Anatomy of a Village Razing:

Counterinsurgency, Violence, and Securing the Intimate in Afghanistan

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ABSTRACT: In autumn 2010, the United States military partially or completely razed several villages in Helmand and Kandahar provinces as part of its counterinsurgency campaign in southern Afghanistan. In the spring 2011, U.S.-led forces rebuilt one of the villages, Taroke Kalacha, to showcase the "humane" side of contemporary U.S. counterinsurgency doctrine. This article analyses the logics and rationalities informing the reconstruction of Taroke Kalacha, and why the rebuilding effort ultimately failed. I examine a wide spectrum of biopolitical initiatives involved in the 2010-2011 "Hamkari" counterinsurgency operations, and show how violence became a protracted condition for displaced villagers as durable lines of force were inscribed into the communal relations and material arrangements of the built environment(s) in Kandahar. I focus on what I call "securing the intimate"; namely, the attempts by U.S. forces to harness Afghan households as sites of indirect rule. In this anatomy of a village razing, I analyse two specific problems with the reconstruction of Taroke Kalacha: (1) the bid to establish a new political order by bringing the villagers closer to local governance structures through the dubious process of U.S. military compensation schemes; and (2) how the rebuilt structures in Taroke Kalacha deviated from the "local style" with devastating effect, especially for women in the village.

KEYWORDS: Counterinsurgency, Violence, Security, Feminist Geopolitics, Biopolitics, Afghanistan

ABBREVIATED TITLE: Anatomy of a Village Razing

Anatomy of a Village Razing: Counterinsurgency, Violence, and Securing the Intimate in Afghanistan

On April 1, 2011, Lieutenant Colonel David Flynn, the commanding officer for the U.S. Army's 1-320th Field Artillery Regiment, presided over a mosque opening ceremony in Taroke Kalacha, a small village in Arghandab district, located just north of Kandahar City in southern Afghanistan. In the previous autumn 2010, Taroke Kalacha was one of several villages either partially or completely destroyed by Flynn's forces as part of the U.S.-led Hamkari[1] counterinsurgency campaign in the northern and western sections of Kandahar province. **[Figure 1 Here]** The "clearing operations," as they were called, entailed the systematic destruction of "abandoned" homes, compounds, mud walls, farm plots, and, in a few cases, entire villages in Kandahar and Helmand provinces.[2] The *macabre tableau* left in the wake of the operations was justified by military officials as a legitimate means to deprive sanctuary for Taliban insurgents (Broadwell 2011). As he stood alongside Kandahar Governor Toryalai Wesa and other provincial leaders, Afghan military commanders, and village elders, Flynn presented the mosque as the centrepiece of a broader U.S. military effort to rebuild Taroke Kalacha's homes, walls, and surrounding fields amidst the charred rubble.

For Flynn, the reconstruction of Taroke Kalacha was as much symbolic as it was strategic. The rebuilt homes were intended to send a message to returning villagers that the motivations of the U.S. military were very different than the scorched earth tactics used by the Soviets, who, during their own counterinsurgency operations in the 1980s, decimated the countryside of southern Afghanistan (Ackerman 2011b). Instead, Flynn wanted to demonstrate the power of the "clear, hold, *build*" mantra then popular among U.S. counterinsurgency doctrine

advocates, and rebuild the Afghan village in a way that established “order” and prevented the (re)infiltration of Taliban insurgents (Flynn 2011). While village destruction and reconstruction has many precedents in U.S. and British counterinsurgency operations—e.g., the early 1960s strategic hamlet program in South Vietnam, and the New Villages scheme in Malaysia (Scott 2016; Sioh 2010)—this phase of U.S.-led operations (summer 2010 to March 2012)[3] marked a dramatic shift in the counterinsurgency strategy in southern Afghanistan.

In this article, I critically analyse the logics and rationalities informing the military operations conducted by Flynn and other U.S. commanders during the Hamkari campaign and its aftermath. The overt “gloves off” approach taken by U.S. forces during Hamkari signalled a radical departure from the “population-centric” mission outlined by the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) Commander General Stanley McChrystal as part of President Obama’s 2009 troop “surge” (Chandrasekaran 2012: 270-285; Forsberg 2010a). McChrystal’s tenure as ISAF commander retains a certain novelty against the historical backdrop of America’s longest war, as he took notable steps to “win” over the Afghan population using “conventional” counterinsurgency statebuilding tactics. While Special Operations missions increased under his command (Niva 2013; Robinson 2013), McChrystal curtailed the use of airstrikes, increased ground patrols, encouraged face-to-face dialogue with local Afghan elders, and, relevant to my discussion here, issued strong guidance against property destruction: “destroying a home or property jeopardizes the livelihood of an entire family – and it creates more insurgents. We sow the seeds of our own demise (McChrystal 2009).”[4]

McChrystal's sweep of "non-kinetic" guidelines were largely jettisoned by his successor, General David Petraeus, who assumed command in June 2010. Under pressure to produce "results" in the face of a growing insurgency and a 2014 timeline for withdrawal from the conflict, Petraeus reintroduced the full-spectrum of coercive instruments into the counterinsurgency campaign. Air strikes increased. There was an uptick in house-to-house night raids. Military-aged Afghan men suspected of supporting the Taliban were arbitrarily arrested or summarily killed by U.S. Special Forces (Aikens 2013). In a bid to build what Petraeus called a "community watch with AK-47s" (Chandrasekaran and Partlow 2010), U.S. forces trained and heavily armed village-based militias ("*arbakai*") dubbed "local police" to assist in the Hamkari operations (Hakimi 2013). The notorious warlord and commander of the Afghan Border Police (ABP), Adbul Razzik, was heavily supported by the U.S. military to restore "order" in Kandahar.[5] During Hamkari, Razzik assisted Flynn's forces in the "clearing operations" in Arghandab, far afield from the APB's jurisdiction in Spin Boldak, inflaming tensions with local residents (Gopal 2010).

Petreaus's shift in tactics exacted a heavy toll on the social fabric of Kandahar, Helmand, and elsewhere. However, the "population-centric" counterinsurgency component was not entirely abandoned. Indeed, what interests me, and is best captured in Flynn's reconstruction effort of Taroke Kalacha, was the equally violent campaign undertaken in 2010-2011 by U.S. forces and civilian agencies to productively reconfigure the biopolitical landscapes and intimate geographies of Afghan life as part of a wider strategy to "secure" the largely Pashtun population of Kandahar and Helmand from the Taliban insurgency. By "biopolitical reconfiguration," I mean the U.S. military's direct intervention into and modification of life

processes, “environments,” and modalities of social reproduction—bodily security, shelter, food—in a bid to manage and control the Afghan population on a local and regional level (Anderson 2011; Kienscherf 2011). While the projects of biopolitical reconfiguration in Kandahar and Helmand were varied—from establishing juridical orders and rebuilding destroyed homes, to crop substitution and food security—the sites I interrogate are the intimate relations that make up Afghan village life and political order; namely the military targeting of the Afghan household and its ties to the surrounding agricultural environment.

By concentrating on biopolitical reconfigurations at the level of the Afghan household, I wish to accentuate a mode of military violence beyond the obliteration of bodies and landscapes with which we have tragically become too familiar, and instead shift the attention to military projects that, in their productive dimensions, amount to something like a “slow death” (Berlant 2007) for local Afghan residents. As Hannah Arendt (1970) reminds us, modes of instrumental violence—such as aerial bombings, drone strikes, and the special operations raids unleashed by Petraeus—are often characterized by their effectiveness in an immediate sense (Shaw and Akhter 2012), arguably amounting to repressive “police” actions (cf. Bachmann, Bell, and Holmqvist 2015). However, in this article, I go beyond Arendt’s rich accounting of violence as the inhibition of dialogue and free action, and attempt to show a mode of violence that becomes a *protracted condition* for those living amidst the remnants; that is, a violence whose “durable traces” (Stoler 2013; cf. Leshem 2016; Povinelli 2011; Springer 2011) persist long after an occupying force leaves. My account does not seek to diminish the importance or immediacy of instrumental violence about which Arendt so eloquently writes. Rather, my intention is to emphasize the fact that Afghan residents must continue to live in the detritus of destruction, and the “reconstruction” of Taroke Kalache

illustrates how violence endures in the aftermath, that is, in the lived textures and built environments that make up every day Afghan life.

In the next section, I draw on the work of feminist geographers and political theorists to analyse the logics informing the U.S. military's targeting of Afghan homes, villages, and kinship relations. I forefront the U.S. military's desire to secure the "intimate" (Pain 2015; Pratt and Rosner 2012) as Afghan domestic spaces and village life became the primary site of intervention. In the following sections, I explore how durable lines of force were inscribed into the communal relations and material arrangements of the built environment of Kandahar in general, and Taroke Kalacha in particular. By durable "lines of force," I am referring to the design structure of the village and surrounding landscapes to facilitate population control in the U.S. military's *absence*, in the same way that Deleuze (1992: 160) argued, following Foucault, that "lines of force" are always embedded in the operational spaces of any apparatus of power. The lines of force range from the redrawing of property lines to building (or not building) walls, to the establishment of surveillance "sight lines" for military and police patrols in the village and countryside. Indeed, the carceral logic (Foucault 1977: 293-308) informing the reconstruction of Taroke Kalacha was intended to both confine *and* discipline Afghan bodies at the level of the household, although the project ultimately failed as it compromised the inhabitability of the village, for reasons I explain in great detail.

My account is based on a review of policy documents, journalistic accounts, and interviews with journalists, village elders, and U.S. State Department and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) officials operating in Arghandab at the time of Taroke Kalacha's

destruction and reconstruction. In this anatomy of a village razing, I examine two specific problems with the reconstruction effort: (1) the attempt to bring the villagers closer to local governance structures, and the dubious process of U.S. military compensation schemes; and (2) how the rebuilt structures in Taroke Kalacha deviated from the "local style" with devastating effect, especially for the women of the village. I close by arguing that the spaces of the Afghan home and the ends of the household are a critical nexus for operationalizing power relations in U.S. counterinsurgencies.

SECURING THE INTIMATE

In the lead up to the October 2001 invasion of Afghanistan, Derek Gregory once wrote that Western policymakers and military officials required a "peculiar cartographic performance of sovereignty through which the space of Afghanistan could be simulated as a coherent state (2004: 50)." If the purpose of this cartographic gaze was necessary, as Gregory argues, to construct Afghanistan as a "bounded locus of transnational terrorism," whereby an essentially "deterritorialized opponent" (Elden 2009: 72) such as al-Qaeda could be targeted, then it was a very short-lived performance. Almost immediately after the U.S. invasion, Afghanistan was quickly re-framed in the Western press and policy discourse as a "failed state" run by a Taliban "militia" who lacked sovereign control in a country still reeling from the 1980s Soviet occupation and 1990s civil war (Rashid 2000; Colls 2004). In fact, this reframing of Afghanistan as a "failed state" was critical step for Bush Administration lawyers to construct the Taliban movement and al-Qaeda as "non-state actors" without standing under the Geneva Conventions dictating the laws of war, a precondition for indefinite

detention in Guantanamo Bay.[6] By 2009-2010, the interpretative cartographic gaze noted by Gregory had effectively been inverted by the U.S. military in Afghanistan, and no longer operated merely at the "state-level" of sovereignty. Instead, the U.S. military operationalized a different set of cartographic performances in its counterinsurgency campaign which targeted the fluid networks of Afghan households, small farms, villages, and cultural institutions animating rural life far from the capital of Kabul.

Although there were many reasons for the "scaling down" of military operations to the lived textures of the village in Afghanistan, two primary factors stand out. First, by 2009, Western diplomats and military officials were disillusioned by the corrupt Karzai regime and the possibilities of liberal peacebuilding at the state level (Maley 2013). While the formal state apparatus operating in Kabul was highly centralized and effectively governed the capital, the rural areas where the conflict was largely taking place remained highly contested. As William Maley writes, "Rural Afghanistan [presented] an exceptionally complex political landscape, in which the agencies of the Afghan state provide[d] but one set of participants in a ceaseless renegotiation of power relations involving civil society, the state, and transnational actors, all using diverse strategies to realize their objectives (2013: 263)." The insistence of U.S. civilian, military, and even Kabul-based officials to build local governance structures ("community resilience") unwittingly contributed to the erosion of a "national solution" to local security problems (Hakimi 2013: 400). For example, the (failed) 2010 Operation Moshtarak to deliver "government-in-a-box" to the town of Marjah in Helmand was intended, in part, to build local governance institutions that could function (Ucko 2013), even if the relationship with Kabul was tenuous.

Second, and more importantly, a persistent narrative appeared around this time that painted rural Afghans, particularly Pashtuns, as culturally predisposed to “traditional” and “tribal” modes of authority fundamentally anathema to a centralized state (Hakimi 2014). Drawing on a long pedigree of Orientalist tropes (Said 1978: 31-49), U.S. forces turned to patriarchal relations rooted in Afghan village life as the legitimate basis for establishing Pashtun authority and order at the level of the village in conflict-ridden areas, regardless of a village’s relationship with Kabul. In this strategic “local turn” to the village, the male-dominated household became rich terrain for structuring social relations in southern Afghanistan (Jones 2010). As Afghan rural life was interpreted as irreparably “tribal,” displays of force were frequently posited as the most profitable means to earn “respect” with villagers. As one U.S. Special Forces practitioner of “village stability operations” put it,

> Family life is structured around the *qalat* (citadel)—a mud-walled compound that serves both to contain (women, possessions, goats) and to repel (intruders and the public). Afghan village life is simple and Hobbesian—nasty, brutish, and short… In rural Afghanistan, demonstrating sufficient cultural understanding while exhibiting the ability to act powerfully earns respect. Personal relationships are paramount, but they must grow from positions of strength... Villages and villagers principally aim to survive and prosper. To do so, *they will visibly align or subjugate themselves to the dominant, lasting presence* (Petit 2011: 26-27; my emphasis).

It is obvious that this type of racist neo-Darwinian cultural representation lacks nuance (█████ ████; Gonzalez 2009). At best, it misunderstands the dynamics of “community

governance" in Pashtun areas (cf. Shahrani 1998). Nevertheless, it is important to consider the posture U.S. military assumes towards a population once dubious stereotypes forcefully frame villagers as primordially "traditional" and motivated by informal kinship relations and force.

The widespread cultural stereotypes of Afghans in general, and Pashtuns in particular, prompted U.S. military soldier-scholars and operators to advocate an operational approach at the local level as the most effective means to stem the Taliban insurgency (Flynn 2010; Jones 2010; Kilcullen 2009: 39-114; cf. Moe and Müller 2017). The "tribal" inhabitants of Kandahar and Helmand were framed as *outsiders* vis-à-vis the central Afghan state, albeit an outside never fully separated from the state apparatus. Instead, an "inclusive-exclusion" (Agamben 1998) was produced under the aegis of "self-governance" by and for local Afghans (Kienscherf 2016). The radical alterity of villagers, embedded in their native traditional ways, always-already placed rural Pashtuns *in-between* the insurgents and "legitimate" state actors, exposing communities as targets for "kinetic" and "non-kinetic" coercion. As RAND analyst Seth Jones, a principal architect of "village stability operations," put it:

> Pashtuns are organized according to a patrilineal segmentary lineage system. This presupposes that the tribe will segment, or split, among multiple kin groups that will engage in competition with each other most of the time. When a common enemy outside the tribe poses an existential threat, the different segments tend to band together—since they are related by common descent—until the emergency is over… Saying that Pashtuns in a particular area identify only with the particular valley in which they live, as opposed to a tribe, suggests a

> misunderstanding of how a decentralized tribal system works. Tribalism is localism. There are many examples of segmented tribes that are deeply divided. But this does not make them any less "tribal." (Jones and Munoz 2010: 16-17)

This kind of broad cultural generalization is one of the reasons Mullah Abdul Zaeef's autobiography *My Life with Taliban* (2010) was so influential in U.S. soldier-scholar circles at the height of the Hamkari counterinsurgency campaign. When an ultraconservative like Zaeef wrote, "As an Afghan you are always more than one thing: your kin, your tribe, your ethnicity and the place where you were born; all are part of you. Pashtuns who emigrated long ago to the big cities of Afghanistan, Pakistan or abroad might have forgotten this, but their true identity lies with their tribe, their clan, their family and their relatives. As a foreigner, you can never truly understand what it means to be an Afghan" (Zaeef, 2010: 2), it reinforced every essentialist stereotype of Pashtun's operating at the time within the U.S. military-civilian apparatus in Afghanistan. It also enabled a "scaling down" of operations to the "local" that opened up Afghan households as a terrain for military violence.

In a way, the U.S. military's turn to the informal and intimate structures that make up Afghan village life was a "rediscovery" of the scale on which counterinsurgencies have always been most violently felt: the colonized body and the home (Khalili 2013). Of course, the process of "un-forming and re-forming communities" has a rich colonial legacy (Loomba 2005: 8); that U.S. counterinsurgency operations in southern Afghanistan resulted in the destructive re-composition of biopolitical landscapes is hardly surprising given the colonial roots of U.S. counterinsurgency doctrine (Khalili 2010). The story of counterinsurgencies re-engineering the political, economic, and cultural arrangements of societies on the receiving end of U.S.

imperial violence is familiar one, from the Philippines (McCoy 2009) to Haiti (Greenberg 2017), Vietnam and Central America (McClintock 1992) to Iraq (Dodge 2013: 31-52). At the height of the Vietnam War, for instance, Samuel Huntington (1968) wondered aloud if a positive side-effect of “modernization” could be gleaned from the American carpet bombings on South Vietnamese peasant hamlets and villages. By destroying the bases of support for the National Liberation Front, it was possible that a “social revolution” was making as South Vietnamese peasants were forced into “modernizing” urban slums.

> [The U.S. bombings] take place on such a massive scale as to produce a massive migration from the countryside to the city, [and thus] the basic assumptions underlying the Maoist doctrine of revolutionary war no longer operate. The Maoist-inspired rural revolution is undercut by the American sponsored urban revolution… The rural poor may well find life in the city more attractive and comfortable than their previous existence in the countryside (Huntington 1968: 650-652).

In his retrospective reading of Huntington, Mike Davis (2006: 56) concluded that U.S. counterinsurgencies are perhaps “one of the most ruthlessly efficient levers of informal urbanization.” Indeed, the mass destruction of homes and the mass displacement of populations is the signature wound of counterinsurgency warfare.

It is significant that the “modernizing” impulse once fashionable in Huntington’s generation is entirely absent in the ideological caricatures of Afghans animating the imaginations of Flynn (2012) and his peers. The motivations driving the village razings and reconstructions in Kandahar and Helmand were *not* to deprive the Taliban of a succouring population by

permanently resettling Afghan villagers in Afghanistan's cities. (Although, tens of thousands were forced to flee the countryside into refugee camps outside Kabul and Kandahar City during the Hamkari campaign; Refugees International 2010). Rather, the military goal was to *re-form a political order* on the basis of "culture" and kinship, specifically on the foundation of the patriarchal Afghan household, that was at once "culturally appropriate" and amenable to U.S. military domination and population control.[7] The logic underpinning this "residential approach" to counterinsurgency is succinctly captured by David Kilcullen in his influential "Twenty-eight Articles":

> In traditional societies, women are hugely influential in forming the social networks that insurgents use for support. Co-opting neutral or friendly women, through targeted social and economic programs, builds networks of enlightened self-interest that eventually undermines insurgents. You need your own female insurgents, including interagency people, to do this effectively. Win the women, and you own the family unit. Own the family, and you take a big step forward in mobilizing the population (Kilcullen 2006: 7).

The practice of specifically targeting households in counterinsurgencies is not entirely novel. Feminist geographers have long demonstrated the ways in which violence manifests in the intimate geopolitics of the household (Pain 2015; Brickell 2014), and how kinship and gender are mobilized in war contexts (Dowler 1998). In her sweeping historical survey on counterinsurgencies "socially administering" colonialized populations in revolt, Patricia Owens argues that counterinsurgents throughout the twentieth century coveted households as a site for indirect rule:

> [Counterinsurgents] drew on and innovated organisational devices of direct and indirect household governance to create or shape units of rule in which populations were to be domesticated. They variously sought to achieve this aim through the selective delivery and withholding of humanitarian supplies and inside and through small-scale family homes, detention and concentration camps, depopulation and re-concentration in new villages and strategic hamlets, the creation or shaping of tribes and sectarian militia, and at the largest scale inside newly formed or reformed postcolonial and/or postwar national-states. In each of the campaigns, liberal counterinsurgents attempted, although never wholly succeeded, to negate the meaningful political agency of local people by turning to old – as well as creating new – techniques of household rule (Owens 2015: 24).

By aiming to secure the intimate, any boundary that may exist between "private" and "public" in the household breaks down (Porteous and Smith 2001; Nowicki 2014). Culture, kinship, and "home" are taken less as sociological constructs than as instruments for coercion (Martin 2012; : 1018-1019). For this reason, Khalili writes (2011: 8), "the conventional privacy measures for homes and the peacefulness of everyday spaces is no longer guaranteed [in counterinsurgencies]… What counterinsurgency does… is to try to transform these spaces without necessarily destroying them (although destruction—especially in the wake of population resettlement is often inevitable), thus co-opting everyday spaces into the landscape of war." Interiority becomes a terrain as important as exteriority. Controlling *hearths* and minds matters as much as "hearts and minds."

The violent encroachments into Afghan domestic spaces were wide-ranging, from rapport-building home visits by U.S. commanders for "tea" with the household patriarch (Adey 2014) and "Female Engagement Teams" trained to work with Afghan women on domestic social programs (McBride and Wibben 2012) to house-to-house searches, night raids and targeted drone strikes on houses. In southern and eastern Afghanistan, where U.S. forces worked diligently to resituate the Afghan household and village as a site of intervention, such an approach was particularly pernicious as "there remains a general respect for the boundary between public space and home – private family spaces. Non-familial breaches to this boundary are largely identified as a violation of family autonomy and honour" (Fluri 2011:285), often creating "more ill-will than civilian casualties" (Azarbaijani-Moghaddam *et al*. 2008: 27). Once these boundaries collapse – the "un-walling of the wall," as Eyal Weizman puts it – the "breaching of the physical, visual, and conceptual border/wall exposes new domains to political power (Weizman 2007: 210)." As I argue below, when boundaries collapse, or are erected again in malicious ways, political power resides not merely in the relationship between governing institutions and the population. Rather, modalities of violence and power are instantiated in the material arrangements (re)established in the (re)built environments. In the next section, I show how this political power manifests in concrete terms in the destruction and reconstruction of Taroke Kalacha.

HEARTHS AND MINDS

"The place was completely riddled with evil."

Lt. Col. David Flynn, *Washington Post*, 16 April, 2011

Clearing

To fully appreciate the biopolitics of the Taroke Kalacha reconstruction, it is important to consider the wider context of the Hamkari operations in Kandahar and Helmand. Ben Anderson has written that counterinsurgency is fundamentally a "violent environmentality," meaning that operations "advocate a type of 'environmental' intervention on the relation between the life and perception of a population (2011: 208)." During the Hamkari operations, it was widely acknowledged that while U.S. commanders had difficulty decoding the cultural milieu—the so-called "human terrain"—the *material terrain* in which U.S. forces were moving posed equally considerable challenges for securing a dominant military presence (Forsberg 2010a; Chandrasekaran 2011). In Arghandab, for example, the combination of un-pruned pomegranate orchards, fields dotted by five-foot high grape drying earth mounds, irrigation canals, high-walled villages, mud-walled lined footpaths and dirt roads hindered U.S. troop mobility, and provided effective cover for insurgents to plant IEDs. To the west, in Panjwai and Zhari, while trees and orchards were less dense, the districts were heavily irrigated with canals as the area relied on the Arghandab River for agriculture. Tall earthen mounds for elevating grapevine trellises also obstructed military movements in the area. Further west in Maiwand, the dense foliage, earth mounds, and irrigation canals tapered off as settlements are increasingly sparse, but the district remained a major trafficking point for the insurgency (Forsberg 2009: 11). From the U.S. military's perspective, the complex mosaic of obstacles and chokeholds of the socio-physical landscape provided the Taliban with a substantial amount of cover for compounds, weapons caches, and deadly mines. Therefore, the violent reconfiguration of the material spaces of the districts was necessary for enacting a viable political order.

It is difficult to overstate the extent of the damage wrought by U.S. operations in the Arghandab River Valley in 2009-2011. Throughout Arghandab, Zhari, and Panjwai, mudbrick walls, homes, and dense foliage were razed to create sightlines and prevent cover for insurgents (Taimoor Shah, journalist in Kandahar, interview 05/12/2015). Starting in July 2010, hundreds of "abandoned" homes and buildings of displaced villagers in the districts were identified by U.S. military commanders as "IED factories," and systematically bombed to rubble (Gall and Khapalwak 2011).[8] It is unclear whether all the homes and buildings were permanently or temporarily abandoned. U.S. forces used Mine Clearing Charges to destroy hundreds of acres of pomegranate and grape orchards not only to clear IEDs, but to create breaches and roads for patrolling military vehicles.

The technologies of ruination were diverse. In one instance, a BBC crew filming the documentary *The Battle for Bomb Alley* (2010) shadowed Captain Matt Petersen, commander of the U.S. 3rd Battalion 5th Marines who was leading demolitions in Sangin in Helmand Province. The footage shows Marines using bulldozers to level houses and mud walls, as well as a mosque situated next to the Marines' base. Soldiers tell villagers their homes have to be "cleared" to "make room for military vehicles" and deny insurgents the capacity to plant IEDs. "It's going to look a lot different," a Marine is filmed saying as a village wall is bulldozed. The reporter asks, "Do you feel bad seeing that?" "Not really," the Marine replies. At one point, an Afghan interpreter for the Marines has difficulty explaining to the villagers why their houses must be torn down. "I would be angry," he says, "and I know you are." In another scene, a villager is running over debris, desperately pointing to his home and shouting, "All

our belongings are in that house! Are you destroying it?" He pleads to interpreter, "Tell them our stuff is there. We are poor people, what should we do? Tell him that our children are there." He was too late. The reporter asked Captain Petersen about the principle or logic behind the demolitions, and Petersen replied, "I know that most people in the world probably wouldn't understand, 'Now, wait a minute. You're trying to build up a country by destroying it.' And it seems like a paradox. But those are people who have not been to Afghanistan, and don't understand that the nature of conflict inevitably includes destruction before you can start to build it the way it should be."[9]

In another instance, the U.S. military worked in tandem with the Office of Transitional Initiatives (OTI), a branch of USAID, to train Arghandab farmers in pruning practices for the overgrown pomegranate trees that hindered military patrol mobility. Initiated as part of USAID's "Afghanistan Vouchers for Increased Production in Agriculture" (AVIPA-Plus) program, the pruning project served a dual purpose. In part, AVIPA-Plus was a "cash-for-work" stabilization scheme to provide training and vouchers for Kandahar and Helmand farmers to increase agricultural outputs, grow alternative crops to poppy, and provide employment for young men who might otherwise join the Taliban (USAID Fact Sheet 2010; Green 2010). As the OTI representative who ran the program told me, AVIPA was a "knowledge sharing" project to recover "traditional" pruning practices: "A lot of people who had either fled or been killed were people who had the knowledge on how to take care of the orchards. That knowledge was sort of gone. And people taking care of the orchards didn't know how to prune their trees, didn't know how to till their soil. They didn't know how to do that sort of thing" (Kevin Melton, USAID/OTI representative in Arghandab (2010-2011),

interview 28/12/2015). More importantly, AVIPA-Plus was a critical component of the counterinsurgency campaign, as the lush and overgrown pomegranate trees hindered U.S. aerial surveillance capabilities in support of troop movements and locating insurgents planting IEDs. The un-pruned trees were frequently likened to the dense hedgerows at Normandy, and made establishing sightlines from above and below nearly impossible (Department of State official, interview; cf. Chandrasekaran 2011). Under the auspices of recovering "traditional" farming techniques and practices destroyed by thirty-plus years of war (cf. Attewell 2016), the pruning project was designed to enhance the U.S. military's ability to more effectively *see* the terrain.

The destruction of Taroke Kalacha and other villages (Khosrow Sofla, Khosrow Ulya, Lower Baber, and others) was part of this wider set of "clearing operations" occurring in the Arghandab River valley. "We obliterated those towns," Flynn's colleague Colonel Jeffrey Martindale boasted at the time to the *Washington Post* (Partlow and Burlliard 2010). "They're not there at all. These are just parking lots now." However, the destructive clearing was only one side of the coin. The other side was dedicated to rebuilding Afghanistan "the way it should be."

Building

Alongside the systematic demolitions, the U.S. military also engaged in several "building" projects. Tall concrete walls were strategically installed along roads and through farmland for

purposes of population control, hindering movements on secondary roads and footpaths, and channelling military-aged males through police checkpoints along main roads. In Zhari district, a five-mile long “great wall of Kandahar” topped with razor wire—described by one journalist as “overly penal” for local residents (Chandrasekaran 2011)—was partially built by U.S. forces to cut off ISAF-controlled villages and areas from Taliban infiltration. In neighbouring Maiwand, soldiers built a mile-long, twelve-foot high “Wolfpack Wall”[10] made of Hesco containers—large, wire mesh boxes filled with dirt—as an *ad hoc* initiative to cut off Taliban lines of communication between Helmand and Kandahar, and expose insurgents to targeting in the open desert (Robson 2010). In the provincial capital, journalists evoked the imagery of Baghdad’s “Green Zone” to describe the changes occurring in Kandahar City under Obama’s troop surge, such as newly erected blast walls, roaming military patrols, and anxiety-inducing checkpoints (Chandrasekaran 2010).

The reconstruction of Taroke Kalacha was the highest profile “building” project in Kandahar. On October 6, 2010, Flynn ordered the aerial demolition of Taroke Kalacha and three other villages located west of the Arghandab River, near the U.S. forward operating base in Jelawar. The name “Taroke Kalacha” means that the village belonged to the Taraki tribe, a minority tribe in Arghandab. After 2001, the village suffered many raids by American Special Forces and the Afghan government, which is one of the reason the village sympathized with the Taliban (Anand Gopal, journalist in Kandahar and New York City, interview 10/12/2015). There was never any trust built between the U.S. military and the village residents. In the bombings, over forty structures and the surrounding fields were destroyed. According to Flynn (2011), the villages were densely populated with mines, preventing military access for

foot patrols. Flynn's battalion and villagers tending their fields suffered heavy casualties from IEDs while patrolling around their combat post in Jelawar.

> All summer long, in spite of our casualties, the local population was hit worse by the Taliban's indiscriminate maiming of civilians by their IEDs. Children maimed while playing in the fields; fathers killed in front of their children while working in the orchards. The people of displaced villages told me that they could not return to their homes due to the threat. I have witnessed more Afghans express desire for retribution against the Taliban than coalition forces in my area (Flynn 2011).

Moreover, the U.S. claimed its military personnel came repeatedly under fire from Taliban "based" in the villages (Ackerman 2011). In autumn 2010, several reports emerged of Flynn and his subordinates collectively threatening villagers with the demolition of their homes if they did not reveal the insurgent networks planting IEDs in the area (Farmer 2010), an accusation that Flynn denies (Broadwell 2012: 162). It is a curious denial, as Flynn and other U.S. commanders frequently claimed that the reason they demolished the villages was that civilians had long fled after the Taliban arrived (Shah and Nordland 2010). It remains unclear how Flynn's forces could threaten or negotiate terms of destruction and compensation of homes with villagers who had fled. Nevertheless, Flynn worked throughout September to secure approval to destroy the "compounds" from Kandahar governor Toryalai Wesa, the district governor Shah Muhammed Ahmadi, as well as landowners and villagers (Flynn 2011). There was little to no strategic input from U.S. civilian agencies in Arghandab on the wisdom of Flynn's plan. As the State Department representative in Arghandab in 2010-2011 told me:

> We were consulted, I guess. We were informed that it was going to happen. The strategy was not developed in any sort of joint manner, at least not with the

> district or with the district governor at first. The idea was presented to the district governor in a very leading way. And, the USAID and State didn't really give them much buy-in. My specific opinion was that it should not have been done. But, if they were going to be levelled, for lack of a better word, then because it was a necessity, then they certainly should rebuild (Chris Harich, U.S. Department of State representative in Arghandab (2010-2011), interview 13/01/2016).

In late September, the district governor ordered any remaining residents to flee the villages, with over 900 families fleeing Zhari and Arghandab in September and October (Forsberg 2010a: 11; Shoaib 2010). Once the villages in the district were empty, the homes, surrounding farms, and orchards were destroyed. 49,000 pounds of bombs were dropped on Taroke Kalacha (Ackerman 2011a). U.S. officials claim that based on pattern-of-life analysis, there was no loss of life in the village demolitions other than the insurgents "based" there.[11] As Flynn wrote of the operation,

> Did I want to destroy the entire Taliban sanctuary and leave no structures for the people to return to? No. The choice, based on my previous experience, was to lose or maim more of my soldiers or raze the structures and rebuild later. I had the greater context of the population in mind and felt with the relationships that we had already made in the past three months, already solidified by the previous unit, that we could successfully resettle the population in the area (Flynn 2011).[12]

The timing of the house demolitions is important to keep in mind, as they occurred at the height of harvest and prior to the onset of winter. In December 2010, when villagers were given permission to return, they were dumbfounded by the extent of the destruction—

houses, village walls, and fields reduced to rubble, their livelihoods in jeopardy (Lawrence 2011).

After the demolitions, the focus immediately turned to compensation and rebuilding the villagers' homes in Taroke Kalacha. I noted above that we need to understand violence as a protracted condition. In this case, it was through the redrawing of property boundaries, the planned layout of the new Taroke Kalacha, and the design of the rebuilt houses that lines of force were inscribed in the built environment. In what follows, I highlight two problems in the reconstruction process: the access to compensation (or lack thereof) through local governance councils, and the design failure of the rebuilt structures.

(I) Local governance and compensation

The reconstruction effort was exceptional insofar as the entire process – planning, compensation, and rebuilding – was carried out by the U.S. military, who paid local sub-contractors to rebuild the village using Commander's Emergency Response Program (CERP) money (cf. Gilbert 2015b: 207-210). General Petraeus and Flynn immediately touted the rebuilding scheme as a counterinsurgency tactic to separate the population from the insurgents (McCloskey 2010). Prior to the razings, much of the local population west of the river in Arghandab, Panjwai, and Zhari were opposed to the presence of U.S. troops, who they blamed for the rise in violence in the area (Dorronsoro 2010: 12). The razings only exacerbated the local population's fear and animosity towards the U.S. military (Chandrasekaran 2010; McCloskey 2010; Shah and Nordland 2010). U.S. officials, however,

were unable or unwilling to admit that their presence fostered insecurity. They routinely chalked up local hostility either to "Taliban sympathizers," or to inter-tribal conflict between the U.S.-favoured tribal aristocracy of Alikozai and Barakzai east of the river in Kandahar City and Dand, and the less-favoured "conservative" Ishaqzai and Noorzai located in the rural areas west of the river (Forsberg 2010a: 11-14; Gopal 2010: 12). Given this resentment, as well as fear of Taliban reprisals, most of the population in Arghandab was reticent to engage with the district governor's office and local councils (*shuras*). The U.S. seized the "opportunity" offered by the razings to crudely *force* reluctant villagers to "engage with the process" of district governance (USAID/OTI official, interview).

One way to "connect the government to the people," as the ISAF Deputy Commander (British) Major General Nick Carter put it (Porter 2010), was to require displaced farmers to prove their residence in Taroke Kalacha and elsewhere as a prerequisite for compensation. Emily Gilbert (2015a) has argued that military payments serve a special function in counterinsurgencies. On the one hand, money payments function to exonerate the military (at least in the eyes of the U.S.) of wrongdoing. On the other hand, since payments are packaged as a "gift," they open possibilities for population control: "Military payments, with their bureaucratic information-gathering practices… [can] be understood as a kind of biopolitics exerted in the interest of the social welfare of the population… [through] appeals to sympathy and condolence… the needs and interests of the victims are suspended, and the imperial noose tightened (Gilbert 2015a: 405)." In Arghandab, the U.S. military had two requirements for compensation. Proof of residence had to be vetted in person by the district governor at the district centre, then approved by the military officer, Captain Pat McGuigan, in charge of the

task force overseeing the reconstruction. Then, proof of ownership in the form of a deed had to be presented to assess land valuation and stake out property lines. All the data gathered in the damage reports was stored by the U.S. military in computer systems (Shah and Nordland 2010).

Three problems arose in the compensation process. First, the U.S. military quickly learned that most of the farmers residing in Taroke Kalacha and the other villages did not in fact own the land. Rather, due to thirty years of conflict, most of the landowners of the fields and buildings in the villages resided in Kandahar City, and hired tenant farmers to tend the fields. Thus, the tenant farmers living in the villages were triply damaged by the Hamkari operations: they were displaced from their homes and animals; their livelihoods were jeopardized by the destroyed vineyards and irrigation systems; and they were not the primary beneficiaries of the compensation packages, which instead went to the landlord in possession of the deed. Second, the proof of ownership via a deed is not straightforward in southern Afghanistan, where property relations are typically "customary" (Murtazashvili and Murtazashvili 2016: 112-117), and do not conform to the Lockean liberal tradition of "property ownership" informing the American military's compensation process. In general, property ownership was a collective understanding and acknowledgement. Ironically, "tribal" customs in this case did not extend to property relations. The proof of paper was necessary, opening up the process to "leakages" and bribery.

As news spread of the village razings, landowners living Kandahar City showed up to the district centre to claim compensation, and many claims were made for non-existent property

(Gall and Khapalwak 2011). If landowners possessed deeds, they tended to be temporally discontinuous, as some pieces of land had four or five deeds depending on the regimes in power in Afghanistan over the past forty years, with some deeds dating back to the rule of Mohammed Zahir Shah before he was overthrown by Mohammed Daoud Khan in 1973 (USAID/OTI official, interview). Therefore, most of the property lines in the villages had to be re-drawn. An OTI/USAID official involved in determining land rights after the razings in Arghandab (and later in Kabul) told me:

> I remember this aspect being frustrating. Which, from trying to talk with (State Department) lawyers, trying to build land rights and land tenure stuff was like, Oh my god, what piece of paper makes the most sense? Well, land rights at that point, we had to make them up. Here's a house. Here's a tree. What's the cost? What is that? And it was, this was why I had to go back and [have discussions with] the district governor, the provincial government, and the local people at Jelawar at the base, and say, Okay, how are we going to look at compensating this? And then, were there actors that felt left out, that sort of thing.

However, the U.S. military compensation scheme, specifically the issued document indicating property ownership containing the district governor's stamp, in effect "rationalized" property ownership – at least for those landowners present and with the monetary means to secure a deed, whether or not they were the "real owners" of the land prior to the demolitions (Gall and Khapalwak 2011). From the perspective of Taraki villagers, the issuing of deeds was a method of "putting villagers in their place" (Mitchell 2002: 59). Since Taraki's had a disfavoured status post-2001, they often lacked a broker or supporter in the government to facilitate compensation or secure deeds (Gopal, interview). Therefore, issuing deeds was not

a moment whereby private property emerged as a “right won by individuals against the state” (Mitchell 2002: 67), but rather a form of penalty for the villagers, and as a means of enhancing population control.

Finally, discrepancies in compensation estimates quickly emerged between the Americans and Afghans. In January 2011, a six-member Afghan presidential commission formed by President Karzai estimated that the Hamkari operations caused over $100 million in damage to farms and homes. According to the commission’s chairman, Mohammed Sediq Aziz, over 800 homes and more than 100,000 fertile and non-fertile trees (not including crops and fields) were destroyed in Arghandab, Panjwai, and Zhari. By contrast, the U.S. military estimated $1.4 million in damages and 81 homes destroyed (Shah and Nordland 2011). Whether the Afghan numbers were too high, and the American’s too low, local officials and journalists placed the number of structures destroyed in the hundreds (Shah, interview; Gopal, interview).

In Taroke Kalacha, residents complained of being under compensated. One village elder and landowner in the village, Haji-Abdul Hameed, claimed that he lost four plots of pomegranate trees, plums and apricot vineyards, as well as his house, but that the monetary value of the loss was not fully recovered.

> We were called by American forces to talk about compensation, and they promised us that the damage of gardens and homes caused by bombs and widening of paths would be compensated. But estimate and calculated costs and

> offers to Americans were not accepted. For each pomegranate tree we calculated 15,000 Afghanis ($228.00), as each tree was fifteen years of age and ready for good produce. For the vine trees 12,000 Afghanis ($182.00) were estimated as the vines take ten years to age and be ready for product. What was their reaction to our calculations estimate? They offered 5,000 Afghanis ($76.00) for pomegranate trees and 1,500 Afghanis ($23) for vine trees, and I was not compensated at all (interview, 23/12/2015; translated by Taimoor Shah).

This is not the place to adjudicate the discrepancies between American and Afghan estimates. However, as Gilbert argues (2015b: 204), money in counterinsurgencies should be understood as a "weapon system" that "brings its own kinds of violence;" namely, the enormous power differential between those with the guns and those with precarious livelihoods at stake. Such a power differential allows for the military to pick winners and losers, "low-ball" estimates against members of a "culture" widely taken as "corrupt." Or, in this case, compensation could work to punish communities such as the Tarakis who had a history of supporting the Taliban.[13]

(II) Rebuilding Taroke Kalacha

In October and November 2010, the property lines of Taroke Kalacha were redrawn, and fourteen deeds were issued to landowners after they were vetted by the district governor (Broadwell 2011). After the New Year, the U.S. military cleared the rubble from the village, and used CERP money in a "cash-for-work" program to hire sub-contractors and displaced

farmers and rebuild the destroyed homes. The “cash-for-work” scheme was touted as “development,” as it “prevented” young men from being incentivized to join the insurgency (Flynn 2011). **[Figures 2 here]** The mosque and houses were finally completed in May 2011, and many displaced villagers returned to Taroke Kalacha. However, the new housing, which amounted to a haphazard and crude attempt at indirect rule, was a disaster for the villagers.

The design of the houses was reminiscent of American-style suburbia as contractors built confab structures like those used on U.S. military bases (cf. Gillem 2007). The villagers complained that the houses were not built in a local style but in a Western style without border walls or many rooms (Gopal, interview). While the U.S. military installed concrete blast walls along the road leading up to the village, in a bid to mitigate against Taliban infiltrators using new boundary walls for sniper cover and/or hiding IEDs, Flynn initially required a height requirement no higher than four feet for the boundary walls, which deviated sharply from local “custom” (Chandrasekaran 2011). In the end, no formal boundary walls were ever built, which transgressed from the local style. Instead, as Taroke Kalacha was reconstructed in the shape of a square, the back walls of the domiciles served as “boundary walls” **[Figure 3 here]**.

Importantly, no boundary walls were built internally within the village. The lack of internal walls was a particularly insidious form of violence, as it came as a great imposition on the women in the village, who were confined to the house for fear of being exposed to the male residents in the village. The violence of no internal walls was exacerbated another problem. The buildings themselves were made of concrete walls and bricks, with steel doors and sheet-metal roofs. During the summer, the villagers could not live in houses as they were too hot,

and the women residents were confined to homes which were practically ovens. However, the carceral logic informing the reconstruction effort did produce durable lines of force since the straight and "rational" layout of Taroke Kalacha allowed for more effective patrolling by U.S. and Afghan forces (USAID/OTI official, interview).

Finally, the military's desire for material transparency extended beyond the walls and into the types of crops planted in the fields. To counteract the dense foliage produced by pomegranate and grape vineyards, the U.S. encouraged farmers to plant alternative crops (such as soybeans). The Afghans insisted on continuing to grow traditional crops. However, the conditions of security collided with the conditions of agriculture and the "recurrent rhythm conditions" (Arendt 1958: 120) of human labour toiling in the fields. The replanted pomegranate trees were estimated to take four to five years to bear fruit. The timeline to bear fruit conflicted with the date set for U.S. withdrawal of military and civilian personnel from Afghanistan, jeopardizing the security conditions necessary to engage in the agricultural practices that were the basis of the residents' livelihood, thus making the whole effort to "help" the displaced villagers seem, at best, disingenuous (Department of State official, interview).

CONCLUSION

Hannah Arendt once argued that although violence and power often appear together, they must be understood as opposites. In her famous essay "On Violence" (1970), Arendt offered a conception of power as the art of persuasion, that is, the capacity to mobilize people

through the means of effective speech, intersubjective dialogue, and a leader or institution's ability to compel the body politic to act in concert (1970: 143). In Arendt's liberal-democratic conception, power is legitimate only insofar as it is realized through the consent and free action of the polity. Power's antithesis, violence, depends upon a different set of means and instruments for its realization. Rather than consensus and action, violence is the radical inhibition of dialogue and the prohibition of (free) action. For Arendt, the opposition of power and violence is most clear if we consider the extreme form of coercive rule, authoritarian tyranny, and the way in which this ultimate "command-obedience" model cancels out meaningful political activity.

In its mid- to late-2000s heyday in Western capitals, advocates of counterinsurgency often presented the revived military doctrine as the pursuit of power in a liberal-democratic sense, placing checks on overt "kinetic" violence, and advocating a conception of power that echoed something like Arendt's notion of "coercion-free force" (Habermas 1983: 174). However, what the case of Taroke Kalacha shows is that counterinsurgencies *in practice* are completely foreign to Arendt's dichotomy. Instead, counterinsurgencies are much closer to Fanon's (1965) understanding of violence (which Arendt criticized) as the glue that holds together the colonial order of things, at both the institutional and structural level, and at the existential and psychological level. In counterinsurgencies, it is impossible to determine where violence ends and power begins, and vice versa.

In this account of the destruction and reconstruction of Taroke Kalacha, I have made two arguments. First, the U.S. military's biopolitical reconfiguration of socio-physical landscapes

rests on a logic that marks “tradition” and the “local” as the privileged sites of military intervention. Why? Because the U.S. military assumes that “real power” resides in timeless Pashtun “tribal customs,” and that Afghans at the village level are always already motivated by displays of patriarchal strength and power. Thus, the Afghan household becomes the locus for securing the intimate and indirect rule.

Logics, however, are never confined to the level of discourse or ideology. Rather, second, in the targeting of villages and households during the Hamkari counterinsurgency operations, the demolition of Taroke Kalacha and other villages was a violently biopolitical (re)composition of the communal and material relations of everyday life. Through the design and rebuilding of Taroke Kalacha, new lines of force were inscribed into the built environment. On the one hand, the Tarakis were coerced to recognize the authority of local governing institutions and a foreign military that had historically punished them for tacitly or overtly supporting the Taliban, and could only receive compensation through those institutional bodies. On the other hand, the villagers’ fields and homes were rebuilt in a way that maximized military surveillance rather than the needs (such as external and internal boundary walls) of the villagers. The entire reconstruction scheme, from the design to the arrangement of the domiciles, illustrates how violence must not be understood in Arendt’s sense as an instrumental means to an end, but rather as a protracted and durable condition for the residents that persists long after the “immediate” military violence of bullets and bombs passes.

At the time of this writing, the U.S.-supported Afghan President Ashraf Ghani faces multiple crises, from daily street protests to power struggles with his ruling partner Abdullah Abdullah and Vice President Rashid Dostum. The Taliban have taken over nearly a majority of rural districts, most notably in Helmand where the insurgency controls almost all the districts, with Lashkar Gah remaining as the last bulwark of government power. In Kandahar, the insurgency is percolating in the north and west. On 13 April 2017, President Trump authorized the use of a massive bomb, the GBU-43, known within the U.S. military as the "mother of all bombs", against supposed ISIS militants in eastern Afghanistan near Pakistan's border. On 21 August 2017, sixteen years into the American war in Afghanistan, Trump announced that the U.S. would be sending 4,000 more military personnel to bolster the Afghan military and maintain what the Pentagon describes as "stalemate" in the war. Even though counterinsurgency has recently returned to its status as a dead letter, and while "winning the war" appears no longer be the motivation or goal of the U.S. military, their continued presence remains as another protracted condition for most Afghans, who continue to remain largely powerless in the face of endless violence.

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<u>INTERVIEWS</u>

- Anand Gopal, Kandahar and New York City-based journalist, interviewed on 10 December 2015

- Haji-Abdul Hameed, Village Leader in Taroke Kalacha, interviewed on 23 December 2015; translated by Taimoor Shah

- Chris Harich, Department of State representative in Arghandab District (2010-2011), interviewed on 13 January 2015

- Kevin Melton, USAID/Office of Transition Initiatives in Arghandab District (2010-2011), interviewed on 28 December 2015

- Taimoor Shah, Kandahar-based press journalist, 5 December 2015

<u>FIGURES</u>:

Figure 1: The destruction of Taroke Kalacha. Source: Broadwell 2011

Figure 2: CERP "cash-for-work" scheme rebuilding Taroke Kalacha houses. Source: U.S. Defense Video & Imagery Distribution System

Figure 3: The reconstructed Taroke Kalacha. Source: Google Earth 31º38'46.0”N 65º37'03.0”E (Image captured by author, 2 September 2017)

[1] Hamkari translates as "Cooperation" in Pashto and Dari.
[2] The number of villages completely or partially destroyed in the Hamkari operations is contested. U.S. officials claim three villages, while the Arghandab District Governor, Shah Muhammad Ahmadi, named seven villages in an interview with the *New York Times* (Shah and Nordland 2010). Ahmadi estimated 120 to 130 homes demolished in his district alone. The four villages discussed in this article are confirmed by interviews and cross-referenced with multiple sources, but it is important to keep in mind that there could be more.
[3] The build-up of U.S. troops (Obama's "surge") occurred in summer 2010. On March 11, 2012, Staff Sergeant Robert Bales went on a shooting rampage in three villages in Panjwai district, killing sixteen civilians, including nine children. The fallout from Bales' actions effectively ended formal counterinsurgency operations in Kandahar.
[4] This is not to say that McChrystal's approach was *less* violent. On the refined violence of "non-kinetic and non-lethal targeting" in counterinsurgency doctrine, see Gregory (2008: 9).
[5] On Razzik's record of corruption and human rights abuses, see Aikens (2011).
[6] See Memos 4-13 on the "Application of Treaties and laws to al Qaeda and Taliban Detainees" in Greenberg and Dratel 2005.
[7] The criticisms of the U.S. military's approach to "cultural awareness" and "human terrain" are well known (; Gregory 2008; Price 2011; Wainwright 2016).
[8] On the notion of "IED factories": "They [U.S. military] would patrol that area, and there was a Taliban presence that was using some of those villages for firing positions and for IED factories as they were termed. I mean, I don't know if you can call a guy making some HMEs [homemade explosives] a factory, but I guess that is what they were called, factories." (Department of State official, interview)
[9] *The Battle for Bomb Alley*, BBC Films, 2010
[10] The 3rd Squadron, 2nd Stryker Calvary Regiment that built the wall is known as the "Wolfpack."
[11] It must be noted that the U.S. military has a poor track record of discerning civilians, especially military-aged males, from combatants (Gregory 2006).
[12] As Flynn told Paula Broadwell: "I literally cringed when we dropped the bombs on these places – not because I cared about the enemy we were killing or the HME destroyed, but I knew that the reconstruction would consume the remainder of my deployed life" (Broadwell 2011).
[13] When I read Hameed's account to the USAID/OTI official, he replied: "Yeah, it sounds very familiar. I mean, look. The number of folks that we saw, and I'm not saying this is him. I'm saying that the number of people who came out of the woodwork to try to make money out of things like this was sickening, quite frankly."