LEASING LEVIATHAN: THE ROLE OF LOCAL DEFENSE FORCES IN COUNTERINSURGENCY OPERATIONS

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By

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the role of local defense forces in counterinsurgency campaigns, specifically the dynamic that exists between these groups and the state. In many instances, as in Afghanistan today, a state that is in the midst of fighting an insurgency lacks the capacity to protect its citizens. In such situations, a state may turn to the members of local communities, and train and arm them so that they might defend themselves while the government regroups. However, such a policy, while potentially very useful, can also be perilous. By turning over some share of its responsibility to provide security, the state may jeopardize its monopoly on violence.

The question then, is under what conditions a state may safely employ local defense forces with minimal fear that its ultimate authority will be challenged. This thesis finds that there are three specific conditions under which local defense forces may safely take on some of the security burden from the state: 1) Local defense forces are small and defensive, 2) The national government is strong enough to control and monitor local defense forces, and 3) Local defense forces and the national government are perceived as legitimate and enjoy popular support. The paper examines three case studies: the British experience during the Malayan Emergency, the French experience during the Algerian War, and the Soviet experience during the War in Afghanistan. In its conclusion, the paper discusses policy implications that can be drawn from its findings, proposes policy recommendations, and identifies areas for potential future study.
Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction

• Focus .................................................................................................................1
• Importance .......................................................................................................1
• Hypothesis: The Conditions for Balance ..........................................................3
• Methodology .....................................................................................................4
• Alternative Explanations ....................................................................................5
• Case Studies .....................................................................................................7
• Contribution to Existing Literature ..................................................................9
• Roadmap ..........................................................................................................10
• Summary of Findings .......................................................................................11

Chapter 2: Small and Defensive Local Defense Forces

• Findings ..........................................................................................................12
• The Scope of the Mission: Roles, Size, and Performance ..................................14
• Local Defense Force Armament .......................................................................17

Chapter 3: Strong National Governments Capable of Controlling and Monitoring Local Defense Forces

• Findings ..........................................................................................................19
• Mechanisms and Organizations for Supervising Local Defense Forces .............22
• Professional Capacity for Operating Local Defense Forces ................................25
• Control of Local Defense Force Armament ......................................................27
• General Capacity of the National Government ..................................................30
• Demobilization and Disarmament ...................................................................32

Chapter 4: Popular Support for and Legitimacy of Local Defense Forces and National Governments

• Findings ..........................................................................................................34
• Traditional Institutions .................................................................36
• Pre-Existing Loyalties .................................................................38
• Efforts to Secure Local Defense Force Loyalty to the National Government ........40

Chapter 5: Policy Implications and Recommendations

• Policy Implications ..................................................................................43
• Policy Recommendations ...........................................................................45

Chapter 6: Topics for Future Study .................................................................49

Bibliography

• Primary Sources........................................................................................52
• Secondary Sources ....................................................................................54
Chapter 1: Introduction

Focus

This thesis attempts to identify the conditions under which local defense forces contribute to the protection of the general population in the context of a counterinsurgency campaign without posing a risk to state authority. As suggested by some of the limited literature on this subject, these conditions must strike a delicate balance. Local defense forces are “most effective in establishing order when the central government remains the preponderant power.” ¹ But conversely, local defense forces seen as too close to the central government may not be seen as legitimate by the local population, which could also compromise the effectiveness of these organizations.²

Importance

The subject matter presented in this work is directly relevant to current U.S. foreign policy in Afghanistan. The United States is currently involved in efforts to stabilize the security environment in Afghanistan and deny Al-Qaeda a safe haven there for terrorist activities. The United States and its NATO allies intend to hand over complete control over security in Afghanistan to the Afghan government in 2014.³ However, at present, the Karzai regime has demonstrated itself incapable of maintaining order and stability throughout Afghanistan, particularly its outlying rural regions.⁴ And whether President Hamid Karzai’s government will be able to assume these responsibilities remains an open question. As such, while the United States

² Ibid.
continues to enhance the military and policing capabilities of the Afghan government, it has also organized village defense forces to protect local communities in areas where formal security forces are scarce.\(^5\) If successful, these groups could buy additional time for the national government to acquire the capacity it requires to become and remain the preponderant power in Afghanistan, even after the withdrawal of U.S. and NATO forces.\(^6\) Providing citizens with the means to defend themselves and their communities until the Afghan government can expand the coverage of its formal security forces may also inhibit the growth of the insurgency in potentially vulnerable areas.

However, President Karzai and several of his advisors expressed misgivings about the program, citing similar efforts attempted by the Soviet Union during the 1980s which ultimately compromised the sovereignty of the national government.\(^7\) In order to assuage these concerns, the United States permitted a number of changes to the village defense forces. These changes are intended to make them easier to monitor and control and to limit their ability to project power.\(^8\) In this new configuration, these groups, which will be called Local Police Forces, will be established by the Ministry of the Interior in villages throughout Afghanistan.\(^9\)

It remains to be seen if the extent of these changes is sufficient to produce local defense forces that do not eventually come to threaten the authority of the national

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\(^7\) Ibid.

\(^8\) Ibid.

\(^9\) Ibid.
government. However, the conditions identified in this thesis for producing this very outcome in other contexts may provide valuable insights for policy in Afghanistan today. The extent to which Afghanistan’s new Local Police Forces meet these conditions may determine whether history repeats itself.

**Hypothesis: The Conditions for Balance**

This thesis will present a unique contribution to the literature on local defense forces, and counterinsurgency more generally. Local defense forces, based upon an examination of a number of cases, seem to be a common element of counterinsurgency efforts, although implementation can vary considerably. But the literature available on this subject, which will be briefly discussed further below, remains rather limited and generally unfocused. This project will build upon existing work, and attempt to verify the conditions under which local defense forces contribute to the security of their communities without threatening the security and stability of the country as a whole. The thesis will use some of the factors identified by other researchers as a working hypothesis which will be applied to four case studies. An analysis of multiple cases should allow for the identification of general principles that are applicable across all cases, including, presumably, Afghanistan.

**The hypothesis of this project is:** Local Defense Forces are able to contribute to the security of their communities without jeopardizing the authority and stability of the national government when the following conditions are fulfilled:

- Local defense forces are small and defensive
- The national government is strong enough to control and monitor local defense forces
Local defense forces and the national government are perceived as legitimate and enjoy popular support

Methodology

This paper will discuss each identified condition in turn, and consider its effect, or lack thereof, on the balance between local security and national stability. To make this determination, the thesis will rely upon the observations and analysis recorded by a variety of experts on the four cases that will be examined. Specific factors will be considered to determine the presence of each condition. These factors were selected based upon the availability of information pertinent to the four conditions being tested and their expected contribution to the analysis.

To determine the extent to which a force was small and defensive, and also to assess the overall effectiveness of the program in providing security, this thesis will consider 1) The roles and size of local defense forces in each case study and 2) The weapons that they used.

To measure the extent to which the government was capable of controlling and monitoring local defense forces, the paper, will consider 1) The mechanisms put into place for this purpose, 2) The availability of trained personnel capable of managing local defense forces, 3) The ability of the government to control the arms used by local defense forces, 4) The overall capacity of the government in question, and 5) The demobilization and disarmament process at the program’s conclusion, if applicable. The demobilization and disarmament process is a good indication of government mastery over the use of force in a given country.

In order to establish the perceived legitimacy of local defense forces and national governments, the thesis will consider: 1) The use of traditional institutions as a basis for
local defense forces, 2) The level of loyalty to the ruling regime at the inception of the conflict, and 3) The effectiveness of attempts by national governments to improve the legitimacy and popular of local defense forces and themselves.

Because of the limited data and analysis available, this paper will only seek to establish a general association between the three identified conditions and a balance between local security and national stability. Establishing a definitive causal link would require a body of work and timeframe far beyond the scale of this project.

Alternative Explanations

A number of alternative conditions with potential explanatory value were not included in this thesis. For example, one possibility is that local defense forces tend to expand beyond their original missions simply as a function of the passage of time, and take on a life of their own. However, this did not bear out in the case studies examined. Local defense forces were used in Algeria, Afghanistan, and Malaysia for approximately the same period of time during counterinsurgency efforts. However, while local defense forces eventually disrupted the sovereignty of the national government in Afghanistan, this did not come to pass in Algeria or Malaysia.\(^\text{10}\)

Some of the works reviewed for this thesis discussed other factors, such as terrain, the availability of economic resources, or the presence of quick reaction forces, as important to the success of local defense forces.\(^\text{11}\) However, these factors were not

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\(^{11}\) Material on terrain and economic resources was obtained from Giampietri and Stone, p. 55. Material on quick reaction forces was obtained from Jones and Munoz, p. 64.
included because they pertain more to the effectiveness of these forces than their inclination to challenge the state’s monopoly on violence.

Another possibility is that there were cultural or political characteristics inherent to the countries involved in this thesis’s case studies that made them more or less likely to develop local defense forces that jeopardized national stability. The cultures of Malaysia, Algeria, and Afghanistan are considered to some extent in the discussion of the role of traditional institutions in establishing and maintaining these groups. However, apart from their large Muslim populations, these three countries are ethnically and politically rather distinct, and there was no compelling evidence that these differences had any relevant effect on local defense forces. The critical difference is one that is explored in this thesis: the ability of these countries to develop the capacity to control and monitor local defense forces and to establish a monopoly on the use of violence. Where Algeria and Malaysia succeeded, Afghanistan failed.

Similarly, in those areas where France, Britain, and the Soviet Union differed, political ideology for example, there was no evidence in the literature reviewed for this project that these differences had any effect on the establishment and conduct of local defense forces. However, these states were similar in those factors that would seem most relevant to the discussion presented in this thesis: each was an imperial, industrial state with a robust military capacity.

This thesis focuses on the constraints placed on local defense forces to prevent them from challenging the authority of the national government, such as limitations on armament. However, while incentives for remaining loyal are considered, there is little

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12 For example, please see Jones and Munoz, Giampietri and Stone, and Horne.
13 Ibid.
discussion of the factors that might induce local defense forces to rebel. These factors were excluded because addressing the litany of potential motivations for rebellion, including economic incentives and political grievances, would constitute an effort beyond the time and space constraints placed on this project.¹⁴

**Case Studies**

This thesis will use three historical case studies to test its hypothesis. Each case will be assessed to determine the extent to which the conditions outlined in the hypothesis contributed to the formation of local defense forces that improved security at the local level without challenging the authority of the national government.

There are a number of cases in which counterinsurgents made use of local defense forces, including in Peru, El Salvador, Guatemala, Sri Lanka, Sierra Leone, and Vietnam.¹⁵ However, most of these cases were not selected because there were no foreign powers involved. Instead, each indigenous government managed its own counterinsurgency strategy, including the use of local defense forces. Because of this key difference, these cases had less to offer in terms of policy relevance for the United States and its allies in Afghanistan compared to other available cases. The experience of the United States in Vietnam, the exception among discarded cases, was not included because of constraints of time and space.

Cases were selected based upon their similarities with the American experience in Afghanistan. In each case, a foreign power conducted a counterinsurgency campaign...
in collaboration with the local government. In each instance, the foreign power used local defense forces. In order to control for geographic and cultural factors, cases from different regions were selected. The thesis will also examine counterinsurgencies that resulted in a variety of outcomes, in an attempt to disaggregate the performance of local defense forces from the success of the overall counterinsurgency effort. The cases are as follows:

The British Experience in the Malayan Emergency (1948-1960): During this conflict, the British used local defense forces as part of its counterinsurgency campaign against the Malayan National Liberation Army (MNLA), the military arm of the Malayan Communist Party (MCP). The British capitalized on the efforts of communities that had “formed their own part-time village guards” and organized villagers into the volunteer, part-time Home Guard program. While the colonial government was ultimately successful in ending the insurgency, Great Britain granted Malaysia its independence at the conflict’s conclusion. The Home Guard was successfully mobilized without ever posing any threat to the government’s monopoly on the use of force.

The French Experience in the Algerian War (1954-1962): When the Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN) began its war for independence from France, French forces recruited _harkis_, Algerians loyal to the French cause, to protect local populations. Like the British, the French also enhanced pre-existing efforts among the Algerian population to fight the insurgency. France’s counterinsurgency effort ultimately failed, and the post-conflict Evian Accords granted Algerian independence. However, in the aftermath,

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17 Horne, p. 244.
the harki defense forces were not able to challenge the sovereignty of the new Algerian government.

The Soviet Experience in the War in Afghanistan (1979-1989): This case should also be particularly insightful, given that the current conflict in Afghanistan is in many ways a continuation of the struggle that began with the mujahedin insurgency against the Soviet-backed Afghan government following the invasion of Soviet forces. During this war, the Soviets recruited local militias to defend towns and villages against mujahedin forces. As in Algeria and Malaysia, many of the militias in Afghanistan were “not invented by the pro-Soviet regime,” but had existed long before in one form or another.18 Some of these militias worked directly for Afghanistan’s Interior Ministry.19 Ultimately, these groups would contribute to the deterioration of the national government’s already-tenuous hold in the country, and fight amongst themselves in a civil war that continued through the 1990s.

Contribution to Existing Literature

The limited literature available on the use of local defense forces in counterinsurgency generally falls into two categories. In the first, works identify conditions under which village defense forces provide local security but do not challenge the central government’s monopoly on violence. However, these contributions do not test these frameworks against multiple case studies.20 In the second category, local defense forces in multiple specific contexts are described at length, but there is

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19 Ibid.
little to no explicit discussion of the dynamic between local security and government sovereignty, and the conditions under which both can be achieved.  

This thesis represents a combination of these two types of literature. Its unique contribution is that it will not only present and analyze a series of conditions that influence the balance between local security and government authority, but also apply this framework to specific and diverse case studies. And unlike previous works, this thesis does not divert attention to other considerations, such as the effectiveness of these forces in providing security. This allows for a specific focus on the relationship between local defense forces and national governments. This approach also produces a model that can also be tested against additional cases in the future.

Roadmap

In the following chapters, this paper will present and examine each of the three primary conditions outlined in the hypothesis. In each chapter, the factors identified in the methodology section will be used to test the effectiveness of each condition in establishing local defense forces that did not threaten the state’s monopoly on violence. In Chapter 2, the thesis will test the principle of keeping local defense forces small and defensive. Chapter 3 analyzes the effectiveness of establishing a strong national government with robust capabilities. Chapter 4 considers the influence of legitimacy and loyalty, and how popular support affects dynamics between local defense forces and the state. In Chapters 5 and 6, the thesis presents policy implications and recommendations, and topics for future study.

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21 For example, please see Giampietri and Stone and Ginifer and Peimani.
Summary of Findings

All three tested conditions appear to have at least a strong association with an end state in which there is both local security and national stability and authority. Local defense forces, if allowed to become too large or too well-armed, can become a destabilizing force. But if they are limited to defensive roles and weapons, they seem generally less likely, and certainly less capable, of challenging the government’s authority. A strong state with an institutionalized approach for controlling and monitoring local defense forces and their weapons is another consistent safeguard against potential national instability. A weak state will be unable to check the power of local defense forces, and may only grow weaker over time unless corrective action is taken, as evidenced by the Soviet example. The third condition tested, popular support, also correlated with successful outcomes. However, it is possible that this may not directly contribute to improved local security or national stability, but is simply an indicator of the strength of the government. A representation of the complete findings of this thesis is depicted in the table on the following page:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Small and Defensive</strong></th>
<th>Malaysia</th>
<th>Algeria</th>
<th>Afghanistan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Limited role and small Size</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited weapons</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strong National Governments</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control and monitoring mechanisms</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of trained personnel</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to control arms</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall government capacity</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demobilization and disarmament</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Popular Support and Legitimacy</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional institutions</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-existing loyalty</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Successful efforts to increase legitimacy and support</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Somewhat</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Factors Present in Each Case Study.

**Chapter 2: Small and Defensive Local Defense Forces**

**Findings**

There is abundant evidence that the size and responsibilities of a local defense force are critical in striking a balance between local security and national stability. In Malaysia, the British generally kept their forces small and defensive, and tightly controlled the arms that were supplied to them. There do not seem to have been any
major incidents in which local defense forces turned against the government.\textsuperscript{22} It is noteworthy that the Home Guard was able to make a considerable contribution to the security of their communities despite the limitations imposed on them by the British.

Possibly more telling are the Algerian and Afghanistan examples. In Algeria, the French initially seemed willing to permit larger defense forces and to even arm them with rifles and automatic weapons. However, incidents of betrayal caused the French to adopt a more cautious approach.\textsuperscript{23} The French were reluctant to trust defense forces comprised of Algerian natives from the onset, and acts of betrayal served to confirm their misgivings. Nonetheless, the harki did prove to be at least somewhat successful in protecting their communities and supplementing French forces.\textsuperscript{24}

In Afghanistan, the Soviets and their Afghan clients authorized and supported a wide variety of militias, some more oriented towards village defense, and others more disposed toward more traditional military roles.\textsuperscript{25} Many of these militias were permitted to grow to a considerable size and to assume offensive functions normally reserved for conventional forces.\textsuperscript{26} They were also armed with heavy weapons that increased their ability to project power considerably, in contrast to the armament provided by the French and British, which were generally defensive in nature. While this certainly increased their capabilities, the effectiveness of these militias in defending local communities was limited somewhat by their lack of legitimacy. And ultimately, any gains made in local security were reversed when increasingly powerful militias capitalized on

\begin{thebibliography}{9}

\bibitem{22} Giampietri and Stone, p. 15.
\bibitem{23} Horne, p. 257.
\bibitem{25} Giustozzi, p. 200.
\bibitem{26} Ibid., p. 208.
\end{thebibliography}
the collapse of the central government and facilitated the outbreak of civil war. This not only undermined national stability and authority, but also created conditions that threatened the security of communities throughout Afghanistan.

In sum, even if limiting the size, scope, and armament of local defense forces does not necessarily prevent them from turning against the government, it can reduce the consequences should this come to pass. Conversely, allowing local defense forces to increase in size, engage in offensive operations, and acquire weapons suitable for assault and the projection of power augments their ability to challenge the government, and may paradoxically reduce the security of local communities by enabling the outbreak of civil war.

*The Scope of the Mission: Roles, Size, and Performance*

In Malaysia and Algeria, respectively, the Home Guard and harki defense units were large-scale national-level programs: the ranks of the Home Guard reached 99,000 by 1951, and by 1960 over 200,000 harkis had taken up arms and were actively fighting the insurgents. However, in both cases, these individuals were organized into small, defensively oriented units. The Home Guard, for example, was divided into two divisions. The first, comprising three-fourths of the organization, was intended for village defense, and only one third of its members were armed. Thirty-five men were placed in each village, with five of them on duty each night. The second group consisted of

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28 Komer, p. 41
uniformed men organized into teams of twelve.\textsuperscript{29} These forces were generally used to support local military and police operations.\textsuperscript{30}

The harki defense forces were also organized into smaller defensive units. The French established Groupes d’auto-défense (GAD) – “self-defense groups” -- in which local villagers and farmers were armed and trained to defend their communities from insurgent assaults until French military forces could arrive.\textsuperscript{31} By 1960 the French had created GADs in 385 villages.\textsuperscript{32} The harkis were also formed into local militias, called mokhaznis, which were also responsible for protecting their villages.\textsuperscript{33} Each mokhazni generally consisted of 25 members and lived with their families near French fortifications.\textsuperscript{34} There were exceptions however, and some harki units consisted of over 1000 men.\textsuperscript{35} The Force K incident, which will be detailed in a later section, illustrated the consequences of organizing a force of this size.\textsuperscript{36}

Despite the small size of these local defense forces, they nonetheless proved themselves a useful asset to the counterinsurgency efforts in their respective countries. The Home Guard and the harki self-defense units, because of their familiarity with local terrain, social and political structures, and languages, were able to provide valuable

\textsuperscript{29} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{30} Giampietri and Stone, p. 10.
\textsuperscript{31} Material on the role of local defense groups in defending their communities was obtained from Evans, p. 120. Material on their intended purpose to hold off insurgents until the arrival of French forces was obtained from Canuel, p.4.
\textsuperscript{32} Evans, p. 121.
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{35} Horne, p. 257.
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid.
intelligence to British and French forces, respectively.\textsuperscript{37} In Malaysia, the Home Guard actually performed well enough that the British eventually allowed them to assume some of the more defensive responsibilities of the official police forces.\textsuperscript{38}

In Algeria and Malaysia, local defense forces were limited in terms of their size and roles. And in both cases, these forces were able to contribute to the counterinsurgency effort and protect their communities, but did not disrupt national stability. This apparent correlation is consistent with the argument that constraining the size and capabilities of local defense forces reduces the likelihood that these groups will threaten the central government’s sovereignty. It is conceivable that these forces were simply not motivated to resist the authority of their respective national governments, a possibility that will be addressed below. Nonetheless, limiting the size and scope of local defense forces reduces the force they can potentially bring to bear against the government.

Conversely, in Afghanistan, the Afghan government and their Soviet sponsors were less cautious, and allowed local militias to significantly expand in terms of their size and roles.\textsuperscript{39} Initially, the number of personnel recruited by the Soviet-backed Afghan government was relatively small.\textsuperscript{40} But many of the part-time forces organized by the Interior Ministry that were originally limited to the defense of local workplaces and villages became larger, more offensively oriented and aggressive, “and increasingly

\textsuperscript{37} Material on the Home Guard was obtained from Giampietri and Stone, p. 9. Material on the harkis was obtained from Evans, p. 121.
\textsuperscript{38} Komer, p. 41
\textsuperscript{39} Giustozzi, p. 208
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., p. 207
heavily armed" as the conflict wore on.\textsuperscript{41} Ultimately, most of the militias in Afghanistan more closely resembled small armies under the command of a single individual than small community defense groups tied to a specific village.\textsuperscript{42}

The expansion of militias’ size and capabilities was ultimately detrimental not only to local and national security, but also to the viability of the national government.\textsuperscript{43} The growing ranks of these forces, for example, cut into the recruitment pool for the regular forces.\textsuperscript{44} In some cases, members actually joined local defense forces to avoid being drafted into the formal military.\textsuperscript{45} This created a situation that effectively burned the candle at both ends, simultaneously strengthening the militias and compromising the ability of the government to assert its authority in the face of opposition.

Warlords in control of large militias demonstrated themselves to be “unreliable and unsuited” for the government’s goal of establishing order and stability throughout Afghanistan.\textsuperscript{46} Instead, smaller militia leaders proved best suited to lead government sponsored local defense forces. However, smaller forces were also limited in the contribution they could make to the overall war effort.\textsuperscript{47}

\textit{Local Defense Force Armament}

The French and British governments also restricted the weapons to which the Home Guard and the harki self-defense units had access. Members of the Home Guard were initially unarmed, but by 1951 they were issued weapons after qualifying for

\textsuperscript{42} Giustozzi, p. 198
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid, p. 285
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid, p. 220
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{46} Ibid, p. 206
\textsuperscript{47} Ibid.
the final stage of a three-phase training program, typically shotguns.\textsuperscript{48} Like their Malayan counterparts, harki armament was limited, primarily because of French mistrust. With few exceptions, the French refused to arm them with automatic weapons, particularly after a few well-publicized incidents of harki defection.\textsuperscript{49} Instead, they were armed only with pistols and shotguns.\textsuperscript{50} The decision to arm members of local defense forces with shotguns is significant, as the characteristics of a shotgun, particularly its short range, generally make it better suited for defense than offense. Pistols also have limited utility in offensive operations because of limited range, caliber, and rate of fire. In Afghanistan however, militias were armed with rifles and automatic weapons.\textsuperscript{51} And by the end of the 1980s, the government was providing heavy weapons and armored vehicles, “including armored transports and even tanks” to some militias.\textsuperscript{52}

Thus, in those cases where access to weapons was limited, local defense forces did not pose a serious threat to government authority. And in the one case where more advanced weapons were made available, increasingly powerful militias were able to cause national instability. This apparent correlation is consistent with the argument that limiting access to weapons reduces the potential of local defense forces to challenge the sovereignty of national governments. It is uncertain the extent to which the possession of more powerful arms and equipment actually made Afghan militias more inclined to resist government control. However, it did increase their capacity to do so. In Malaysia and Algeria, however, even if local defense forces were motivated to turn

\textsuperscript{48} Komer, p. 42
\textsuperscript{49} Horne, p. 257.
\textsuperscript{50} Ibid., p. 245.
\textsuperscript{51} Giustozzi, p. 211.
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid.
against government forces, their limited access to weapons would likely reduce their ability to successfully engage professional military personnel and seize territory.

Chapter 3: Strong National Governments Capable of Controlling and Monitoring Local Defense Forces

Findings

The strength and organization of a government also help determine the balance between local security and national stability. Evidence suggests that where there are measures in place to monitor and control local defense forces and their arms, the local forces will be less capable of taking action against the national government. The British instituted a single, streamlined organizational approach to coordinating the activities of the Home Guard. A single chain of command permitted simplicity and accountability, and tight control of weapons meant that most were accounted for. 53 The French, on the other hand, did not initially have a system of control and supervision, and lacked the trained personnel necessary to adequately manage local defense forces, resulting in inconsistent field performance. They also faced grave consequences when indigenous units aligned with the FLN used French neglect and willingness to supply automatic weapons to their advantage. 54 The Soviets and their Afghan allies also lacked any institutionalized approach for monitoring militia activities and tracking the weapons provided to them. 55 The Soviets were aware of the danger and warned the Afghan government, but neither party took corrective action. As a result, it was far easier for local militias to operate unchecked.

53 Material on the chain of command was obtained from Giampietri and Stone, pp. 14-15. Material on weapons control was obtained from Komer, p. 40.
54 Horne, p. 256.
55 Giustozzi, p. 221.
The research conducted for this thesis also suggests an association between the presence of a cadre of officers qualified to work with local defense forces and a counterinsurgency outcome in which these forces do not threaten the sovereignty of the national government. The British had access to officers prepared to assume this role, which was an important asset during their counterinsurgency efforts. Conversely, the Soviets’ inexperience with counterinsurgency efforts increased the challenge of working with local defense forces. And while French officers were initially inadequately prepared for this role, the French government did improve available training programs.

The strength of the national government may also help determine the extent to which a local defense force can challenge the authority of that government. In Malaysia, the British engaged in a planned, comprehensive state-building effort, dedicated to making sure that native civil servants would be able to assume the functions of the government after the withdrawal. The establishment of police and military institutions allowed for the new Malaysian government to become the preponderant power and to maintain peace within its borders. The transition period proceeded smoothly and peacefully. In addition, the establishment of a strong, functioning government also seems to have facilitated an uneventful disarmament and demobilization process for the Home Guard once they were no longer needed. Precautions in arming Malaysian local defense forces in the first place also contributed to the disarmament process, as a smaller number or personal weapons was relatively easy to track and collect. This reduced the scale of the disarmament effort. In general, demobilization and

57 Komer, p. 41.
disarmament efforts seem to be a good indicator of the relative strength of local defense forces and the stability of states. A successful process suggests that the state planned ahead and was sufficiently strong to formally reduce the strength of local defense forces.

Unlike the British, the French did not participate in collaborative state-building in Algeria, as the country was granted full independence as part of an agreement between two warring parties, instead of two allies.\footnote{Horne, p. 531.} Nonetheless, the new Algerian government was able to establish a monopoly on force within its borders. While an unfortunate development, the ability of the government to punish those who had sided with the French during the war with little resistance demonstrated its power relative to the harki forces. The French never planned out the demobilization of the harkis, nor was the issue addressed during negotiations with the FLN. The bloody consequences of this oversight jeopardized the security of many local communities that had supported the French during the Algerian War.

This introduces an interesting caveat into the literature on local defense forces in counterinsurgencies. The concern, generally, is that a preponderance of power is necessary to protect a state from any challenge from a local defense group. However, the French experience in Algeria presents an instance in which no measures were taken to protect a local defense group from the preponderant state, resulting in tens of thousands of deaths.\footnote{Ibid, p. 538.}

The Soviet experience in Afghanistan demonstrates the consequences of a combination of a weak state and strong, offensively-oriented, well-equipped militia. The

\footnote{Horne, p. 531.}
\footnote{Ibid, p. 538.}
national Afghan government, even with Soviet support, was unable to keep the country’s powerful militias in check and prevent them from increasing their power and influence at the government’s expense or assuming key functions typically reserved for the state and traditional local authority figures. Once the government collapsed, it “paved the way for the rise of warlords” in command of their own personal militias.\textsuperscript{60} Without “any central government forces that could control or provide oversight to local defense forces, Afghanistan slipped into anarchy.” \textsuperscript{61} Amid continuous civil war, no government has achieved meaningful disarmament and demobilization.\textsuperscript{62}

Weak states and excessively strong local defense forces both contribute to national government instability. And it is logical that the two conditions exacerbate one another: strong local defense forces will likely generate more instability in the presence of weak states Depending on the state in question, a sufficiently strong militia could theoretically challenge even a well-established state, and even a relatively weak defense force could threaten a fragile government. This indicates that at least one condition is necessary, and may in some cases be sufficient. The precise threshold at which one of, or a combination of, these two factors creates national instability is beyond the scope of this thesis.

\textit{Mechanisms and Organizations for Supervising Local Defense Forces}

There seems to be an association between the extent to which governments established and maintained means of monitoring local defense forces and the reliability of these forces. For example, the Home Guard in Malaysia was tightly controlled and supervised by the national government. This may be one reason why members of the

\textsuperscript{60} Jones and Munoz, p. 44.
\textsuperscript{61} Ibid., p. 46.
\textsuperscript{62} Ibid.
Home Guard did not challenge the government’s authority. The British military maintained administrative control of local defense forces by establishing “a clear chain of command” in which officers were attached to a local police force and paid from its budget, and directly responsible for supervising the local Home Guard unit. 63 This arrangement helped to ensure that Home Guard forces were closely monitored by official police forces. 64

In Algeria, however, inconsistent means of control and monitoring generally meant inconsistent reliability. 65 Local defense forces were commanded directly by French officers. 66 These officers were usually drawn from the SAS (Special Administrative Section), or “Blue kepis,” the lead organization responsible for working with the harkis. Unfortunately, qualified SAS officers were in short supply throughout the conflict. 67 Generally, the performance of these forces depended on the individual ability of the officer to whom they were assigned. 68 Uneven qualifications among the SAS, and the general lack of a uniform, institutionalized means of monitoring and controlling harki units, translated to uneven effectiveness and reliability in the field. 69

For example, in 1956, the French were betrayed by a harki anti-guerilla unit known as Force K. 70 Even though the harki were presumably under the supervision of French officers, FLN members were able to successfully pass themselves off as loyalists and escape with French arms and equipment, despite clear warning signs that

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63 Material on chain of command was obtained from Giampietri and Stone, pp. 14-15. Material on the organization and pay of officers was obtained from Komer, p. 40.
64 Giampietri and Stone, p. 15.
65 Horne, p. 255
68 Ibid., p. 255.
69 Ibid.
70 Ibid, p. 256.
they were not who they claimed.\textsuperscript{71} It is possible that Force K was successful in its deception in part because there were no standard protocols for monitoring harki unit activities. It was only by one officer’s personal initiative that there was even any investigation of the group, and the nature of Force K’s deception was not discovered until they revealed themselves in a letter to the French forces.\textsuperscript{72}

In even greater contrast to the Home Guard, Afghan local defense forces were widely allowed to act with impunity, which made it easier for them to pursue interests contrary to those of the central government and contribute to national instability.\textsuperscript{73} Militia organizations were established by, and reported to, a variety of groups, including national government ministries and party organizations, traditional governing bodies, and warlords.\textsuperscript{74} As in Algeria, there was no clear organizational model for monitoring, coordinating with, and controlling the militias. Instead, it seems that the wide variety of militias that worked with the government were addressed on a mostly ad hoc basis.

It appears as though there was a lack of interest in adopting a formal model for working with militia forces. Most government forces “did not seem to care” about coordinating their efforts with local defense groups and declined to develop a specific approach to work with them.\textsuperscript{75} Even if there were greater interest in monitoring and controlling militia forces, the “persistent weakness and ineffectiveness of the regular

\textsuperscript{71} Material on the ability of FLM members to pass themselves off as loyalists and escape was obtained from Lorcin, p. 165. Material on the warning signs was obtained from Horne, p. 256.

\textsuperscript{72} Ibid., p. 257.

\textsuperscript{73} Giustozzi, p. 202.

\textsuperscript{74} Ibid., p. 203.

\textsuperscript{75} Giustozzi, p. 221.
forces”, and the national government as a whole rendered these activities simply unrealistic. 76

As the size and capability of militia forces grew, the Soviet advisers to the Afghan government grew increasingly concerned. In 1989, they recommended that the government take steps to mitigate the consequences of what they considered a likely mass defection among the state-supported militia. 77 Specifically, they advised that the Afghan government freeze militia recruitment and instead focus on developing regular army forces and placing them in areas controlled by the militias to establish a government presence. 78 However, the Afghan government did not heed these recommendations, and continued to increase the number and size of militias ostensibly in its employ. 79 The government’s apparent lack of interest in taking additional steps to monitor and control the militias thus made it easier for these groups to develop into a force that could challenge the central government’s sovereignty.

Professional Capacity for Operating Local Defense Forces

The experience of the British in Malaysia seems to suggest the utility of a professional capacity in establishing local defense forces that do not challenge the sovereignty of the national government. When the British organized the Home Guard, they benefited from a considerable institutional memory on the establishment of policing practices in other countries. 80 Many officers already had personal experience in local policing, and their training in the civilian aspects of counterinsurgency operations was

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76 Ibid., p. 231.
77 Ibid., p. 219.
78 Ibid.
79 Ibid.
second to none.\textsuperscript{81} For most British military personnel, the training and coordination of local defense forces was standard practice. They considered policing missions “a normal part of an active soldier’s career.” \textsuperscript{82} The professionalism with which the British viewed their unconventional responsibilities may have contributed to the orderly way in which the development, implementation, and eventual demobilization of the Home Guard unfolded.

Unlike the British, the French and the Soviets lacked a cadre of officers prepared to establish and monitor local defense forces, or to conduct counterinsurgency operations in general. However, the French and the Soviets differed in that the French eventually developed a training capacity to correct this weakness. Officer education improved after a school to train French forces deployed to Algeria was established in 1956.\textsuperscript{83} However, the French and Algerians would likely have benefitted had there already been an institution that could prepare officers for the nuances of counterinsurgency warfare. This is especially so given that, as previously mentioned, the reliability and performance of harki units largely depended on the ability of the officers under whose command they served.\textsuperscript{84} The initial approach of the French during the Algerian War was inadequate. Training materials consisted of little more than “simplistic cartoon manuals providing simple phrases in Arabic thought likely to assist the soldier in daily dealings with the native inhabitants.” \textsuperscript{85} Military personnel were

\begin{footnotes}
\item[81] Ibid.
\item[82] Ibid.
\item[83] Canuel, p. 5.
\item[84] Ibid.
\item[85] Alexander, Evans, and Keigel, p. 24.
\end{footnotes}
generally taught very little beyond “how to treat the Arab population” and how to “respect local traditions, customs, and dress.”

The Soviets, however, do not seem to have taken steps to prepare their officers for managing local defense forces. As a result, their ability to monitor and control Afghan militias suffered. The lack of Afghan and Soviet political officers in Afghanistan had a range of consequences. A lack of professionals equipped to work with and monitor local defense forces meant that “any effort at reducing their independence was clearly bound to meet huge difficulties.” It is also possible that unprepared cadre and political officers were more susceptible to defection. Instead of developing militia forces into loyal extensions of the central government, officers assigned to work with the militia were rather themselves co-opted.

Control of Local Defense Force Armament

The ability of a government to track and control the arms it provides to local defense forces reduces the probability that these weapons will fall into the hands of those most likely to use them against the national government. A sound accounting of the arms provided also facilitates the disarmament process. As previously mentioned, the British government constrained the power of Home Guard units by tightly controlling the weapons they issued to these forces. This policy seems to have resulted in positive results: two years after the organization of the Home Guard, only nine weapons were unaccounted for. Again, all prospective Home Guard members were required to

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86 Ibid.
87 Giustozzi, p. 231
88 Ibid., p. 221.
89 Ibid., 231
90 Giampietri and Stone, p. 15.
91 Ibid.
pass through a three phase training program, and it was only in the final phase that guards could be armed. This practice allowed the British to be more selective about the individuals to whom they issued weapons, decreasing the chances that these arms would be used against them and limiting the amount of force that could be exerted by Home Guard units.

The French displayed much more lax control over the weapons they provided to the harki units, at least initially. They were even willing to provide them with rifles and automatic weapons, despite some misgivings. However, the Force K incident demonstrated that such misgivings might be well-placed. The unit, despite its suspicious behavior, requested and received 300 rifles and sub-machine guns from the French government without hesitation or means of oversight. And by the time the French realized the truth, Force K was already scheduled to be supplied with mortars to complement their automatic weapons and rifles. Six hundred members of the group ultimately escaped French reprisals with weapons and military equipment. This was an important lesson to the French about limiting the size and armament of local defense forces and one that should be remembered today. The consequences of Force K’s defection might have been considerably less if the group had fewer members and less firepower. After this incident, the French “would be rather more cautious about doling out weapons” and would be less inclined to trust the harkis in general. The harki units,

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92 Komer, p. 41.
93 Horne, p. 256.
94 Ibid.
95 Horne, p. 257.
97 Horne, p. 257.
as mentioned earlier, would henceforth only be provided with shotguns and pistols, if any armament at all.

Indeed, the French seem to have eventually developed at least some capacity for monitoring and tracking the weapons issued to harki units after this incident. This was evidenced by their ability to disarm harki forces following the conflict.\textsuperscript{98} However, it is notable that the French often relied upon deception to recover these weapons, rather than any sort of systematized approach to controlling and recalling arms.\textsuperscript{99} In some cases, French units were forced to lie to harki forces, and to convince them to turn in their weapons on the promise that they would be replaced with superior armament. The French would then “sneak away in the middle of the night.”\textsuperscript{100} The abandoned harki were thus left defenseless against government reprisals.\textsuperscript{101}

The Soviets, on the other hand, did not seem to have a means of keeping track of the weapons provided to local defense forces in Afghanistan at all.\textsuperscript{102} There does not seem to be an official record of the number and status of the weapons delivered to Afghanistan through Soviet efforts. The total number of weapons shipped to Afghanistan between 1980 and 1992, not only from the Soviet Union but also the United States, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan, is hard to approximate.\textsuperscript{103} However, it is estimated that “by the early 1990s two million weapons were circulating inside Afghanistan, including thousands of heavy ones.”\textsuperscript{104} A lack of oversight meant that many of these

\textsuperscript{98} Ibid., p. 538
\textsuperscript{99} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{100} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{101} Alexander and Evans, p. 128.
\textsuperscript{102} For example, in the literature produced by Giustozzi, Jones and Munoz, and Tepperman, there is no evidence of any such system.
\textsuperscript{103} Giustozzi, p.245.
\textsuperscript{104} Ibid, p.246.
weapons were unaccounted for, allowing militias to use them as they saw fit, even in the pursuit of interests that compromised national stability and helped lead to civil war. The Soviets therefore literally provided the militias with the tools they needed to establish bases of power independent of the weakening central government, without establishing a means of revoking these tools if they went astray. The British and eventually the French were able to regain control of the weapons they provided and thereby keep their respective local defense forces in check. But the seemingly unregulated proliferation of weapons in Afghanistan weakened the power of the central government relative to the militias, compromising its monopoly on violence. With the eventual collapse of the Afghan government, weapons became the only guarantee of protection. Their possession effectively determined the distribution of power in Afghanistan.

*General Capacity of the National Government*

In Malaysia and Algeria, new indigenous governments were sufficiently strong that their respective local defense forces did not pose a threat to national stability. However, this strength manifested itself in different ways. In Malaysia, the British focused on increasing state capacity, particularly the military and formal police forces. By 1949, the number of police officers increased from 9,000 to 50,000, and in 1954, there were 67,000. The British also worked to create a professional Malayan civil service, training Malayans to “replace district police officers, infantry company

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105 Jones and Munoz, p. 46.
106 Ibid., p. 81.
107 Giustozzi, p. 246.
108 MacDonald, p. 20.
commanders and mid-level civil servants.” 109 Efforts to establish a Malayan civil service and a strong administrative structure helped to ensure a smooth transition marked by stability. By the time the new independent Malayan government was elected into office, “all 106,600 positions within the Civil Service were filled by Malayans.” 110 The British therefore created a central Malaysian government that had the capacity to manage the post-conflict transition process and establish a monopoly on the use of force, assuming the security roles that had previously been delegated to the Home Guard and gradually demobilizing these units.

In Algeria, on the other hand, the French did not participate in any efforts to establish or strengthen indigenous institutions. Instead, Algeria was simply granted independence at the Evian Accords in 1962. The new government was nonetheless able to establish itself as the nation’s preponderant power, but in marked contrast to the Malaysian experience, this was a bloody affair. At the conclusion of the war, while 68,000 harki soldiers were able to escape to France between April and August 1962, tens of thousands more were left behind and killed in government-supported purges. 111 For the new government, these massacres were considered an assertion of the sovereignty, power, and authority of the new Algerian state. 112

Unlike its counterparts in the Algerian and Malaysian cases, the Afghan central government was not strong enough to maintain its sovereignty and control the militias. Instead, militias gradually increased in power and assumed additional functions traditionally reserved for the state. Warlords seized control of large swaths of the

109 Ibid.
110 Ibid.
111 Alexander, Evans, and Keiger, p. 25.
112 Evans, p. 128.
country’s rural areas, taxing local populations in addition to providing security.\footnote{Ibid.} With the warlords firmly in control of these territories, it was difficult for the state to expand its authority outside of urban areas.\footnote{Tepperman, p. 49} At the same time, increasing militia violence also threatened local populations and the stability and reputation of the regime, which was predicated in part on its ability to provide its citizens a peaceful life.\footnote{Giustozzi, p. 227}

By 1984, Soviet advisers expressed concern that the growing role of the Afghan militias risked the creation of a “state within a state.”\footnote{Ibid., p. 213.} Several advisers believed that these militias were not trustworthy and presented a considerable risk to the sovereignty of the Afghan government.\footnote{Ibid.} But when the Supreme Army Command attempted to reassert its authority over the militias in December 1989, it was unsuccessful.\footnote{Ibid.}

Demobilization and Disarmament

There is also an association between successful demobilization and disarmament of local defense forces and national stability. In Malaysia and Algeria, respectively, the Home Guard and harki self-defense units were demobilized and disarmed, although the processes in these two cases were rather different. In Malaysia the Home Guard was gradually demobilized largely without incident once the security situation improved.\footnote{Giampietri and Stone, p.15.} This was because of the planned, gradual, measured process adopted by the British and the success of their broader military efforts.\footnote{Komer, p. 41.} After reaching its peak of 152,000 in 1955, the size of the organization began to be scaled down as

\footnote{113 Ib} \footnote{114 Tepperman, p. 49} \footnote{115 Giustozzi, p. 227} \footnote{116 Ibid., p. 213.} \footnote{117 Ibid.} \footnote{118 Ibid.} \footnote{119 Giampietri and Stone, p.15.} \footnote{120 Komer, p. 41.}
early as the following year. By 1958 membership was already reduced to 68,000 men.\textsuperscript{121} The government’s tight control over the weapons issued to local defense forces also facilitated disarmament and demobilization.\textsuperscript{122}

Unlike the Malaysia case, however, it appears there was no formal plan in place regarding the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of the harki fighters in Algeria. During the Evian Accords, the two parties to the conflict never reached any resolution on the fate of those Algerians who had sided with the French.\textsuperscript{123} At the local level some ALN leaders indicated a willingness to reach reconciliation with the harki and incorporate them into local police forces.\textsuperscript{124} But ultimately, the demobilization of the harki units at the end of 1961 only left them vulnerable to reprisals by the new Algerian government and their fellow citizens.\textsuperscript{125} The harkis were also prevented from fleeing to France, and in some cases were even sent back to Algeria.\textsuperscript{126} Contrary to what one might expect, a failure to plan for the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of harki units did not threaten national stability, but instead proved costly to the security of communities under harki protection.

In Afghanistan, there were no disarmament and demobilization efforts at all before the American intervention in 2001. The conflict in Afghanistan did not end with the Soviet withdrawal or the collapse of its client government in Kabul. Rather, these developments only facilitated violence and civil war, as militias formerly allied with the Afghan state pursued their own interests, armed with weapons that the government

\textsuperscript{121} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{122} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{123} Evans, p. 125.
\textsuperscript{124} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{125} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{126} Ibid., p. 127.
could not repossess.\textsuperscript{127} The continuing war discouraged locals from surrendering the weapons they believed they needed simply for their own protection, undermining the potential effectiveness of any disarmament and demobilization program.\textsuperscript{128} In Algeria and Malaysia, the indigenous governments were able to roll back their respective local defense forces one way or another, limiting their potential to threaten the authority of the central government. In Afghanistan, however, the weak Afghan government lacked the means to establish order and conduct a demobilization and disarmament process.\textsuperscript{129} This permitted militias to act with even greater autonomy.

Chapter 4: Popular Support for and Legitimacy of Local Defense Forces and National Governments

Findings

Grounding local defense forces in traditional institutions can be useful, but is not necessary for establishing a balance between local security and national stability. There seems to have been a history of local defense forces in Malaysia, and the Home Guard as a whole was considered a successful program. But there is little evidence that the former actually contributed to the latter. The harki units did not originate from traditional institutions either, but this did not seem to prevent Algerians from viewing these forces as legitimate and signing up en masse. It is quite possible, as will be detailed below, that Algerians became members of harki units for reasons other than legitimacy, such as self-interest, and many likely did. But if anything, this demonstrates that legitimacy is not the sole, and perhaps not even the primary, determinant of allegiance. However, British and French recruitment did benefit from the loyalty to traditional institutions.

\textsuperscript{127} Jones and Munoz, p. 46.
\textsuperscript{128} Ibid., p. 81.
\textsuperscript{129} Ibid., p. 46.
The Soviet experience offers the only evidence of a link between traditional institutions and the provision of local security and national stability. Soviet efforts to recruit and administer local defense forces were not as successful as they might have been because they were not based in traditional institutions. As a result, they were not trusted by the local population, undermining the intelligence-gathering appeal of local defense forces and the primary purpose of counterinsurgency: securing the allegiance of the population. In addition, because warlords are not rooted in traditional institutions, they are free to pursue their own personal ambitions, which may extend beyond the borders of a single community and threaten national stability. However, that Afghanistan is the only case in which there is evidence of a relationship may indicate that this is a factor that varies from case to case, and is not a universal principle.

A more promising factor is the presence of pre-existing loyalties. The degree of loyalty commanded by the government in question at the outset of the insurgency correlates with an outcome in which local defense forces remain loyal and the national government remains stable. In Malaysia, the majority of the local population flocked to the defense of what remained a stable government, and the Home Guard was generally loyal and reliable. France also enjoyed the support of the majority of Algeria’s population, although some supported the regime because of the material incentives offered by the government instead of genuine allegiance. There were a few incidents of betrayal, but nothing that threatened the stability of the government. The Soviet-backed government in Afghanistan, on the other hand, did not command any actual loyalty, and had to buy its supporters and allies. A possible explanation for this apparent association is the strength of the government itself. Large segments of the general population may

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130 Ibid., p. 44.
have supported the governments in Algeria and Malaysia *because* they were strong. Either a regime’s strength or its popularity could act as a deterrent against potentially rebellious local defense forces.

In all three cases, the government attempted to broaden and secure the allegiance of the recruitment base for local defense forces, and by extension, its own appeal and legitimacy. The British were able to win the support of Malaysia’s ethnic Chinese minority. France and the Soviet-backed Afghan government offered material incentives to potential recruits and supporters. While this may have attracted individuals with no particular fondness for either government, it was still effective in denying insurgents the popular support on which they rely. However, all three governments made similar attempts to develop popular legitimacy and recruit new stakeholders for their local defense forces, and yet experienced rather different results. This would seem to suggest that while this practice may be a necessary condition for balancing local security and national stability (although there is little evidence to suggest such a relationship) it is certainly not sufficient.

*Traditional Institutions*

In both Malaysia and Afghanistan, the British and the Soviets attempted to harness the legitimacy of traditional institutions to bolster the effectiveness of local defense forces and the increased loyalty of the general population from which their ranks were drawn. This latter benefit decreases the likelihood that local defense forces would challenge the authority of the central government. In Malaysia, local defense organizations “had a long history” in villages, where they were used to fight crime. ¹³¹

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¹³¹ Giampietri and Stone, p.13.
The British also benefited from Malaysia’s traditional social institutions.\textsuperscript{132} Because they enjoyed the loyalty of the Malaysian royalty, the British could “count on the loyalty of 40-49 percent of the total population” who were themselves “devoutly loyal to their individual sultans.” \textsuperscript{133}

The Afghan government and their Soviet sponsors also attempted to harness traditional forms of authority. To the extent to which they were successful, they were able to increase the legitimacy and effectiveness of local defense militias. The Soviets attempted to establish a range of tribal forces, mostly under direct control of the Afghan Ministry of Interior and officially sanctioned in March 1983 by a jirga, or a tribal council, in Kabul, but their effectiveness was limited by the fact that they were not seen as legitimate by the population at large.\textsuperscript{134} On the other hand, defense forces based directly on institutions like the arbakai, a traditional form of community policing, proved effective in maintaining peace and fighting crime in local villages.\textsuperscript{135} Militias based on traditional forms of authority, instead of answering to warlords, were also less likely to pursue interests detrimental to national stability.\textsuperscript{136} Renewing traditional forms of authority and organization might have also made it easier to manage these groups. Antonio Giustozzi indicates that the Afghan government may have encouraged local defense groups to rediscover their tribal and ethnic identities in order to make them less difficult to control.\textsuperscript{137}

\textsuperscript{133} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{134} Jones and Munoz, p. 44.
\textsuperscript{135} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{137} Giustozzi, p. 230.
While these two cases demonstrate some of the benefits of basing local defense forces in traditional institutions, the extent to which this practice had an effect on maintaining national stability is not clear. That the British and the Soviets ultimately experienced such different results in their local defense force efforts would suggest that this factor might be a necessary, but not sufficient factor for striking a balance between local security and national stability.

With regards to Algeria, it does not seem as though the French capitalized on any pre-existing traditional forms of local defense. However, some did join the harki units because of tribe or clan affiliations and loyalties, allying with the French when their tribal and clan leaders decided to do so.138

Pre-Existing Loyalties

There is also an association between the loyalty of the general population to the central government and the development of local defense forces that did not pose a threat to government authority. Again, this may be because a more loyal recruitment base would make local defense forces less likely to challenge the central government’s monopoly on violence. In Malaysia and Algeria, it seems that the government enjoyed the loyalty of the majority of the local population, while this was not the case in Afghanistan.

In Malaysia, the British were able to maintain the loyalty of the vast majority of the population, which viewed the government as legitimate. During the Emergency, most Malays not only refused to participate in the insurgency, but many actively fought against it, “rallying to the government” and joining the ranks of the home guards, police

forces, and the military. And in Algeria, recruitment among the harkis, and the indigenous population in general, seems to indicate the popular legitimacy of the French regime. By the end of the war, over 180,000 harkis had fought on the French side. This was greater than the number of Algerians who fought on the side of the FLN, who ultimately only mobilized half that number. Some sided with the French because of the material incentives for doing so, but many Algerians genuinely “saw themselves as French and found it impossible to identify with the Algerian nation.”

In Afghanistan, the use of tribal militias by the national government in lieu of a formal army was a practice with a long history in Afghanistan. However, the effectiveness of this policy, and the likelihood it would result in militia defection, depended in part on the reputation of the government. Unlike the ruling governments in Algeria and Malaysia, the Karmal regime “could not count on the loyalty of the militia” without paying for it. The more tenuous basis of militia loyalty in Afghanistan may partially explain why these local defense forces ultimately challenged the sovereignty of the central government, while those in Algeria and Malaysia did not.

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141 Ibid.
142 Evans, p. 123.
144 Ibid.
145 Ibid.
Efforts to Secure Local Defense Force Loyalty to the National Government

Throughout the conflicts assessed in each case study, the counterinsurgents attempted to maintain the loyalty of the local defense forces they organized. Generally, national governments adopted two types of approaches. The first was to appeal to perceived legitimacy of the ruling government. The second was to entice local defense forces with material incentives. The British adopted the first approach while the Soviets adopted the latter. The French would employ both strategies.

In Algeria, the French attempted to win the hearts and minds of the population, and by extension, maintain the allegiance of the harki units. The government presented itself as the legitimate alternative to the FLN, which was “routinely represented as crazed animals and criminals.” The French government also bolstered its public appeal by claiming that it was “building a new society based on equality.” For example, in 1958, Charles de Gaulle promised social, political, and economic reforms that would benefit Algerian Muslims. The French also used the local defense forces themselves to attempt to secure the allegiance of the Algerian population. The recruitment of the harkis added legitimacy to the French cause, putting “a native face on the French Army.” For the French, harki involvement in providing for their own security “would give them a stake in the outcome of the conflict: “the native population would see victory over the FLN as their victory too.”

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146 Evans, p. 123
147 Ibid.
148 Ibid., p. 120
149 Ibid.
150 Ibid.
151 Peterson, p. 33.
152 Ibid.
The British generally enjoyed the loyalty of the Malaysia population. This allowed them to focus on securing the allegiance of ethnic minorities, particularly the Chinese, who were the most likely to side with the insurgents.\textsuperscript{153} The British correctly believed that involving ethnic Chinese in the counterinsurgency effort would to help win their loyalty.\textsuperscript{154} This paralleled French efforts to use local defense forces to win the allegiance of the Algerian general population. Allowing the Chinese to play an increasing role in the Home Guard and providing them with access to weapons and training, “strengthened the government and improved its legitimacy in the eyes of the ethnic Chinese minority,” as it linked them directly with the local government.\textsuperscript{155}

In Afghanistan, however, attempts to win the political and ideological allegiance of militias were generally unsuccessful.\textsuperscript{156} Unable to rely upon allegiance based on genuine feelings of loyalty, the Afghan government offered a salary “six times that of a regular army soldier…and an exemption from conscription in the Army.”\textsuperscript{157} The government also promised militia leaders full autonomy in their territories, weapons and military equipment, and government positions.\textsuperscript{158} Other advantages included commodities such as electricity and televisions.\textsuperscript{159} The government’s success in “transforming militia membership into a popular job” created a recruitment boom.\textsuperscript{160} The

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\textsuperscript{154} Newsinger, p. 54.
\textsuperscript{155} MacDonald, p.14.
\textsuperscript{156} Giustozzi, p. 221.
\textsuperscript{157} Tepperman, p. 48
\textsuperscript{158} Ibid., p. 14.
\textsuperscript{159} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{160} Ibid.
French also offered material incentives for joining the harki units. These included “better food, passes for free movement, and local status.” 161

When material incentives are offered, however, it raises the risk of attracting members more interested in material goods than defending their communities. 162 Ultimately, what the French lost as a result of undependable defense forces was more or less offset by the contribution of those who remained dedicated and loyal. 163 As in Algeria, there were times when Afghan militias proved unreliable or even disloyal. 164 The factors that made membership appealing attracted “large numbers of peasants who did not want to work the land and did not fight very actively, if they fought at all.” 165

Nonetheless, the Afghanistan case demonstrated that there are benefits to a relationship between a government and local defense forces based on patronage. 166 While many groups may have allied with the government out of pure self-interest, some ultimately found their fates bound to that of the state as they became dependent on its support. 167 Thus, while the expansion of the militias in the government’s employ gained the state “few sincere friends and many ‘spongers’” it nonetheless increased the links between the government and the general population, which made insurgent activities more difficult. 168

161 Kalyvas, p. 1052.
162 Evans, p. 121.
163 Horne, p. 258.
164 Giustozzi, p. 211.
165 Ibid.
166 Ibid., p. 217.
167 Ibid.
168 Ibid., p. 216.
Chapter 5: Policy Implications and Recommendations

Policy Implications

A Balance Between Local Security and National Authority Will Produce Superior Results

This paper has several key implications for U.S. policy in Afghanistan and the policy of any country that intends to use local defense forces as part of its counterinsurgency efforts. The first is that too much central government involvement, or too little, can have a negative effect on local defense forces.\textsuperscript{169} If the United States and its allies in Afghanistan want the new local police forces to improve security in villages across the country, be seen as legitimate by local populations, and not pose a threat to the authority of the central government, they must pursue a balanced relationship between local forces and the national government.

Local Defense Forces Will Be a Riskier Option Where They Are Needed Most

As is the case in Afghanistan today, these types of forces have generally only been used when the central government is not sufficiently strong to provide security to protect the general population. However, as demonstrated by the Soviet experience in Afghanistan during the 1980s, this weakness in capacity is one of the primary conditions under which local defense forces are most likely to turn against the government. As such, the best way to mitigate risk is to follow the example of the British and the French and limit the strength of local defense forces and to attempt to increase the capabilities of the national government’s security institutions as quickly as possible.

Local Defense Force Armament Must Be Limited

Another implication is that regardless of the circumstances, the types of weapons provided to local defense forces must be limited. As seen in Afghanistan during the

\textsuperscript{169} Jones and Munoz, p. 50.
1980s, when presented with assault and heavy weapons, defense forces will tempted to use them for their intended purpose – the projection of power and seizure of territories. This increases the capacity of local defense forces to challenge the authority of the government and jeopardize national stability. Even if local defense forces are generally trustworthy, if even one group defects, as demonstrated by the French experience with Force K, the results can be destructive and embarrassing.

There May Be Reprisals against Participants in Local Police Programs

The experience of the harkis during the Algerian War highlights the risk of reprisal for local defense forces that side with counterinsurgents. Undoubtedly, in Afghanistan members of the Local Police Programs will be targeted by Al-Qaeda, the Taliban, and other terrorist and insurgent organizations. However, the United States and its allies should consider taking steps to protect Local Police Force officers from reprisals should the mission in Afghanistan fail and the Taliban, or a group like it, once again comes into power. The harki massacres ultimately proved an embarrassment for the French, and the United States and its allies would be wise not to repeat their mistakes.

The Current Lack of Loyalty to President Karzai is a Bad Sign

As indicated by the experience of the Soviets and the Afghan government during the War in Afghanistan in the 1980s, efforts at building loyalty and legitimacy may not prove very fruitful if an individual or organization does not already enjoy the support of the general population. For President Karzai, this means that while he should not necessarily abandon efforts to bolster his popularity among Afghanistan’s public, he must be wary of the fact that the lack of loyalty to the national government, and to him
specifically, raises the risk that local defense forces will turn against him. However, President Karzai seems at least somewhat aware of this, as evidenced by his insistence that, among other conditions, the new Local Police Forces be tightly controlled by the Interior Ministry.

**Paid Local Defense Forces Have Risks and Benefits**

The allegiance of a paid employee can occasionally be bought, whereas someone who fights for honor or prestige, or a sense of fighting for a worthy cause cannot be so easily compromised.\(^{170}\) In Malaysia, because the British enjoyed the loyalty of most of the general population, they did not have to rely as heavily upon material incentives as the French and the Soviets. With some exceptions, Home Guard consisted primarily of part-time volunteers. This not only saved valuable resources, but also may have resulted in fewer incidents of defection. But there are disadvantages to a volunteer force as well. Ultimately, members of a local defense force require a livelihood, and if the government does not pay them, they may seek that livelihood elsewhere. For example, in Afghanistan, militias supplemented their income by setting up toll booths and taxing local populations.\(^{171}\) In addition, paying local defense forces gives them an additional stake in the government, as they come to rely upon it.

**Policy Recommendations**

**Signs are Hopeful for Afghan Local Police Forces, But Formal Control and Monitoring Mechanisms Must Be Put in Place, and Law Enforcement Professionals Trained**

Accordingly

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\(^{171}\) Tepperman, p. 49.
Based on the analysis of the historical cases, it appears that the current Local Police Forces are set up to do many things correctly. They will report to the district police chief and receive pay, uniforms, and ammunition from the Interior Ministry.\textsuperscript{172} This will make it easier for the government to monitor and control local defense force activities. Members will also be vetted by tribal elders and be drawn from local communities. They will also be strictly defensive, bound to their communities and denied the means to project any power beyond that.\textsuperscript{173} These factors make it less likely that the Local Police Forces will have the incentives or the means to challenge the national government’s monopoly on violence. Biometrics and lower pay will also help prevent the abuses seen in the Algerian and Afghan cases.\textsuperscript{174} Lower pay than the official police and armed services will make the Local Police Forces less appealing to those who simply intend to avoid serving with one of these services, as was sometimes the case in Algeria and Afghanistan. In addition biometrics will make it more difficult for criminals, insurgents, and terrorists to infiltrate local defense forces as members of the FLN did during the Algerian War.\textsuperscript{175}

However, militias established in the 1980s were linked with the Interior Ministry as well, and there is still room for improvement. In order to avoid the mistakes of the past, the district chief responsible for monitoring Local Police Forces should undergo a training program jointly designed by the governments of the United States and Afghanistan to prepare him for this task. A formal process should also be created for evaluating Local Police Forces and tracking their activities.

\textsuperscript{172} Naylor.
\textsuperscript{173} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{174} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{175} Ibid.
Arm Local Police Forces with Pistols and Shotguns

At present, members of the Local Police Forces are expected to provide their own weapons. However, this may be unnecessary. In Malaysia and Algeria, local defense forces were armed with pistols and shotguns, primarily defensive weapons, largely without incident. This will place an additional burden on the state, which will have to purchase these weapons and keep track of them at all times. However, providing local defense forces with arms will increase their capacity to defend themselves and their communities. Given that insurgents have access to weapons like the AK-47 assault rifle and rocket propelled grenades, it is understandable that members of the Local Police Forces would wish to arm themselves with more potent arms than pistols and shotguns. They should be allowed and perhaps even encouraged to procure these weapons for themselves if they wish. But by issuing only pistols and shotguns, the Afghan government can establish a baseline level for Local Police Force firepower without contributing significantly to their capacity to disrupt stability on a regional or national scale. As demonstrated the Malaysia and Algeria cases, local defense forces with limited armament may be less likely to challenge government authority, or at least less capable of doing so.

While Local Police Forces Should Be Administered by the Interior Ministry, this Should Be Downplayed to the Extent Possible

The historical case study of Afghanistan demonstrated that in some instances, an association with what is considered to be an illegitimate government can compromise the ability of a local defense force to win the trust and cooperation of the local population. Given the unpopularity of the Karzai regime, current efforts to establish local
defense forces in Afghanistan could be in jeopardy if they are perceived as too closely associated with the central government. Tight control and monitoring by the national government is necessary in order to help keep local defense forces in check. However, this association must be downplayed to the extent possible in order to help ensure that local villages do not simply perceive Local Police Forces as yet another arm of a corrupt national government. It may be prudent, for example, to allow members to identify themselves by means other than government-issued uniforms. In addition, Local Police Forces should consider adopting community policing practices as a means of strengthening ties between themselves, formal law enforcement agencies, and the communities that they serve.

**Ultimately, Local Police Forces Are Not a Permanent Solution, and Increasing the Capacity of the State’s Security Institutions Must Remain a Top Priority**

If Local Police Forces are successful, it may be tempting to keep them in place indefinitely to provide security for Afghanistan’s remote rural areas. However, if left unchecked by a strong government, local defense forces may grow and assume functions generally reserved for the state. This is ultimately what came to pass in Afghanistan in the 1980s. The Local Police Forces must be viewed as a temporary solution to stabilize contended areas of Afghanistan long enough for the government to assert its control. In this regard, the United States should continue follow the example of the British in Malaysia, and focus on building the capacity of the central government and create the conditions for a successful demobilization and disarmament process.

Efforts to strengthen the government’s security institutions must remain a primary priority. Ironically, based upon the research collected for this project, one of the ideal
conditions for creating a balance between local security and national stability is the establishment of a strong national government, which generally renders local defense forces obsolete. Nonetheless, a strong government will help to prevent an imbalance like the one that developed during the 1980s that facilitated civil war. The sooner that Afghanistan’s government can assume the functions of the local police forces, the better.

Chapter 6: Topics for Future Study

The Local Police Forces currently being established in Afghanistan present an excellent opportunity, not only to help bolster security at the local level in underserved areas, but also to learn from the mistakes of the past. Governments have used local defense forces in a large number of counterinsurgency campaigns in one way or another, and yet the amount of scholarship devoted to them remains rather limited.

This thesis demonstrates that the size, role, and armament of local defense forces can be a decisive factor in whether they ultimately prove to be counterproductive. Just as important is the capacity of the government to keep these forces in check, monitor their activities, and eventually guide them through a demobilization and disarmament process once they have served their purposes. Popular support is also somewhat important, while traditional institutions do not seem to be a decisive factor. However, this may simply be another indicator of the importance of a strong government in creating a balance between local security and national stability. Another significant consideration is whether the government has the personnel it needs to establish a balanced working relationship with the local defense force.
However, some questions remain unanswered. This paper seems to support the principle that limited local defense forces and strong governments generally lead to steady relationships that allow for local security and national stability. However, it is difficult to know how strong is too strong, or how limited is too limited. This likely varies on a case by case basis, but a larger study making use of more than four case studies might provide greater precision.

Another consideration is the loyalty of a population to a government. Whether it is driven by a sense that the government is legitimate, a perception of the strength of the government, or simply self-interest is important. Understanding the drivers of loyalty can help a government to identify the right incentives to encourage populations to accept local defense forces, and to discourage these forces from turning against them.

This thesis also focused on the constraints placed on local defense forces, to the general exclusion of the factors that might induce local defense forces to rebel. An analysis of the presence of these factors in each of the case studies selected for this thesis and their influence, or lack thereof, on local defense forces would further the work presented in this paper. However, with regard to implications for policy, an approach focusing on constraints on local defense force activities instead of the incentives that motivate them may be a more efficient use of resources, given the wide range of potential incentives that can induce rebellion.¹⁷⁶

Finally, this thesis raised a new issue for this field. To date, the preoccupation of most governments has been the protection of their own sovereignty and authority in the face of local defense forces that, albeit temporarily, assume the state’s responsibility for

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providing protection. However, there does not seem to be any literature that considers the importance of protecting members of local defense groups from a strong state should they end up on the losing side. If the United States and its allies do not want to be responsible for another harki massacre, they should strongly consider taking measures to protect those who were willing to take a risk by siding with them.
Bibliography

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