitimate by the elites, but also by the population in general.

Second, when Jean-Jaques Rousseau (1762) raised the question of how social solidarity could be maintained in the absence of recourse to traditional claims of divine rights, he suggested the "social contract." That is, "'civil religion,' [consisting of] symbols and rituals that establish and dramatize the sense of collective belonging and purpose", which assures societal cohesion. A century later, this notion of civil religion was taken up by Emile Durkheim (1912) and reconfigured in the concept of "collective effervescence" achieved by communal rituals, and symbolically embodied in what he termed "collective conscience". Contemporary conceptions of political culture "as the sets of symbols and meanings involved in securing and exercising

political power" (articulated by Olick &and Omeltchenko, (2008, pp. 300-01) are firmly grounded in these early conceptual developments.

In a brief review of contemporary studies of political culture, Gabriel Almond (1993, pp. :ix-xii) suggests that the field of study has passed through three distinct phases: First, the early twentieth century psychoanalytical contributions combined with ideas in cultural anthropology which formed the "culture and personality" approach. Contributors to this phase included luminaries such as Margaret Mead (1942, 1951 and 1953), Ruth Benedict (1934, 1946), and Ralph Linton (1945), who pioneered culture and personality studies approach during WW II (1939-1945)[1]. The major question of the time, according to Almond, was why some nations had turned to authoritarianism while others tried to build democratic governance systems. Benedict and Mead, inspired by their separate ethnographic studies, had suggested that different societies developed different "modal personalities" that in turn explained the support for different kinds of political institutions and systems. In the same vein, Theodor Adorno (1950) in his book *Authoritarian Personality* suggested that the structure of authority in German families provided support for authoritarian politics, while Harold Laswell (1948) postulated personality traits such as an "open ego" and generalized trust to be supportive of democratic regimes. Together with Eric Fromm (1941), who used data from child-rearing patterns, and practices in anthropological literature, plus case studies from among psychiatric patients in industrialized societies, they explained the formation of the "national character" of nations involved in WW II.

According to Almond, the second phase lasted about three decades (1950s through 1970s) marked by a series of strong reactions to previous studies of political culture. One of the important reactions to the reductionism of culture and personality and national character studies came in the form of large-scale surveys[2]. Aside from employing large-scale surveys, these studies used data from rigorously constructed interview schedules, content analysis, and along with quantitative and "scientific procedure" to stress the importance of political behavioral expressions rather than the alleged personal and psychological traits (Almond, 1993, pp. :ix-x).

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[1] For additional contributions to this approach also see Gorer (1948,; 1953,; 1955), Fromm (1941), Klineberg (1950), and Pye (1962, 1971).

[2] The most important work of the period in the study of political culture is said to be Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba's *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations.* They utilized Talcott Parsons' concept of social institutions as a means for inculcating individual members of a society with a set of coherent norms, values and attitudes which helps sustain social order through time. They also attempted to demonstrate the behavioral significance of norms, values and attitudes in understanding political outcomes. Through operationalizing the Parsonian concept of culture in this book, they ""theorized three basic orientations towards political institutions and outcomes: parochial, where politics is not differentiated…; subject, in which individuals are …[politically] relatively passive; and participant, where citizens have a strong sense of their role in politics and responsibility for it." (Olick and Omeltchenko, 2008, p. :301). For additional and more elaborate typologies of political cultures and political systems, also see Arend Lijphart' 's *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms & Performance in Thirty-six Countries*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999.

However, the "radical movement" (i.e., dependency theorists and neo-Marxists) of the 1960s and 1970s questioned the objectivity of these large scale studies of the working class, primarily ethnic minorities and peoples of the Third World. These theorists argued that the purpose of such studies was to conceal the suppression and exploitation of these groups and societies by the capitalist West. The radical movement challenged the legitimacy of such approaches to the study of political culture, because they asserted that such studies reflected only "false consciousness" of those studied. They argued that the findings of these large-scale studies were the outcome of the processes of indoctrination of capitalist schools, universities, and the media. They concluded that the capitalist idea of political culture was not worth studying due to its exploitative nature. Instead, they favored focusing on the true socialist political culture, whose values are to sustain equitable society and polity (for background see Ferraro, 2008; Wallerstein, 1979; and Frank, 1978).

Another challenge to the study of political culture in the 1950s, according to Almond, was launched by the adherents of rational choice economic theory. They argued that all decisions made by voters, politicians, and military men were on the basis of rational choice that maximized their short-run-interests. Consequently, they asserted that "the study of political culture was largely unnecessary and wasteful" because "[o]ne simply had to plug 'rational choice' into any political context, and it would generate the programs and platforms of politicians, the votes of electors and legislators, the decisions of diplomatic bargainers, and the like.". (Almond, 1993, p. xi, see also Allingham, 2002; Amadae, 2003; Sen, 1987, and Hollis & Nell, 1975). Not surprisingly, Almond suggested that during the 1970s and 1980s the "public choice" school in Political Science dominated both the academic field as well as the market place.

The third phase in political culture studies has been shaped since the 1980s by the weakening of the reductionisms of both the left and the right. The Leninist variety of Marxism collapsed with the demise of the former USSR. Marxist theorists came to acknowledge "the reality of pluralism, and the autonomy of governmental institutions, recognizing that politics is not simply the reflection of economic structures and processes, and that attitudes and values are of importance in the functioning and transformation of economic and governmental institutions" (Almond, 1993, p. :xi). The public choice theorists also began to retreat during the 1980s and 1990s from their claims of universality of rational choice by all individuals and groups. The retreat came in the form of a search for "institutions", based on "a recognition that the rational self-interest models must be set in a context of laws, rules, ideas, beliefs, and values in order to contribute to explanation" (Almond1993, p. xi; also see North, 1990). These realizations and adjustments have allowed for more dynamic scholarship with eclectic methodologies, the return of rigorous survey-based research, as well as historical and descriptive ethnographic studies. As a result, theoretical works on political culture now have come to focus on the role of political culture in the processes of economic growth, development, and democratization, as well as on the maintenance of democracy and more (Almond, 1993, p. xii; also see Diamond, 1993, p. 2).

On a Working Definition and Functions of Political Culture:

While there seems to be a broad agreement among social scientists on the analytical value of the concept of political culture, there are nevertheless concerns about its applicability to some type of societies (e.g., on Communist systems, see Brown & Gray, 1977) as well as on how the concept should be defined and "operationalized". Therefore, for our purpose in this paper it is important to articulate a working definition and a clear understanding of the functions of political culture.

I will start with Lucian W. Pye, who has offered one of the more inclusive and useful definitions of political culture: "the set of attitudes, beliefs, and sentiments which give order and meaning to a political process and which provide the underlying assumptions and rules that govern behavior in the political system" (1968, p. 218).   Larry Diamond refines it by adding that political culture refers to "a people's *predominant* beliefs, attitudes, values, ideals, sentiments, and evaluations about the political system of its country, and *the role of the self in that system*" ((1993, pp. 7-8, emphasis is mine). For our purposes here, I would like to draw attention to the following points: (1) Political culture encompasses both the political ideals and operating norms of a polity, i.e., it provides a "model of" as well as a "model for" political behavior (see Geertz 1973, pp. 93-94). (2) It is employed instrumentally and affectively for the management of public affairs within a society. (3) It encompasses both the collective history of a political system as well as the life histories of the members (both power elites and their subjects) of that political system. [3] (4) It is the reflection and manifestation equally of public events and private experiences of the political elite as well as the ordinary citizen/subject. Therefore, political culture is inclusive of such commonly used concepts as political ideology and national ethos/spirit. It encompasses the fundamental values of a political community or society. The signal importance of the concept of political culture for us is "to apply an essentially behavioral form of analysis to the study of such traditional problems as political ideology, legitimacy, sovereignty, nationhood, and the rule of law" and to address problems associated with their use and abuse. (For a theoretical analysis of the concept, see Verba in Pye & Verba, 1965, pp. 512–560).

Following a detailed assessment of a number of recent approaches to the study of political culture, Richard W. Wilson (2000, p. 273) bemoans their shortcomings and suggests that an adequate definition and theory of political culture must do at least the following four things:

1. Specify the functional role of political culture while maintaining analytical distinctions between social and psychological components as variables.
2. Explain how and why people make choices that affect political life.

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[3] By "political system", I mean, "the network of political institutions and the pattern of political behavior within a given state" (Brown & Gray, 1997, p. 3). In this conception, continuity or change in a political system is highly contingent on its political culture.

3. Specify the nature of interactions between political norms and performance and show how socialization, moral discourse, and activism link the normative and the performative (practice) sides/levels and how and why discourses developed in one level have an effect upon the other.
4. Specify the sociological/anthropological context in which a hypothesis can be tested.

To accomplish this significant intellectual challenge, Wilson (2000, p. 268) is advocating a focus on linking the norms of a political culture with preference orientations in decision-making—e.g., the impact of kinship or patronage norms on making political appointments. Since linkage implies reciprocal relationship, any theory of linkage must explain how individual or collective preferences "act upon culture and, conversely, how normative prescriptions affect individual choices." Wilson argues that since most social exchanges and communications relevant to political culture are moral in nature, the focus of theorizing should be on moral linkages. He then suggests four avenues for conducting such research: First, use a combination of research methodologies (e.g., surveys, historical and participant observation, in-depth interviews, etc.) to learn about normative principles and their moral force for members of society both individually and collectively. Second, focus on "institutions" as conceived by Douglas North, as "a set of rules, compliance procedures, and moral and ethical norms designed to constrain the behavior of individuals [or offer them opportunities] in the interest of maximizing the wealth or utility of principles" (1981, pp. 201-02). Such a formulation, Wilson asserts, allows political culture to be conceptualized as "moral and ethical behavioral norms", which both undergird rules and how they may be enforced (pp. 201-02). Since rights and obligations are defined and honored in culturally specific contexts, change within a political system is both possible and expected. Third, not grounding preference orientations within the framework of two theoretical approaches, such as "moral development theory [ala Piaget], and rational choice theory", political culture cannot be based on moral preferences alone (Wilson, 2000, p. 271, also see Fearon & Laitin, 1996). Because depending on the stages of moral development, individuals make rational calculations on whether or not to abide by moral rules. Finally, Wilson draws attention to promising developments in the field of evolutionary psychology concerning the role played by genetics in explaining reciprocal altruism, instead of its presumed rootedness in moral values of justice and fairness alone.

These are indeed very useful suggestions for serious interdisciplinary researchers aiming to unpack the complex place of political culture in contemporary socio-cultural systems. Wilson's suggestion that the focus of theorizing be on moral linkages within a political culture shaping and being shaped by individual and collective preference orientations is admirable. However, he fails to offer a coherent framework for how to proceed in this important endeavor. I believe the Institutional Analysis and Development (IAD) and Social-Ecological System (SES) frameworks developed at Indiana University's Workshop in Political Theory and Policy Analysis could offer a very useful means of formulating more effective and useful theories for the study of

political culture. It is to a brief discussion of IAD and SES frameworks and their possible utility in studying Afghanistan's dysfunctional political culture to which we turn next.

Background of the Institutional Analysis and Development (IAD) and the Social-Ecological System (SES) Frameworks

Professor Elinor Ostrom, the only female Nobel Laureate in Economics (2009) and Co-Director of the Workshop in Political Theory and Policy Analysis (hence forward the Workshop) at Indiana University, Bloomington, in collaboration with her husband, Professor Vincent Ostrom and many other scholars at the Workshop, began their work on the Institutional Analysis Development (IAD) framework in the early 1980s (Kiser & Ostrom, 1982). This led to the development of the Social-Ecological System (SES) framework (Ostrom, 2007a and 2009; for its history, see McGinnis, 2010). In a syllabus for a graduate seminar entitled "Institutional Analysis and Development: Micro", Lin Ostrom outlined the central concern of the seminar on the IAD framework by highlighting the following questions:

- How can *fallible* human beings achieve and sustain self-governing ways of life and self-governing entities as well as sustain ecological systems at multiple scales? When we state that institutions facilitate or discourage effective problem-solving and innovations, what do we mean by institutions and what factors affect these processes?

- How do we develop better frameworks and theories to understand behavior that has structure and outcomes at multiple *scales* (e.g., household use of electricity affecting household budget and health as well as community infrastructure and investment and regional, national and global structures and outcomes)?

- How can institutional analysis be applied to diverse policy issues, including urban public goods, water and forestry resources and health care [or appropriate governance system in war ravaged multi-ethnic post-Taliban Afghanistan]? (Ostrom,2011, p. 1, emphasis in the original)

The IAD framework traces its origins to a general systems approach to social policy processes, (McGinnis, 2011, p. 172). Policy-oriented researchers have focused more on the political agenda of domestic, national and even local governing bodies "without recognizing the importance of the local for the global. Instead of studying how individuals are crafting institutions, many scholars are focusing on how to understand national and global phenomena" (Ostrom, 2011, p. 2). Ostrom argues that in order to understand the problems of self-governance, we should focus on the "four "I's": individuals, incentives, institutions, and inquiry.

The centrality of focusing on *individuals* and the *incentives* they face is critical to understanding of processes at any levels of organizations, asserts Ostrom. That is, "When we talk about 'THE' government doing X or Y, there are individuals who hold positions in a variety of situations within 'THE' government." (2011, p. 1) Hence it is important to understand how individuals approach decision-making in a variety of situation with the constraints and incentives

they face. The main source of incentives, especially in the public sector, is the rules of the game the participants are playing. *Institutions*, one of the key subjects of study for Ostrom, are defined as "the rules that specify what, may, must or must not be done in situations that are linked together to make a polity, a society, an economy, and their inter-linkages. To understand this process, we must be engaged in an *inquiry* that will never end." (2011, p. 1, also see Ostom, 1986, 2007b, & 2010).

The settings and issues we study are always complex, diverse, multi-layered, multi-scaled and dynamic, and in need of frameworks that provide a general language and range of theories and models for studying them. Ostrom is adamant that it is impossible to develop a universal theory of actions and outcomes in all setting and for all times (see 2007a). Therefore, the task of inquiry has to be a life-long endeavor on the part of investigators since the tasks of citizens and their governing officials are continuous and unending. Because no socio-cultural system can last very long without shared and enforced rules relying on varying degrees of force or potential use of violence, Ostrom bemoans that "we face a Faustian bargain in designing any system of governance (2011:2).

Michael McGinnis, a Co-Director of the Workshop at IU, and a longtime collaborator of the Ostroms, offers the following useful definitions for institutional analysis, development, design and diagnosis: "*Institutions* are human-constructed constraints or opportunities within which individual choices takes place and which shape the consequences of their choices" (McGinnis, 2011, p. 170). A*nalysis*, he says, involves unpacking "of institutional contexts into their component parts as a prelude to understanding how these parts affect each other and how institutions shape outcomes." By *development* in the AID framework he means "dynamic changes of institutions as well as changes in their effect over time." It is also assumed that "*design* is part of the development processes through which institutions are established, maintained, and transformed" (2011, p. 170).

The epistemological and ontological foundations of AID are said to be grounded in "*political theory* [which] encompasses all efforts to understand the institutional foundation for governance, especially involving efforts to relate philosophical [and religious] principles and normative values to practical challenges of implementing these principles and values in real-world political institutions" (McGinnis, 2011, p. 170, also see V. Ostrom, 2008). The IAD approach insists on clear distinctions among three closely related concepts of the "Framework-Theory-Model".

> *Framework* identifies, categorizes, and organizes those factors deemed most relevant to understanding some phenomena. *Theory* posits general causal relationships among some subset of these variables or categories of factors, designating some types of factors as especially important and others as less critical for explanatory purposes. *Model* specifies the specific functional relationships among particular variables or indicators that are hypothesized to operate in some well defined set of conditions. (McGinnis, 2011, p. 170).

The IAD-SES frameworks also subscribe to *behavioral rational choice* which "incorporates effects of visual and verbal cues, norms of reciprocity and fairness and willingness to sanction violators." (2011, p. 170) Individuals are also assumed to be operating under the rules of *"bounded rationality",* i.e., they pursue their goals under the constraints of "limited cognitive and information processing capability, [and] incomplete information" as well as subtle influences of cultural predisposition and beliefs. (2011 p. 170) Fallible individuals are also assumed to be *adaptive learners*. They learn from their mistakes but these learning processes do not operate perfectly. More important, since institutions are human constructs, institutional analysis must also be part of a "creative process through which the image or artistic vision of an artisan can be imperfectly realized in the real world" (McGinnis 2011, p. 171, V. Ostrom, 1980). Furthermore, institutional process is a collective enterprise, and the role of entrepreneurial individuals "who offer appealing new visions or innovative practical solutions to governance problems" must be given special attention (McGinnis, 2011, pp. 170-71).

In the IAD-SES frameworks, *governance* is defined as "the repertoire of rules, norms, and strategies that guides behavior within a given realm where policy interactions are formed, applied, interpreted and reformed." (McGinnis 2011, p. 171) It can take a variety of forms, including *community self-governance* in which members can actively participate in decisions relating to the management of public affairs; *monocentric governance,* ideally conceptualized as unitary sovereignty such as that articulated by Hobbes in the *Leviathan*. Such governments do not exist in the real world though some concentrate considerable power in the hands of a small number of people at the national level; and *polycentric/collaborative governance* with overlapping jurisdictions. Authority limitations are negotiated or assigned to various levels of governing units including physical boundaries and political jurisdiction over subjects. Typically, polycentric systems are *multi-level* (local, provincial, regional, national or global), and *multi-type,* as in traditional federalism with nested jurisdictions or specialized as in cross-jurisdictional units of special districts. Polycentric systems can be also *multi-sectorial* (public, private, voluntary, community-based, etc.) and *multifunctional,* incorporating specialized units for specific tasks such as provision, production/co-production, financing (taxes, donations), co-ordination, supervision or dispute resolution (McGinnis, 2011, pp. 271-72).

Elinor Ostrom (2010, p. 646) highlights the basic components of the IAD framework to consist of the following key elements:

Inputs/contextual factors—which include biophysical conditions, attributes of the community and rules-in-use;

T*he Action Situation* considered as the "black box" where choices are made based on interactions;

Outcomes shaped by outputs of the action situation that may be modified by the exogenous variables;

Continuous evaluations of actions, outputs and outcomes by participants which may have their own impact on any stage of the dynamic processes; and

Feedback and adaptive learning which may affect the action situation during the process (see Fig. 1).

Figure 1-Institutional Analysis and Development (IAD) Framework:
Contextual Factors, Action Situation, Interactions, Outcomes, Evaluations, & Feedback

Contextual Factors

Biophysical Conditions

Attributes of community

Rules-in-use

Action Situation

Interactions

Evaluative Criteria

Outcomes
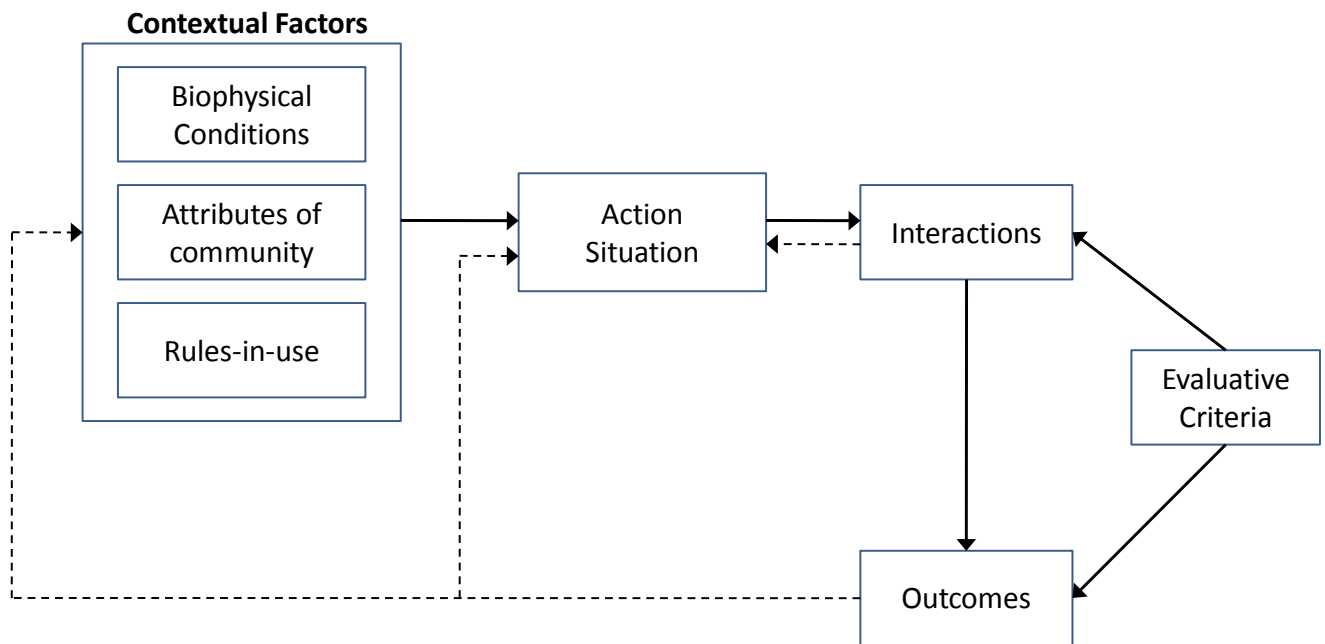
Sources: Ostrom 1990, 2005, 2010, 2011, McGinnis 2011, Aligica and Boettke 2009.

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After decades of collaborative effort refining the IAD framework for the study of common pool resource and their governance, the Workshop initiated a new Program for Institutional Analysis of Social-Ecological Systems (PIASES) framework. The SES is a revised version of the IAD framework in which a large number of variables identified by researchers as potentially relevant to the understanding of patterns of interaction between human groups and their environment (physical, psychological, social and cultural) are arranged "in a nested series of tiers, using a set of generic categories intended to be applicable to [the study of] diverse resource sectors, geographic regions, political entities, and cultural traditions [including political cultures] (McGinnis, 2011, p. 181). Ostrom states that "SES is composed of multiple subsystems and internal variables within these subsystems at multiple levels analogous to organisms

composed of organs of tissues, tissues of cells, cells of proteins, etc." (2009, p. 419). Designed collaboratively by ecologists and social scientists for the promotion of interdisciplinary research by creating a common language of scientific discourse, the aim of the SES is to show "how to dissect and harness complexity, rather than eliminate it from such system." Therefore, the SES framework provides a "common, classificatory framework… to facilitate multidisciplinary efforts towards a better understanding of complex SESs."
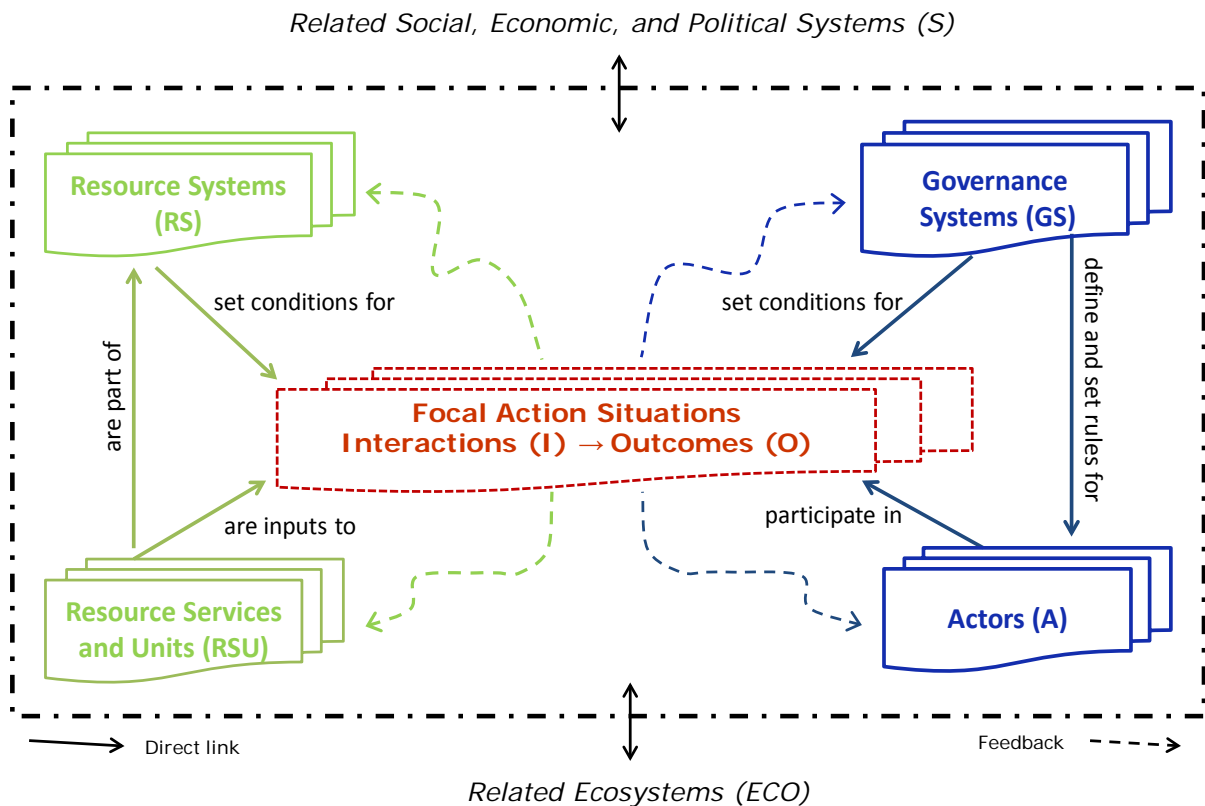
Figure 2. Revised SES Framework with Multiple First-Tier Components (Ostrom 2007:15182)

The value of the SES framework for this study of Afghanistan's political culture is that it helps "to identify relevant variables for studying a single focal SES [i.e., the role of political culture within the Afghan political system]." More important, it could also help identify "a common set of variables for organizing studies of similar SESs" (Ostrom, 2009, p. 420, see Fig. 2). Indeed, although it may not be possible to undertake it in this essay, it is my hope that the SES framework will enable me (in a longer book manuscript) to organize the many relevant variables identified by empirical research on political culture so that more appropriate frameworks, theories and models can be formulated for the study of the role of political cultures in governance in variety of socio-cultural systems. Such a framework would be useful in providing a common language of discourse as well as sets of relevant variables with their

subcomponents (see Fig. 3). These in turn could be used in designing data collection methods such as survey instruments, conducting fieldwork, and evaluating the appropriateness of policies, procedures and practices of nation-building and democratization by international entities across the globe.

Studying Afghanistan's Dysfunctional Political Culture Using IAD and SES Frameworks

Created during the late 19th century as a buffer nation-state by colonial powers, namely British India and Tsarist Russia, Afghanistan is a relatively poor and landlocked country located in a troubled neighborhood. The country has had an ineffective and inappropriate governance system (although not necessarily a weak one as is often alleged) during much of its history. By the second half of the 20th century, popular discontent against the ruling monarchy facilitated the intervention of foreign forces. This lead to the Soviet military intervention (December 1979) and ultimately to the complete collapse of the Afghan state in 1992. The militarily victorious Afghan resistance (the Mujahideen) were aided and abetted by many Western countries and Muslim nations in their anti-Communist struggles (1978-1992). However, instead of leading to the formation of their promised revolutionary Islamic government, the victorious holy war quickly degenerated into the formation of a Taliban terrorist state (1994-2001). The Taliban provided Al Qaeda terrorists a safe place in Afghanistan to use as a launching pad against the interests of the United States and Europe, culminating in the dastardly acts of September 11-2011 in New York, Washington, DC, and Pennsylvania.

The 9/11 terrorist attacks led to the massive U.S. and NATO military intervention which removed the Taliban from power, but failed during the last decade to secure Afghanistan by building a credible and effective governance system in this multi-ethnic and largely tribal war ravaged society. The key questions for us to explore are: Despite considerable effort during the past decade, why have both the Afghan ruling elite and their international patrons failed to help build a viable governance system in post-Taliban Afghanistan? How can resurgence of Taliban be explained in spite of considerable U.S. and NATO military surges against them, especially during the past several years? Responses to these questions have been many and varied. Attempts by various policy experts to offer explanations, however, have not systematically made use of effective research frameworks to formulate theories and suggest culturally appropriate governance models (for a review of some, see Shahrani 2009).

The experiences of state collapse, war, violence and failure to build an effective governance system in multi-ethnic post-colonial nations are not unique to Afghanistan. Rather, they are common. For the most part state-building efforts and their degree of success in the Third World have been assessed by political scientist on the basis of a generic Western model of modern nation-state with powerful security forces able to maintain relative peace and stability regardless of costs to those societies. There is a need to apply more appropriate analytical approaches such as IAD and SES frameworks to formulate adequate theories and explanatory models for the continued instability, war and violence in most of these post-colonial states. This is a brief attempt to explore the utility of IAD and SES models on how a few key elements of

Afghanistan's political culture has been rendered dysfunctional by the decisions of those running the externally imposed monocenteric government systems in the country since the 1880s. It is also to hypothesize that socio-culturally inappropriate governance system based on centralization of powers, combined with Afghanistan's predominantly tribal political culture may have hindered the establishment of an effective governance system. Because of time and space limitations the discussion will be focused on four key elements of Afghanistan's political culture (see Fig. 3) and the effects of their subsidiary parts within Afghanistan's political system[4].
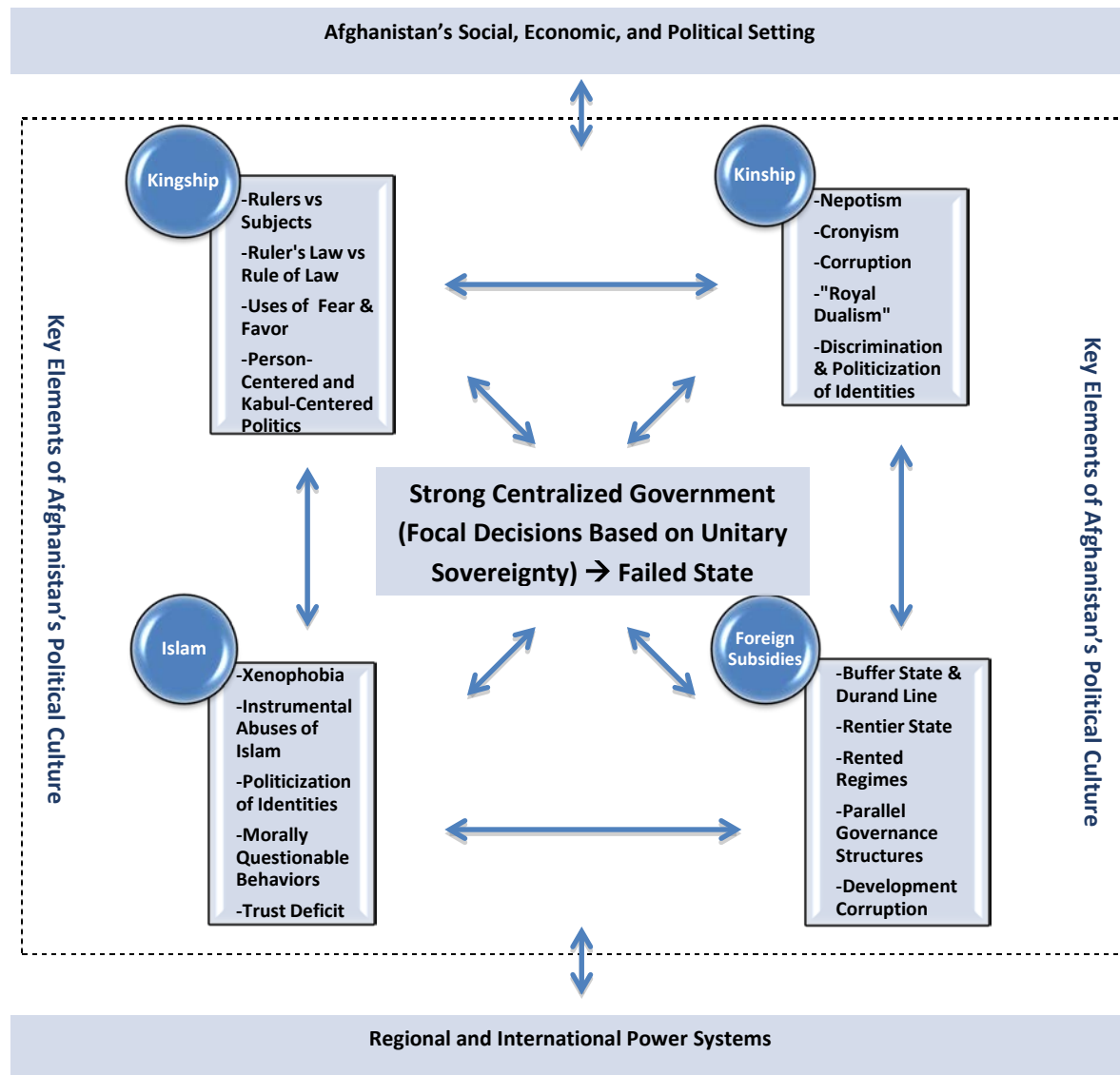

Fig 3: SES dynamics of the consequences of monocentric, unitary sovereignty-based government decisions rendering Afghanistan's political culture dysfunctional

[4] I have recently returned from conducting ethnographic fieldwork in Afghanistan and am currently working on a book project utilizing the IAD and SES frameworks on this topic.

The IAD and SES frameworks require us to "identify, categorize and organize those factors deemed most relevant to the understanding of some phenomena", in our case the mutual impact of Afghanistan's governance system and political culture upon each other (McGinnis, 2011, p. 170). Since the last decades of the nineteenth century, I argue that political dynamics in Afghanistan generally, and especially those of the ruling circles, have been shaped by adherence to the closely connected ideals and practices of four key institutions. They are: *kingship* (monarchic/unitary sovereignty), *kinship* (familism, clanishness/tribalism)and among the Pashtun adherence to the accompanying values *of pashtunwali* (the Pashtun code of male honor), *Islam* (a universally acknowledged source of moral codes and guidance), and the *political economy of state dependency* on foreign subsidies or assistance.

Lucian Pye reminds us, "The notion of political culture assumes that the attitudes, sentiments, and cognitions that inform and govern political behavior in any society are not just random congeries but represent coherent patterns which fit together and are mutually reinforcing." It is not, however assumed that all social groups share or utilize equally the elements of political culture, and that the elites hold a distinctive place in these dynamics. In addition, "ethnic and regional group cultures, classes, military and bureaucracy and the university [may] hold varying values and political cultures (Pye, 1965, p. 8). Pye also notes that differences of basic cultural values within a society sometimes may be greater than between nations. Laitin states that political culture may best be thought of as forms of strategic resources or what he terms the

> 'points of concern' embedded in the dominant cultural subsystem. Political elites in any society will act strategically and ideologically in the hope of defining and delimiting which strands of their society's culture should become dominant. Those who are successful in establishing a dominant cultural framework form a 'hegemonic bloc.' The dominant cultural subsystem, once chosen, spins political life into a 'web of significance' which grasps elites and masses alike. Since the hegemonic bloc is more concerned with the efficiency of control than the secondary consequence of having altered the cultural framework for action, the new elites will themselves become (often unwilling) subjects of their own past cultural choices. In this way, cultural subsystems have an impact on the subsequent choices of both elites and masses. Consequently, social science needs to develop theories capable of isolating this power of culture to influence politics." (Laitin, 1986, p. 171)

The ideals and practices of these four elements of Afghanistan's political culture, formed over a century of violence-ridden, oppressive tribalized dynastic rule, have consistently and dialectically affected choices and decisions of rulers and subjects alike. The ultimate wish of the rulers from the very start has been to build a strong centralized state structure by means of modern arms and financial subsidies/aid provided by foreign colonial and post-colonial patrons. This was accomplished by terrorizing, subjugating and trying to homogenize the diverse

populations of Afghanistan.[5] Therefore, proper attention to understanding of myriad disturbing historical legacies of state-building attempts in Afghanistan which have rendered key components of its political culture dysfucntional, is critical to the current U.S. and international community's efforts to end the cycle of violence in Afghanistan.

As Edward Said suggested, "the writing of history is the royal road to the definition of a country" (2003, p. 77). It will be argued here that the uses and abuses of these four closely linked key institutions of Afghanistan's political culture by the ruling elites are, at least in part, responsible for hindering considerations of alternative paths to effective and appropriate governance in the country. It is to a brief discussion of the dialectical relationship of each of the four key components of Afghanistan's political culture with the monocenteric governance system to which we turn now.

Kingship (the institution of monarchic/monocentric sovereignty): Afghan (Pashtun)[6] monarchs beginning with Amir Abdur Rahman (1880-1901) and his son and successor Amir Habibullah (r.1901-1919) claimed the sources of their sovereignty directly from God. King Amanullah (r.1919-1929) attributed his claims to the Afghan throne to the will of the "honorable nation of Afghanistan" for "putting the crown of the Kingdom" on his head (Ghubar 1967, p. 752, also see Shahrani 186, p. 45)[7]. His successor, Nader Shah (1929-1933), credited "the exclusive help of the Almighty God" and "the sacrifices of the peoples of Afghanistan." (Gregorian, 1969, p. 322). King Amanullah, the failed reformist ruler, introduced constitutionalism as another important source of his sovereignty/legitimacy, and this became the standard for all of his successors to the throne, and after the fall of the monarchy (for more details, see Shahrani, 1986). In practice, sovereignty was exercised whenever possible by means of a relatively large army, gendarmerie in rural areas, and police in the cities and towns. All of these consumed the meager resources of the state, whose coffers were generally supplemented by foreign subsidies[8]. Another significant

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[5] The list of major patrons since 1880 includes British India, which laid the foundations for "modern" Afghanistan as a buffer-state and remained the main patron of Afghan rulers, until after World War II. This was followed by patronage by the U.S. and former USSR during the Cold War, culminating in the Soviet occupation of the country during the 1980.   Then Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Iran fought proxy wars during the 1990s (see Zahir Tanin, 1996). Finally, consider the current U.S. and coalition partners' installation of the Karzai regime in 2001.

[6] Afghanistan's rulers, with minor exceptions, have since 1747 come from among the Kandahari Afghan or Pashtun tribesmen.

[7] Amanullah created and institutionalized the now infamous Loya Jergah (Grand Assembly) of selected dignitaries (religious and otherwise, rural and urban) and government officials for the purpose of anointing him as the sovereign (King/Shah). This new "traditional Afghan" institution of political culture has been justified by dubiously constructed precedents dating back to the founder of Durrani Pashtun Empire (1747-1772). Amanullah's successors have all abused Loya Jergah as a means to claim their sovereign powers, with all its limitations (for details, see Shahrani,1986).

[8] It is important to note that large standing armies in Afghanistan are notorious for being usedas instruments of oppression by rulers against their own subjects or as means for staging coup d'états to topple governments. As such they are sources of political instability and hindrance to democratic governance rather than promoters of national security as is often presumed.

vehicle to centralization of power was the creation of extensive system of corrupt Shari'a courts (Ghani, 1983, 1978; Kakar, 1979). On the whole, the Afghan rulers did not trust their subjects and lived for the most part in mutual fear of each other.

The most significant legacy of the institution of kingship is a claim to exclusive rights of personal sovereignty by rulers over their subjects.[9] This problematic claim to exclusive rights of sovereign rule by members of one ethno-tribal community over all the rest has turned into a virtual demand by the Pashtun elites to such an entitlement. The justification offered for this demand has been twofold: the Pashtun rulers were the founder of the modern state of Afghanistan (in 1747 and again in 1880 and 1929). In addition, the rulers claim Pashtun constitute a demographic majority without a census ever having been taken (see Ahady, 1995; Starr, 2004, 2001). *The most important expression of the rights of sovereignty*, other than how violently the rulers have dealt with their political opponent (real or imagined), *is the right to appoint, promote, demote and dismiss all government officials from the cabinet ministers to the lowest of local administrators* within a centralized system of rule. Completely ignoring legal pluralism of the country (shari'a, 'adat or local customary practices, etc.), their claims of sovereignty in essence have amounted to the "rulers' law" rather than "the rule of law". That is, the peoples of Afghanistan have been ruled over as subjects (not as citizens) to be controlled and extracted from, with extremely few rights. The institution of kingship has also promoted person-centered and Kabul- centered politics with serious negative consequences for center-periphery relation (for details see, Shahrani, in press). In practice, the exercise of sovereign rights has transformed other component of Afghanistan's political culture, especially kinship, to which we now turn, utterly dysfunctional to establishing effective government.

Kinship (familism, Clanishness and tribalism)**:** The most significant social organizational principle at the local level and increasingly at the higher levels of *qawm (*clan, tribe, ethnic group, etc.) in national politics in Afghanistan is based on patrilineal descent loyalty and patriarchal authority. Kinship has been an important but problematic factor in the history of dynasties and post-dynastic politics. Within Pashtun ruling families, kinship relations based on the common practice of polygyny by rulers have been a constant source of tension leading to serious and sometimes bloody crises of succession to power. Such conflicts have also been aggravated by the ideals and practices of *torborwali*, an aspect of the Pashtun code of male honor/chivalry (*Pashtunwali/Pakhtunwali*) that promotes intense competition among paternal first male cousins, often resulting in violence and vendettas[10]. At the higher level (beyond the extended family) the same principles are the cause of considerable hidden and not so hidden

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[9] This has been true whether the ruler has been a monarch or president (interim, transitional or elected as in the case of Karzai), or even Burhanuddin Rabbani (head of Mujahiddeen government, 1992-1996/2001) and Amir Mullah Muhammad Omar (in the case of Taliban).

[10] This phenomenon that Amin Saikal (2006) has called "Royal Dualism" was at least in part responsible for the downfall of the Musahiban dynasty at the hand of Muhammad Daoud Khan. It is actually, so far, very poorly studied. On the dynamics of the rules of Pakhtunwali and their impact on Pashtun behavior and society, see Akbar Ahmed (1980).

rivalries for access to outside money and weapons between members of extended families, lineages, clans and tribal formations, especially among the Pashtun (e.g., Durrani vs. Ghilzai)[11].

At the level of state operations, preference for appointment of kinsmen in government posts has become the principal cause of nepotism, cronyism and corruption. Because of the pervasiveness of such preferences in political appointments, kin-based and ethnic identities have become the bases for the creation of social hierarchies. For example, in any given regime with the ruling household at the apex of power and prestige followed by other members of Durrani and then Ghilzai Pashtun tribes, the Hazarahs until very recently were considered at the bottom of the picking order while all other non-Pashtun ethnic groups took their places in between, in some rank order depending on the context. As a result of past practices, politicization of tribal, ethnic and regional identities has increasingly occupied a central place during decades of war and conflict in national politics. Indeed, identity politics continue to be the principal cause of nepotism in the appointment of government officials (by every ethnic group) as well as in allocation of state and/or outside resources to individuals, communities and regions by state officials[12].

Paradoxically, in this highly politicized environment of personal and collective kin-based identities, especially during the past century among ruling elites, kin-based groupings at the local level have helped maintain the most durable and resilient communities of trust in the rural villages, nomadic camps and even urban neighborhoods (*mahalla* and *guzars*). These kin-based communities of trust operating through informal local *shuras* (council of elders), resolve disputes (over property and other claims) and can be used to defend and protect their own localities in times of crises. As such they are the most precious social capital the country offers for building a firm state structure. It is important to note however that reliance on kinship loyalties and favoritism at the level of national politics has proven dysfunctional.

Islam (the source of moral codes and guidance)**:** The centrality of Islam in Afghanistan's political culture and national politics, especially its use legitimating rulers' claim to state power and authority and as the principal means of mobilizing political and military action against domestic and foreign foes, is well documented (e.g., Roy, 1983 Olesen,1995; Edwards, 1993, 1995; Maley, 1998; Marsden, 1998; Naby, 1988; Nawid, 1999; Shahrani & Canfield 1984; Wilber, 1952). The uses of Islam in Afghanistan's politics, in addition to politicization of communal identities (especially between Sunni and Shi'a, rural and urban, Islamist and secular nationalist, Communist and Muslim traditionalist, etc.), has intensified tremendously in recent decades. These unfortunate realities of societal change, however, are not often properly understood or acknowledged by the secularized Afghan expatriates returning from the West (or their foreign patrons) who are currently ruling the country. Many of the collaborating elites

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[11] These are the two major Pahtun tribal factions: the Durranis have provided the royal households since 1747 and inhabit for the most part the well watered Helmand-Arghandab river valleys in south-Western Afghanistan; while the rival Ghilzai faction occupy the more marginal dryer hills of eastern and southern Afghanistan.

[12] Some even argue that the international patrons have also become "tribalized" in Afghanistan by virtue of their choice of places of service in different parts of the country. Indeed, over the years I have noticed that members of the international community serving in Afghanistan often express ethnic/tribal preferences, based on their experience among the various ethno-linguistic groups within the country. Allocation of resources by different coalition members along ethnic-regional coordinates within Afghanistan has been also rather uneven resulting in charges of discrimination or disregard towards non-Pashtun living in the more peaceful parts of the country.

constitute the new technocratic rulers of the post-Taliban Afghanistan. They did not directly experience the jihad resistance during the 1980s and its aftermath during the 1990s, either inside the country or in the refugee environments of Pakistan and Iran. They are ill informed about the profound intensification of Islamic awareness from the growing jihadi culture among the masses, brought about through a prolonged exposure to the more conservative teachings of the Deobandi and Saudi-Wahhabi teachers and preachers, especially among the Pashtun tribal communities in the eastern and southeastern parts of the country close to Pakistan border areas[13]. The overwhelming support of these Pashtun tribesmen for the Taliban movement in the 1990s and their support for the current resurgence of Taliban is a powerful testament to the changed Islamic preferences of the ordinary Pashtun today.

The post-Taliban leaders of Afghanistan (Pashtun and non-Pashtun alike), especially those who have returned from years of exile in the West, have tried systematically to abuse, marginalize or eliminate the Mujahiddeen leaders (good and bad alike) by labeling them as "warlords," often with the blessings and help of their international patrons in the media and even by some scholars[14]. Their presumed success in co-opting, restraining, eliminating or sidelining the Mujahideen and other local and regional leaders could be at their own peril. The ordinary people of Afghanistan, especially at the local community level, have a fairly sophisticated assessment of their own local and regional leaders (Mujahideen and other). Contrary to media claims, the locals do not live in constant fear of the great majority of the so called "warlords".

However, given improved means of communications,[15]hypocritical attempts to deceive the presumed illiterate, hence "ignorant" Afghan masses by their post-Taliban Western-trained technocratic and professional rulers who claim to adhering to basic Islamic values of decency, honesty, fairness and justice are no longer successful. One example is the now celebrated case of the sacked former Attorney General, Abdul Jabbar Sabit. He had noisily declared jihad on corruption while in office. Now he is accused not only of being corrupt himself, but has been caught on videotape in a state of intoxication "dancing giddy around a room and slurring his words" (Filkins, 2009).

The relationship of the ordinary people of Afghanistan with Islam has been entirely devotional. Islam has been the sole source of guidance for managing their personal and collective lives. In contrast, the relationship of their rulers with Islam has been almost purely instrumental and generally ambivalent or negative, including during the post-1980s jihad and the Taliban era. Indeed, these uses and abuses of Islam by the ruling elites have been one of the main causes of the lack of trust and often silent and sometimes militant opposition to the government, especially during the last three decades. The increasing trust deficit in the post-

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[13] It is important to remember that over 85% of more than 3.2 million registered Afghan refugees in Pakistan were (why past tense? If no longer true, then when?) Pashtun and that a great many of them lived in the FATA region.

[14] For example see, Ahmad Rashid (2008, 2001); Jalali (2009), and S. Frederick Starr (2001a,b,c, & d) .

[15] There are now some seventeen million cell phones (some of them with video capabilities), many private television channels, numerous radio stations, and a thriving print media in Afghanistan.

Taliban regime headed by President Hamid Karzai (who is incidentally regarded highly for his personal piety) over the last several years has gradually widened, lending some reluctant popular support to the Taliban extremists, especially among the Pashtun. Failure to devise appropriate means to bridge this trust gap between the ruling elites and society will only accelerate the impending disaster that is brewing.

Political Economy of State Dependency on Foreign Patrons & Subsidies: The Durrani Empire (1747-1793), predecessor to the modern state of Afghanistan in the 1880s, was built on the war economy of armies led by ambitious men to the Indian subcontinent for booty to pay their tribal *lashkar* (militia) and collect taxes and tribute from conquered lands for the state treasury. This possibility for funding the Durrani state came to a quick end by the turn of the 19th century when Britain took control of Hindustan (India) in the southeast and the Russians began to press down south into Turkistan (Central Asia) in the north.

The new possibility offered by British India, the European colonial superpower, to those aspiring to rule in Afghanistan, especially after their 1879 invasion, was modern weapons and substantial cash subsidies. However, these came with a hefty price tag that has haunted successive rulers of the country since Amir Abdur Rahman (1880-1901) accepted the offer. The price asked for and granted was the acceptance of the Durand Line as the official frontier with British India and relinquishing control of foreign policy of the new buffer state of Afghanistan to the Viceroy of British India, though this control was reclaimed by his grandson, King Amanullah, in 1919. The historic capitulation by Amir Abdur Rahman (the alleged founder of "Modern" Afghanistan) amounted not only to relinquishing the richest and most fertile territories occupied by the eastern Afghan (Pashtun) tribes, but also to dividing the Pashtun homelands into what came to be known as the NWFP within British India, and since 1947 has been part of Pakistan. The non-recognition of the Durand Line since the creation of Pakistan by successive rulers of Afghanistan has become one of the major sources of tension between the two countries and arguably one of the main causes of political instability, especially during the last three decades. It has also contributed to the current Taliban insurgency (see Qassem, 2007).

The installation and/or maintenance of all heads of state in Afghanistan since "Iron" Amir Abdur Rahman in 1880, either directly or indirectly, has been managed by outside powers. The only exceptions to this rule are King Amanullah (and his nemesis, the Tajik ruler Amir Habibullah II, who ousted him during a civil war), who apparently refused the support of the former USSR (in 1929) to reclaim his throne, as was reported by the late poet laureate of Afghanistan, Ustad Khalillah Khalili (see Tanin, 1996).

It was not easy however for the rulers to accept substantial arms and cash from potential and actual foreign enemies of Afghanistan in order to keep their untrustworthy subjects under control. Because, to convince their subjects of their own sovereignty, the rulers were obliged to engage in xenophobic Islamo-nationalist discourses against their foreign patrons, making such relationships full of double talk and divided loyalties[16]. This problem may have been less

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[16] President Karzai is now faced with this predicament especially after every tragic incident of non-combatant death following attacks by the United States and coalition forces against Taliban suspects in the villages close to Pakistan border. Karzai attempts to echo the increasingly common popular protests to such senseless killings of the innocent by criticizing his major patron, the United States of America.

complicated when they had a single foreign master (British India), as was the case from 1880 to the end of World War II. With the termination of the "Great Game" and the onset of the Cold War, finding patrons in a bifurcated world required a great deal of skill at begging and even more keeping the balance from tipping in favor of one side or the other. An incident of tipping the balance, as happened with President Muhammd Daoud (r19973-1978), cost him not only his life and the lives of 17 members of his immediate family, but eventually also the loss of the country to occupation by the former Soviet Union (see Tanin, 1996).

Following the onset of the jihad resistance against the Khalq-Parchan regimes (1978-1992), however, the role of foreign subsidies and international military and humanitarian assistance became extremely complex. In the pre-war era the central government received the largesse (in arms and/or in cash) and disbursed it with a minimal degree of international oversight. The government in Kabul had some control and oversight over larger development projects which required the presence of foreign personnel. With the formation of multiple resistance organizations outside the country (largely controlled by Pakistani and Iranian security) and the arrival of numerous international entities--Muslim and non-Muslim, governmental, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), United Nations (UN), and others--, Afghan society became fair game for all those who expressed interest. Gradually, numerous chains of multiple dependencies stretched from the villages of rural Afghanistan all over the globe via Peshawar for weapons, cash, medicine, teachers, doctors and more, not only to fight the Soviet occupation but also to survive conditions of war and deep insecurity.

Paradixocally, this collapse of central authority had very positive consequences for local communities across the country. It gave them the opportunity to create effective local organizational structures and leadership not only for fighting the war of liberation but also for meeting, with help from international NGOs, basic medical, agricultural, educational, judiciary and security needs of their communities. These community-based organizations with leadership at the local and regional levels still are the most valuable assets produced during the prolonged years of war. If the post-Taliban government had tried to reform, institutionalize and strengthen them--instead of attempting to destroy and weaken them--the country would not be facing its current environment of security crises and lack of confidence in the government and its international patrons.

Unfortunately, lack of proper political vision and appropriate planning for the governance of a war shattered multi-ethnic society in post-Taliban Afghanistan has produced at least four parallel governments operating in the country: the U.S. Embassy and military; the U.N. and its ISAF-NATO forces; International NGOs, World Bank, IMF, the Asian Bank with their own private securities; and the weakest of them all, the Karzai government[17]. There are also countless other entities in the capital, the provinces and districts that are doing what a properly conceived effective post-Taliban Afghan government should be doing. For example, many private security firms are owned and operated by people of influence in Kabul and the provinces. Indeed, some former jihadi commanders (deserving the title of "warlord") with close ties to the post-Taliban

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[17] The first three have territorial claims to parts of the country, and have their own much larger budgets, army and police. Most of them also have extremely expensive private security. Each operates independently on the basis of rules and regulations of itsown. As such they are not subject to laws of Afghanistan and pay little heed to the occasional demands of the utterly dependent Karzai government.

government as well as close relatives and clients of the new rulers (perhaps new warlords in the making) have formed private security firms serving foreign entities. Also, many national NGOs owned by high government officials or their relatives and cronies have been created and are engaged in graft through pyramid schemes pretending to do reconstruction projects and more.

Conclusion:

The monocenteric political system of Afghanistan, proven inappropriate and ineffective, is a manifestation of key institutions of its political culture as well as its sustainer. Like religions, as Max Weber suggests, all political cultures "are historical individualities of a highly complex nature…they exhaust only a few of the possible combinations [of elements] that could conceivably be formed from the very numerous individual factors to be considered in such a historical combination" (Gerth & Mills 1946, p. 292). The IAD and SES frameworks facilitates identifying, defining and underscoring those features in the total picture of Afghanistan's socio-cultural system which have been decisive for the fashioning of the country's historical political system and political culture. These approaches also highlight how and why particular elements of Afghanistan's political culture—kingship, kinship, Islam and political economy of state dependency on foreign subsidies—are employed by what Weber calls "socially decisive strata" or "master strata" (Gerth & Mills, p. 276), depending on the changing political ecology of the larger colonial and post-colonial world system during the past century. What is clear from our discussion in this paper, however, is that Afghanistan's political system is not determined by any one of its four key institutions of political culture. Rather the choices and decisions made by members of the Afghan power elites desiring to build strong centralized government in specific times and places are effected by strategic deployment of one or more of these closely related factors in the management of power relations in the country. Application of IAD and SES frameworks in this brief study demonstrates how the repeated uses and abuses of key elements of Afghanistan's political culture, produced and reproduced during more than a century of failed attempts to build a strong centralized and often tribalized nation-state in a multi-ethnic Afghanistan, gives Afghanistan's political culture its distinctive dynamics and outcome. Indeed, I argue here that the principle reason for the failure of the US and NATO forces to bring peace and stability in post-Taliban Afghanistan is the insistence by the current squabbling Pashtun (Afghan) elites (both within the Karzai regime as well as their Taliban nemesis) to re-establish the same old hegemonic centralized governmental system by relying on the use of the same old traditional dysfunctional political cultural norms—i.e., kingship, kinship and purely instrumental abuses of Islam—under auspices of the US and ISAF forces.

The predicament facing the United States and her international partners in dealing with their collaborating Afghan elites within the complexities of political ecology of Afghanistan's socio-cultural system, as indicated earlier in this paper is neither new nor unique. The institutions of kingship, kinship and Islam have deep historical roots in the political cultures of large parts of Asia and Africa. However, these traditional elements of local political culture have been rendered dysfunctional by the colonial imposition of modern centralizing nation-state system accompanied by the crippling dependencies on outside patronage. The outcomes of modern state building efforts in post-Colonial Asia and Africa, especially in Muslim societies, have been for the most part volatile to say the least. The IAD and SES frameworks, if applied to the study of such societies can add considerably to our understanding of these complex socio-cultural systems. That is, these frameworks will encourage theorizing on how key elements of

political cultures are causally connected as deployed by the ruling elites. The application of IAD and SES frameworks in this very brief study of Afghanistan's political culture also urges us to pnder questions such as: what are the fundamental assumptions underlying the policies of state- or nation-building in post-Taliban Afghanistan (and other fragile and failing states in the region and beyond) that have brought the country once again at the brink of another disaster, and what might be the way out?

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