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Beyond 'fear of death':
Strategies of coping with violence and insecurity – A case study of villages in Afghanistan

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Abstract

Debates over how humans can be secure from violence are often related to the role of the state. This paper takes a bottom-up perspective to examine how ordinary people achieve security and explores their strategies of coping with violence and insecurity. The study of Afghan villages shows that the ways of gaining security are diverse, especially when considering the actors relied upon. The analysis of Nahr-e Saraj district in Helmand suggests three factors to influence this: The security-relevant behaviour of those actors, the village's patronage networks and its internal cohesion. The implications of these findings can contribute to a better understanding of hybrid security regimes.

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Glossary of terms

ANA	Afghan National Army
ANP	Afghan National Police
ANSF	Afghan National Security Forces (ANA, ANP and Afghan Air Force)
Arbaki	Informal security institution on the village level in Afghanistan; a form of tribal militias[1]
CPAU	Cooperation for Peace and Unity
DFID	United Kingdom Department for International Development
HMEP	Helmand Monitoring and Evaluation Programme
ISAF	International Security and Assistance Force
Malik	Person with informal executive and administrative functions on the village level in Afghanistan[2]
Manteqa	Physical area in Afghanistan in which villages are informally grouped together[3]
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNISDR	United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction

[1] Bray 2012:20,26.
[2] Bray 2012:20,32.
[3] Bray 2012:16.

I. Introduction

"The passions that incline men to peace are: fear of death; desire of such things as are necessary to commodious living; and a hope by their industry to obtain them." (Hobbes 1651:188)

Ever since Hobbes asserted that "fear of death" drives the human desire for security and makes humans consent to a "common power" (Hobbes 1651:185,196), the discussion over how human beings can be safe from violence has been closely tied to debates about the state's role in the provision of security. While both state-centred views of security (cf. Scott 1998) as well as the more recent concepts of "human security" (UNDP 1994; Kaldor 2007) have often focused on how and what kind of security is *provided*, less has been done to analyse how security is *achieved* in contexts where violence and insecurity are prevalent (cf. Kerr 2003; Colak/Pearce 2009). There is only little analysis of security practices and coping strategies in times of violent conflict (Brück 2004; Luckham/Kirk 2012:38): While research has brought insights into how insurgents influence the behaviour of civilians (Lavie/Muller 2011; Giustozzi/Reuter 2011; Metelits 2009; Kalyvas 2006), the other side of the interaction is rarely examined. Furthermore, studies of coping strategies are often conducted from a perspective of livelihood security and are only rarely concerned with physical violence and insecurity (Young et al 2009; Young 2009).

This paper aims at understanding strategies of coping with violence and insecurity and argues that such analysis contributes to the debate about how "ordinary people" achieve security. In order to do so, it first conceptualises coping strategies as behaviour aimed at avoiding physical violence and insecurity. By then shedding light on the human desire to escape "fear of death" from two perspectives, it argues that coping strategies often manifest themselves differently from what a Hobbesian perspective envisages: Rather than either depending on the state for the provision of security or living in complete insecurity, a "state of nature", people cope in a multitude of ways, including by relying on a variety of actors for the provision of security. In order to better understand how coping strategies manifest themselves, a perspective of hybrid security regimes is adopted (Luckham/Kirk 2012). Following this

conceptual framework, this paper then explores the factors that influence the reliance on various actors as a means of coping with violence and insecurity on the example of villages in Afghanistan. In a first step, the context of violence and insecurity is examined with a specific focus on Nahr-e Saraj district in Helmand. By analysing the characteristics of various actors and their behaviour in relation to security from the perspective of villagers, it is argued that contrary to the assumptions of a Hobbesian perspective, these actors are often not able or not willing to provide security in exchange for control, and that this constitutes one factor influencing people's coping strategies. In a second step, the coping strategies of four specific villages in Nahr-e Saraj are then assessed to demonstrate that their reliance on different actors for the provision of security is also shaped by the quality of their patronage networks and the cohesion within the village. To back these findings, the paper then expands the scope to villages in other parts of Afghanistan. A final chapter then embeds the findings in the history of socio-political organisation in Afghanistan and discusses the broader implications of "fear of death" and the quest for security within hybrid security regimes.

II. The context of violence and insecurity

1. Concepts and definitions

As a first conceptual step, it is useful to distinguish between violent conflict and violence: Violence can take various forms and intensity within a single context of conflict and may have different causes than the conflict itself (Kalyvas 2006:16-20). This paper is specifically concerned with these localized forms of violence: The broader conflict may have an influence on how, where and when violence is prevalent, but it is the localized forms of violence that directly affect the people living in such contexts (cf. Lubkemann 2005). From this perspective, Galtung's typology of violence remains a useful guide to conceptualise violence: Rather than with "structural" violence, which can also be seen as social injustice or inequality, this paper is mostly concerned with "personal" or "direct" violence in its physical dimension (Galtung 1969:169-171,173,175). This includes both manifest and latent forms, since the threat of personal violence also constitutes

a form of violence (Galtung 1969:170-172). Even if a distinction is made between personal and structural violence, in practice these two forms exist on a continuum (Galtung 1969:182). It is therefore useful to add the concept of insecurity, through which we can account for the ways in which structural violence creates or sustains vulnerability to direct violence.

Just as most of the literature on civil wars is not concerned with the perspectives of ordinary people (Kalyvas 2006:39), the concept of “security” is often not looked at from their viewpoint either (Luckham/Kirk 2012:4). For a long time, a state-centered perspective of security has prevailed, where the state is assumed to hold a monopoly over violence and through that provides security as a public good (ibid). These perspectives have been challenged by approaches focusing on “human security”, broadly defined as “freedom from want” and “freedom from fear” (UNDP 1994:24). Apart from “personal security”, which corresponds with the freedom from personal violence, this definition encompasses other dimensions such as economic security, health security and food security (UNDP 1994:24-25,30). Even if in reality these types of security may not be separable, this paper focuses on the narrow concepts of personal security and corresponding situations of personal insecurity, which are closely related to violence and threats of violence as defined above.

Rather than the direct subjects of enquiry, this paper understands violence and insecurity as an environment and is concerned with the ways in which ordinary people can achieve security in such settings. For this purpose, it is essential to recognize that security has different meanings for different people in different contexts (Luckham/Kirk 2012:4-5,7-8): Security is deeply contested and cannot be separated from power relations (ibid). Additionally to being defined as the protection from personal violence, security thus also has to be conceptualized as “a process of political and social ordering, maintained through authoritative discourses and practices of power” (Luckham/Kirk 2012:10). When analyzing how people deal with violence and insecurity, we have to account for these processes and consider the influence of power relations – especially in situations where the state does not provide security. This paper therefore analyses how people cope with violence and insecurity in general, but specifically focuses on their relations with various actors as a way of gaining security.

2. Violence and insecurity as a “vulnerability context”

To understand how violence and insecurity influence ordinary people’s lives and how they cope with it, it is useful to add the perspective of vulnerability. Chambers defines vulnerability as a two-sided concept, consisting of an external side of risk, shocks and stresses to which people are subject to; and an internal side of “defenselessness, meaning a lack of means to cope without damaging loss” (Chambers 2006:33). To conceptualizes these two sides of vulnerability, the perspective of the sustainable livelihoods model is useful, even though this study is not primarily concerned with livelihoods: On one hand violence and insecurity can be depicted as the “vulnerability context”, the “external environment affecting people’s life and livelihoods” (DFID 1999:2.1-2.2). On the other hand, internal factors such as people’s human, social and political, physical, natural and financial “assets” (DFID 1999:2.3; Korf 2004:277) as well as “structures and processes” like policies, legislation and institutions define how individuals or households are able to cope with such a context (DFID 1999:2.4; Bohle 2007b:11). Where violence and insecurity are prevalent however, formal “structures and processes” are often deteriorating or non-existent (Korf 2004:278) and people’s assets are constrained by structural violence, “which they experience as restrictions and exclusions, as repressions and exploitations through powerful groups.” (Bohle 2007a:145). This indicates that structural violence contributes to vulnerability and inhibits people’s possibilities to cope (Collinson 2003:3,10,75). It is therefore important to recognize that a vulnerability context marked by violence and insecurity is not as exogenous to people’s lives as the livelihoods model suggests, but, echoing the earlier definition of security, is also endogenous to socio-political structures and power-relations (Lautze/Raven-Roberts 2006:391-396; Young et al 2009:21).

To summarise, it is useful to apply the livelihoods model and conceptualise violence and insecurity as a “vulnerability context” in order to understand how it affects ordinary people and how they deal with it. The above suggests that the shape and intensity of violence and insecurity as much as the people’s position within society’s power relations influence the way people cope. In that sense, coping strategies vary considerably and can be different from village to village (Collinson 2003:74).

III. Coping strategies

"Ordinary people caught in the whirlwind of violence and war are, more often than not, less than heroic: they seek to save one's job, house, family, and, above all, life." (Kalyvas 2006:45)

1. Definition of coping strategies

As a general definition, coping strategies refer to "the means by which people or organisations use available resources and abilities to face adverse consequences that could lead to disaster" (UNISDR 2002:16), or, put more briefly, "the ways in which capacities are mobilised in times of crisis" (Gaillard 2010:220). The term "coping" is often described as an outcome on a scale of various possible outcomes (DFID 2011:7), whereas "coping strategies" focuses on processes rather than outcomes: Following the livelihoods model, coping strategies are "the ways of combining and using assets" (Bohle 2007b:10) in order to react to the vulnerability context and reach a certain outcome, but not the outcome itself (DFID 1999:2.1, Korf 2004:277). For the purpose of this paper, coping strategies are thus defined as the behaviours that aim at limiting or avoiding violence and increasing security.

Following Korf, it is useful to distinguish between three types of coping strategies employed under violence: First, the management of personal risks and insecurities especially in cases where violence is targeted towards specific groups of the population; second, the adjustment of household economies for survival; and third, the use of social and political relations to access external support (Korf 2004:285; Bohle 2007a:144). The third strategy seems especially important, since it can be employed to cope with both physical and economic insecurity, at which the first two strategies aim respectively. While this paper concentrates on coping strategies aiming at overcoming physical insecurity and violence, in reality physical and economic security overlap to a certain extent – access to food and water is key to survival as much as avoiding physical violence, and therefore the types of coping strategies employed may equally be interconnected (Korf 2004:288).

2. Two perspectives on coping strategies

After conceptualising coping strategies, we now turn to discuss two theoretical perspectives on how these coping strategies manifest themselves.

a) A Hobbesian perspective: Survival and coercion

According to Hobbes, “fear of death”, a natural desire for security, is the only force that counters the human desire for power, and it is this fear that makes men want to escape the predatory “state of nature” and inclines them to peace (Hobbes 1651:183-188; Ahrensdorf 2000:581). Fear of death is thus the driving force for men to rationally consent to a “common power”, which is sovereign and coercively controls their individual desire for power and, through that, provides security (Hobbes 1651:185,196; Ahrensdorf 2000:579,582).

Hobbes’ perspective can be taken to understand how individuals cope with violence and insecurity: Following Hobbes’ insights into human behaviour in the “state of nature”, Millen argues that individuals caught in an insurgency resulting from a diminishing government authority - a breach of the “contract” (Hobbes 1651:192) - are driven by the notion of self-preservation (Millen 2006:4,7-8). This implies that in order to avoid the “state of nature”, to stay alive and preserve their and their families’ livelihoods, people tend to comply with the rule of any new “common power”, for example the insurgency, even if it is hostile to them (Millen 2006:8-9): “For Hobbes’ citizen, a common power, even if harsh, is better than the state of nature. The primary goal of self-preservation compels individuals to accept the new conditions.” (Millen 2006:10). In this view, coping strategies other than compliance with the actor currently exercising control seem illogical, because this is the only way to gain security (Kalyvas 2006:111,116-119): Fleeing or migrating would mean thrusting one-self back into the state of nature (Millen 2006:10). And fully joining either the government counterinsurgency or the insurgency is too dangerous (Millen 2006:11); and in a situation where insurgency and counterinsurgency contest each other’s control over the population, the people will rather remain “noncommittal” to either side (Millen 2006:4,11,13).

One important insight of the Hobbesian perspective is that for people caught in violent conflict, survival calculations often play a more important role than political preferences (Kalyvas 2006:94,103,114). This also explains why civilians

often change their alliances: Rather than opportunistic behaviour this is a means of dealing with “fear of death” by complying with the coercive force currently in control in exchange for security (Kalyvas 2006:101,105-106,131).

b) Beyond “fear of death”: Agency and power relations

A Hobbesian perspective on people’s behaviour in insecure and violent contexts emphasises the compliance with coercive actors as a means of coping. This is based on two assumptions: The desire of civilians to survive and escape a state of nature and the desire and ability of warring factions to gain control over the population. However, these assumptions may not hold true in all situations.

First, a Hobbesian perspective does not capture situations in which warring factions cannot or do not want to exercise control over the population in return for security: Warring factions may have aims other than ‘winning the war’, potentially making them more interested in promoting insecurity and violence (Keen 2008:12-24). Armed groups and insurgents often display extractive and coercive behaviour without establishing reciprocal relationships with civilians and without providing them with security in exchange for control (Metelits 2009:673-674; Weinstein 2006), and so do even formal state institutions in some cases (Luckham/Kirk 2012:15,32). From the perspective of ordinary people, these actors thus become providers of insecurity rather than offering a way of gaining security, which in turn influences the coping strategies they employ.

Second, while “fear of death” and the desire to survive certainly is an important driver in the behaviour of people subject to violence, it might not be the only one. Violence and insecurity are not just passively borne out by local populations, and often their coping strategies go beyond trying to survive: As Bohle observes in the case of Sri Lanka, people “adapt deliberately to the shifting regimes of violence, and they always seek to negotiate options that help secure their lives and livelihoods.” (Bohle 2007:130). Furthermore, local actors in civil wars often actively use the broader context of violence as a resource for their own private struggles, rivalries and tensions (Kalyvas 2006:367-369,375). Contexts of insecurity and shifting power dynamics can thus be manipulated or even created to serve local agendas, especially those of local elites (Korf 2004:293). This can lead to alliances between local actors and warring factions, even if the former do

not necessarily share the agenda of the later (Kalyvas 2006:365). On one hand, these alliances determined by local rivalries influence the coping strategies of ordinary people: During the civil war in Mozambique, civilians reacted to risks in terms of the logic of local dynamics of social strife rather than the conflict as such, and because of that adopted different coping strategies in each location (Lubkemann 2005:501; Korf 2004:276). On the other hand, coping strategies themselves may be intertwined with local rivalries and power struggles: A strategy of coping may at the same time be aimed at deferring an economic or political rival, while outdoing a rival can be an important means of coping (cf. Lubkemann 2005:498). Just as warring factions may have other aims than controlling, people might have other aims than mere survival. A Hobbesian perspective reminds us that coping strategies often do not represent free will and choice. At the same time, we should be careful with portraying ordinary people as mere subjects of security: Regarding them as “agents with varying capacities to influence, respond or resist contemporary political orders” (Luckham/Kirk 2012:8) may come closer to reality.

To summarize, a Hobbesian perspective of “fear of death” does not necessarily capture the full determinants of coping strategies: First, in some contexts there might be no “common power” able and willing to provide security in return for control, which influences the way people cope with violence and insecurity. And second, coping strategies might sometimes be driven and influenced by more than the desire to survive. This results in different ways through which security is achieved and especially in a multitude of actors relied upon. Such arrangements might be best understood from a perspective of hybrid security arrangements, which also implies that contexts of violence and insecurity do not necessarily represent a pure “state of nature” as depicted by Hobbes.

c) The perspective of hybrid security regimes

To better understand both the violent and insecure context as well as coping strategies, it is useful to employ the perspective of hybrid security regimes. As Luckham/Kirk argue, “the state’s failure to provide public goods does not necessarily lead to an anarchic state, akin to Hobbesian reality. Rather, actors, organisations and institutions adhere to norms that merge informal, formal and globalised codes, and this mixture results in hybrid modes of political order.

Security provision in hybrid contexts is negotiated, bargained and enforced through both formal and informal processes that coexist, overlap, and intertwine" (Luckham/Kirk 2012:4). Hybrid security arrangements are thus "characterised by complex interactions among a variety of actors following different animating logics and drawing on various sources of authority within fragile and conflict affected spaces" (Luckham/Kirk 2012:13). This perspective can account for the tensions that often exist between what a state-centered view regards as an actor's expected function and their actual, latent agendas (Luckham/Kirk 2012:15). Thus, rather than representing a "state of nature" where "every man is against every man" (Hobbes 1651:185), violent and insecure settings are structured by certain logics. In the perspective of hybrid security regimes, people meet their security needs by following these logics and using them to draw on a variety of sources, rather than achieving security solely through a common power, the state (Wood 2010:50-51,64).

Drawing on this perspective, we can interpret the various coping strategies people employ, and explain why they rely on certain actors but not others as a means of achieving security. To safeguard their lives in violent and insecure contexts, people increasingly rely on family ties, kinship networks, neighbours and patrons as a way of coping (Wood 2010:50-51,64; Twigg 2004:135). This insight corresponds with Korf's third type of coping strategies, the use of social and political relations to access external support (Korf 2004:285). However, as the perspective of hybrid security regimes implies, these relations are often unstable and constantly contested, negotiated and reconfigured – shifting fields of power, in which people have to navigate in order to cope (Bohle 2007a:130,141,145). This has two implications: First, existing political orders, or what Bohle calls "social spaces", influence the ability of people to cope with violence and insecurity (Bohle 2007a:130). Second, if people rely on a variety of actors as a means of gaining security, then coping strategies shape the hybrid security regimes in return. This aligns well with the perspective that the way people cope shapes the behaviour of warring factions (Justino 2008:3-4). Thus it can be argued that "fear of death" and the corresponding coping strategies can be understood as a component of hybrid security regimes.

In this context, the focus on coping strategies – or rather a particular set of coping strategies - becomes important: Understanding which relationships with

which actors people rely on to gain security and why might bring us closer to understand how hybrid security arrangements are formed and sustained (Luckham/Kirk 2012:32). In line with this, the subsequent case study of villages in contemporary Afghanistan focuses on the following question: What factors influence the reliance or non-reliance on different actors as a means of coping with insecurity and violence?

3. The limitations of coping strategies

While understanding coping strategies in violent and insecure environments is important, it is equally important to remember that these strategies often do not address the causes of violence and insecurity in the first place (Twigg 2004:141-144). In some cases, coping strategies might even drive further the conflict and reproduce the vulnerability context (Justino 2008:3): Taking the view that violence can be used to actually limit violence and enhance security (Keen 2008:17-20) suggests that a coping strategy aimed at enhancing security for an individual or a village could deteriorate the security situation in a bigger context. Various studies show that militarization, armament and the joining of armed groups or banditry gangs is a coping strategy motivated as much by physical insecurity and the aim to survive as by economic insecurity (Collinson 2003:5,17; Lavie/Muller 2011:16; Justino 2008:4,11-12; Young et al 2009:21,26). Furthermore, coping strategies can also pose a trade-off, where enhancing physical security negatively affects human security (Mazurana et al 2004:58) and people “stay poor to stay secure” (Wood 2003). Where security is achieved through social relationships, as in the case of hybrid security regimes, it can come at the expense of dependence on patronage relationships (Pain/Kantor 2010:3-4; Wood 2010:51) and of reinforcing inequalities of power and wealth (Luckham/Kirk 2012:38).

IV. Coping strategies in contemporary Afghanistan

1. Afghanistan: A context of hybrid security regimes

Contemporary Afghanistan not only provides a good example of a context where insecurity and violence are prevalent, but it also displays features of all three categories of “hybridized political contexts”, which underlie hybrid security regimes (Luckham/Kirk 2012:26). With the insurgency spreading beyond the south and Pasthun dominated areas since 2009 and the multitude of armed groups struggling for dominance (Giustozzi/Reuter 2010:14; 2011:1-3,25-27), Afghanistan resembles a “securitized border space”, where state authority is “violently challenged by alternative claimants to power” (Luckham/Kirk 2012:26). Communities have been squeezed among various armed factions, which often switch side or carry multiple affiliations (Giustozzi/Reuter 2011:14-15,20, Theros/Kaldor 2011:3-4; Theros/Said 2011:151-153). Parts of these opposition groups and also parts of the Taliban have dissolved into criminal networks (Theros/Kaldor 2011:3,9), but others still aim at replacing the Afghan government (Giustozzi/Reuter 2011:33).

Afghanistan also displays features of a “fragile leviathan”, where the state’s capacity to deliver security is weak, contested or compromised by special interests (Luckham/Kirk 2012:33). The number of people fearing for their safety has increased steadily since 2006 (Tariq et al 2011:27). Adding to that, a number of actors use insecurity for their own political, economic and personal gains (Theros/Said 2011:155): Sections of the government administration seem to collaborate with or tolerate the Taliban because of factional infighting between officials (Giustozzi/Reuter 2010:6; 2011:12-13) and the conflict is used as a “resource” in social, tribal or ethnic rivalries on a local level (Giustozzi/Reuter 2010:6; 2011:4,10-11,26-27; Theros/Kaldor 2011:16). The presence of the formal government thus often contributes to insecurity rather than security (cf. Brick 2008:27-28; Mazurana et al 2004:7). Lastly, Afghanistan also shares similarities with a “donor saturated space” (Luckham/Kirk 2012:43), where the international forces have become dependent on corrupt local actors and the arming of local militias for their counter-insurgency engagement (Luckham/Kirk 2012:46; Theros/Said 2011:153).

It is this “nexus between corrupt officials, drug-traffickers, former warlords, and criminal syndicates” (Theros/Kaldor 2011:20) as well as the conflict between opposition groups and the counter-insurgency engagement which constrain ordinary people in their coping strategies (Giustozzi/Reuter 2011:14-15; Collinson 2003:78). Their difficulties of coping in a context in which none of the actors can or wants to provide security is illustrated by the quote of the ANA commander Lal Muhammad Ahmadzai: “When there are Taleban, people do not like it; when we do operations, people do not like it; when we want them to form Arbaki, they also don’t like it” (cited in Giustozzi/Reuter 2011:15). How then do people cope with pervasive insecurity and violence in a context of constantly shifting power dynamics, where layers of power structures have evolved with the conflict (Kakar 2005:11)?

2. Overview of coping strategies in the Afghan context

> *“The people are just defending themselves right now from all sides. In this sense, I guess we are allowing these [insurgents] to spread in the community although we should not be encouraging them. But this is due to the insecurity and to our lack of choices to make things better. How are we to complain to the governor? First, he does not even listen to us. Second, if we are seen as cooperating with the government, we will be observed by the intelligence of the Taliban who will make trouble for us.”* (Youth in Baghlan, cited in: Theros/Kaldor 2011:29)

Just as the violent and insecure context, coping strategies in Afghanistan can be embedded in a perspective of hybrid security regimes. The Afghan people’s ways of gaining security are diverse, especially when considering the actors involved and drawn upon (Schetter et al 2007:137). Often, they apply a wide range of strategies at the same time (Collinson 2003:16). An overview gathered from the literature and expert interviews illustrates this.

Generally, people confronted with violence and insecurity restrict their daily life, especially their freedom of movement. They stay in their houses particularly at night, and stop plowing their fields for fear of violence (CPAU 2010:4,8). Afghans sometimes also refrain from using government services because of insurgent threats (CPAU 2010:13), or do not report a crime for fear of retaliation

(Tariq et al 2011:35). One of the most common strategies is migration, either as a direct response to violence or in advance of foreseen security problems, and often family members are sent abroad to shield them from violence, but also in the hope of remittances (Collinson 2003:16, Pain/Kantor 2012:17; Dennys, interview).

Rather than seeking protection from the state or solely relying on other coercive forces like the Taliban, Afghans often rely on informal arrangements at the local level (Mazurana et al 2004:7; Collinson 2003:79, Brick 2008). Communities practice “fence-sitting” and try to keep out of the violence by forming alliances and negotiating with all sides (Theros/Kaldor 2011:29,36; CPAU 2010:13). This can take the form of telling one side what they want to hear, while giving information back to the other side, or of providing logistics to insurgents while at the same time accepting aid from the government and foreign forces (Dennys, interview). It could also mean to negotiate with insurgents for protection in return for paying informal ‘taxes’ or to strike non-belligerence deals without forming close alliances with anti-Taliban forces (Giustozzi/Reuter 2010:2; 2011:15,25; Pain/Kantor 2012:16).

Also, people might organize and arm themselves to defend against violence and abuse, be it from authorities or insurgents (Theros/Kaldor 2011:19-20). Sometimes one of the few ways of gaining security is the reliance on militias linked to former commanders and local powerbrokers or even “warlords”, even if this comes at the costs of oppression and exploitation (Giustozzi/Reuter 2011:25; Barfield 2010:283; Schetter/Glassner 2009:152). This security dilemma is illustrated by an informant in Kunduz saying that after the fall of the Taliban “people hated the commanders, but now they love them again” (cited in Schetter/Glassner 2009:151).

Throughout the years of conflict and until today, mutual support mechanisms within community and family as well as patronage ties have provided some measure of security, especially for rural households (Pain/Kantor 2010a:3; Pain/Kantor 2010b:1,3-4). The quality of these social relations is essential for the way security can be achieved (Pain/Kantor 2012:19; Collinson 2003:16; Korf 2004:285). Despite the fast-changing conflict dynamics, people find pro-active ways to ensure and strengthen these relations by trying to have a foot in every camp: This can entail placing each of their sons with different armed factions as

well as with the government (Theros/Kaldor 2011:4; Dennys, interview; Adlparvar, interview). Sometimes families also marry their daughters to different ethnic groups or tribes to avoid ethnic violence (Adlparvar, interview). Early marriage is also used as a coping strategy more generally: It is a way to protect daughters from the conflict, and a way to stop men from going to fight and potentially being killed (ibid). Some communities manage to play different ethnic and sectarian identities as a way of avoiding violence (ibid). Other communities have the possibility to rely on high-level patronage networks: A national level patron like a member of parliament increases the options of coping for members of the same tribe by providing access to state funding, employment, political connections and protection (Dennys, interview).

To summarize, in the context of Afghanistan the reliance on a common power for security does not seem to be a viable option and the determinants of coping with “fear of death” are better understood from a perspective of hybrid security arrangements.

3. Identifying the security providers in Nahr-e Saraj, Helmand

The following case study of Nahr-e Saraj district in Helmand takes this further by analysing what factors drive the reliance on different actors as a means of gaining security. As a first step, potential security providers are identified to demonstrate that their characteristics and behaviour are one factor influencing the way people cope with violence and insecurity.

This analysis is based on data collected by the HMEP between September 2010 and June 2012. Within this time frame, the changing security context can be accounted for. One limitation of this approach is that the data can only be disaggregated to the district and not the village level. Furthermore, Afghans seem to conceptualise security in broader terms than the absence of fighting or physical security, and their answers often include considerations of livelihoods and human security (Mazurana et al 2004:19,36-42; HMEP 2011:11,28). Also, when asked about security, Afghans might not fully disclose their opinions, since the interaction with researchers could lead to violence (CPAU 2010:5).

Even if it is not possible to analyse individual villages at this stage, important insights can be gained from the district level: The analysis shows that villagers in Nahr-e Saraj perceive a multitude of actors as having influence on their security

situation and that this is changing over time. It also suggests that influential actors are not necessarily the ones the people are satisfied with. Further contextualising these actors from the perspective of hybrid security regimes hints at their influence on how people rely on them as a means of coping.

a) Security situation

Helmand has been a stronghold for the Taliban for years, and by 2010 most of the local governance was contested between the formal government and the Taliban "shadow government" (Walker 2010:5). Until then, the governments' control was limited to the district centers, while the Taliban controlled the rural areas (ibid). Narcotics production is important for the local economy, with Helmand deriving most of its income from opium (Walker 2010:4-5; Bray 2012:18). Many officials seem to be involved in production and trafficking and it also provides revenue for the insurgency (Walker 2010:4-5). By the beginning of 2010, international troops and ANSF conducted military operations against the Taliban, resulting in the deterioration of the security situation at least in the short term (Walker 2010:6,50).

In Nahr-e Saraj, the Taliban had been openly operating a parallel administrative structure (Walker 2010:49) and during the military operations in 2010 it was among the districts experiencing the most physical violence (HMEP 2011:15,17). Since then however, the security situation seems to have improved in the eyes of villagers: By June 2012 a majority of 69% perceived the security situation in the area as "somewhat good" and 24% as "very good" (HMEP:A).[4]

b) Influence of and satisfaction with security providers

Taking together the first and second actor villagers mention when asked who they view as having most influence on the security situation in their area results in a picture of fluctuating influence of a multitude of actors (all from HMEP:B until otherwise stated). A first observation is that no actor is mentioned by more than 31% of the population, and more recently the highest percentage fluctuates around 24%.

As one of the formal actors, the central government has lost perceived influence over time. It had a high point of 24% in August 2011, but then the amount of

[4] For all citations of HMEP data, see respective graphs in Appendix B.

people mentioning it fell to 5% in June 2012. The influence of district government officials is perceived as very inconsistent, but with a similar general downward trend. In contrast, the ANP has steadily increased its perceived influence, reaching almost 25% in June 2012. Since November 2011 the ANP has been the actor mentioned by the majority of people. The numbers for the ANA show a similar picture: It has jumped from 1% in December 2010 to 19% in June 2012, making it the second most mentioned actor.

Turning to traditional, locally rooted actors, the perceived influence of village elders shows a reverse trend: In September 2010, they were mentioned by 31%, but in June 2012 only by 12%. Other locally rooted actors have been mentioned only recently, but their influence is perceived to be growing, even though on a low level: By June 2012, 7% saw religious leaders as having the most influence, while villagers themselves are mentioned by 9% and Arbaki by 4%.

On the low and decreasing end of perceived influence are foreign actors: Foreign countries and organisations are barely mentioned in June 2012. ISAF were mentioned by 8% in December 2010, but only by 2% in June 2012. A similar picture appears for formal government courts and informal justice groups. The Taliban have been ascribed decreasing influence, even from a low level of 4% in September 2010 to 1% in June 2012. Community councils and local warlords with their own militias have been mentioned by almost no one over time.

Contrasting the above with the people's satisfaction with these actors in keeping the district secure gives an insight into which actors they see as *providing* security rather than just *influencing* security.

Despite being perceived as losing influence, there is increased satisfaction with the central government, but the majority of people remain "somewhat satisfied" (HMEP:Ca). Similarly, there is increasing satisfaction with the district government (HMEP:Cb). The ANP and the ANA, who are perceived as having increased their influence, also show increasing satisfaction rates since April 2011. The majority of the people have been "very satisfied" with both the ANA and the ANP since mid 2011 (HMEP:Cc,Cd).

The satisfaction scores for tribal leaders are contrasting with their perceived decreasing influence. The great majority of people have been "somewhat satisfied" or "very satisfied" with tribal leaders over time (HMEP:Ci). For other

traditional, locally rooted actors, data has only been collected recently, but they equally show that people are mostly “very satisfied” with both the religious leaders and the villagers themselves (HMEP:Cj,Cl).

Satisfaction with the ISAF has fluctuated over time, possibly following their patterns of military operations (HMEP:Cg). For local warlords and their own militias, who are said to have almost no influence on the security situation, a balanced satisfaction score in April 2011 turned into dissatisfaction by June 2012 (HMEP:Ce). Finally, there is a clear dissatisfaction with the Taliban over time (HMEP:Cf).

c) How the characteristics of security providers influence coping strategies

To summarise, a range of different actors, from representatives of the formal state to traditional, locally rooted actors, to foreign forces and informal actors is being perceived as influencing the security situation. As a tendency it can be inferred from the above that villagers see traditional, locally rooted actors like tribal leaders and to a certain extent also religious leaders and villagers themselves as competent security providers, but recognize that they have lost influence. Similarly they see formal state actors like the central and district governments as quite satisfying security providers, but feel that these have not much and decreasing influence. At the same time, informal actors like the Taliban or local warlords with militias are neither seen as satisfying security providers nor as having much influence. This could be related to the military offensives against the insurgents in 2010 and could also be a reason for the position of the ANP and the ANA: These are the security providers the people are most satisfied with, and, in contrast to the others, are also seen as having the most influence.

The above suggests that the population of Nahr-e Saraj has relied on more actors than the state for the provision of security. Contextualising these actors briefly indicates that they display different behaviours than a Hobbesian perspective assumes. Rather than providing security in exchange for control, they have no ability and often no desire to provide security, and use their coercive force for aims other than governing. This in turn influences the coping strategies people adopt.

First, the Taliban are not one single entity, and local leaders in Helmand

differentiate between their foreign, Afghan and local members, and between "those who supported the former Taliban regime versus those who recently joined, and those who have committed major crimes versus those who have not" (Walker 2010:104). This potentially also points to the Taliban members' diverse agendas (cf. Coghlan 2009:132-139,150), just as local powerbrokers with their militias not only fight for spheres of influence and power, but also for the control over the narcotics production and trade (Martin 2011:52,56). Second, government officials are often perceived as corrupt, and, at least in 2010, there have been reports of the police working with the Taliban for mutual benefit (CPAU 2010:5-6). In the "spaghetti ball of Helmandi politics" (Martin 2011:56), the boundaries between local powerbrokers, formal state officials, the Taliban, police forces, militias and criminals are blurred and their behaviour is often driven by interests different from a contest over the control of the population (Martin 2011:47-56; cf. Coghlan 2009:120,122,127,145-147).

From the perspective of the local population, none of these actors thus seems to be able to provide enough security to them. The high satisfaction rates of the ANA, the ANP and traditional, locally rooted actors could be seen in this light: Potentially, the population regards them as "above" Helmandi politics and as willing and also able (in the cases of the ANA and ANP) to provide security. However, as the data suggests, the years of constantly shifting power dynamics (cf. Roy 2003:6-7) have a deep effect on who people rely on for the provision of security.

4. Identifying coping strategies: Differences in relying on security providers

a) Villages in Nahr-e Saraj

In order to analyse why villages rely on certain actors and not others for the provision of security, we need to go beyond the district level, since the situation of individual villages varies considerably: A village south of Gereshk, located between the more urban centres of Lashkar Gah, Nad Ali and Gereshk in a key strategic area for the district government may be affected by violence and react to it in a different way than a village in the upper Gereshk valley in the North,

where historically the state has not reached (Dennys, interview).[5]

Due to the very limited availability of data from the village level, this analysis is based on Bray's discussion of the socio-political organization of villages situated in Parchow manteqa, south of Gereshk and north of the Helmand river (Bray 2012:49). To make up for the limitations of a single source, the findings will later be checked against evidence from villages in other provinces. A few shortcomings still need to be considered: The question asked to village elders[6] and the resulting representation of socio-political organization does not directly represent whom the village relies on for security. However the networks of advice and power relations could still be taken as an indicator for it. Also, the network analysis provides a static picture and does not account for changing dynamics over time, and there is a danger of information being withheld in the survey (Bray 2012:57). Lastly, the concept of a village is fluid and pluralistic in Afghanistan (Mielke 2007), and there can be internal divisions. For now, villages are used as an analytical category demarcating "a unit of residence to which households belong" (Pain/Kantor 2010b:16).

Bayazo is a predominantly Barakzai Pashtun village with around 690 inhabitants (Bray 2012:49-50). At the time of research in the first half of 2011, Bayazo was subject to pervasive violence and insecurity (Bray 2012:55-57, interview). One of the village leaders, the actor with most political authority within the village, is therefore most concerned with the provision of security – but in his eyes, neither the village on its own nor the formal government are able to solve this (Bray 2012:55). On one hand, he sees foreign forces as the source of the village's security problems (ibid). But at the same time, and contrary to the district level analysis, he describes the Taliban as practically controlling the village: "The Taliban rule the village. They only stay out of the village when the Coalition Forces visit the village on patrol. The do not bother any local people, except those who work for the government. But during the night, the Taliban completely takes control… the authority and power of the elders always comes under question during the presence of either side [Taliban or ISAF]. When the village comes under control of either side, we can only make decisions on domestic

[5] Cf. Maps in Appendix A.

[6] "Who do you go to for advice related to your work as a member of the local jirga or shura?" (Bray 2012:39)

issues." (cited in Bray 2012:57). This indicates that both the Taliban and the coalition forces diminish the power bases of village elders. As a way of coping with the security situation and possibly also with their diminishing power, the village elders of Bayazo seem to rely on and deepen their links with district government actors like the (then) district governor and the head of the district community council (Bray 2012:55). These links to the formal government provide them with access to resources and assistance to mitigate security threats (Bray 2012:56-57). At the same time the village seems to be providing support for the insurgency, to a lesser extent for the ANSF and sometimes also for the coalition forces (Bray, interview). Interestingly, despite the security situation and again contrary to the district level analysis, the village seems to have no ties to the local police or other security services (Bray 2012:57).

Chaghuri, a second Barakzai village with 525 inhabitants, has seen less violence than Bayazo during the time of research, making the village elders more concerned with development issues (Bray, interview). Nevertheless, the Taliban seem to be in control of the village, even if they are not ascribed any political power or authority and like in Bayazo are seen as diminishing the authority of elders: "The Taliban have been in control of this area for a long time…the government writ does not exist in this village. The Taliban do not care about the elders and nor do they listen to them." (cited in Bray 2012:58). In order to cope with this situation, the village relies on its ties to the formal government as well, but Chaghuri's elders seem to rely on other actors within the formal system than Bayazo's elders: Rather than with the district governor, who is associated with the Kalq party, a relation is sustained with a district level actor who is associated with a group in opposition against the district governor (Bray 2012:56-57). This hints at the way political cleavages like party politics may influence coping strategies (ibid). Related to this is the fact that in Chaghuri, two actors within the village hold similar levels of authority and power, but seem to be competing with one another (Bray 2012:51). This indicates that cleavages *within* the village play a role in shaping the relations with potential security providers. Both the cases of Bayazo and Chaghuri demonstrate that relying on or using ties to outside actors is in some cases not just a coping strategy, but also motivated by political or economic motives at the same time. They also show that even when under Taliban threat and control, these villages try to

reach out for a different and potentially opposed actor for the provision of security: The district government.

The third village, Sakrila Nawabad, is a Baluch village with 670 inhabitants. While the security situation at the time of research was relatively benign (Bray, interview), the network analysis indicates that there is a certain degree of self-reliance within the village and that elders have confidence in the local capacities for dealing with problems - which seem to be related with development rather than security (Bray 2012:52,54). The few important actors within the village's network who belong to the formal governance structure are Baluch themselves (Bray 2012:52). This and the possibility of Baluch tribal structure as an explanation for the centralized self-reliance of the village elders (Bray 2012:53) indicates that tribal affiliation and organization has an influence on who people rely on for security and whether they even rely on actors outside the village (Bray 2012:56-57). However, in Sakrila Nawabad, as in Chaghuri, district level civil servants hold some positions of brokerage power in the network, whereas in Bayazo, these positions are held within the village. This is possibly a consequence of the insecure situation in Bayazo (Bray 2012:57) and could indicate that independent of tribal affiliations, the more violent the surroundings are, the more village elders tend to take their own decisions and rely less on relations with actors outside the village.

Interestingly, Enezai, another Barakzai village, appears to be completely isolated from an external network of power relations (Bray 2012:47). The security situation at the time of research was relatively benign (Bray, interview). Here, the villagers seem to have managed to cope with insecurity through forming informal alliances with all sides: The village elders deal with all factions by providing material and information to the Taliban as well as to the ANSF and to coalition forces (Bray, interview). An explanation for this non-reliance on a specific security provider could be that no clear and unambiguous "victor" or coercive force persists and that the influence of various actors are shifting constantly, prompting the villagers to hedging their bets (Bray, interview). Another possibility is that the village elders have not had any pre-existing ties to external actors and therefore cannot make use of them as a means of coping with insecurity.

To summarize, the ways in which villages rely on actors as a strategy of coping with insecurity vary in their degree and shape. Historically formed socio-political relationships and patronage networks seem to be one determinant of this (Dennys, interview): When villages have pre-existing ties to the formal government, even if weak, they may try to strengthen them even in the face of overriding coercive power by another actor, as the case of Bayazo shows. Potentially however, this could also work in reverse: The more violent and insecure an environment, the less villages can afford to rely on their pre-existing ties. The less pre-existing ties, the more self-reliant the villages have to be, leading them to "hedging bets" and forging informal alliances with various actors at the same time, like in the case of Enezai. A second factor influencing the reliance on certain actors seems to be the degree of cohesion within a village, and the question whether there is a dominant group or a competition between groups (Dennys, interview): Rivalries within a village, be they tribal or political, as in the case of Chaghuri, may influence who villagers rely on - partly as a coping strategy, but partly also to eliminate or trump their rivals.

b) Villages in other parts of Afghanistan

In order to see whether these factors play a role outside the narrow context of Nahr-e Saraj, the scope of this paper is broadened to examine how patronage networks and village cohesion influence coping strategies of villages in other provinces. This analysis is based on Pain and Kantor's discussion of villages' varying capacities to provide public goods (Pain/Kantor 2010b:14), but focuses mainly on the provision of security.

Examples of how patronage networks and socio-political structures influence which actors are relied upon for the provision of security are found in various villages: In Dand district of Kandahar, both the villages of Lalakai[7] and Julan manage to keep up security through the Malik's connections to the formal government system, the provincial council and the central government in Kabul (Pain/Kantor 2010b:18-19,30). Other villages cope by relying on more powerful actors in neighbouring villages, because they cannot defend themselves and potentially have little other connections: Khilar, a village in Jurm district of Badakhshan, depends on the village elite's relation with the valley commander

[7] All village names from Pain/Kantor 2010a, 2010b and 2012 are fictitious.

for physical security; while Kushlak, a village in Sayyad district of Sar-i Pul, has no strong connections outside the district and equally depends on security provided by more powerful actors in the neighbouring village (Pain/Kantor 2010b:15,22-25,27,30; 2010a:15; 2012:17). A fourth example is the village of Shur Qul in Yamgan district in Badakhshan: Over time, elites in Shur Qul have managed to provide security by educating members of the village, who subsequently were employed in the formal government and over time have used their diverse connections to protect the village from violence (Pain/Kantor 2010b:20,23,30). At the same time, the village was able to stay relatively independent, possibly because of its remote location (ibid).

There are also examples of villages which have little external links or patronage networks and through that are self-reliant in terms of the provision of security: Toghloq, a village in Jurm district of Badakhshan, copes by organizing armed protection to defend the village from outside interference (Pain/Kantor 2010b:21,23,30; 2010a:14). Similarly, in Chakar, a village in Dawlatabad district of Faryab, villagers rely on themselves to provide security (Pain/Kantor 2010b:28-30). Because power within the province is contested, the building of ties to potential security providers becomes more difficult: Security here is achieved through a commander who has taken up arms and organized a militia to defend the village (ibid). This has resulted in the village being less affected by insurgents and other conflicting parties, while neighbouring villages pay taxes to insurgents, negotiate with them or organise armed night guards in order to maintain their security (Pain/Kantor 2010b:29, 2010a:20, 2012:17).

The analysis of these villages also reveals important insight into the factor of village cohesion as an influence on coping strategies. When villages rely more or less successfully on themselves or on their patronage networks, security is provided against violence from the *outside* of the village. This external security however does not necessarily mean internal security and freedom from violence *inside* the village: In Toghloq, the village elites who are able to provide external security are at the same time driven by self-interest and use their coercive power inside the village, for example by taking wives by force (Pain/Kantor 2010b:21,23,30; 2010a:14). Similarly, in Lalakai, the village Malik uses his connections to the formal government to secure the village externally, but also to secure his own interests – for the villagers this means that both their external

and internal security depends on their affiliation with him, forcing most of them to comply with his power (Pain/Kantor 2010b:18-19; 2010a:13,17). In these cases the coping strategies lead to the protection of social hierarchies within the village (Pain/Kantor 2010b:30). However, there are also other examples: In Shur Qul, elites have made sure that the security benefits of their outside relations were distributed among the village, and while relationships within the village are hierarchical, they are less exploitative than those in Chakar or Lalakai (Pain/Kantor 2010a:14,19-20). The valley commander on which the village of Khilar depends for external security sometimes exploits his position, but at the same time security and social support within the village are strong, because many villagers are related (Pain/Kantor 2010a:14; 2012:15). These examples indicate that the relationship between the elite and 'ordinary' villagers within a village influence the way security is achieved (Pain/Kantor 2010b:30): Where inequalities are high, village elites are less likely to provide public goods widely, because their position makes them immune to social sanctions (Pain/Kantor 2010b:17,36-38; 2012:1,3). Where resource endowments are smaller and inequalities are lower, there is a higher possibility of checks and balances, and elites are more likely to have an interest in providing public goods widely (ibid). By acknowledging this, we can expand the notion of "village cohesion": It is not just the degree of political or tribal cohesion as suggested by the analysis of the villages in Nahr-e Saraj, it is also the degree of economic cohesion which seem to influence the way villages rely on certain actors as a means of coping.

To summarise, the factors influencing the reliance on certain actors for the provision of security found in villages in Nahr-e Saraj can also be found across other villages in different provinces: patronage networks and social, political and economic cohesion within the village. While this resonates well with what the livelihoods framework calls "assets", both of these factors are again shaped by history and location: The socio-political and economic lines along which society is organized in a certain geographic area and how these have changed during the course of conflict.

V. Discussion

1. The importance of history: Socio-political organisation

To understand why villages cope with violence and insecurity in a certain manner, there is a need to understand the historical forces that have influenced both patronage networks and social structures within a village. A discussion of the organizing principles that have shaped Afghan and particularly Helmandi society over time would go well beyond this paper however, and the following can only be a brief overview. As Bray finds, the main organizing principles of society in Nahr-e Saraj are "(1) spatial in terms of the urban-rural divide, […] (2) membership to a particular political party or resistance; (3) participation or employment within either the formal or informal systems of governance" (Bray 2012:48). The foundation of these principles however appears to be tribal affiliation and descent (ibid). Not only ethnicity shapes identities and network structures, but also tribal groups, sub-groups and extended families, which are, especially in Pashtun society, often competing with each other (Martin 2011:71). However, there is a history of Afghans cooperating or rivaling each other in terms of interests rather than group identity (Barfield 2010:280; Roy 2003:8), and over time the ethnic and tribal organization in Helmand has been layered over with other forms of group identities (Martin 2011:53, Bray 2012:16-17). These layers of social networks and affiliation might best be represented by the Afghan notions of "qwam" and "rabhitâ", which go beyond the depiction of patrilineal or tribal affiliation and can even include a territorial basis, the "manteqa" (Favre 2005:5-8). Also of great importance is the divide between "rural" and "urban" societies, a division deriving from Ibn Khaldun's distinction between "desert civilization" and "sedentary civilization", which today still resonates with the Pashtun concepts of "nang" and "qalang" society (Bray 2012:34-35) and which divide the more egalitarian subsistence societies in the mountain areas from the richer and more hierarchical agrarian surplus societies in the plains (Barfield 2010:56-63; Pain/Kantor 2010b:17).

2. "Fear of death" and the quest for security in hybrid security regimes

Seen from the perspective of hybrid security regimes, the coping strategies analysed above, even if driven by "fear of death", are not employed in a "state of

nature", and neither do they necessarily imply the consent to a "common power" to achieve security. In this sense, such a perspective can help to explain the ways in which villages rely on various actors as a means of coping and to understand why this reliance takes different shapes, depending on the village's patronage networks and internal cohesion.

On another level, the findings of the above examination bring us closer to understanding how hybrid security regimes are formed and sustained. First, a focus on coping strategies, or more specifically coping strategies involving the reliance on various actors for the provision of security, can help to point out the variety of security arrangements in a certain area (Luckham/Kirk 2012:6). In Afghanistan, as Schetter et al have observed, "one can even find a variety of different security architectures within a province, often diverging from valley to valley and from village to village." (Schetter et al 2007:148). One of the explanations for this potentially lies in the way patronage networks and village cohesion manifest themselves through the mechanisms of coping strategies.

Second, by focusing on coping strategies and the behaviour of ordinary people in situations of violence and insecurity, the perspective of "end-users" is brought into the discourse of security (Luckham/Kirk 2012:6). The findings of this study support the assertion that ordinary people are not passive subjects of security, but are involved in shaping security regimes through the way they rely on and use their ties to various actors as a means of coping.

While hybrid security regimes are in some sense a solution to the "fear of death" and the quest for security, the examination of coping strategies also demonstrates that the various actors in such settings often are security providers for some parts of the population, but at the same time agents of insecurity for other parts (Luckham/Kirk 2012:32,48). Ordinary people can achieve a certain amount of security by relying on these actors, but since the later have their own agendas, security often comes at a high cost rather than as a public good (ibid). As the case study has shown, these actors often use their control over violence and security to maximise their power and profit, be this political or economic (Luckham/Kirk 2012:38,40). As the example of villages in Afghanistan further demonstrates, ordinary people often cope with violence and insecurity with considerable wit and exhaust all their possibilities, but the security achieved depends on the quality of patronage ties, which can be

volatile, instable and often come without accountability (Luckham/Kirk 2012:46). In this sense, coping strategies are one way to escape “fear of death”, but in the short-term rather than in the long term.

VI. Conclusion

This paper has aimed at contributing to the debate about how ordinary people achieve security by examining their coping strategies in violent and insecure contexts. The analysis was undertaken from two different perspectives, connecting coping strategies with a wider debate on security and the role of the state in it: From a Hobbesian viewpoint, the human desire to escape “fear of death” leads people to consent to powerful and coercive actors in return for the provision of security. From the perspective of hybrid security regimes however, the assumptions of a Hobbesian perspective might not hold true in all contexts of violence and insecurity: Actors in these contexts often do not aim at controlling the population in return for security, but rather follow aims for which insecurity is conducive, and ordinary people may not be driven purely by the desire to escape “fear of death”.

Applying these two perspectives to the case of villages in Afghanistan demonstrates that the presence of a formal state structure does not automatically translate into security for the population, and the presence of insurgents, powerbrokers, militias and warlords does not automatically translate into their complete insecurity akin a “state of nature”. Rather, these actors all form part of hybrid security regimes which are highly contextual. As this paper has shown, the reliance on various actors for the provision of security is an important means of coping in such a contexts. The example of villages in Nahr-e Saraj district in Helmand suggests that people rely on a variety of actors, sometimes even at the same time. By comparing the coping strategies of these villages with other villages in Afghanistan, this paper finds that this behaviour is influenced by the characteristics of potential security providers, as well as by the village’s existing patronage networks and internal cohesion. In this sense, the mechanism of coping strategies also becomes a component of the way in which hybrid security regimes are created and sustained.

However, the implications of the human “fear of death” and the quest for security need to be more fully examined. How people achieve security in contexts of violence and insecurity, where the state is only one amongst many actors, remains a topic for further and more detailed and scrutinising research. While the perspective of hybrid security regimes is a useful analytical lens, we also need to understand the wider implications of their existence for both the state as much as for ordinary people.

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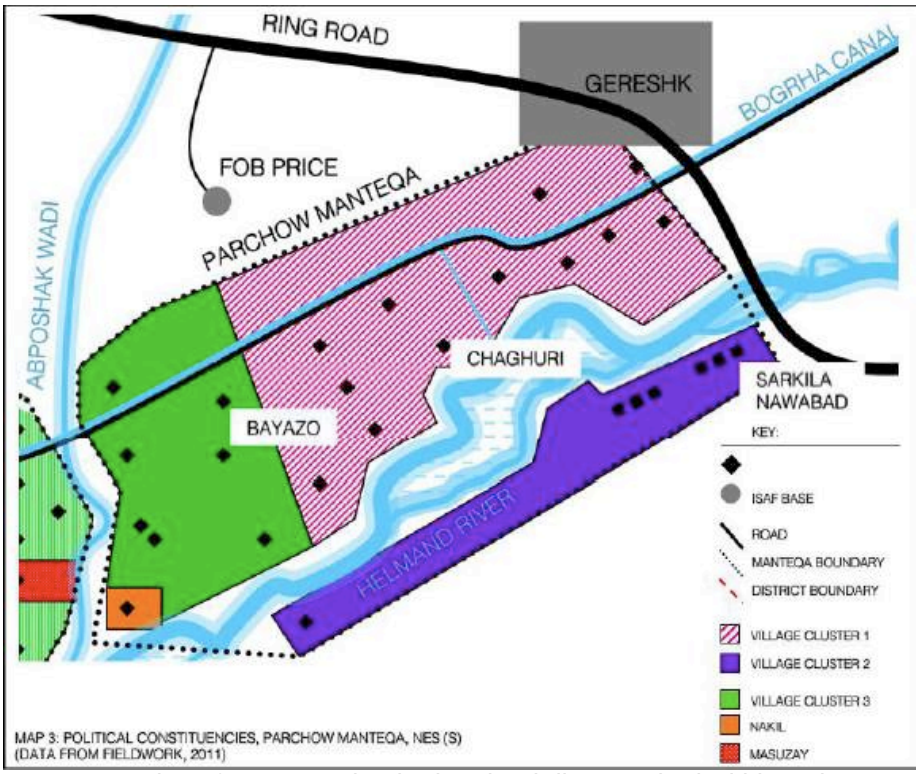
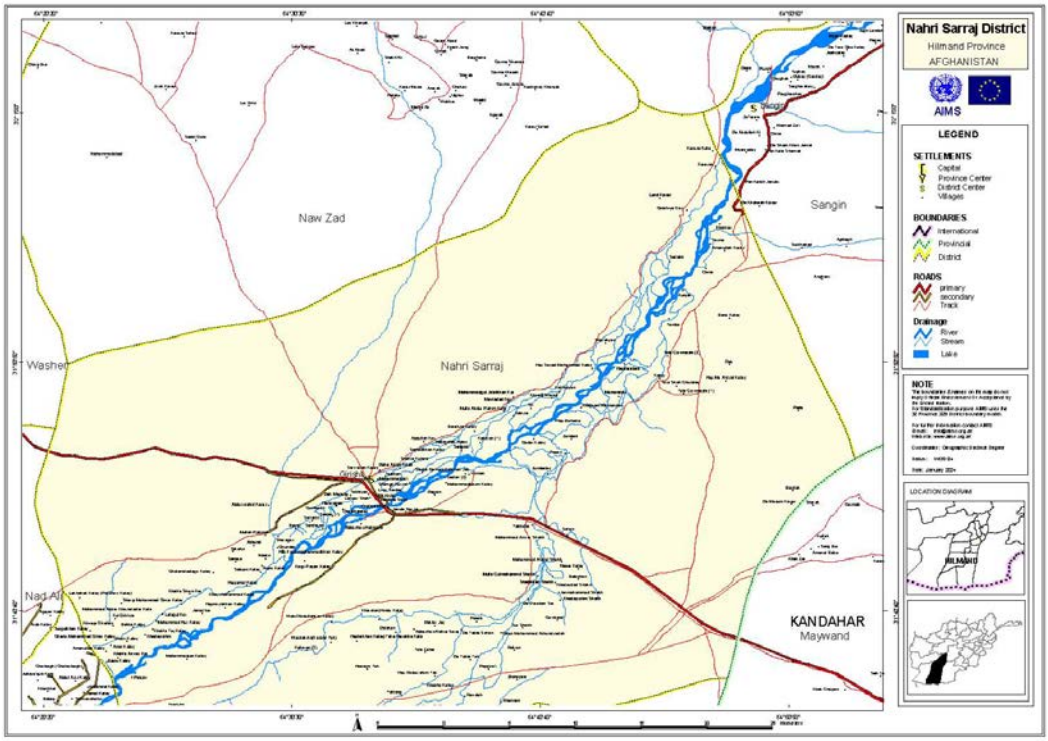
- Bray, Donald, University of Cambridge, 27.07.2012
- Dennys, Christian, Cranfield University, 30.07.2012

Appendices

Appendix A: Maps of Nahr-e Saraj district



Map 1: Location of Bayazo, Chaghuri and Sakrila Nawabad within Nahr-e Saraj district. Source: Bray 2012:49.

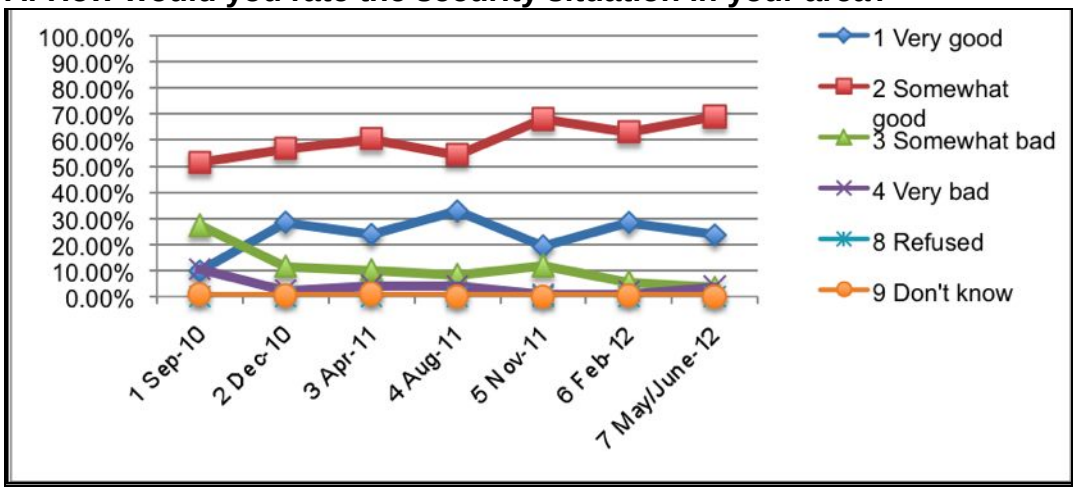


Map 2: Nahr-e Saraj district of Helmand. Source: AIMS 2004. Accessed online at http://www.aims.org.af/Hilmand-Province.html (19.08.2012)

Appendix B: Visualised HMEP data for Nahr-e Saraj district

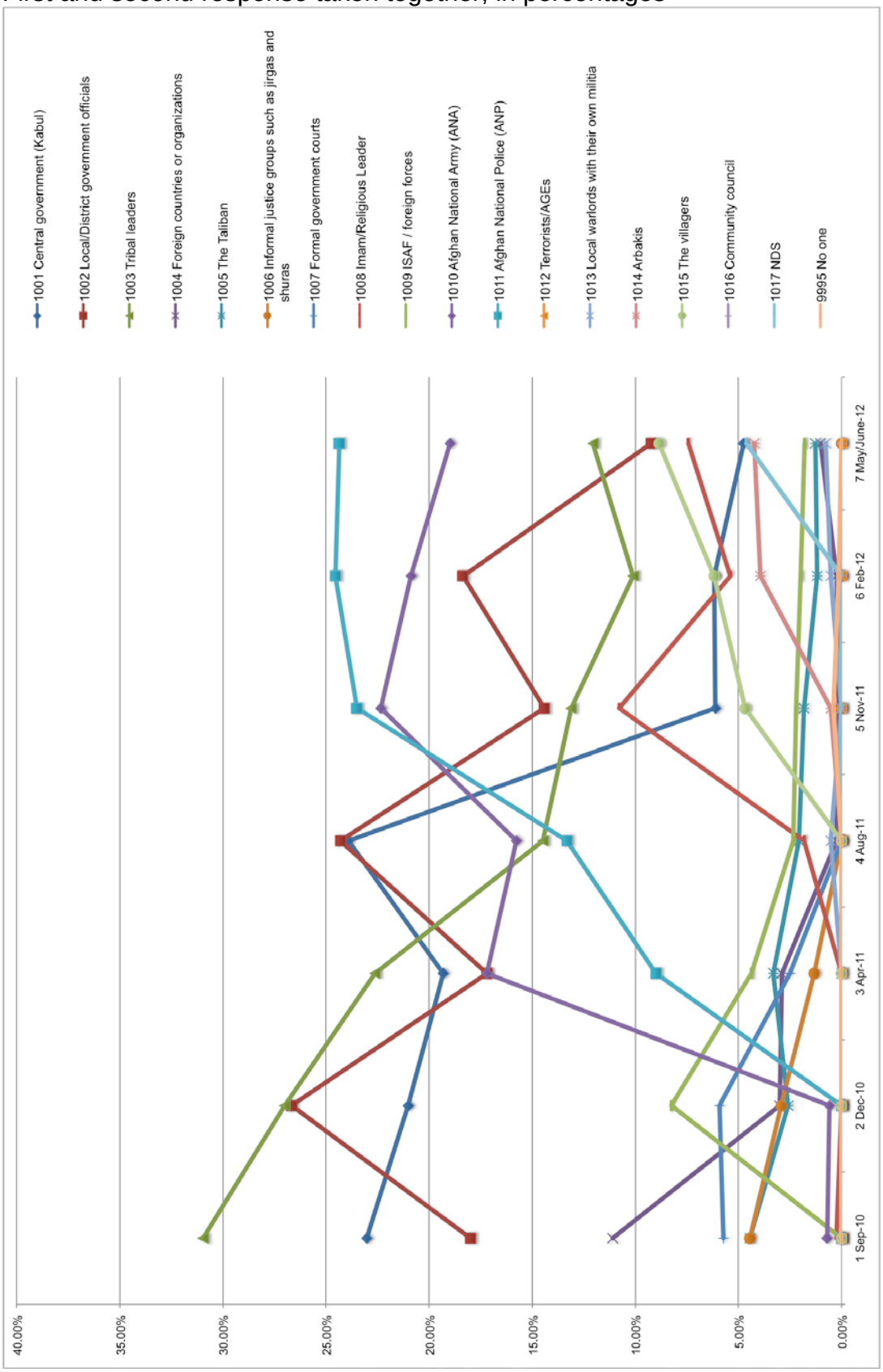
All created from HMEP Head of household survey data 2010-2012.

A: How would you rate the security situation in your area?



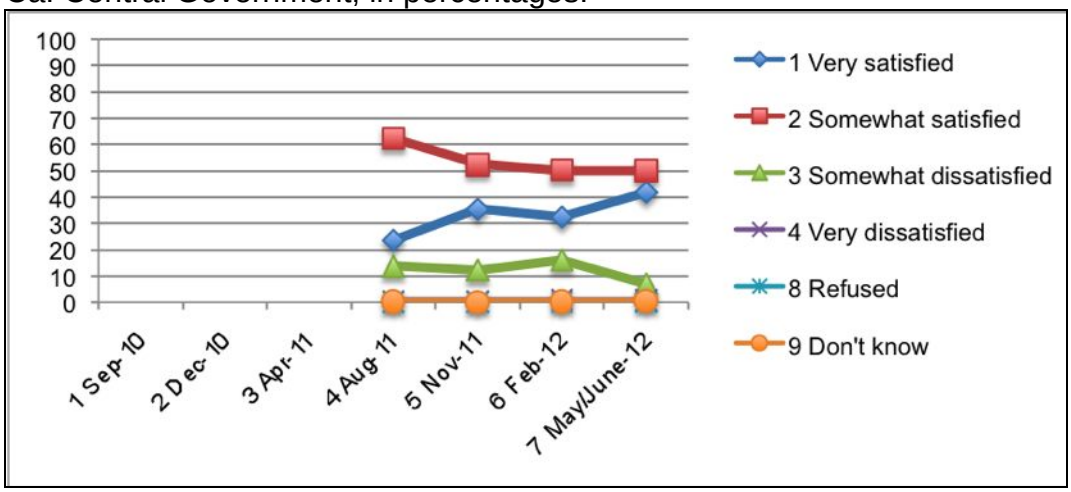
B: Which of the following has the most influence over the security conditions in the local area where you live?

First and second response taken together, in percentages

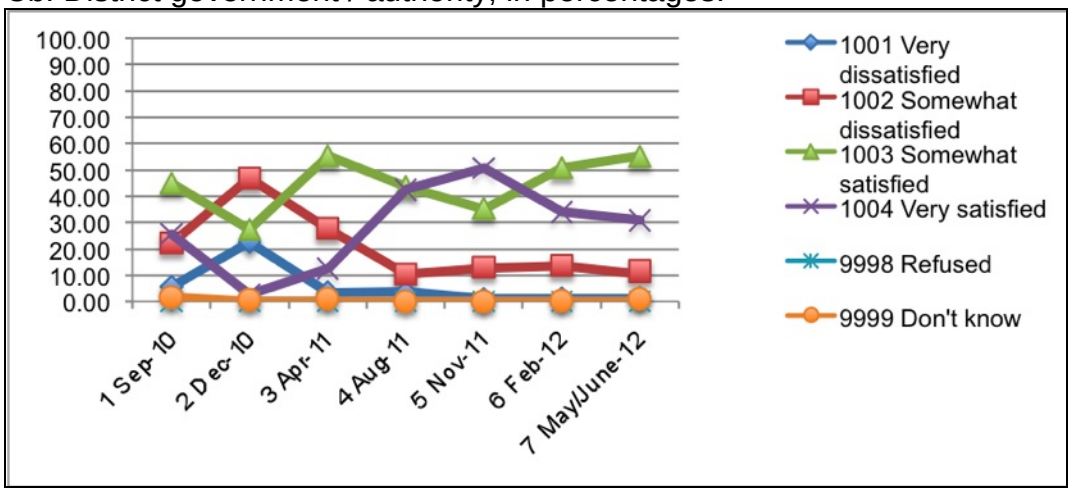


C: How satisfied are you with each of the following's role in keeping the district secure?

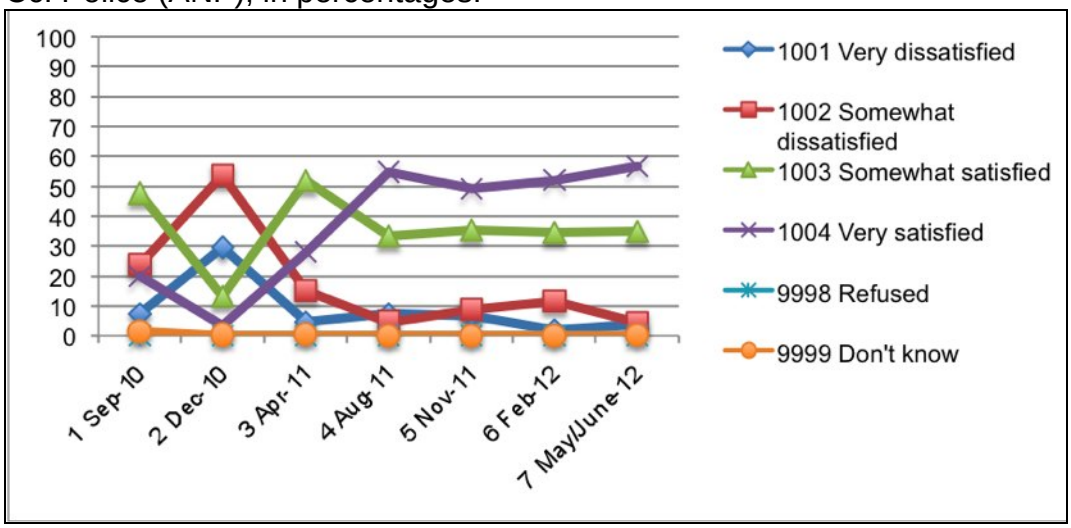
Ca: Central Government, in percentages.



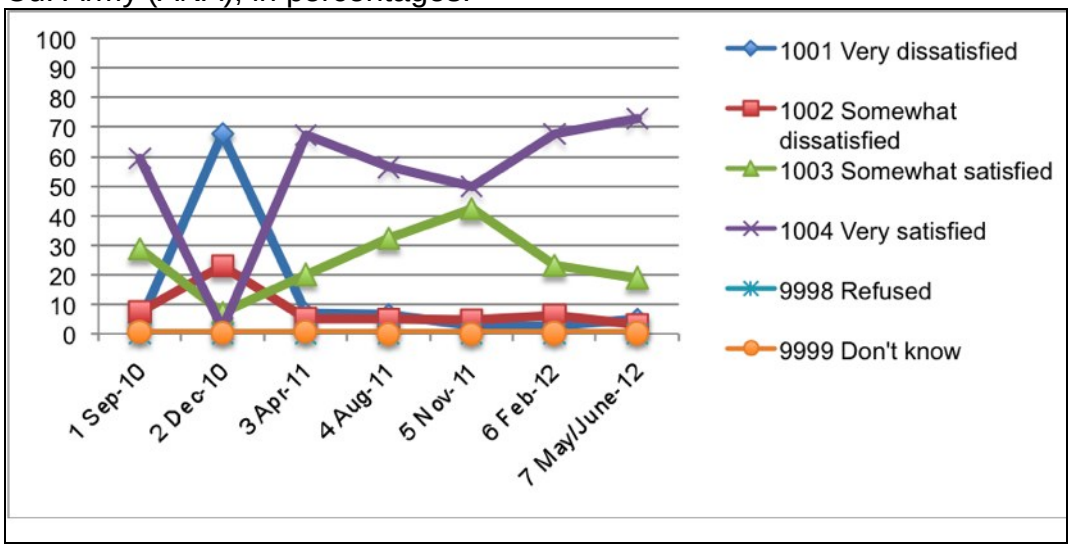
Cb: District government / authority, in percentages.



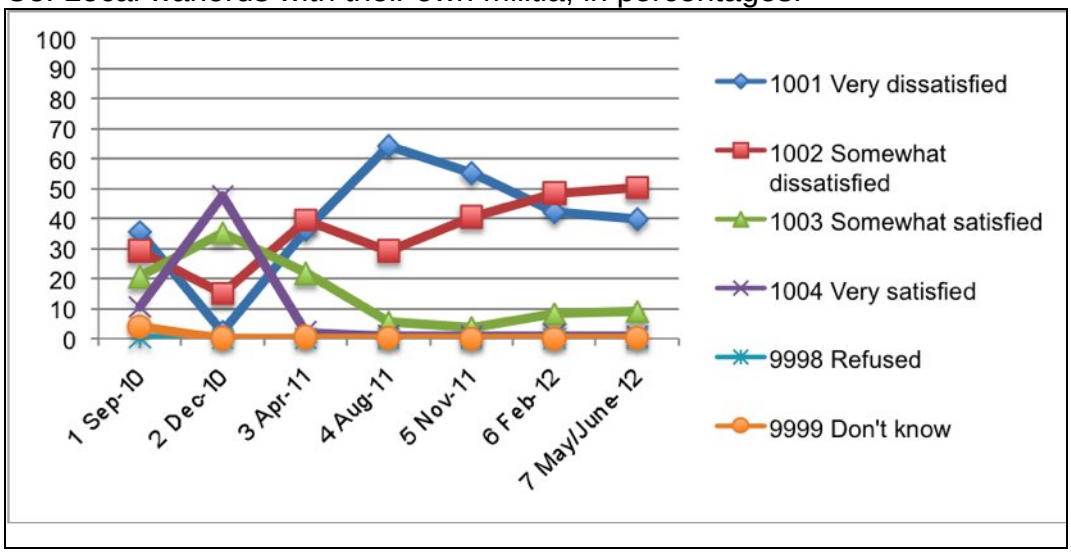
Cc: Police (ANP), in percentages.



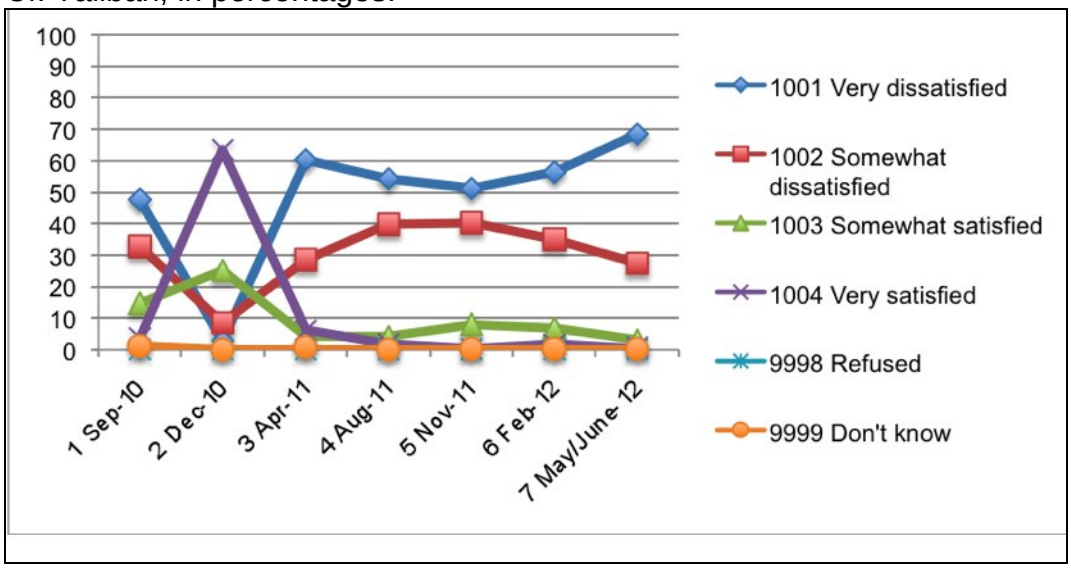
Cd: Army (ANA), in percentages.



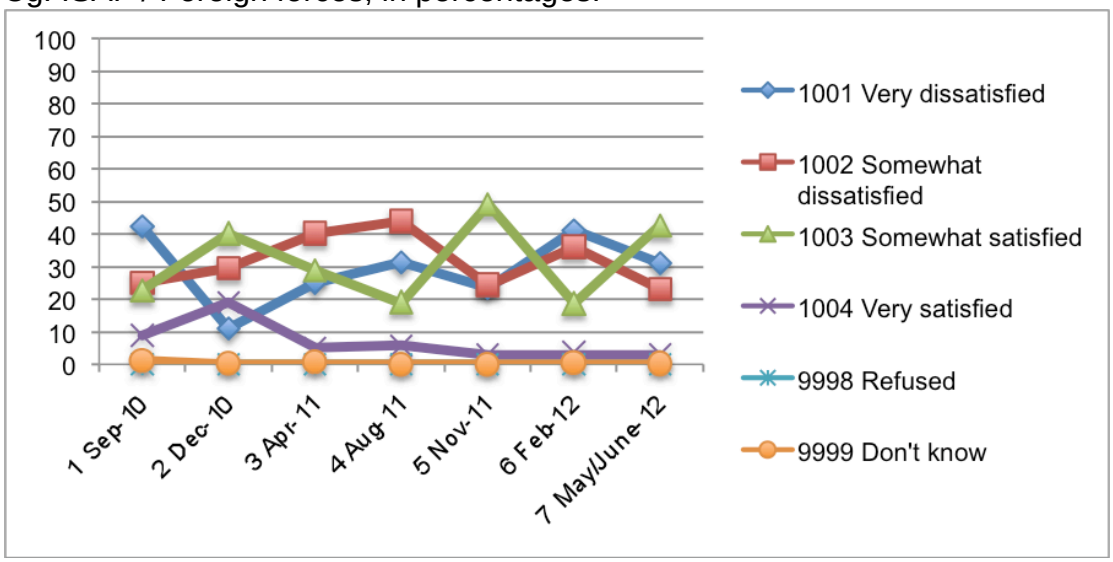
Ce: Local warlords with their own militia, in percentages.



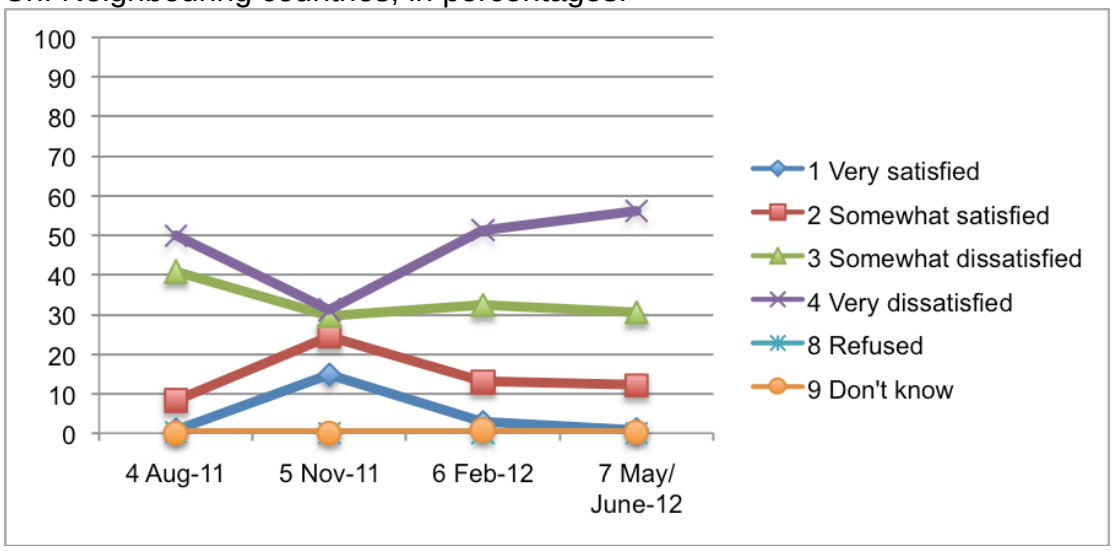
Cf: Taliban, in percentages.



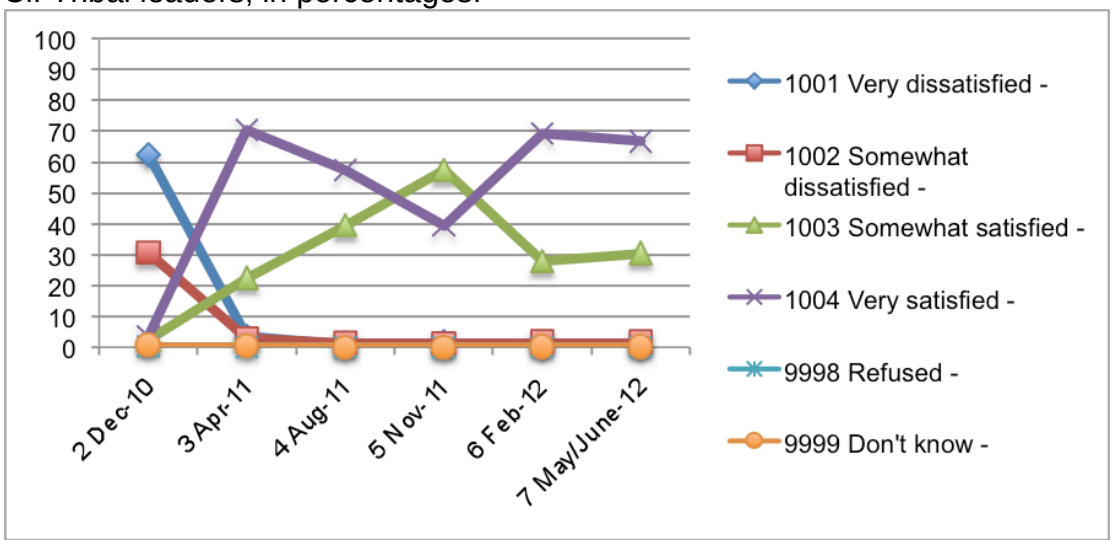
Cg: ISAF / Foreign forces, in percentages.



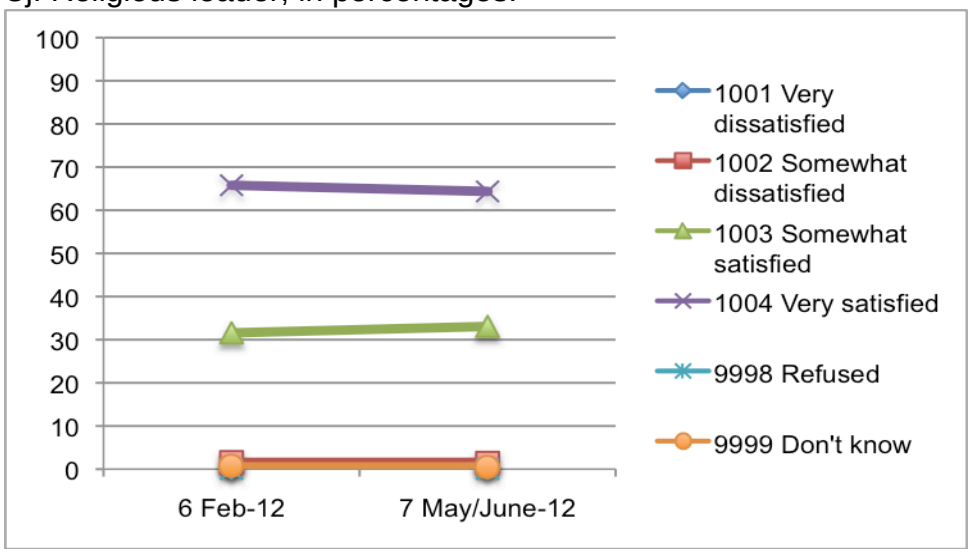
Ch: Neighbouring countries, in percentages.



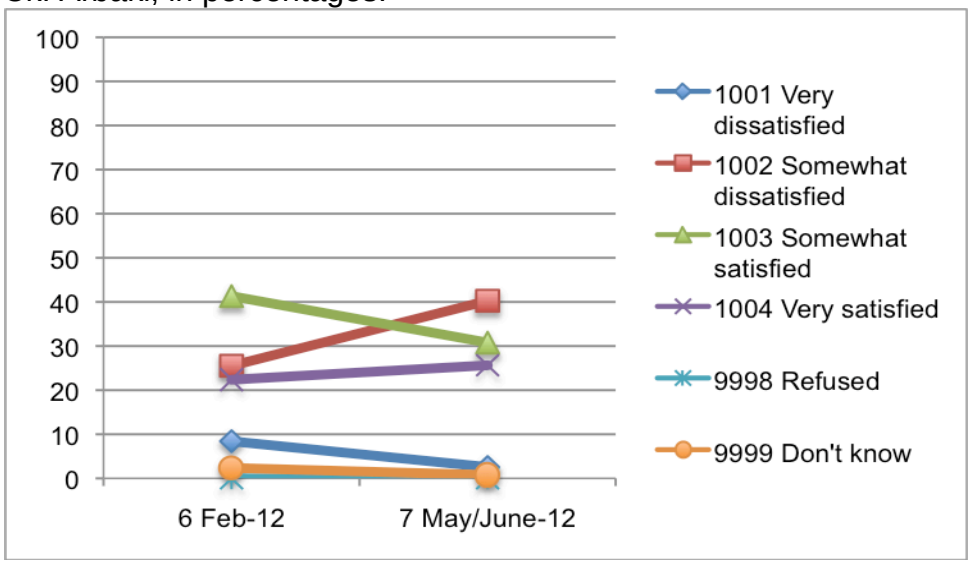
Ci: Tribal leaders, in percentages.



Cj: Religious leader, in percentages.



Ck: Arbaki, in percentages.



Cl: Villagers, in percentages.