

# Enforcing Legitimacy

Perspectives on the Relationship between Intervening  
Armed Forces and the Local Population in Afghanistan

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### **Abstract**

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Bolstering local perceptions of legitimacy in armed intervention has emerged as an important feature of increasingly complex international peace and statebuilding efforts. Yet, previous research has only begun to explore what local legitimacy entails to those involved in, and affected by, armed intervention. This dissertation advances an understanding of local legitimacy as a perception-based, relational phenomenon. Through this lens, it examines armed intervention in Afghanistan (2001-2014). In particular, this dissertation studies how the relationship between Afghan citizens and intervening armed forces interacts with, and shapes, perspectives on local legitimacy held by the main 'interveners' and those 'intervened upon'. This dissertation consists of an introduction, which situates the study in a wider context, and four essays. Beginning with the organizational perspectives of the main intervening actors in Afghanistan, Essay I finds that the UN and NATO initially conceptualized problems of local legitimacy as principally the consequence of a fragile Afghan state, and not as failings of the intervention. When negative dimensions of intervention became increasingly recognized, principal responsibility for the legitimacy process shifted away from intervening authorities and onto the Afghan state. Similarly, Essay II shows how key U.S. military doctrine, over time, reconceptualized the formal duty of intervening forces in the local legitimacy process, ultimately considering it contingent on, and subordinate to, the will and capabilities of host-state authorities and the local population. Turning thereafter to firsthand accounts from the field, Essay III and Essay IV together contrast personal perspectives on the intervention held by U.S. Army Officers and Afghan citizens. Essay III finds that personal experiences of noncombat contact with Afghans reinforced the Officers' sense of duty toward the local population. Conversely, Essay IV suggests that the local legitimacy of intervening forces became increasingly contested among Afghans, due largely to the perceived intensification of foreign intrusion on 'everyday' life. Taken together, the findings of this dissertation lay the foundation for the development of a new concept, the host-citizen contract. In so doing, it provides a social contract framework to better understand the complex dynamics of local legitimacy in Afghanistan, and beyond.

*Keywords:* armed intervention, local legitimacy, Afghanistan, intervening armed forces, military, local population, perceptions, soldiers, ISAF, noncombat contact, peace operations, peacekeeping, military doctrine, contact theory, fieldwork

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*To Margot and Anders*

I can fly, my friends



# List of Essays

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Essay II: Karlborg, Lisa. 2015. "The Ambiguous Host-citizen Contract: An Evolving Notion of Duty in the U.S. Military Quest for Local Legitimacy." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 38(10): 864–84.

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Today, I look forward to the new chapter in my life, and all the delicious ambiguity it holds in store. On that note, for anyone about to finalize a dissertation, I highly recommend falling madly in love. I promise, the heart wins over the mind every time. And at once, all is right with the world.

To Daniel, a most delightful distraction – and the love of my life.

Lisa Karlborg  
Uppsala, October 2015



# Introduction

In the past decade, the quest for local legitimacy in the context of armed intervention has become a principal concern for policymakers, practitioners and scholars alike. Since the deployment of the first international peacekeeping operations in the 1950s, the legitimacy of armed intervention has been widely argued as crucial to mission success. Contemporary armed intervention has become synonymous with complex peace and statebuilding endeavors that aim to transform the relationship between the host state and its citizens. Consequently, they call upon intervening armed forces to (re)build a legitimate social contract between host-state authorities and the local population; a social contract that is viable without the presence of intervening forces (Newman et al. 2009; Paris and Sisk 2009). In this context, bolstering local perceptions of legitimacy is of the highest strategic value to foreign troops that deploy to host nations. It is now widely assumed that unless the local population perceives the armed intervention—and the reforms and host-state authorities it supports—as legitimate, intervening forces will ultimately fail (Berdal 2009; Whalan 2013). Thereby, the objective of local legitimacy has relocated the relationship between host citizens and intervening forces from the periphery to the center of military operations.<sup>1</sup> This transformation has culminated with the recent internationalized armed intervention in Afghanistan. In the lead field manual for intervening forces, it is stipulated that, “if a population does not see outside forces as legitimate, this can undermine the legitimacy of the host-nation government” (U.S. Army and Marine Corps 2014, 1-31).

Despite its assumed centrality, the phenomenon of local legitimacy remains underexplored. Conceptually, the literature lacks a coherent idea of what local legitimacy entails for host citizens and key intervening actors. Theoretically, there is limited insight to how armed intervention—and the relationship between host citizens and intervening forces, in particular—shape understandings of local legitimacy. Empirically, there is a lack of qualitative insights across perspectives held by the local population and key intervening actors at different levels of the armed intervention. This gap is particularly prevalent at the micro-level, where firsthand empirical accounts are scarce.

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<sup>1</sup> In the United Nations “Capstone Doctrine”, which outlines key principles and guidelines for UN peacekeepers, it is stated that a mission must be “perceived as legitimate and credible, particularly in the eyes of the local population” in order to succeed (United Nations 2008, 36).

To address these lacunas in the literature, this dissertation is a study of local legitimacy from *inside* armed intervention.<sup>2</sup> It advances an understanding of local legitimacy as grounded in perceptions, and as such a dynamic and *relational* phenomenon. In so doing, this study sets out to explore perspectives on local legitimacy held by the local population and key intervening actors. In particular, it focuses on the relationship between host citizens and intervening forces. To this end, the dissertation is guided by the overarching research question, *how does the relationship between the local population and intervening forces interact with, and shape, perspectives on local legitimacy in armed intervention?*

In four separate essays, this dissertation draws on the case of internationalized armed intervention in Afghanistan. It presents a fine-grained empirical examination of perspectives on local legitimacy held by Afghan citizens, as host citizens, as well as the United Nations (UN), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the U.S. Armed Forces and U.S. Army Officers, as the key intervening actors.

To give a brief overview, the dissertation begins at the macro-level with an examination of organizational perspectives of the main intervening actors. Essay I finds that the UN and NATO initially conceptualized problems of local legitimacy as chiefly the consequence of a fragile Afghan state, not as failings of the intervention itself. Over time, as the presence of intervening forces was increasingly recognized as problematic, primary responsibility for the legitimacy process shifted from the intervening actors onto the Afghan state. Similarly, Essay II shows how the principal military presence in Afghanistan, the U.S. military, reconceptualized the main role, and duty, of intervening forces in the process of bolstering local legitimacy. Ultimately, the influence of intervening forces was conceived as contingent on, and subordinate to, the will and capability of the host state and the local population.

The study then turns to the micro-level, where it explores firsthand accounts from the field. Essay III and Essay IV together contrast personal perspectives on the intervention held by U.S. Army Officers and Afghan citizens. Resonating with findings at the macro-level, Essay III finds that the U.S. Officers grew increasingly critical of armed intervention, and its impact on local legitimacy. Simultaneously, findings suggest that personal experiences of non-combat contact with Afghans shaped a stronger sense of duty toward the Afghan people. Conversely, Essay IV finds that the legitimacy of intervening forces grew increasingly contested in the eyes of Afghan citizens, largely due to the perceived intensification of foreign intrusion on 'everyday' life.

By analyzing the phenomenon of local legitimacy at different levels of analysis, and from the perspectives held by the 'intervener', as well those 'intervened upon' (Gelot and Söderbaum 2011), the findings of each essay are mutually complimentary. Through 'top-down' perspectives, it is possible

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<sup>2</sup> This phrasing is inspired by Clark (2003).

to gain an understanding of the inner logics of the recent pursuit of legitimacy in armed intervention, while ‘bottom-up’ perspectives provide insights to how the implementation of such efforts were, in fact, perceived on the ground. Thus, the joint empirical findings of this dissertation provide clues as to why recent armed intervention in Afghanistan, on the whole, appears to have been largely ineffective in creating a sovereign Afghan state and delivering a viable peace by begging the more fundamental question, ‘legitimacy, according to whom?’

This chapter serves as an introduction to the dissertation and outlines its main findings and overall joint contributions. In the next section, I present previous research on legitimacy in armed intervention, which helps to clarify gaps in the literature pertaining to the relationship between intervening forces and the local population. I then present the overall analytical framework, where I clarify the key concepts guiding the dissertation. Thereafter, I outline the empirical and methodological strategy for the dissertation before presenting each of the essays. Next, I consider the joint contributions of the study, and how they speak to existing gaps in the literature. Drawing on these, I then develop the concept of a *host-citizen contract*—a social contract that governs the relationship between host citizens and intervening forces. This concept creates a salient red thread that binds the four essays together, and provides an overall framework for how the findings of each essay speak to each another. Beyond that, I propose that the host-citizen contract can help guide future exploration of how this relationship interacts with, and shapes, perspectives on local legitimacy. I conclude this chapter with a discussion on the implications of this study and provide suggestions for future avenues of research.

## Previous Research

For the past decade, scholarly debate on legitimacy in the context of armed intervention has revolved around the liberal peace paradigm (Paris 1997), namely the promises and perils of an externally assisted introduction of “top-down frameworks of markets, liberal democracy, and the rule of law” with the desired end state of building viable host-state authorities with broad-based legitimacy (Chandler 2015). As such, the broader liberal peace debate critically examines the involvement of external actors, including military forces, in the process of (re)building a ‘liberal’ social contract between the local population and host-state authorities in conflict-ridden, or failed, states (Barnett and Zürcher 2009; Duffield 2001; Lemay-Hébert 2013; Paris 2003, 2004; Richmond 2011, 2012). This debate draws on rich contributions from different fields of research, situated mainly within the fields of political science, International Relations, peace and conflict research, and the interdisciplinary field of critical peace and conflict studies.

## Local Legitimacy in Armed Intervention: A Contested ‘Liberal’ Social Contract

In the existing literature, the legitimacy of the liberal peace agenda has been discussed along two main avenues of thought, which target both its normative underpinnings and overall performance (Newman et al. 2009).<sup>3</sup>

The first avenue of thought challenges the underlying norms and assumptions of the liberal peace agenda in three main ways: by contesting the assumed legitimacy of and local receptiveness towards external interventions, by highlighting the dissonance between the promises made and the practices pursued by intervening actors, and finally by stressing that the lack of understanding for the ‘local’ can cripple the effectiveness of external interventions. Firstly, the act of intervening is an assertion (explicit or otherwise) by the external actor that the intervention, and intervener, is legitimate. Critical scholars challenge the assumption that the local population considers the intervention legitimate, or necessarily want to be ‘liberated’—especially when such liberation is conditioned on the terms stipulated by intervening actors (Rubenstein 2005). Secondly, intervening actors are criticized for, ultimately, compromising their promise of liberal change to advance their own strategic aims. It has been argued that, in the end, liberal and democratic principles, institutions, and processes remain the façade of foreign intervention, but they do not support, or create, host-state authorities with broad-based legitimacy. For example, liberal reforms might be introduced, but in ways that cement pre-existing, negative power relations in the host nation (Barnett and Zürcher 2009; Lemay-Hébert 2011b), or host-state authorities receive external support, but only if they appear loyal to the intervener’s strategic interests, regardless of if they are perceived as legitimate by the local population (Lake and Fariss 2014). Finally, others argue that external actors are not always unwilling, but at times incapable of understanding, much less adapting to, the ‘everyday’ needs of the host population and local understandings of legitimacy (Rubenstein 2003, 2005; Robins 2013). For instance, it has been argued that external actors continue to pursue approaches that appear “inefficient, ineffective, and even counterproductive” because they are trapped in a widely shared cognitive frame that systematically attributes higher value to ‘international’ norms, expertise and modes of implementation—at the expense of the ‘local’—in everyday practices, habits and narratives on the ground (Autesserre 2010, 2014, 36).

The second avenue of thought on the liberal peace agenda adopts a more problem-solving approach. In so doing, it focuses on how intervening actors can most effectively contribute to the process of constructing viable social contracts in host nations, and thereby help mend the relationship between the local population and host-state authorities. The task, ultimately, is to ensure

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<sup>3</sup> The liberal peace debate is not neatly delineated into either critical or problem-solving avenues of thought (Newman et al. 2009), but they serve as the two main points of departure.

local ownership and sustainability of peacebuilding and development efforts (Aggestam and Björkdahl 2009; Donais 2012; Olsson and Jarstad 2011; Thiessen 2014). Thus, the main problem lies not with the introduction of liberal principles, or the values and norms they represent, but rather with the process of how they are implemented by external actors. It is pointed out that local legitimacy for “the reforms that liberal peacebuilding entails” is largely hindered by intervening actors’ dominant use of security-centric, technocratic, superficial, and culturally insensitive approaches, which do not resonate with ‘the everyday’ lives of the local population (Roberts 2011, 411; Sending 2009, 4). For example, the empirical link between democratic elections and renewed conflict is not viewed as the fault of democratic principles *per se*, but rather the ill-advised rush to implement a politically competitive system in societies without functioning and effective institutions (Paris 2004). Even so, intervening actors find themselves caught between two “competing imperatives” of expanding intervention to reinforce host-state institutions, while also curbing “the level of international intrusion” in the internal political processes of the host nation (Paris 2010, 343).<sup>4</sup>

Beyond these two main points of departure, the liberal peace debate has grown increasingly complex. Previously held assumptions about what is, in fact, ‘external’ or ‘local’ have been challenged, and scholars have conceptualized the outcomes of interventions as shaped through different dynamics of contestation, friction, or hybridity, whereby the agency, norms and institutions of both external actors and the local population are in constant interplay (Björkdahl and Gusic 2015; Björkdahl and Höglund 2013; Hellmüller 2013; Jarstad and Olsson 2012; Kostic 2007; Mac Ginty 2010a; Mac Ginty and Richmond 2013; Richmond and Mitchell 2012; van der Lijn 2013).

Concurrently, an important part of this expanding debate has been to cast light on the agency of host citizens, recognizing them as an important source of influence in the host nation rather than passive recipients of foreign intervention (Poulligny 2006). In so doing, contributions to the liberal peace debate have not only cautioned against validating the effectiveness of ‘interveners’ without thoroughly examining their local impact in the host nation (Autesserre 2014; Newman et al. 2009), but also dissuade the assumption that all things ‘local’, including indigenous, traditional and customary norms and practices, are inherently more peaceful, effective, or legitimate in the eyes of the local population (Mac Ginty 2008, 2011).

Despite a rapidly expanding literature that evaluates the role of external actors in contemporary peace- and statebuilding efforts in war-torn states, there is limited attention specifically devoted to exploring the relationship between intervening forces and the local population, and how this relationship interacts with, and shapes, perspective on legitimacy and the broader process of (re)building a social contract in the host nation.

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<sup>4</sup> For a similar argument, see Edelstein (2009).

## Intervening Forces and the Local Population

For a long time, research, policy and practice on armed intervention neglected the relationship between host citizens and intervening forces. Instead, the focal point of armed intervention was the relationship between intervening actors and host-state authorities. This resulted in an understanding of legitimacy in armed intervention as a largely top-down, state-centric and legalistic phenomenon, which could be achieved through host-state consent, UN Security Council authorization, and a broad representation of troop-contributing states.

After the end of the Cold War, the ‘international community’ entered a phase of interventionism. With newfound confidence after the successful armed intervention to end Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait (Boot 2003), the UN Security Council authorized an unparalleled number of multilateral military operations broadly referred to as peace operations, the majority of which took place in the context of intrastate armed conflict (Fortna and Howard 2008; Zaum 2013). However, with repeated international failures to prevent mass atrocities committed by state authorities against their own people, the pillars of legitimacy, which had guided traditional peacekeeping operations, including the principles of impartiality and host-state consent, were increasingly called into question (Bellamy and Williams 2009; Chesterman 2001; Diehl 1994; Hurd 2011; ICISS 2001; Wheeler 2000).

In 1999, NATO air strikes in Kosovo marked a watershed and a ‘local turn’ in the debate on legitimacy in armed intervention. As human rights issues were brought to the fore of the debate (Mockaitis 1995), the notion of legitimacy grew more multifaceted and extended to include broad-based legitimacy for intervention amongst the local population (Mac Ginty and Richmond 2013). Since then, the emergence of new international norms of protecting civilians and ensuring local ownership of externally assisted reforms has turned local legitimacy into a political obligation of the intervening actors.<sup>5</sup> Concurrently, the ‘duty’ to intervene militarily has extended beyond the realm of the United Nations to also include regional organizations and coalitions of the willing.<sup>6</sup> With these recent developments, the pursuit of local legitimacy has largely been delegated to intervening forces, which has prompted scholars to cast new light on the relationship between deployed troops and the local population. This study engages with this debate and defines ‘armed intervention’ broadly to include foreign military operations deployed to an intrastate armed conflict with, or without, formal UN Security Council authorization (see “Local Legitimacy”, 24).

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<sup>5</sup> This development is manifested in the growing number of UN Security Council Resolutions that call for increased measures of civilian protection and local capacity-building in the context of international intervention (Clapham 1998b; Francis et al. 2012; Holt and Berkman 2006; Hultman 2013; ICISS 2001; Paris 1997; Tsagourias 2006; United Nations 2008).

<sup>6</sup> However, most armed interventions are still authorized by the UN Security Council, or “welcomed either before or after the fact by the Council, or conducted with the consent of the host state” (Bellamy and Williams 2009, 51).

In existing scholarship, the role of perceptions has been identified as key in shaping the dynamics between host citizens and intervening forces. The bulk of previous contributions, mainly situated in the fields of peacekeeping, civil-military relations, military sociology and counterinsurgency studies, adopt a problem-solving approach to perception-based dynamics of armed intervention. In so doing, they advance an understanding of local perceptions as something that intervening forces can, theoretically, ‘manage’ to achieve mission effectiveness (Wiharta 2009). For instance, it has been argued that intervening forces exert influence on local perceptions of legitimacy by the ability to meet local expectations, or fulfill local ‘social contracts’ (Mersiades 2005), defined mainly in terms of providing security and improved living conditions (Aoi 2011; Dandeker and Gow 1997; Galtung and Eide 1976; Galula 1964; Gow and Dandeker 1995; Nagl 1999, 2015).

From the point of view of intervening forces, a problem-solving approach to local legitimacy is understandable because it resonates with the traditional duty and basic function of armed forces, namely to implement ‘policy by other means’. Prevalent in counterinsurgency studies, local perceptions of legitimacy represent the ‘human terrain’, which much like the conventional ‘physical terrain’ denotes an indivisible, zero-sum resource that must be ‘won’ by intervening forces, or is else lost to the enemy (Beckett 2007). Relatedly, previous contributions tend to rely on behavioral indicators to measure local perceptions of legitimacy, often defined negatively as the *absence* of local resistance toward intervening forces. Conversely, if intervening troops are perceived as unable, or unwilling, to achieve the reforms initially pledged, it is expected to generate local mistrust and resentment, possibly even violent opposition, to intervening forces (Heiberg 1991; Mersiades 2005; Pouligny 2006; Talentino 2007).

Although there is ample empirical evidence to support the claim that intervening forces can be effective in terms of shortening the duration of armed conflict, curbing its lethality, and prolonging (negative) peace after fighting ceases (Fortna 2004; Gilligan and Sergenti 2008; Hegre et al. 2015; Howard 2008; Hultman et al. 2013), limited empirical work explores, and substantiates, the commonly assumed link between mission effectiveness and local legitimacy. Recent work by Whalan (2013) constitutes a notable exception, which argues that the effectiveness of peace operations—defined as the ability to shape the behavior of the local population in line with mission objectives—is contingent on both their power to induce and coerce the population, as well as their locally perceived legitimacy. Problematically, others have argued that perceptions of armed intervention, and its legitimacy, differ significantly between intervening forces and local populations, partly shaped by their different understandings of timeframes, priorities and indicators of mission success (Clapham 1998a; Pouligny 2006; Winslow 1997, 2002). This ‘disconnect’ between ‘local’ and ‘external’ perspectives, problems, and approaches has been identified as a systemic flaw within the broader international interven-

tion apparatus (Autesserre 2009, 2010, 2014; Chopra et al. 1999; Miller 1999; Pouligny 2006; Rubenstein 2008).

On the perspectives held within the local population, recent studies suggest that the performance of intervening troops—especially in terms of establishing security—is, indeed, crucial to the development of the relationship with the local population. However, recent findings also indicate that security considerations are not sufficient to guarantee local compliance with the intervention and intervening forces. For instance, if intervening forces are perceived to pose a threat to local norms and values, they run the risk of being perceived as an illegitimate ‘intrusion’ by the local population (Böhnke et al. 2013, 2015; Fishstein and Wilder 2012; Koehler and Zürcher 2007; Lemay-Hébert 2011a; Mac Ginty 2008; Roehner 2012; Talentino 2007; Whalan 2013). Thus, recent calls for intervening forces to serve, protect, and interact with host citizens in order to bolster local perceptions of legitimacy appear to have heightened the tension between security-related and ideational concerns.

Relatedly, studies on the perspectives held by intervening soldiers argue that deployed troops find it difficult to strike a balance between their traditional combat role and sense of duty toward fellow military members and the mission at hand (Wong et al. 2003), and their increased responsibility to respond to the needs of the local population (Campbell and Campbell 2010; Michael and Ben-Ari 2011; Leaning and Lappi 2011; Sion 2006; Tripodi 2013). This challenge seems most tangible in a combat environment, where troops appear more likely to feel antipathy and engage in aggressive behavior toward the local population (Castro and McGurk 2007; Warner et al. 2011). However, numerous stressors related to interaction with local populations have also been found under more permissive conditions of deployment (Azari et al. 2010; Britt 1998; Britt and Adler 2003; Dandeker and Gow 2004).

Nevertheless, there appears to be significant variation in how armed forces deployed to the same areas of operation perceive, and approach, the local population, with some forces adopting a clear military profile consisting of limited noncombat interaction, while others interact more extensively with host citizens (Miller and Moskos 1995; Larsdotter 2009; Pouligny 2006; Ruffa 2014). This variation has been attributed to factors at both the organizational and individual levels of analysis.<sup>7</sup> Yet, to date, only a small number of studies have begun to explore whether this variation is reflected in how intervening forces understand their responsibilities and obligations toward the local population in the context of the broader pursuit of local legitimacy in the host nation (Blocq 2010; McD Sookermany 2011; Perez 2012).

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<sup>7</sup> At the organizational level, variation has been attributed to differences in factors exogenous to the mission, such as the training, military culture, and previous experiences of the deployed contingents (Duffey 2000; Hajjar 2010, 2014a; Ruffa 2014; Winslow 1997), while variation between individual troops has been attributed to factors such as race, gender, Military Operational Specialty (MOS), rank, past mission experiences, values, attitudes, and personality (Franke 1999, 2003; Hajjar 2014b; Leeds 2001; Miller and Moskos 1995).

## Research Gaps

Studies on contemporary armed intervention and the pursuit of local legitimacy have spurred a promising and rapidly growing interdisciplinary debate. Nevertheless, several pertinent research gaps remain.

Conceptually, there is limited knowledge of what local legitimacy *de facto* entails to the main actors involved in, and affected by, armed intervention. Local legitimacy is widely treated as a mechanism that is often assumed, but rarely explored as a phenomenon in its own right. Instead, existing research tends to equate local legitimacy with behavioral indicators, such as the absence of local resistance to intervening forces and externally supported reforms (Heiberg 1991; Mersiades 2005; Pouligny 2006; Talentino 2007).<sup>8</sup> I argue that such indicators fail to satisfactorily capture the context-dependent, dynamic and, essentially, relational phenomenon of local legitimacy.<sup>9</sup> Thus, this study instead advances a perception-based understanding of local legitimacy, which takes both the perspectives held by the ‘interveners’ and those ‘intervened upon’ in consideration (Gelot and Söderbaum 2011).

Furthermore, theoretically, there is limited insight to how the relationship between the local population and intervening forces interacts with, and shapes, perspectives on legitimacy in armed intervention. Instead, previous research has principally focused on the relationship between intervening actors and host-state authorities. Consequently, there is limited knowledge of what roles and obligations constitute the basis for mutually reciprocal and beneficial host-citizen relations. Relatedly, there is a limited understanding of whether, and how, noncombat interaction between host citizens and intervening forces—a key feature of recent military efforts to win the ‘hearts and minds’ of local populations—shapes the sense of soldierly duty toward host citizens, either within the broader military organization or amongst intervening soldiers.

Lastly, what is most acutely missing in the literature are firsthand empirical accounts that specifically target perspectives on legitimacy from *inside* armed intervention. Despite the rich empirical insights offered in previous case studies (e.g. Paris 2004; Richmond and Franks 2009; Whalan 2013), there is still a lack of fine-grained, qualitative empirical analysis of the perspectives held by key intervening actors and local populations. This gap is particularly prevalent at the micro-level of armed intervention. I argue that this lack of firsthand empirical accounts helps to sustain the common, and inaccurate, assumption that ‘local’ and ‘external’ actors are internally homogenous groups (Richmond et al. 2015), rather than allow us to unpack and, in a compelling way, challenge and nuance such categorizations.

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<sup>8</sup> See for example the Peacemakers at Risk (PAR) event dataset (Uppsala Conflict Data Program), on the timing, location and characteristics of violence against peacekeepers (Lindberg Bromley 2013).

<sup>9</sup> The use of behavioral indicators to study perceptions is also problematic because survival instinct, rather than personal preferences, tends to shape local behavior in armed conflict (Kalyvas 2006).

## Analytical Framework

In four separate essays this study explores different understandings of local legitimacy in armed intervention. The following section serves to clarify the key concepts guiding the dissertation. More specifically, I discuss the concept of *legitimacy* and how perceptions of legitimacy are linked to the idea of social contracts and the notion of duty. Thereafter, I define the concept of *local legitimacy* and how it interconnects relationships between the local population, intervening actors, and host-state authorities. Here, I clarify my choice to focus on the relationship between intervening forces and the local population.

### Legitimacy

Legitimacy is notoriously difficult to define, theorize and empirically measure. Since Plato and Aristotle, philosophical and scholarly thought has featured debate on the origins, characteristics and effects of legitimacy. Contemporary usage of the English term *legitimate* refers to being “lawful” or “proper”, either conformable to law or (hereditary) right. In extended usage of the term, legitimate can also denote that someone or something is “valid or acceptable”, or justifiable and reasonable (Oxford English Dictionary 2015). Reflections on legitimacy tend to begin at one of two main points of departure: Legitimacy is either defined by a set of normative criteria, such as a legal framework, which ‘objectively’ grants something or someone legitimacy, or as an empirical phenomenon defined in the eye of the beholder and, thus, a construct of belief systems, attitudes, behavior, and perceptions. In terms of the latter, it begs the question of, ‘whose perceptions?’ (Clark 2007, 18).

A shared trait across both normative and empirical definitions of legitimacy is the element of authority. In this study, I lean on Max Weber’s notion of legitimacy *as the voluntary conferral of consent to an authority rooted in a belief in a set of claimed traits* (Bensman 1979; Lemay-Hébert 2014; Weber 1978, 215). In so doing, I treat legitimacy as an empirical and perception-based phenomenon, contingent on the context and population where it is studied. I conceptualize perceptions in line with Talentino (2007, 166) as a “sense of understanding”, which involves the element of interpretation “in the light of experience”. With this point of departure, I recognize that norms of legality or appropriateness can be “more or less important in defining legitimacy, but that is an empirical question” (Skumsrud Andersen 2012, 207).

Legitimacy is assumed to provide an authority with the perceived right “to act”, “to exist”, or to “perform an activity in a certain way” (Ahlstrom and Bruton 2001, 73; Suchman 1995, 574f). Perceptions of legitimacy thus constitute a crucial strategic resource to an authority. As such, it is likely that an authority devotes more effort and resources to influence, or manage, the relationship with audiences whose perceptions of legitimacy matter the most to its

continued existence (Ahlstrom and Bruton 2001; Mitchell et al. 1997; Phillips 2003). Hence, at the core of this notion of legitimate authority is the existence of a relationship, or ‘bond’, between the object and subject of authority (Clark 2003, 2007). Following a relational understanding of legitimacy, I argue that an exploration of legitimacy requires the study of perspectives at both ends of a relationship. In this respect, the idea of a *social contract* is key.<sup>10</sup> At its core, a social contract denotes the consensual conferral of legitimate authority in exchange for the protection of perceived essential interests. To this end, I understand the notion of duty as an important part of the contract and the perceived legitimacy of an authority. If an authority fails to deliver in accordance with its perceived duty, its legitimacy is lost.

Notwithstanding the vast influence of social contract theory to scholarly thinking about legitimacy, the empirical applicability of social contracts remains contested. Philosopher David Hume (1987) captured the core of this critique when eloquently refuting the social contract and its notion of voluntary consent as a flawed idealistic assumption.<sup>11</sup> Most people, Hume argued, do not question why they obey an authority any more than they would question the laws of physics. Furthermore, even if they would actively oppose an authority, Hume argued that few exerted any real power to challenge it. Hume rightfully pointed out that, throughout history, authorities have repeatedly seized power through means of conquest and coercion, not by the act of voluntary consent by those subjected to its authority (Brownsey 1978).

In this study, I work from the understanding that the relationship between an authority and those subject to its power is always more, or less, contested. Nevertheless, I argue that such dynamics do not refute the relevance of the social contract framework, but rather challenge its traditional reliance on rational, cost-benefit and output-oriented calculations. Instead, I assume that perceptions of legitimacy are not fixed, but rather dynamic and relational constructs conditioned on both the normative and instrumental interests of an actor (Clark 2007, 15; Gibson et al. 2005, 190). In so doing, I call into question the degree to which an authority is ever in power to influence, manipulate, and, ultimately, control the perceptions of legitimacy held by those subject to its authority.

In sum, for the purpose of this study, I approach legitimacy as a perception-based phenomenon, rooted in a context-dependent and dynamic relationship between the subject and object of authority. As such, this study understands perceptions of legitimacy to resonate with the overarching framework of a social contract.

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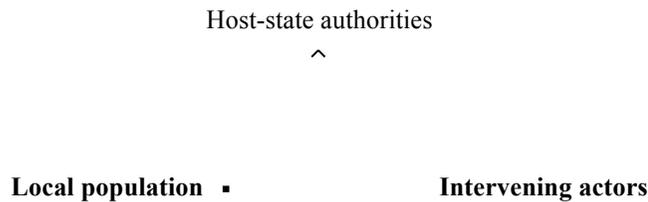
<sup>10</sup> Most notably, social contract theory has its intellectual roots in the scholarly reflections of numerous modern thinkers such as Hugo Grotius, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Immanuel Kant and, more recently, John Rawls.

<sup>11</sup> First published in 1748.

## Local Legitimacy

For the purpose of this study, the phenomenon of local legitimacy refers to the perceptions held by the host population of an armed intervention and the host-state authorities and reforms it aims to support. Like the corners of a triangle, local legitimacy, thus, applies to three main sets of relationships. It is believed to interconnect the local population, intervening actors, and host-state authorities in a tense and dynamic constellation. Thus, each ‘leg’ of the triangle interacts with, and shapes, the other two, which ultimately defines the broader process of (re)building a social-contract in the host nation.

Figure I.



In this study, the term *intervening forces* refers to foreign armed forces (including both intervening military organizations, as well as individual troops) deployed to assist host-state authorities in the context of an armed intervention. *Armed intervention* is a collective and broad term that refers to military operations implemented by an external actor, either the UN, a regional organization, or a group of states, which deploy foreign troops to actively assist host-state authorities in managing intrastate armed conflict, while strengthening host-state institutions and functions. Thus, armed intervention denotes missions that purport to implement both peace- and statebuilding objectives. This includes, but is not limited to, military operations formally authorized by the UN Security Council, commonly referred to as ‘peace operations’. The terms *host citizens* and *local population* refer to civilians living in the host nation, while *host-state authorities* refer to people and institutions that are official representatives of the host state, also commonly referred to as local counterparts to intervening forces.<sup>12</sup>

Understandably, the relationship between the local population and host-state authorities is of the utmost importance to the broader legitimacy process in the host nation. Nevertheless, armed intervention and the deployment of external military forces—the most coercive (and controversial) instrument at the disposal of an intervening actor—is argued to interact with, and shape, this relationship. At an abstract level, armed intervention is conceptualized as a means to salvage, or rebuild, a social contract between host citizens and host-state authorities; a contract that has been corrupted, compromised or

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<sup>12</sup> An exception is made in Essay III, where local Afghan civilian and military counterparts are counted as host citizens. Nevertheless, the empirical analysis in this essay, to a certain extent, distinguishes between local counterparts and the wider civilian Afghan population.

completely eroded. As such, armed intervention is commonly understood to *precede* the development of a legitimate relationship between host-state authorities and the local population (Angstrom 2008).

The main focus of this study is the *relationship between host citizens and intervening forces*. As the nature of armed intervention has increasingly accumulated political dimensions and statebuilding objectives, intervening forces have been given increasingly extensive mandates and coercive capabilities to sway the local population in favor of externally supported host-state leaders and reforms. Intervening forces, serving as an “invited Leviathan”, purport to facilitate local peace and statebuilding by providing order and stability to “sustain the initially weak indigenous state, while it recuperates and starts to work” (Ibid, 375). In addition to supporting host-state governance and institutions, a key feature of armed intervention is to reestablish the host-state’s monopoly on the legitimate use of force—a key criterion of Weber’s concept of a sovereign state. To this end, intervening forces are commonly tasked with training, advising, and fighting alongside with local security and defence forces to curb threats against the host state by actors engaged in the intrastate armed conflict (Ibid, 375, 382; Hajjar 2014b).

However, the influence exerted by intervening forces on the process of (re)building a social contract in the host nation appears to be shaped by numerous enabling and constraining factors at the international, state and local levels of the armed intervention. For example, political will and resources of troop-contributing countries eventually come to an end. This offers only a temporary, albeit sometimes extensive, window for intervening forces to exert influence on the host-state and the local population. Concurrently, local agency and sociopolitical dynamics in the host nation either enable or constrain interaction between intervening forces, host citizens, and host-state authorities, which shapes an unpredictable development of these relationships during the course of deployment (Poulligny 2006). Notably, as these relationships take place in the context of intrastate armed conflict, they are influenced—and challenged—by different actors, particularly those involved in the armed conflict.

Viewed together, the essays in this dissertation shed new light on all three sets of relationships in the context of Afghanistan. For instance, they provide insights to how host-state authorities shape the relationship between intervening forces and the local population (Essays II and III), and, conversely, how intervening forces shape local perceptions of host-state authorities (Essay IV). Although it falls outside the scope of this study to examine the role of other state and non-state actors exerting influence on the local legitimacy process, the different essays all touch upon, to varying degrees, the role of insurgent elements in Afghanistan. In so doing, they help elucidate some of the complexity within, as well as surrounding, these relationships.

## Armed Intervention in Afghanistan: An Empirical Strategy

In this section, I outline the overall empirical and methodological strategy for this study. I begin with motivating the choice to focus on contemporary armed intervention in Afghanistan. Here, I also comment on the ‘interveners’ and ‘intervened upon’ of interest for this study, and briefly contextualize the quest for local legitimacy in Afghanistan. Yet, more elaborate and eloquent overviews on the recent armed intervention in Afghanistan are available elsewhere (Bird and Marshall 2011; Johnson and Leslie 2004; van Bijlert and Kouvo 2012). This is followed by a brief discussion on the empirical material and choice of methods for the essays in the dissertation.

### The Case of Afghanistan

In Afghanistan, the principal intervening military and civilian actors in the context of recent internationalized armed intervention were the U.S.-led *Operation Enduring Freedom-Afghanistan*, OEF-A (2001-2014), the UN-mandated and (predominantly) NATO-led *International Security Assistance Force*, ISAF (2001-2014), and the ongoing UN-led political mission *United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan*, UNAMA (2002-).<sup>13</sup> Together, these missions constituted the most large-scale, invasive and protracted case of armed intervention and statebuilding of our time. For the purpose of this study, perspectives from inside this intervention promise to generate pertinent insights as to how the relationship between the local population and intervening forces interacts with, and shapes, perspectives on local legitimacy.

In many ways, Afghanistan represents a central case of contemporary interventionism and the liberal agenda, as “[t]he social contract perspective ... underpinned the entire international reconstruction effort” (Suhrke 2008, 232). It was an ambitious attempt to transform the epitome of a “failed state” into a viable, and legitimate, democracy in the course of a few years (Rubin 2006). Yet, armed intervention was also “driven and shaped by different (and competing) logics” (Goodhand and Hakimi 2014, 5), which followed from the simultaneous pursuit of peace while waging a war and fighting terrorism (Suhrke 2011b). The tensions and contradictions associated with armed intervention in Afghanistan continue to constitute a topic of extensive policy and scholarly debate, not least surrounding the promises and perils of attempts to externally enforce liberal, or ‘Western’, ideas of legitimate statehood (Chesterman 2005; Egnell 2010, 2013; Suhrke, 2009, 2011a). In the aftermath of recent armed intervention, Afghanistan still suffers from persistent dynamics of weak governance, instability and conflict, which have been

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<sup>13</sup> In addition to these main intervening actors, there were, and continues to be, a plethora of external assistance and development actors in Afghanistan. For example, the broader SSR (Security Sector Reform) process, which has involved a number of different actors, such as the civilian European Union Police Mission in Afghanistan (EUPOL Afghanistan) (Wilder 2007).

argued by some to expose the fundamental failings of the liberal peace project. As foreign troops are likely to remain in some capacity in Afghanistan for years to come, it is fair to assume that their presence will continue to interact with, and shape, the relationship between the Afghan people and Afghan authorities, and thus the broader legitimacy process in the country.

To gain a better understanding of how the presence of intervening forces, to-date, has influenced this process, this study explores perspectives held by Afghan citizens, as host citizens, and the UN, NATO, the U.S. Armed Forces and U.S. Army Officers, as the principal intervening actors.

## The Intervened Upon

Afghan perspectives are of pertinent interest to deepen an understanding of how the presence of intervening forces influences local perceptions of legitimacy. The Afghan population has extensive experiences of dealing with foreign armed forces, which have constituted a central feature, and source of insecurity, throughout the country's modern history.

For the past three decades, the sociopolitical, military and economic landscapes of Afghanistan have been molded by the dynamics of civil war, foreign military occupation, and persistent power struggles between homegrown and foreign militias (Mac Ginty 2010b). Nevertheless, Afghan resistance to foreign military forces has been equally persistent. After the Soviet occupation ended in 1989, fighting continued amongst Mujahedin factions during the 1990s. An ensuing state of lawlessness in Afghanistan became the breeding ground for the Taliban movement. Vowing to establish order and impose Sharia law, the Taliban quickly fought their way to power in 1996 (Rashid 1999). The international community remained quiet for a long time, until the 9/11 attacks on the United States broke this silence. What came to follow was the beginning of America's longest war, and 14 years of internationalized armed intervention in Afghanistan.

Although the bulk of empirical studies on Afghan perceptions have been conducted within development and humanitarian spheres, principally focusing on perceptions of foreign *civilian* aid and assistance, several recent studies have included questions on Afghan perceptions of intervening forces. Together, they have revealed intriguing and ambiguous findings that appear to speak to the study of local legitimacy, and the relationship between Afghans and intervening forces. Most notably, pertinent information is found in the Asia Foundation Surveys (Shawe et al. 2013; Tariq et al. 2011, 2012; Warren et al. 2014), the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) survey series conducted between 2007-2013 (Böhnke et al. 2013, 2015; Koehler and Zürcher 2007), and several fieldwork-based studies

conducted by the Feinstein International Center at Tuft University (Fishstein 2010; Fishstein and Wilder 2012; Gompelman 2011).<sup>14</sup>

Together, these empirically studies appear to suggest two, seemingly, contradictory trends. On the one hand, they find an upward trend in optimism about the direction Afghanistan is moving. In line with the tenets of the liberal agenda, the majority of Afghans appear to support foreign-led reforms. Survey findings suggest that the majority of Afghans feel that the Afghan government “does a somewhat good or very good job”, and have identified improved security and economic conditions, reconstruction, democratic elections and more visible Afghan national security forces, as key reasons for optimism. However, this optimism is not unconditional, as the majority of Afghans report that Afghan authorities still need “foreign support to do their job properly” (Warren et al. 2014, 6ff).

While a clear upward trend is visible, a contradictory trend is also evident, as the majority of Afghans reported fearing for their own safety or that of their family. This includes fear to participate in “peaceful demonstrations” or running for public office, but also an increasing fear of encountering international forces (Ibid, 7). In fact, fear of foreign forces has increased drastically since 2007, being near equal to fear of insurgent groups in 2013 (Böhnke et al. 2015). Fieldwork suggests that the reason why Afghans have grown increasingly wary of foreign forces results, in part, from the association of foreign forces with military operations, which have been perceived to constitute both a major threat to security, as well as a threat to cultural values and local ways of life (Böhnke et al. 2015; Fishstein 2010; Fishstein and Wilder 2012; Gompelman 2011).

Overall, these ambiguous findings point “to a rather complex and multi-faceted dynamic” in the local discourse, which, to date, remains relatively unexplored (Böhnke et al. 2015, 44; Koehler and Zürcher 2007).

## The Interveners

U.S. and British forces invaded Afghanistan in October 2001 in a proclaimed act of (collective) self-defense, in accordance with Article 51 of the UN Charter (Quigley 2003). The UN Security Council did not formally authorize (or condemn) the invasion.<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, at the outset, what evolved into

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<sup>14</sup> See also Donini (2007) and research conducted by the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit.

<sup>15</sup> The UN Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 1368 (2001a) in condemnation of the 9/11 attacks on the United States, which deemed the situation “a threat to international peace and security”. In so doing, it recognized “the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence in accordance with the Charter”, and called on “all States to work together urgently to bring to justice the perpetrators, organizers and sponsors of these terrorist attacks.” Moreover, the UN Security Council later on adopted resolution 1510 (2003), which called on ISAF forces to “work in close consultation ... with the Operation Enduring Freedom Coalition in the implementation of the force mandate”.

the OEF-A mission had considerable international support.<sup>16</sup> In Afghanistan, intervening forces supported the Northern Alliance, composed of numerous armed groups fighting the Taliban regime. In November 2001, joint military advancements gathered momentum as the Northern Alliance seized Mazār-e Sharīf, and a number of strategic positions in Kabul. Within a month, these Afghan armed groups supported by OEF-A toppled the Taliban regime (Cotey 2003). Factions of the Northern Alliance signed the Bonn Agreement in December 2001, which stipulated the basis for a new central Afghan political structure. As part of the agreement, the UN Security Council authorized the deployment of the ISAF mission to provide security in support of the nascent statebuilding process (Barnett and Zürcher 2009). Shortly thereafter, it authorized the deployment of UNAMA, which came to lead international civilian efforts for Afghan reintegration and reconciliation, humanitarian aid and electoral assistance.

At the outset, there were only a few thousand foreign troops in Afghanistan. The aim was to avoid public perception of a Soviet-style occupation, which was expected to provoke widespread local resistance (Suhrke 2008). Thus, OEF-A worked together with Afghan armed groups as part of a 'light footprint' approach, focusing on the objective to fight against remnants of Al-Qaeda and the Taliban movement, while ISAF troops were initially limited to Kabul and its vicinity. The ISAF mission was widely referred to as a 'peacekeeping' or 'reconstruction' mission that served a largely complementary function to the combat-focused OEF-A by providing support to Afghan authorities in the areas of governance outreach and the provision of security and stability to the Afghan people (UN Security Council 2001b; UN Security Council 2002). During these initial years, there were some tensions between the two military missions and their different objectives. However, over time, as the overall armed intervention grew more expansive and robust, the two missions increasingly converged (Rubin 2006; Rubin and Hamidzada 2007).<sup>17</sup>

The role of the ISAF mission expanded under NATO leadership during the years that U.S. forces were largely preoccupied with the war in Iraq. In 2006, NATO shouldered the main responsibility for security and defence operations in Afghanistan, and ISAF troops branched out into Afghan provinces. This expansion was followed by an escalation in violence throughout the country. ISAF forces, and remaining U.S. forces, were increasingly involved in conducting combat operations. As the security situation deteriorated and civilian and military casualties were on the rise, it generated public outcry in

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<sup>16</sup> Following the 9/11 attacks, NATO member states invoked, for the first time, Article 5 of the Washington Treaty, thereby recognizing the attacks on the United States as an attack on all member states.

<sup>17</sup> For further discussion on how legitimacy considerations influenced the formation of these missions in Afghanistan, see Coleman (2014).

Afghanistan (Rubin 2007).<sup>18</sup> In response, the number of ISAF forces more than doubled between 2007 and 2009, and the United States vastly increased the number of U.S. troops, as well as instructed them to begin conducting nation-building tasks (Suhrke 2008).

By the end of 2009, U.S. President Obama (2009a, 2009b) authorized the deployment of 30 000 additional U.S. troops to Afghanistan. Concurrently, the ISAF mission grew in size<sup>19</sup> bringing the total number of foreign troops in Afghanistan to approximately 150 000 (Human Rights Watch 2011). In an attempt to replicate recent progress made in Iraq, U.S. forces together with international troops were tasked to implement a large-scale counterinsurgency campaign in Afghanistan that sought to ‘win the hearts and minds’ of the Afghan people. With this shift toward a ‘population-centric’ approach, the pursuit of local legitimacy intensified and the two missions grew increasingly entwined. A joint command structure was established to facilitate coordination between the ballooning infrastructures of OEF-A and ISAF, and Afghan authorities.<sup>20</sup> Yet, the military fight against the insurgency grew increasingly violent, and the number of casualties escalated. Public support for the armed intervention dropped amongst troop-contributing countries, including the American public (Holsti 2011; Scarborough 2013; Yousafzai 2012).

In late 2010, the NATO Summit in Lisbon marked the beginning of a new phase of armed intervention in Afghanistan: the gradual transition to Afghan leadership and the ensuing withdrawal of intervening forces. In the summer of 2013, Afghan authorities formally assumed primary responsibility for national security and defence operations. Although the following year turned out to be one of the deadliest since the invasion in 2001, OEF-A and ISAF forces left Afghanistan by the end of 2014. The missions were immediately replaced by the NATO-led noncombat operation *Resolute Support Mission* (RSM), authorized by the UN Security Council to support Afghan authorities and “train, advise, and assist the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces” (UN Security Council 2014).<sup>21</sup> Alongside RSM, a U.S.-led contingency mission, *Operation Freedom's Sentinel*, deployed in support of the NATO-mission, but also to conduct counterterrorism operations “against the remnants of Al-Qaeda” (U.S. Department of Defense 2014).

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<sup>18</sup> This was partly due to the extensive use of airstrikes by OEF-A and ISAF, and partly due to the Taliban counteroffensive and the tactics of using Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) and suicide attacks (Suhrke 2008).

<sup>19</sup> At its height the ISAF mission consisted of fifty-one contributing countries.

<sup>20</sup> Despite increased streamlining of the two missions, the command structure remained vastly complex, not least with the influx of private security contractors (Hrychuk 2012; Joras and Schuster 2008; Leander 2006).

<sup>21</sup> In early 2015, 13,000 mission personnel from 42 countries operated out of bases located in Kabul, Mazār-e Sharīf, Herat, Kandahar and Laghman Provinces (NATO 2015).

## Method and Material

The contribution of this dissertation is to explore perspectives on local legitimacy from inside armed intervention, particularly focusing on the influence of the relationship between intervening forces and the local population. Methodologically, I employ a qualitative approach to begin unpacking the dynamics and tensions between—and within—perspectives held by host citizens and the principal intervening actors in Afghanistan. Studying the perspectives of different actors is a difficult task, as such understandings are expected to be dynamic and multifaceted constructs that are reevaluated, and possibly reformed, over time. In this regard, a qualitative approach is preferable to gauge rich empirical insights, which serve as a fruitful point of departure for theory-building.

In Essay I and Essay II, I have sought to capture the organizational, macro-level perspectives held by the key intervening military and civilian actors in Afghanistan. I have done so by studying the discourse in UN and NATO policy statements (Essay I) and U.S. military doctrine (Essay II), which viewed together provide complementary insights: High-level policy directives provide the political framework and broader legal, moral, and ethical guidelines for armed intervention, while military doctrine—and field manuals in particular—translate such political objectives into a framework for military action. Moreover, military doctrine is widely recognized as shaping how armed forces conceptualize problems, tasks, and preferred solutions in theatre. As such, military doctrine constitutes an important influence on the formal notion of duty within the military organization (Høiback 2011; U.S. Department of Defense 2010). For the purpose of this study, the U.S. Army and Marine Corps counterinsurgency field manual (FM3-24) offers particularly pertinent information, as it captures the central underlying rationale behind the intensified quest for local legitimacy in Afghanistan (Biddle 2008; Cassidy 2004).

In Essay III and Essay IV, I have sought to capture the individual, micro-level perspectives held by some U.S. Army Officers (Essay III) and Afghan citizens living in Kabul (Essay IV). These essays provide complementary insights as they together elucidate how intervening forces and host citizens perceived each other in the setting of armed intervention in Afghanistan. Essay III specifically explores how personal experiences of noncombat contact shaped U.S. soldiers' perceptions of Afghan citizens, while Essay IV seeks to deepen an understanding of how security and ideational concerns shaped Afghan perceptions of intervening forces.

To this end, in-depth interviews were conducted with 17 U.S. Army Officers (15 men and 2 women) in the United States, while a total of 22 Afghan citizens (11 men and 11 women) participated in focus group discussions and in-depth interviews in Kabul. In both essays, the use of a semi-structured design enabled me to conduct a theoretically informed analysis with comparability across statements within each sample, while leaving sufficient space

for exploratory work (Brounéus 2011).<sup>22</sup> The specific empirical focus of each essay ensured that the limited—but also insightful and important—empirical accounts could still lead to relevant, albeit modest, conclusions. The perceptions of U.S. Army Officers were expected to generate a fruitful starting point for analysis as military operations in Afghanistan were predominantly led and furnished by the U.S. Army. Moreover, U.S. Army Officers hold specific positions of authority and are formally responsible to act as ethically sound leaders to subordinate troops. Similarly, the perceptions of Afghan citizens in Kabul were deemed pertinent due to being located in the epicenter of past occupations, civil war, and recent armed intervention in Afghanistan.

Essay III and Essay IV set out to deepen an understanding of the main themes and tensions within each sample, not to assess causality. However, I sought to achieve sufficient variation amongst participants and minimize the element of selection bias: For Essay III, U.S. Army Officers were approached through liaisons at West Point, the United States Military Academy (USMA) and interviewed in the United States (October 2014-February 2015). Under ideal conditions, each Officer would have been interviewed at different stages of their deployment to Afghanistan—before deployment, during initial deployment, and towards the end of their rotation. However, such arrangements were not feasible. Instead, the interviews capture ‘post-mission’ accounts. The benefit of this arrangement is that Officers may have felt more comfortable to discuss their experiences freely, as they were no longer bound by the formal institutional framework of an ongoing mission. Moreover, the sample of Officers served the main purpose of the study, as it displayed variation on factors exogenous to the mission, including age, military specialty, professional background, and length of service in the U.S. Armed Forces (to lesser extent race and gender), as well as variation in the experiences of noncombat contact with Afghan citizens during different time periods and areas of deployment.<sup>23</sup>

For Essay IV, Afghan citizens were approached through local entry points during two weeks of fieldwork in Kabul (November 2012), namely with the help of the National Center for Policy Research (NCPR),<sup>24</sup> and local translators and liaisons. The sample of Afghans displayed variation in age, profession, ethnicity and gender of the participants. Although more extensive fieldwork conducted beyond Kabul would have been preferable, gaining access to Afghan citizens (and U.S. Army Officers) was a challenging endeavor, especially as a civilian researcher and foreign citizen. In addition to the practical challenges

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<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, the use of open-ended questions sought to encourage the research participants to feel free to discuss and elaborate on their thoughts. It was meant to increase their sense of control over the topic of conversation and make them feel more comfortable, and safe, to speak candidly about their experiences.

<sup>23</sup> For future research, to further assess the empirical relevance of the argument, it would be preferable with a more representative sample that also includes participants with limited or no personal experiences of contact with Afghans.

<sup>24</sup> NCPR was established at Kabul University in 2003 by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation of Germany in cooperation with the Ministry of Higher Education.

and costs associated with fieldwork in a conflict zone, risk assessments must take precedence to ensure the safety of both the participants and the researcher. To ensure that fieldwork for this study was conducted ethically, the dissertation project underwent ethical review by the United States Military Academy and the Regional Ethical Review Board in Uppsala, Sweden.

## Presenting the Essays

The four essays in this dissertation aim to address the three gaps in previous research identified above. The first gap pertains to conceptual aspects of local legitimacy and what it entails to the principal actors involved in, and affected by, armed intervention. The first two essays address this gap, to varying degrees, by exploring organizational perspectives of the key intervening actors in Afghanistan, namely the UN, NATO (Essay I), and U.S. Armed Forces (Essay II), while the last two essays examine the personal perspectives held by some U.S. Officers (Essay III) and Afghan citizens (Essay IV).

The second gap concerns the theoretical aspects related to the lack of understanding of how the relationship between intervening forces and host citizens interacts with, and shapes, perspectives on legitimacy in armed intervention. Although this gap is addressed in all of the essays, it constitutes the key focus of the last three. Essay II and Essay III revolve around the duty of intervening forces in the context of recent armed intervention in Afghanistan. Essay II examines the formal notion of duty at the macro-level of the military organization, while Essay III looks more closely at perspectives held by individual soldiers. Lastly, Essay IV examines local Afghan perceptions of armed intervention and the legitimacy of intervening forces.

The third gap refers to the lack of firsthand empirical accounts from *inside* armed intervention. Addressing this gap, Essay III explores the views held by intervening forces using novel material collected from interviews with U.S. Army Officers, while Essay IV examines host-citizens' perceptions based on individual interviews and focus-group discussions with Afghan citizens.

### Essay I

The essay "International Quest for Local Legitimacy in Afghanistan: A Tower of Babel?" was published in *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 24, 2 (2013): 349–369. It serves as a suitable stepping-stone to subsequent essays in the dissertation by providing the broader picture of how the quest for local legitimacy was conceptualized within the international realm of conflict management. More specifically, this essay contributes to the literature by shedding light on how the two principal, military and civilian, intervening actors in Afghanistan—the UN and NATO—defined local legitimacy. It asks, at the highest policy level, what do the UN and NATO recognize to be the main features of local

legitimacy in Afghanistan, and which local actors and what factors are perceived to determine the level of legitimacy granted to international assistance in the country? At the outset, this essay expects that similar understandings of local legitimacy might lead to more effective civil-military coordination in Afghanistan.

Based on a qualitative analysis of UN Security Council Resolutions, Security Council Debates, Secretary-General Reports (2001–2011) and NATO Declarations and Opinions (2003–2011), empirical findings unveil surprising similarities in how the actors conceptualize local legitimacy. Despite different roles, mandates and fields of responsibility in Afghanistan, the UN and NATO both understand local legitimacy to be a largely perception-based phenomenon. In line with the liberal peace agenda, they define legitimacy as contingent on an *effective*—and therefore locally legitimate—Afghan state that is willing and able to provide instrumental services, including security and democratic elections. To this end, the UN and NATO understand international intervention as a chiefly positive influence on the broader legitimacy process in Afghanistan, while labeling problems of legitimacy largely as the failings of a weak Afghan state.

Nevertheless, the UN and NATO differ in their overall framing of how international intervention supports the development of local legitimacy. The UN conveys a ‘top-down’ structural-legal approach that remains largely rooted in relatively fixed indicators, such as the robustness of mission mandates, while NATO advances a more pragmatic, ‘bottom-up’ approach that emphasizes an interaction-based and dynamic relationship between intervening forces and Afghan citizens. Although both actors increasingly recognize the plausible negative impact of intervening troops and the use of force, the material suggests limited reflection on what the Afghans themselves understand as sources of, or challenges to, legitimacy. Furthermore, even though the discourse increasingly emphasized the responsibility of the Afghan state, there continues to be limited discussion on Afghan-specific solutions and the role of Afghan civilians and grassroots organizations as active participants to the broader legitimacy process.

In conclusion, I argue that this mismatch at the politico-strategic level speaks to, and serves to justify, a heavy international footprint in Afghanistan that is, essentially, detached from locally defined needs and capabilities; an approach that is expected to have influenced experiences of intervention on the ground.

## Essay II

The essay “The Ambiguous Host-citizen Contract: An Evolving Notion of Duty in the U.S. Military Quest for Local Legitimacy” was published in *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 38, 10 (2015): 864–84. In this essay, I explore how recent ‘population-centric’ armed intervention in Afghanistan has shaped the formal notion of duty within the intervening military organization toward the local population. Looking specifically at the U.S. Armed Forces, I argue

that the duty toward the local population is conceptualized as a form of social contract, whereby local legitimacy for host-state authorities and U.S. mission objectives represents the ideal end-state. I explore this idea further by examining, and comparing, the 2006 and 2014 versions of the U.S. Army and Marine Corps counterinsurgency field manual (FM3-24), which provided key guidance to U.S. forces and international troops on how to implement a ‘population-centric’ counterinsurgency approach in Afghanistan.

Empirical findings suggest that the U.S. military’s notion of duty toward host citizens contains three interdependent obligations in exchange for local legitimacy: defeating enemy forces, supporting host-state authorities, and protecting the local population. Notably, the notion of local legitimacy is revised in the 2014 version of the field manual, which seems to narrow the scope of duty. In 2006, local legitimacy was conceptualized as a zero-sum objective that could be achieved with invasive military efforts. Conversely, in 2014, legitimacy is defined as an intangible or, at worst, unattainable objective for intervening forces. As a result, the formal duty of U.S. armed forces is portrayed as contingent on—and subordinate to—the will and capabilities of host-state authorities and the local population.

In conclusion, similar to findings in Essay I, the material suggests that U.S. Armed Forces largely externalized the problem of local legitimacy. Over time, failure to achieve viable, and legitimate, results did not lead to increased accountability on the part of intervening forces. Rather, I argue, that the revised manual serves as an attempt to explain, and justify, limited results as chiefly at the hands of host-state authorities and U.S. political leadership. Looking to the future, I propose that the revised manual is intended to serve as an ‘escape clause’ to justify the withdrawal of intervening troops ‘prematurely’ from the host nation, thus breaching the host-citizen contract. Thereby, it offers a cautionary tale about the limited utility of external military forces to achieve the objective of local legitimacy.

### Essay III

As a means to secure broad-based legitimacy in Afghanistan, intervening forces were instructed to work “by, with, and through” local counterparts and the wider population. To date, little is known about how intervening forces perceived this interaction. In the essay “Exploring Noncombat Contact and the Sense of Soldierly Duty in Afghanistan”, I set out to deepen an understanding of how personal experiences of interaction with host citizens influence intervening soldiers’ perceptions of the relationship with the local population. More specifically, this essay asks, if and how does noncombat contact shape the sense of soldierly duty toward the local population?

As a point of departure, this essay draws on the basic premises of the contact hypothesis to argue that the frequency, context and nature of personal experiences of contact (re)shape perceptions of host-citizen relations. Over time, I

expect that such experiences are likely to foster more nuanced and empathic understandings of the people living in the host nation. If so, it may instill a more pronounced sense of duty toward host citizens, particularly if interaction occurs on an equal footing and with the support of relevant authorities.

Based on in-depth, semi-structured interviews with U.S. Army Officers, this argument finds empirical support. Prior to deployment, most of the Officers recalled having a limited sense of duty toward the local Afghan population. Once on the ground, the Officers discovered that developing local ties was required to conduct effective operations. Without receptiveness and flexibility toward the interests and concerns of the people living in their areas of operation, it was perceived as impossible to achieve sustainable results.

Aside from recognizing the instrumental value of relationship-building with Afghans, the Officers' accounts also suggest that extensive noncombat contact came to strengthen an emotional bond with the local population. In line with the contact hypothesis, informal and friendly interaction on equal terms, or that demonstrated positive interdependence (for example by taking risks together to achieve a common goal), helped the Officers to overcome initial biases and gain a more nuanced understanding of Afghans. This in turn made them more susceptible and empathic of how the presence of intervening forces affected Afghan lives, for better and worse. With that, the Officers perceived to have grown increasingly tolerant of local behaviors and practices that were initially thought of as unacceptable.

Notably, in line with Essay I and Essay II, it appears that the Officers, over time, grew increasingly disillusioned about the role of U.S. forces in Afghanistan. However, they recalled frustration over institutional constraints of the military organization that made it difficult to establish reciprocal local relationships, for example the 'top-down' nature of military chain of command, or the combat-centric training and culture of the U.S. Army. Moreover, the Officers also grew more critical of the nature of mission objectives—including bolstering perceptions of local legitimacy—which were perceived as 'detached' from local realities. This friction between formal expectations of duty and the personal sense of duty on the ground was perceived as most tangible during the transition to Afghan leadership, which the Officers found premature and damaging to both host-citizen relations and mission gains.

In conclusion, the findings of this essay demonstrate that host-citizen relations are largely built, and shaped, by face-to-face interaction during deployment. Most importantly, this study shows that internalizing a sense of duty to the local population does not stand in conflict with the traditional duty toward fellow soldiers or the mission at hand, only such obligations were perceived as contingent on the ability to *adapt* to the local populace.

## Essay IV

The essay “Enforced Hospitality: Local Perceptions of the Legitimacy of International Forces in Afghanistan,” was published in *Civil Wars* 16, 4 (2014): 425–448. In this essay, I explore how some Afghan citizens understand the relationship with international forces and the ISAF mission, and what they perceive to constitute legitimacy in an Afghan context.

This essay expects that local perceptions of intervening forces are shaped, and reinforced, through socially constructed discursive frames. In the first instance, frames are by nature selective and affect what information the local population will take notice of and internalize about intervening forces. Subsequently, they provide a cognitive structure that facilitates certain interpretations over others, thereby shaping what host citizens view as available and suitable responses. Based on semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with Afghan citizens, this essay finds that security-related and ideational concerns interacted and together shaped understandings of legitimacy through two coexisting, yet seemingly oppositional, frames: *an occupation frame* and *a liberation frame*. At the outset of the armed intervention, participants recalled that most Afghan citizens welcomed intervening forces based on the promise of security and development. In line with the liberation frame, the willingness and ability of intervening forces to support and protect Afghan citizens was identified as a key source of their legitimacy. However, as a concept, legitimacy was associated with lawfulness and legality in accordance with Islamic values and principles. As such, intervening forces were not only evaluated based on their provision of instrumental services, but also on their impact on local norms and ways of life.

Over time, participants recalled that intervening forces were widely perceived as unable, and unwilling, to keep the initial promise of security and development. Instead, they became associated with an increasing threat to ‘everyday’ life. As a result, the occupation frame gained traction and the participants described that many Afghans felt deceived by intervening forces. Similar to findings in Essay II and III, it appears that feelings of disillusionment and disappointment over intervening forces took root amongst Afghans. It seems that Afghans came to doubt the true intentions of intervening forces. In the end, Afghan security and defence forces became known as more legitimate than intervening forces, not because they were the more capable security provider, but because they were considered ‘one of us’, as Muslims and *Afghans*. Nevertheless, Afghan citizens were ambivalent about the imminent withdrawal of intervening troops due to persistent security concerns.

In conclusion, the findings of this essay demonstrate that local perceptions of legitimacy in the context of armed intervention are, indeed, relational and dynamic constructs. As such, they are not easily measured as either ‘success’ or ‘failure’.

## Conclusion

All four essays in this dissertation address specific gaps in previous research and make individual contributions to the broader debate on the liberal peace agenda, specifically the use of external forces in the process of creating legitimate host-state authorities and a viable peace. Thus, their individual findings speak to each other and make several joint contributions. In this section, I present three principal joint conceptual, theoretical, and empirical contributions. Drawing on these contributions, I thereafter further develop the concept of a host-citizen contract, which can be seen to create a salient red thread between the main findings of this dissertation, and provide an overall frame for understanding how the relationship between intervening forces and the local population interacts with, and shapes, perspectives on local legitimacy in Afghanistan, and beyond.

Speaking to a conceptual gap in the literature, the first main contribution of this dissertation is to advance an understanding of what local legitimacy entailed to the ‘interveners’ and those ‘intervened upon’ in Afghanistan. The findings of Essay I and Essay II suggest that the UN, NATO, and U.S. Armed Forces conceptualized legitimacy in line with the liberal peace agenda. At the organizational level, these principal intervening actors all envisioned that legitimacy would ensue following the introduction of liberal reforms and democratic host-state authorities. Over time, challenges to broad-based legitimacy were conceptualized as chiefly the failings of the Afghan state, rather than the fault of the underlying principles and approaches of the intervention. Conversely, the main findings of Essay III and Essay IV challenged this liberal and ‘output’-oriented notion of legitimacy. Based on personal accounts of some U.S. Army Officers, findings highlight the salience of normative and relational dimensions of local legitimacy. In their views, the provision of basic services to local communities was a necessary, but not sufficient, means to bolster local perceptions of legitimacy. In addition, it was perceived that intervening forces—and the host-state reforms and authorities they supported—needed to demonstrate that they were capable of and willing to address local concerns in ways that local communities saw fit. Similarly, based on the personal accounts of some Afghan citizens, legitimacy required more than the provision of basic services, such as security and development. Moreover, legitimacy of authority was essentially rooted in ideational concerns, and the sense of Afghan identity, and evaluated in accordance with the influence it exerted on ‘everyday’ Afghan life.

The second main contribution of this study speaks to a theoretical gap in the literature by shedding light on how the relationship between host citizens and intervening forces interacts with, and shapes, perspectives on local legitimacy. In Afghanistan, the essays demonstrate a ‘disconnect’ between the perspectives held at the politico-strategic level of the armed intervention and those held by host citizens and intervening forces on the ground. Initially, it ap-

pears that both intervening actors and Afghan citizens held expectations of intervening forces to embody the promise of legitimate Afghan authorities and the delivery of a viable peace in Afghanistan. To this end, the main findings of Essay I, Essay II and Essay III suggest that the UN, NATO and U.S. Armed Forces initially envisioned the need for intervening forces to shoulder a leadership role over security and development efforts throughout the country. Similarly, the main findings of Essay IV suggest that initial local signs of progress, such as the ousting of the Taliban regime, reinforced local sentiment that viewed intervening forces as liberators of the Afghan people. However, as armed intervention in Afghanistan changed drastically over the years, so did perspectives on the relationship between host citizens and intervening forces. Viewed together, the essays demonstrate that understandings of local legitimacy also evolved. At the surface, it appears that both the ‘interveners’ and ‘intervened upon’ increasingly problematized the role and influence of intervening forces in the process of creating legitimate and sovereign Afghan authorities. Upon careful examination, this shared sentiment becomes far more intricate than it appears to be at first glance. The main findings of the essays demonstrate that different logics informed this new stance. Findings of Essay I, Essay II, and Essay III show that intervening actors, over time, reconceptualized the once principal influence of intervening forces as contingent on—and subordinate to—the will and capability of Afghan state authorities and the Afghan people. Thus, at the politico-strategic level, a main obstacle to the influence exerted by intervening forces was the perceived lack of local support, and adaptation to, the liberal reforms introduced by intervening forces.

By contrast, joint findings of Essay III and Essay IV demonstrate that the limited positive influence of intervening forces on the local legitimacy process was largely attributed to the ‘foreign’ and temporary nature of the intervention, which was perceived to have adapted poorly to local conditions and the needs of the Afghan people. From the perspectives of some U.S. Army Officers, the formal mission framework was perceived as largely detached from local realities. Day-to-day interaction with the local population revealed key differences between what constituted effective and legitimate outcomes of armed intervention according to the formal mission framework vis-à-vis Afghan citizens. Thus, the lack of adaptability was perceived as much of a problem at the politico-strategic level, and amongst U.S. forces on the ground. For example, the largely combat-oriented approach employed by intervening forces fed local sentiment of a lack of respect for local ‘ways of life’. Resultantly, intervening forces were increasingly perceived as aggressors and a threat to Afghan citizens, rather than their liberators (Essay III and Essay IV). Yet, despite a growing critical stance on the influence of intervening forces on local legitimacy, these micro-level perspectives on the ground underscored that the relationship between intervening forces and host citizens remained important. Speaking to this point, the imminent withdrawal of

intervening troops seems to have led to feelings of frustration amongst both intervening soldiers and Afghan citizens. Although a future transition to Afghan leadership constituted an ideal end state, the timing of the withdrawal was perceived to endanger existing gains in Afghanistan. Largely due to persistent security concerns, and a perceived lack of viable alternatives, Afghan citizens displayed ambivalent feelings about the withdrawal of foreign troops (Essay IV). It seemed that Afghan citizens preferred to hedge their bets and settle for whoever would exert the most influence on their everyday lives. Thus, they would evaluate the relationship with intervening forces based, in part, on their performance, but also on what they expected would happen once armed intervention came to a close.

Conversely, U.S. Army Officers with extensive personal experiences of ‘meaningful engagements’ with Afghan citizens recognized local relationships to be of fundamental importance to the effectiveness of their day-to-day activities on the ground. Moreover, local interactions on a perceived equal footing and for a shared purpose appear to have reinforced an emotional bond between intervening troops and Afghans. For example, taking risks and fighting together strengthened the sense of camaraderie between them, while informal interaction, such as drinking tea and talking about family, was a basic, yet effective way, for both parties to humanize each other. Over time, it appears that the Officers developed an increasingly tolerant and pragmatic understanding of local expressions of resistance toward the military presence, and instead sought to adapt the mission according to local needs, customs, and conditions (Essay III).

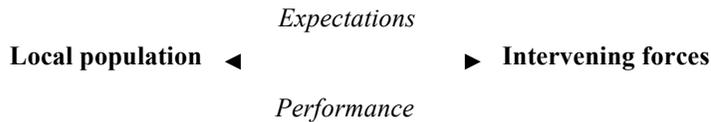
The third, and final, main contribution of this study speaks to an empirical gap in the literature by providing novel empirical insights that unveil new dimensions and complexities of armed intervention in Afghanistan—a case already extensively examined by scholars and practitioners alike. Viewed together, perspectives amongst the ‘interveners’ and those ‘intervened upon’ demonstrate that understandings of local legitimacy are, indeed, dynamic constructs that cannot be neatly confined to any one specific actor, event, or point in time. Aside from displaying differences between the perspectives held by Afghan citizens and the principal intervening actors, the findings of the essays also show that these perspectives vary within each group of actors, and over time. Thus, they serve to illustrate that neither host citizens nor intervening actors are internally homogenous groups. As such, the joint empirical findings of this dissertation display the fruitfulness of employing a broad analytical framework to capture how different relationships, factors, and processes interact to shape perspectives on local legitimacy. Next, I seek to further illustrate the main findings of this dissertation in the joint conceptual framework of a host-citizen contract.

## Local Legitimacy and the Concept of a Host-Citizen Contract

In this section I develop the concept of a host-citizen contract—a social contract that governs the relationship between the local population and intervening forces. In addition to linking together the findings of this dissertation, the host-citizen contract provides an analytical framework that incorporates both the perspectives held by the armed ‘intervener’ and those ‘intervened upon’ toward local legitimacy, and their relationship to each other.

According to the host-citizen contract, the basis for this relationship is the promise of legitimate host-state authorities and the delivery of a viable peace. I conceptualize the decision to engage in this relationship as contingent on different sets of expectations. Throughout the course of armed intervention, the relationship is reevaluated based on the perceived ability, and willingness, of each actor to fulfill the set of responsibilities and obligations envisioned by the other.

Figure II.



*At the outset of armed intervention*, intervening forces’ expectations of formal duty toward the local population appear to be shaped by the existing institutional mission framework, which focuses on three main responsibilities: defeating the enemy, supporting host-state authorities, and protecting civilian lives. On the ground, these key tasks appear to influence whether, and how, intervening soldiers engage with the local population. Concurrently, within the local population, expectations of intervening forces will contain strands of optimism, as well as strong reservations. At the outset, these coexisting strands of thought form an ambivalent local narrative on armed intervention that contains different local rationales for interaction with intervening forces.

*During the course of armed intervention*, the relationship is re-evaluated on the basis of perceived performance. In this regard, experiences of intergroup interaction exert important influence. In many ways, it resembles a costly process of trial-and-error, in which host citizens and intervening forces are bound, to varying degrees, by different underlying rationales and normative constraints that hamper their ability, and willingness, to adapt their modes of interaction to each other. A mutually perceived lack of adaptation represents a salient source of friction in the relationship. Yet, from the perspectives of intervening forces, it seems that noncombat contact, particularly interaction that fosters a sense of commonality, increases empathy with the local population and leads to a more tolerant and pragmatic understanding of local resistance to adaptation. Consequently, rather than imposing changes upon the

local population, some intervening forces recognize that they can generate more effective, viable and legitimate results if they instead adapt the mission in accordance with local needs, customs, and conditions. Relatedly, from the perspectives of host citizens, the provision of basic security and livelihood services is a necessary, but insufficient, means to sustain local willingness to engage with intervening forces, or the host-state reforms and leadership they support. Moreover, host citizens principally evaluate this relationship based on how it influences ‘everyday’ life. Although such local preferences are likely to evolve over time, intervening forces risk becoming entrapped in a negative and self-perpetuating pattern of interaction with the local population if they fail to adapt accordingly. If so, continued interaction is likely to feed a mutual sense of disappointment and frustration, which may lead to intergroup hostility or discourage interaction all together. At worst, intervening forces and host citizens lose faith in the armed intervention, and its ability to support legitimate host-state authorities and a viable peace. This would lead to an erosion of the host-citizen contract, both at the macro-level of the intervening military organization and the micro-level of individual host citizens and intervening soldiers.

*Eventually, armed intervention draws to a close.* At this point, perceived local resistance to adaptation may be used to rationalize the limited positive influence exerted by intervening forces on the host-nation legitimacy process. As such, it may serve to justify a premature withdrawal of deployed troops and, thus, a breach of the host-citizen contract. Yet, concurrently, large segments of the local population may still consider intervening forces as a necessity on the basis of immediate security concerns. Despite widespread disillusionment over the initial promise of intervening forces, host citizens may not see any other viable option than for intervening forces to remain in the country, indefinitely. Those intervening soldiers, who have developed close relationships with host citizens, may share this sentiment. To them, troop withdrawal may stand in conflict with their personal sense of duty toward host citizens, as it leaves the local population without a viable guardian.

In conclusion, the host-citizen contract illustrates some of the key promises and perils of the relationship between the local population and intervening forces, and how it shapes perspectives on local legitimacy. Thereby, the host-citizen contract helps to elucidate the perception-based, dynamic and relational qualities of the phenomenon at hand. If viewed as a social contract, a key challenge to local legitimacy is the perceived lack of local accountability of intervening forces, largely due to their perceived temporary and overtly intrusive nature. Nevertheless, it seems that intergroup interaction during deployment, which is based on positive interdependence and conducted on equal terms, may still generate a sufficient level of mutually perceived reciprocity in this relationship to achieve limited, but viable and legitimate, results on the ground.

## Implications and Paths for Future Research

On the whole, this study demonstrates that the nature of the relationship between intervening forces and the local population exerts an important influence on the perspectives on local legitimacy held by the ‘interveners’ and ‘intervened upon’ in the context of armed intervention. For future research, this dissertation underscores the fruitfulness of studying such perspectives over time, and at different levels of analysis, as it elucidates how this relationship is largely shaped by dynamics between the formal mission framework and face-to-face interactions on the ground.

The main findings of this study have given rise to the concept of a host-citizen contract. While the case of Afghanistan provides many fruitful insights, it remains unclear to what extent the findings are applicable to other host-citizen relationships. Important empirical and theoretical insights can be gleaned through the application of the host-citizen contract framework to other intervention settings. For example, it is necessary to explore whether similar dynamics are present in other ‘difficult’ cases of armed intervention, where the context is shaped by simultaneous combat operations and statebuilding efforts, such as the Intervention Brigade part of MONUSCO in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Autesserre 2014). In addition, it would be relevant to uncover if and to what extent the dynamics of the host-citizen contract apply to more permissive operational environments, such as small-scale peacekeeping missions with limited statebuilding objectives and deployed to areas with low levels of armed conflict. Scholars have already stressed the need to expand the study of intervention to include a wide spectrum of relationships between ‘interveners’ and ‘intervened upon’ (Gelot and Söderbaum 2011). Thus, it would be fruitful to investigate whether the host-citizen contract also applies to the relationship between political, development, or humanitarian missions and the local population. Although such relationships are briefly addressed in the dissertation (principally in Essay I) they warrant closer examination.

Concurrently, the findings of this dissertation suggest that it can be problematic to generalize conclusions from one intervention setting to the next. Viewed together, Essay II and Essay III serve to illustrate this point. At the organizational level of the U.S. Armed Forces, there appears to have been a strong inclination to view armed intervention and the local population in Afghanistan as interchangeable with military operations and the local population in Iraq. This is understandable to a certain extent considering that both Afghanistan and Iraq were characterized by high-levels of armed conflict, and large-scale (and partly overlapping) U.S. military operations pursuing invasive state-building agendas. Yet, turning to the micro-level, the findings suggest that this tendency was damaging to the prospects of relationship-building in Afghanistan, as host-citizen relations were perceived as drastically different, and more challenging, than in Iraq (Essay III).

Nevertheless, by comparing their experiences in Afghanistan and Iraq, the personal accounts of U.S. Army Officers also provided preliminary support to the broader applicability of the finding that noncombat contact influences perceptions of duty toward the local population. In both mission settings, noncombat interaction was identified as a crucial means to increase perceived positive interdependence and reciprocity in this relationship. This in turn fostered loyalty and mutual trust between intervening soldiers and host citizens, which proved instrumental to achieving viable results on the ground. Hence, this finding calls for more extensive study into what factors enable or constrict the development of such mutually beneficial intergroup dynamics. To this end, this dissertation serves as a useful point of departure for future theory-building and empirical study. In particular, more extensive fieldwork conducted at different points during an armed intervention would be a highly fruitful, albeit a demanding and potentially dangerous, research endeavor.

Armed intervention constitutes an unpredictable and costly learning process where mistakes are unavoidable. However, the findings of this study inform policy on armed intervention by elucidating some of the key challenges of deploying external military forces in support of local legitimacy processes. Collectively, the findings underscore the necessity of continued work toward creating more robust international institutions, mechanisms, and norms for the purpose of increasing the accountability of intervening states and organizations toward local populations (Zwanenburg 2005). The perceived lack of accountability toward the local population seems to have constituted the principal obstacle to local legitimacy in Afghanistan, and it took several forms. Viewing their state officials as fundamentally corrupt, it seems that Afghans were persistently hesitant in their reliance on state authorities. Instead of relying on the Afghan state, or intervening forces, they continued to place their faith principally in family networks, community ties, or local strongmen. Thus, findings demonstrate that Afghans placed their trust in interpersonal *relationships* rather than new institutions. The reluctance to engage with, and rely upon, intervening forces resulted partly because they were perceived to aggravate the problem of local accountability. For one, they provided extensive support to corrupt state officials. Moreover, Afghan citizens considered foreign troops to fundamentally lack local accountability of their own: they were widely found to be disrespectful to Afghan people and ways of life, to lack responsiveness to local needs, and to act overtly aggressive seemingly without any repercussions (Essay III and Essay IV).

Of additional policy relevance is this study's finding on the utility of formalizing consideration of the local population into the notion of soldierly duty. If working toward including the local population as a key component of soldierly duty, it could lead to significant improvements of future host-citizen relations. This in turn could generate more viable, and locally legitimate, outcomes of armed intervention. To this end, a number of reforms within intervening military organizations are necessary. For instance, there is a need

to develop more efficient communication across different levels of the mission, particularly from the ‘bottom-up’ between units on the ground to higher levels of command. In tandem, several ‘top-down’ reforms are necessary to improve institutional support at the interpersonal level of armed intervention. Specifically, increased support should be geared toward managing the relationships between deployed troops, local counterparts and members of the civilian population. To improve conditions for local relationship-building, the formal mission framework and local authorities in the host nation should facilitate and encourage noncombat contact. In the U.S. Armed Forces, but likely other militaries as well, findings of this study suggest that institutional support for noncombat activities still lags far behind support to combat training and the use of force in theater. Thus, improved training on noncombat interaction should constitute an obligatory component of basic military education and training, and specifically pre-deployment training. Nevertheless, such reforms must be accompanied by more comprehensive and critical reflection on the nature of the underlying norms and culture of the military organization, and the core values attributed to the notion of the professional soldier, all which are known to be difficult to change.

Lastly, the local accountability of intervening forces is challenged by the temporary, albeit at times protracted, nature of armed intervention. Contemporary armed intervention aims to leave behind the fundamentals of a new social contract intended to be self-sustaining, yet, findings show that the ‘premature’ transition to Afghan leadership eroded relationships, and thereby gains, that had taken years and painstaking efforts to develop. However, the idea of conducting seemingly never-ending armed intervention is certainly equally controversial. In the aftermath of recent armed intervention, as evidenced in Afghanistan and Iraq, residual external forces continue to shape, and challenge, conditions for local legitimacy. These developments raise questions that pertain specifically to the matter of local accountability, and thereby legitimacy. For instance, in late September 2015, U.S. forces may have stretched the bounds of ongoing NATO and U.S.-led noncombat operations in Afghanistan by conducting a series of airstrikes, during which several civilians were killed (Aljazeera 2015; BBC 2015). What is the duty of external forces in the aftermath of intervention, when the official transition to host-state leadership has been completed? What level of local accountability can be attributed to external forces if they operate under the guise of ‘legitimate’ state authorities?

Local legitimacy lies the heart of any armed intervention that purports to serve the interests of the host nation and its people. To intervening actors, bolstering local perceptions of legitimacy has developed into a moral and political obligation, as well as a key premise for mission effectiveness. Yet, ultimately, legitimacy is at the hands of the local population to either challenge or defend, be it with or without the presence of foreign troops.

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