

**Western support to warlords in Afghanistan from 2001 - 2014
and its effect on Political Legitimacy**

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ABSTRACT

This is an integrative paper aiming to encapsulate the themes of my previously published work upon which this PhD is being assessed. This work; encompassing several papers and various chapters of my book are attached behind this essay. The research question, examines the effect of Western support to warlords on political legitimacy in the post 9/11 Afghan war. I contextualise the research question in terms of my critical engagement with the literature of strategists in Afghanistan during this time. Subsequently, I draw out themes in relation to the available literature on warlords, politics and security in Afghanistan. I highlight the value of thinking about these questions conceptually in terms of legitimacy. I then introduce the published work, summarising the focus of each paper or book chapter. Later, a 'findings' section addresses how the policy of supporting warlords has affected legitimacy through its impact on security and stability, the political settlement and ultimately whether Afghans choose to accept the Western-backed project in Afghanistan, or not. I argue that this issue is important as it has security implications not just in the immediate region, but increasingly, throughout the Middle East and possibly further.

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Abbreviations

AIHRC	Afghan Independent Human Rights Centre
ANA	Afghan National Army
ANP	Afghan National Police
ANSF	Afghan National Security Forces
AREU	Afghan Research and Evaluation unit
CENTCOM	US Military's Central Command
CFC-ALPHA	Coalition Forces Command - ALPHA
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
COIN	Counter Insurgency
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilisation and Re-integration
DEA	US Drug Enforcement Agency
DFID	Department for International Development
DIAG	Disarmament of Illegal Armed Groups
DIS	Defence Intelligence Service
DOD	US Department of Defence
ELJ	Emergency Loya Jirga
EUSR	European Union Special Representative
FATA	Federally Administered Tribal Areas
GCHQ	General Central Head Quarters (Britain's Intelligence Centre)
IC	International Community
ICG	International Crisis Group
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
ILG	Informal Local Governance
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
ISI	Inter Services Intelligence Directorate (of Pakistan)
Mi6	British Secret Intelligence Service (International)
MMA	Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal
MOD	Britain's Ministry of Defence
MOI	Ministry of Interior
NA	Northern Alliance
NATO	the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NDS	National Security Directorate (also known as NSD)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NIE	National Intelligence Estimate
NIFA	National Islamic Front for Afghanistan
NSP	National Solidarity Programme
NWFP	North West Frontier Province
PDPA	People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan
PRT	Provincial Reconstruction Team
RAWA	Revolutionary Afghan Women's Association
SIS	Secret Intelligence Service
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission for Afghanistan
UNCHS	United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat)
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

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Published works utilised:

- 1) How the 'entry' defines the 'exit': contradictions between the political and military strategies adopted in 2001 and how they have deleteriously affected the longer-term possibilities for stabilization in Afghanistan** 593 - 619
- 2) State-building in Afghanistan; a case showing the limits** 967 - 991
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- 4) The Afghan Solution: the inside story of Abdul Haq, the CIA and how western hubris lost Afghanistan (2011)**

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1. Introduction

Following the events of 11 September 2001, the US and UK began a bombing campaign on Afghanistan under the name *Operation Enduring Freedom* (OEF). The stated aim of the campaign was ‘to disrupt the use of Afghanistan as a terrorist base of operations and to attack the military capability of the Taliban regime’.¹ Additional aims, elucidated in the general discourse, were for a ‘liberal humanitarian intervention’ in Afghanistan. This was despite the contested nature of the terminology with Chomsky (2001), Ali (2000) and Chesterman (2001) all of whom questioned whether ‘humanitarian intervention’ was really a pretext for geopolitical control in strategically important regions rather than importing democracy and human rights to conflict-affected countries.

By 2001, war had been ongoing in Afghanistan for over two decades and the conflict had evolved through several distinct phases (Maley, 2011). A central part of the US-led strategy after 9/11 was re-empowering un-indicted warlords.² Support was principally rendered by the US with the UK acting as a junior partner. Initially, this support was delivered in the form of cash and weapons to strongmen allies brought back from exile abroad, as recalled by Dobbins (2008), Rubin (2004), Shroen (2003), Beardon (2005) and Grenier (2015). The CIA initiated the strategy and later US military chiefs justified it as an alternative to putting Western military ‘boots on the ground.’ Later, significant political support for warlords manifested in a variety of ways,³ which ultimately enabled warlords to shape and constitute the state itself.

A secondary phase of support started in 2003 when ISAF (later NATO) moved outside the cities in the guise of Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), whose remit, in reality, was undefined (Stapleton, 2008). The establishment of PRTs had further implications for direct and indirect support to regional warlords; in

¹ Statement given after the start of the US and British military strikes on targets in Afghanistan on Sunday, 7th October 2001 by President George Bush.

² I have used the generic term ‘warlords’ throughout this paper for simplicity even though in some places the term ‘strongmen’ may be more appropriate. Barfield (2010, p. 282) describes how landowning *khans* (previous allies of the state) were replaced during the *jihad* by “a new generation of younger, self-made military commanders, fighting for the mujahideen against the Kabul government”. Barfield adds that ‘militia leaders created by Najibullah as the Soviets withdrew’ were added to this group. They became dominant after the Soviet withdrawal and, though many prominent regional commanders were killed or went into exile during the Taliban period, the associated structure of ‘local commanders’ could not be so easily displaced. It was to these lower level commanders, Barfield says, that the regional leaders (the ‘warlords’) reconnected following the collapse of the Taliban regime in 2001 (ibid).

³ Political legitimization of warlords by the international community (IC) was initiated at the Bonn Conference in December 2001, which was a ‘victors peace’ rather than a Peace Agreement. There was no move to sideline those previously accused of crimes against humanity or war crimes despite the fact that in 2004, in ‘A Call for Justice’ ordinary Afghans expressed their desire for accountability. Further political legitimization continued with the ability of warlords to usurp the rules of Bonn and with their last minute inclusion in the June 2002 ‘Emergency Loya Jirga,’ a development that UN chief Lakhdar Brahimi dubbed ‘Peace versus Justice’ (though he later ‘recanted’). Later there was the failure by the IC to push for ‘vetting’ of parliamentary candidates for previous crimes or to ensure that parliamentary candidates could not be linked to armed groups. All these issues are developed in my papers.

particular when warlords' militias were engaged with Western PRT Commanders.⁴ From 2006, as the centre struggled to consolidate its authority, a third wave of support was delivered to paramilitary groups in the regions, funded by the CIA and the Pentagon as catalogued by, among others, Kipping (2008) and Gopal (2014). This was in spite of a parallel project aiming to build a centralised Afghan national army and police.

Today, despite the initial aims of the war, the Taliban appears to be stronger than ever; escalating the number and shock-value of terror attacks in the region, strengthening military control over districts in Afghanistan⁵ and expanding their connections with other radical groups across the Middle East (e.g. Islamic State). A classified December 2013 US National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) quoted in the Washington Post predicted the Taliban to return to power by 2017 (see LME, 2014 pp. 607 f.n. 59). In May 2014, the International Crisis Group expressed grave concern about Afghanistan consisting of a multitude of conflicts, where insurgency was worsening and district centres were susceptible to falling back into Taliban hands unless the West stepped up its efforts to support ANSF. The long disputed April 2014 elections, though initially deemed relatively successful, were dominated by warlords or their proxies (Nordland, 2014).⁶ Although the outcome of the war may not be fully known for many years to come, my work aims to show how processes initiated by Western states in 2001 have led to the present and ongoing situation.

Research Rationale

My central question is how has Western support to warlords from 2001-14 affected political legitimacy in Afghanistan?

Western support to warlords after 9/11 was both military (encompassing arms, cash and Western military power) and political.⁷ The decision to give military support to the Northern Alliance (NA) brought about an array of security and political implications. An early example was how the US bombing of front lines northeast of Kabul enabled the NA to take key ministries from the departing Taliban. This established 'facts on the ground' that led to an imbalanced political settlement; something my interlocutors and Abdul Haq (see below) had attempted to warn against. To further situate my work, I examine the available literature surrounding these questions. For example how support was constituted in Afghanistan, before and after 2001. The 1980s anti-Soviet jihad drew a regional and Western covert response and I found the effects of historic

⁴ Also the refusal by NATO Commanders to support a Programme for disarming 'illegal armed groups' (known as DIAG) in 2004/5 because of the implications this might have for 'force protection' of NATO soldiers at the PRTs. The corollary, was that NATO bases and PRTs increasingly worked with local warlords and commanders, to the bemusement of locals.

⁵ New York Times 30 July 2014

⁶ 27 February 2014 Rod Nordland 'Warlords with dark pasts battle in Afghan election', New York Times

⁷ see note 3.

relationships built up during the jihad were still in evidence in 2001. I looked broadly at state-building and state formation theory and examined how far the post-2001 Afghan intervention really was a 'liberal peace.' There were many assumptions in the US and UK about the war which do not reflect the realities I witnessed on the ground. My publications also examine how the initial phase of support from 2001 impacted upon the secondary phase (from 2003 onwards) and how the initial military strategy affected the political settlement, identity politics, legitimacy and the national narrative.

My study of the so-called Haq plan is an analysis of the counter-narrative. While the Haq plan was ultimately undermined by Western intelligence, it represents an Afghan-led alternative for toppling the Taliban already existing for two years prior to 9/11. Although Haq had international connections I found that these were not through the official channels of the intelligence agencies that warlords enjoyed after 9/11; and which often reverted to relationships established with Western intelligence agencies during the 1980s (see LME, 2011 Chapters 12, 13, 19 and 21). Numerous writers including Tomsen (2011), Kaplan (2002) and Gutman (2008) describe how from the 1980s Pakistani strategy, financed by the US and other Western states, factional warlords who supported Pakistan's perceived regional strategic interests were favoured.⁸ Hence, effective nationalists such as Abdul Haq were neglected while leaders such as Gulbuddin Hikmatayar were given preferential treatment (LME, 2011, chapter 6). Pakistan's use of certain proxy warlords reflected its leadership's concerns about Pashtun nationalism, the threat of a re-negotiation of the Durand border with Afghanistan and the curtailment of Indian influence in the region (LME, 2011, Chapter 10).

Abdul Haq's plan did not call for international support in 2001. Instead he preferred that the West hold off on its bombing campaign because Haq foresaw its deleterious impact on security and power politics in Afghanistan (LME, 2011 chapters 12, 13, 19, 21, 22 and LME, 2014). The Haq plan demonstrates how power is purchased locally in relation to relationships based not solely on 'rent seeking', as is often assumed, but in relation to historic legitimacy. I believe this an important, yet overlooked, resource in Western state-building and counter-insurgency strategy which has often placed too much weight on military solutions (LME, 2010, pp 980-90). The Haq plan encompassed agreements made in the two years prior to 9/11 with regional tribal leaders, including senior Taliban members who wanted to defect. As such the Haq plan was not just a Pashtun claim for legitimacy but rather based on nationwide consensus.

Evidence I accumulated as a result of a decade of research and experience in Afghanistan demonstrates that although the choice made by the West to work with warlords in 2001 may have fulfilled short-term military objectives, it failed to suitably respond to the aspirations of Afghans.⁹ In addition, the decision did not appreciate the regional context of a war that had been ongoing for over two

⁸ There was also significant funding and support from Saudi Arabia but that was delivered directly to selected mujahideen leaders - eg. Sayyaf.

⁹ Schmeidl, 2009, p. 72, says, "one of the questions raised most frequently during nation-wide civic education outreach campaigns by the Afghan civil society Forum and its partners during 2003-2005 was when there would be an end to warlord rule. "

decades (comprising an internal civil war and a regional 'power play'). Thus it failed to anticipate longer term effects on security, stability, development and consequently the legitimacy of, and support for, the project by Afghans themselves. Ultimately, any gains made are liable to be reversed as US and NATO troops pull out.

My research therefore challenges the generally received wisdom that: there were no other options available in 2001; that the US-led coalition undertook a 'liberal intervention'; that it was essentially a 'legitimate' war; and that the fault therefore does not lie with the West.¹⁰ These published works contextualise and thus challenge myths which have been propagated by the US and UK governments and militaries. I feel this is crucial to understanding the broader geopolitical context of rising instability in South Asia and the Middle East.

3. Approaches in the Literature

The rationale for my research is therefore based on a critical engagement with the mainstream strategic analysis which dominated Western perspectives on Afghanistan in the 2000s. This received wisdom which was pronounced in the first decade after the intervention in 2001 constitutes one approach in the academic literature on the subject. It is composed by a politicised community of analysts which, as the approach has become demonstrably unsuccessful, have sought to justify their original recommendations. I critically assess this literature before going on to frame my research in terms of the academic literature on warlords and legitimacy, and state-building.

Post-9/11 Security Analysis

Initial proponents of Western support for warlords include authors closely associated with the strategy itself, or former CIA personnel (Schroen, 2003; Beardon, 2005; Berntsen et al, 2005). These include the US Ambassador who oversaw the December 2001 Bonn Agreement, former RAND official James Dobbins who in his 2008 book, 'After the Taliban' wrote how 'surprised' he was by the failure of the US's main proxy, the NA, to share power with the majority Pashtun after the fall of Kabul (Dobbins, 2008 p 77-97). However, I emphasise that Haq had anticipated this problem and this was the crux of why he desired an 'Afghan Solution' to toppling the Taliban (see LME, 2014 f.n. 83 p. 613).

An important feature of much of the writings about security in Afghanistan over this period is that authors are deeply implicated in the object of their analysis. Though I have drawn on Rubin (1995), Coll (2004) and Rashid (2000 and 2007), my work differs in that I felt Rubin and Rashid were both very involved in the initial strategy.¹¹ Few authors have made this point (see LME, 2011, note 2)¹² and I did so because I was concerned both were very influential on what was

¹⁰ Comments by Jose Ramos Jorta in Geneva, May 2014 indicated that the fault lay with President Karzai who 'failed to make political space' for democracy.

¹¹ An ICG analyst commented to me in 2005 they were 'both architect and critic' of the initial strategy.

¹² though Schmeidl (2009 p. 69) makes a similar point about the example of the Constitution making process in Afghanistan.

being published on the post-2001 Afghan conflict. Interestingly, in the preface to his 2008 book, Dobbins attributes 'many suggested corrections, additions and interpretations' to Rubin in his manuscript.¹³

Latterly some authors, often military academics or former CIA officials, indicate that the strategy followed back in 2001 was the only available option. Others, such as Larson (2013) describe the war solely in military security terms. Generally, the military narrative which ignores the more complex political factors underpinning the war has also been coupled with the received wisdom that Afghanistan 'failed' because Western resources switched in 2003 to Iraq. Like Rogers (2010), who pleads for an appreciation of local factors as crucial to understanding levers of conflict, I challenge this assumption for several reasons. First, because it subscribes to the notion of the Westphalian order as the 'only option' for global stability (Kissinger, 2014) and assumes Afghanistan to be a *tabular rasa*; to be 'cured' of its 'failed statehood' through construction and financial resources. For example, the assumption ignores the fact that the USSR had also undertaken state-building in Afghanistan only a decade before. I argue that the *tabular rasa* notion indicates collective blindness to the local reality and obviates the need to understand local and regional political factors that affect the situation; something I try to elucidate in my work. Secondly, I argue that the failure occurred early on (October 2001 - July 2002) when significant military and political support was accorded to warlords. This affected power politics, closing off opportunities to ameliorate the situation later. Abdul Haq foresaw this problem and argued that a window of opportunity would close. I show iteratively how this set the stage for what has occurred since with regard to the undermining of the rule of law, corruption, instability, insecurity, the resurgence of the Taliban and the overall impact this has all had on global security.

The accounts of former UN or State Department officials in Harrison and Cordovez (1995), Gutman (2008), Kaplan (2001) and Tomsen, (2011) are consistent with my research findings. They detail the Soviet pull-out, the role of Pakistan, the close relationship between the CIA and ISI despite the differing strategic interests of both countries in the region, while the ISI policy of favouring warlords deemed compliant to Pakistani regional interests and the rise of the Taliban and al Qaeda was also documented. Both Tomsen and Gutman describe extensively the friction between the US Department of State and the CIA during the 1980s and since 2001. I reiterate with empirical observations the effects of this friction post-9/11. At the outset of the war in 2001, most journalists were behind Northern Alliance front lines; hence tending to see the warlord allies as 'good guys' while the majority Pashtun, despite not unanimously favouring the Taliban, were seen as 'complicit', 'backward' and 'conservative'.¹⁴ My work redresses this balance with observations on the

¹³ Dobbins also talks about how the Afghan campaign has been covered "from several perspectives" and then lists the books of senior US military and CIA agents as informing his perspective. These were those of Gen. Tommy Franks and CIA agents Schroen and Berntsen, who led the two "para-military" teams into Afghanistan after 9/11. My work is an attempt to find a counter perspective.

¹⁴ For example the notorious propaganda example of the BBC's John Simpson's 'arrival' with the Northern Alliance in Kabul in November 2001.

Pashtun reaction to the post-9/11 intervention and new power structures and attempts to disaggregate the Pashtun from having the unwanted reputation of 'Taliban supporters' (LME, 2011, chapters 3, 7 and 8).

During the 1980s war when Afghanistan was relatively inaccessible, Western journalists travelled with mujahideen leaders to gain access to the country. Several admitted bias in their support as few based themselves on the Soviet side. My work bridges those competing viewpoints by relating Afghan perspectives on the various regimes (eg. Communist, Mujahideen, Taliban). The elections in 2002 and 2005 exposed former Afghan mujahideen or communist sympathisers whose views often contradicted Western received wisdom about the 1980s. For example, I found the most dominant Western narrative of the anti- communist, 'freedom fighter' struggle to be somewhat distorted because many ordinary Afghans saw benefits in communism as a vehicle for modernisation and state-building. Some interlocutors were in favour of President Daoud, and later President Najibullah, seeing them as supporters of modernisation, education and reconstruction. These diverse viewpoints enabled me to appreciate how the Afghan conundrum was not the simple Manichean struggle presented by much of the media after 9/11. It also demonstrated the value of an ethnographic approach to understanding the complexity of the situation and the need for a historical perspective.

Legitimacy and warlords

An alternative perspective is found in the academic literature on warlords, which assesses the conditions by which the integration of military factions may be considered legitimate. One of the foremost theorists of legitimacy, David Beetham (1991: 16), sees power as legitimate if it meets the following criteria:

- (i) Conforms to established 'rules.'
- (ii) When these 'rules' are justified in terms of beliefs shared by both the dominant and subordinate.
- (i) When there is evidence of consent by subordinates to the power relation;

I find Beetham's notion of legitimacy useful because it is applicable both to a modern Weberian style nation state and to more customary systems. This is the case even where tribal structures have been damaged and fragmented during the past thirty years of war. Lister (2007) describes 'micro-societies' created by tribal and religious leaders before the war which related to central and other powers on the basis of negotiation and patronage. Kuhn (2010) highlights how paradoxical claims of accountability have created tension as a result of the 'rentier state' situation in Afghanistan since 2001. Hence, today the questions include;

- Who provided consent for the rules being established?
- Was it the external supporting powers or the Afghan people?
- Hence the question of whose rules, whose beliefs and whose consent are at issue?
- Is it those of Afghan citizens or warlords or their Western paymasters?

There are opposing positions in the academic literature about the effects on state-building, security and political legitimacy of supporting, rather than side-lining, warlords. For example, Stedman (1997, 5-53) argues that warlords should be distinguished according to whether they are 'spoilers' of a Weberian inspired state-building project or not. Ahram and King (2012, p. 170-173) see warlords as 'the type of social organization that the state was meant to supplant.' Lyons and Samatur (1995) and Marten (2006/7) see warlords as antithetical to the state in that they exploit systems characterised by anarchy and insecurity to such a degree that their empowerment undermines any form of legitimate governance. I aim to show how the decision made in 2001 to empower warlords to displace the Taliban/al Qaeda goes against the orthodoxy of liberal peace or the aim to eject the Taliban for it undermined the rules-based system of the democratic centralised state. I am one of few authors to have observed directly how the international community accorded political legitimacy to warlords at the ELJ in 2002 at what was effectively a Faustian bargain whose corollary was a hijacking of the so-called democratic process and state-building project by un-elected warlords.¹⁵¹⁶ The result was the side-lining and intimidation of democratically-elected Afghan delegates who were disbarred from dialogue, empowerment or inclusivity (essential ingredients of peace-building).¹⁷ Where Peceny and Bosin (2011) see contradictions in a policy that co-opted warlords yet aimed to build a modern and democratic state, I have aimed to provide concrete examples of what this meant to Afghans using empirical observation of events as they unfolded.

While Ledwidge (2011), Schetter (2002) and Transparency International (2015) argue that the 2001 decision to co-opt warlords rendered the state unable to provide public goods and services and increased inequality, poverty, criminality and instability, I have again given examples of how Afghans felt about these events. Chayes (2015) portrays the corruption engendered as a result of the policy as a dangerously destabilising force with international implications. I build a case for why there was a crucial window of opportunity early on in the intervention that was missed and provide examples at each stage of the intervention regarding how the situation was regressing. Sharan (2014) presents warlord strongmen as vectors in a networked state whose tentacles encompass military, economic and political strength and whose reach today includes international organised crime. Kuhn (2008) finds that the state was hampered by both external demands of Western powers supporting the project and the need to seek political accommodation with the various predatory (and rent seeking) warlords and their proxies, who increasingly came to constitute the state. Where Hodes and Sedra (2005) see the Bonn meeting as a lost opportunity to re-balance power or sideline warlords, I argue forcefully that the opportunity had *already* been lost, well before Bonn, due to the 'facts on the ground' established weeks earlier, with a CIA/ military strategy that had armed warlords and bombed Taliban front lines, leading to the fall of Kabul to the NA; with its 'power' ministries (see LME, 2011 chapters 12, 13 and LME, 2014).

¹⁵ Journalists were disbarred from entry and cordoned into the Intercontinental hotel, which was over 1 km away from the site.

¹⁶ See note 3.

¹⁷ As former UN envoy to Guinea Bissau Jose Ramos Horta said in a lecture titled 'Preventing conflicts, ending wars, building desirable peace' in Geneva on 15 May 2014.

Mukhopadhyay (2009 and 2014) and Leiven and Ottaway (2003) posit that warlords are a useful means of providing governance through strength and bargaining on a messy continuum towards statehood. However, while Mukhopadhyay promotes the concept of 'warlord as bureaucrat' (2014, p. 4), much of her theory is rooted in African examples such as those covered by Reno. Also Mukhopadhyay's notion of 'informal' is orientated towards warlords with little analysis of ILG in Afghanistan.¹⁸ The inference of Mukhopadhyay and promoted by Boege et al (2009) is that 'warlord systems are embedded in the local societal structure of clans and tribes as witnessed in Afghanistan or Somalia.' But Schmeidl says (2009) "this is an extremely tricky issue in Afghanistan as I have met no Afghans whose preferred choice is to live in a state run by warlords.' Mukhopadhyay however negates the impact of impunity, banditry and lawlessness, stating that 'predation and protection often go hand in hand, as do patronage and politics and the provision of goods and services' (Mukhopadhyay, 2004, p. 11). For example, banditry was a salient reason for Afghans initially welcoming the Taliban as I discovered when I lived in Kandahar in 2000. Their memories of the period from 1992 to 1996, when 'warlord' supremacy led to anarchy, was one they did not wish to repeat. Marten (2014) and Ledwidge (2011 and 2014) among others, present accounts of how the West (in this case the UK) misread legitimacy in its post-9/11 campaigns in southern Afghanistan.

Rather than entirely excluding warlords from the political settlement in post-9/11 Afghanistan, my approach to legitimacy is not to simply engage more with customary elements, but also to distinguish paramilitary leaders who had committed serious crimes against humanity or war crimes from those who had not. Abdul Haq, who had withdrawn from the battlefield in 1992 and who had not been associated with the worst violations of the 1992-96 civil war or with war crimes in the preceding era recommended in 2001 that warlords accused of crimes be sidelined, made accountable before an international body and not included in any new political settlement.¹⁹ This fits with Beetham's notion of legitimacy according to rules and forms of consent, in this case provided by the legal system. Throughout my work I have argued that if such a system had been supported by Western powers in Afghanistan, a warlord such as Rashid Dostum, who is currently Deputy President, would have been held accountable for the numerous massacres he coordinated at different phases of the last three decades of conflict in Afghanistan. There is also the need to distinguish warlords from leaders whose 'primary allegiance is to local solidarity groups based on kinship or locality' as described by Barfield and Nojumi (2010). My major criticism of

¹⁸ For example Mukhopadhyay (2014, p.4) when talking about 'the absence of a preexisting institutional architecture linking Kabul to the countryside' she fails to qualify the fact that historically a balance between the Monarch and tribal leaders in the regions provided this link. For Afghanistan has never been a modern state.

¹⁹ My research established that wider Afghan opinion saw Abdul Haq as legitimate and not a personality who had engaged in war crimes. For example even this month (February 2015) a former member of the Afghan National Security Council contacted me to request that I do an online rebuttal of a speech at the New America Foundation in Washington DC held in January 2015 by ex CIA Robert Grenier, who had just published his account of events surrounding 9/11.

much of the narrative around the intervention was that senior British military and DFID/UK Stabilisation Unit figures seemed to have little idea of what went on in relation to ILG at the periphery.²⁰ Hence, British military and DFID staff dismissed ILG and traditional elements as 'invisible'; while continuing to believe warlords were the sole reference points for engagement in Afghanistan.

Other authors who catalogue serious examples of state capture associated with the policy of supporting warlords include Maley (2011), Filkins (2009), Forster (2010), Chayes (2007) and Wilder and Lister (2008). Giustozzi (2009) sees the prerogative of warlords as holding military power rather than gleaning benefits.²¹ Both Macginty (2010) and Mukhopadhyay (2014) appear to conflate the 'local' and 'informal' with 'warlord', which I found problematic because the narrative after 9/11 ignored forms of governance not visible to outsiders in favour of military 'might'.^{22,23} Like me, Schmeidl and Karokhail (2009, p. 72) emphasise the problem of academics 'endorsing hybrid political orders that most ordinary Afghans would have opposed' and call for more research to 'identify actors within hybrid political orders that should be....sidelined.' Unlike Mukhopadhyay (2014), I do not see warlord power as a means to an end on a hopeful continuum towards state stability. Rather, 'handing out ministries as war bounty to different factions' at the 2002 ELJ (Maley, 2006 in Schmeidl, 2009, p. 72) undermined the stability and legitimacy of the intervention in the longer term to such an extent that by late February 2015 the US was forced to delay its planned departure from Afghanistan.²⁴ I chart iteratively how decisions made in 2001-02 led to the present instability. LME et al (2013), argues that the policy of supporting warlords further undermined the traditional system of governance which historically enabled a periphery/centre balance and enabled locals to feel represented. The failure of security analysts and practitioners in 2001-02 to appreciate this context is generally reflected in the literature. I disagree with the received wisdom that Afghanistan failed due to the Bush administration's decision to go to Iraq and the resultant lost resources, rather than altered power structures and impunity (e.g. see Rashid, 2012 p. 69). The failure to debrief

²⁰ For example at meetings I attended on 'International Intervention' at Ditchley Park, May 2012 and at Merton College, Oxford, in December 2013 I heard respectively a DFID representative say 'we don't want to go back to the 13th Century' in response to a comment on ILG in Afghanistan and senior British military figures dismiss the idea of there being any elements other than warlords to engage with in Helmand.

²¹ Giustozzi's book came out in advance of the Kabul bank scandal and some of the worst stories of NATO cooption of warlords and the racketeering associated with those contracts eg. to guard roads or to warlord militias. For example the case of Mattiullah Khan in Orozghan as reported by Maley (2011) or by Filkins, and Rosenberg, 2010 on the Kabul bank scandal. Or on Kandahar governance and the Karzai family (Forster, 2010 and Chayes, 2007).

²² The US military did recognize the importance of understanding informal local governance at the periphery. Hence the Human Terrain system, introduced alongside the 'surge' in 2008, attempted to map and engage with what was 'local' on the ground.

²³ The Human Terrain system was a genuine attempt by the US military to engage with less formalized governance at the periphery. Unfortunately it came too late (2008) by which time security had broken down and there had been further fissuring of consensus building structures, making work very difficult for the human terrain specialists.

²⁴ *Ashton Carter: US 're-thinking Afghan Policy'* Foreign Policy South Asia Channel, 23 February 2015

enough regional experts resulted in a dismissal of the role of traditional leadership and the empowerment of un-indicted warlord strongmen that the CIA and Mi6 had engaged with since the 1980s. The corollary has been growing instability, complexity, disenchantment and a trend of increasing sympathy for the Taliban (see LME, 2011 p. 260).

Approaches to State-building

A third approach in the literature on warlords, politics and security in Afghanistan is that of state-building. Generally, the recent state-building approach has been characterised by the externally-led process whereby a predominantly Westphalian model is imposed even on to occidental, complex tribal societies. Like Schmeidl (2007), I found that civil society was not meaningfully engaged in the state-building exercise, but rather seen as a threat, by both the international community and the Afghan government (See LME, Chapter 14, 18 and note 16).

I explore authors who critique the Westphalian model such as Paris (2004) and Chesterman et al (LME, 2010, p 969) and emphasise the need to look beyond the state-centric Westphalian approach to governance and statehood. Hence, I assess the literature of writers looking beyond orthodox concepts of legitimacy and towards understanding the role of legitimacy and customary governance as more effective responses to state fragility (see LME, 2010 pp 980-981, 986-7 and pp 988-989 and LME, 2014). My work shows how theoretical approaches can be transposed to ground examples; for example, in relation to the Haq plan. Thus, I explore and summarise ideas being developed in the academic sphere and demonstrate how the international community missed opportunities in Afghanistan to bring about more inclusivity and accountability (see LME, 2010, 2011 chapters 12, 13, 18 and 2013 pp. 10-11, 2014). I show that there was potential for a more stable political approach than that delivered by the security-led focus of 2001-14.

One track of the literature on state-building has focused on informality. Barfield and Nojumi (2010), Tariq (2008) and Schmeidl and Karokhail (2007) find that informal local governance (ILG) has remained an important but neglected aspect of power dynamics in Afghanistan since 2001. Barfield and Nojumi (2010) talk of 'gradually invisible' informal local mechanisms of governance and show how the focus on engaging strongmen after 9/11 meant such nuances were ignored by the IC. In addition, there was a failure to appreciate that historical relationships between the ISI and CIA were ultimately problematic when it came to selecting which warlords to work with after 9/11. Hence, some of the West's supposed allies, handpicked by Pakistan, worked against Western strategic interests in the region. An example of the corollary of this lack of focus was the somewhat scandalous discovery of Osama bin Laden in 2011 in the Abbottabad, where the Pakistani army is based.

In my work, I argue for greater accountability and an approach to state-building, recognising positive aspects in both Westphalian and traditional models. Karokhail and Schmeidl (2008) give examples of how such a bridging approach could work in their useful case study on Loya Paktia, eastern Afghanistan. In

doing so, they engaged tribal and traditional elements and built trust between them. With an emphasis on a rules-based system acceptable to traditional elements, I try to show how similar bridging approaches could have been employed; for example, with a local consultative shura in Jalalabad that was replicable at other governance levels.

4. Political Ethnography as a basis for research design

By drawing and reflecting on my practical experience, my research is consistent with the principles outlined in Schatz's (2009) book on political ethnography. Schatz states that in order to gain knowledge and understanding of a context, complete immersion in a community is required. This enables the researcher to observe participants whether they be in a cohort, a community or a locale or indeed a variety of locations and contexts. Furthermore, Schatz emphasises the importance of the researcher understanding the political reality of those observed, and stresses that this goes beyond face-to-face contact. I tried to do this and also to triangulate my questioning because, having lived with three decades of war, and shifting alliances, Afghans sometimes give incorrect responses to questions as a coping strategy. This type of engagement is more meaningful than data collection and allows for a multi-dimensional means of inquiry.

Rather than designing an academic research design in advance of going to the field, I reflect methodologically on my practices of questioning and evidence gathering that led to my findings. My experience was from 1999 to 2006 in the field. Only later did I attempt to make sense of this and relate it to the literature. I published 'the Afghan Solution' in 2011 and other papers between 2008 and 2014. During 2013, while writing up this PhD, I returned twice to the field in Afghanistan. I have worked as a scholar-practitioner and have influenced policy with my writing and talks at academic institutions, think tanks in Europe and the US and the House of Lords Select Committee on Defence.

I was able to witness trends, experience for myself the situation and formulate empirical research through interviews, through participation in events, meetings and conversations of, and between, the international community, the military, the Afghan government and among normal Afghans. What I witnessed in rural areas was in stark contrast to my experiences of the assumptions made about those rural contexts by the international community in Kabul and later the military structures in those regions.

These experiences enabled me to make links between Western support for warlords and further fragmentation of consensus building and informal local governance structures. On a trip to Afghanistan in June 2013, an Afghan interlocutor commented:

'We had a system and they have destroyed that; even the Soviets, Pakistan and the Taliban never quite managed to destroy what they have done since 2001.'

I witnessed the trade-off between the policy of appeasing strongmen and the effect on stability and ultimately legitimacy. I chart this, beginning with my own experience at the Emergency Loya Jirga (ELJ) in 2002, by referring back at the Bonn Agreement (LME, 2011, chapters 1, 2, 12). The Faustian bargain made between the UN / USA and the warlords on the eve of the ELJ was a shock to me after monitoring elections in Spring 2002, when Afghans expressed hope that their country was being 're-born' after 23 years of war. My research on transitional justice issues in 2002 for the International Crisis Group meant I interviewed people who described the effects of the deal made between the US/UN and the warlords at both Bonn in November 2001 and the summer 2002 ELJ, which included senior international diplomats, members of the Afghan diaspora, women, opposition figures.

My fieldwork also applied a triangulation research method. This meant I asked several sources the same question several times. I also triangulated several local interlocutors I used. For example, in relation to Pakistani policy across the Durand line, I interviewed both Pakistani and Indian representatives in Kabul and Jalalabad, the UN representative in Jalalabad, the US military in the area, the leader of the Mohmand tribe in Jalalabad and local people in villages affected. I also visited the Commander of the Afghan Border Guard at the Durand frontline where the Afghans were fighting Pakistani incursions.

Within **Appendix I** on sources, I explain my biography and positionality in relation to the politics of writing about Afghanistan. I also gathered empirical information and informed myself, through literature, on the background to what I was learning in Afghanistan (on a political, social, regional and historic basis). A list of my interviews is included in **Appendix I**.

5. Introduction to the published works utilised

Work selected for this PhD aims to show how Western support for warlords since 2001 materialised and what it says about the broader issues of state-building and legitimacy. The objective is also to understand the effects on the legitimacy of this support. I have therefore selected the following papers:

- 1) Lucy Morgan Edwards; How the 'Entry' defines the 'Exit': Contradictions between the Political and Military Strategies adopted in Afghanistan and how they have undermined longer-term possibilities for stabilisation - Conflict, Security and Development, Volume 14, Issue 5, 2014 (LME, 2014)

The paper discusses paradoxes inherent to the intervention and charts how the military strategy of supporting warlords affected power politics in 2001, leading to the present crisis of impunity, the difficulty for the centre to retain a monopoly over the use of violence and the resultant chaotic situation in Afghanistan. The paper makes linkages between the Haq strategy and the idea of informal local governance and traditional/historic legitimacy (Clements, 2009),

showing how this could have achieved a better outcome. It argues that, rather than seeing stabilisation solely through the centralised Westphalian state and security lens (partly manifested by the short-term strategy of supporting warlords), practitioners have neglected political legitimacy as an essential ingredient in stabilisation. The paper examines the Haq strategy as an alternative. It also examines literature on more hybridised approaches to governance.

- 2) Lucy Morgan Edwards, International Review of the Red Cross (Vol 92, No. 880, December 2010) 'State-building in Afghanistan; a case showing the limits?' ([LME, 2010](#))

This paper was commissioned for a special two volume edition entitled 'Conflict in Afghanistan.' The title had been chosen by the editors and I had to work within those parameters. I decided the question could only be answered by looking generally at the evolution of the current state-building paradigm as well as recent approaches to state-building and so-called liberal humanitarian interventions. I examined whether the fault was the template chosen for Afghanistan or the country itself. So I assessed historical approaches to state-building in Afghanistan and looked in detail at the model chosen following 9/11. This included examining the various stages of the Bonn Agreement, the Western military strategy, the comprehensive military-led approach to state-building and the outcomes of each of those stages; both positive and negative. I also looked at the literature on fragility, questioning whether a Weberian model (emphasising rule of law rather than support to unindicted warlords) would have been appropriate for a traditional society where modes of governance and authority are informal, complex and for which historic and charismatic sources of legitimacy are implicit. I looked at work which challenges the orthodox Weberian notions of state-building, showing in particular how informal local governance as well as traditional and historic legitimacy mechanisms can be a more valuable means to affect state effectiveness. I found that, as a means of tackling state fragility, the Weberian nation state model has resulted in a more limited, predominantly security-focused lens as a prescription for fragile conflict zones. I found that other writers err on the side of supporting a more nuanced approach in complex situations, seeking to engage with informal governance and to understand what constitutes legitimacy locally.

- 3) Guest, K, Morgan Edwards, L. and Seeger, R. *A Better Path to Peace; a more optimistic Solution for Afghanistan*, Written Evidence Published by the House of Commons Select Committee on Defence Session 2012-13. 'Securing the Future of Afghanistan.' HC 413. (LME et al, 2013)

This paper builds upon an earlier one co-written with the same authors and published in the Small War's Journal in 2010 that emphasised the need to work through traditional elements in the Pashtun belt, the border area between Afghanistan and Pakistan, which is also the heartland of the insurgency. This paper develops the argument, saying that there is a need to focus on the periphery (and traditional structures), rather than building up security forces and militias from the centre. By localising the response to security problems, you are able to build accountability (e.g. accountability of the security forces to those they are meant to be protecting) into the system. Secondly, 'The Better Path'

warns against an eleventh hour political settlement that would leave Pakistan as the real beneficiary of the Western pull-out in 2014.

- 4) Lucy Morgan Edwards 'The Afghan Solution: the inside story of Abdul Haq, the CIA and how western hubris lost Afghanistan', (Pluto Press / Palgrave Macmillan) London, 2011 (LME, 2011).

The book arose from my experiences in the region from 1999 to 2006 and is aimed at a wide readership and contains important practitioner contributions that others may wish to draw upon for the purposes of background research material in order to develop their own arguments in the field of humanitarian intervention, liberal peace building and to develop arguments about how perception management arguments around a war (e.g. of supposed liberal intervention) can contradict the realities on the ground.

I have chosen chapters of the book which underpin the issues I address in my research question. For example, the idea of the intervention being benign and aimed at democracy is called into question with chapter 1 on the Emergency Loya Jirga, a major event in the state-building project. Further chapters show how the policy of re-empowering warlords was disdained by ordinary Afghans and knowledgeable foreign interlocutors while also highlighting the cascade of effects arising from that policy. Later chapters look at the Haq strategy, why this was more appropriate to the context in 2001 and Afghan political legitimacy, and why it was rejected by the West.

- a) Chapter 1 - The Peace versus Justice Strategy
- b) Chapter 2 - Re-Igniting Fundamentalism
- c) Chapter 9 - First you call us Freedom fighters, now warlords
- d) Chapter 10 - Playing the al Qaeda card
- e) Chapter 12- A Perspective on British post 9/11 strategy and intelligence (UK Haq effort)
- f) Chapter 13 - He would have begun a Revolution (that's why they killed him so fast)
- g) Chapter 18 - Governance and traditional structures
- h) Chapter 19 - UK Haq effort Part 2
- i) Chapter 21 - Abdul Haq and CIA Strategy in Afghanistan

6. Findings

My key findings are two-fold. In the first sub-section, I summarise my findings regarding how the initial military strategy of empowering warlords had an immediate effect on power politics. In the second sub-section, I abbreviate my findings with respect to how this impacted upon the political settlement in the longer term and ultimately eroded Afghan popular confidence in the regime and the intervention.

a) Post 9/11 Military Balance and Questions of Security

The new military facts on the ground were already obvious at the Bonn Meeting in November 2001. Further evidence of how warlords were shaping the state-building project came with the ELJ. I provide rare empirical observations of what happened at the meeting and how effects cascading from it ultimately impacted upon the political legitimacy of the regime and its Western backers from 2002 onwards. I show iteratively how the Taliban have been able to exploit these weaknesses in political legitimacy and how this has given them a military advantage. I also provide examples of alternatives, including the Haq plan in order to strengthen the reasoning behind my argument with respect to political legitimacy in the Afghan context.

The Haq Peace Plan

The Abdul Haq strategy is the lens through which problems inherent to the Western 2001 military strategy are shown (LME, 2011, chapters 12, 13, 19, 21, 22 and LME, 2014). As Haq foresaw, the 2001 Western military strategy immediately altered the power balance between competing ethnic and factional groups. The strategy also failed to take account of historic parallels such as the 1992 entry into Kabul by the mujahideen which presaged the civil war of 1992-1996 when warlords carved up the country, enabling the Taliban to take power easily, partly because locals preferred security to anarchy. A 1993 letter from Abdul Haq to the US State Department describes 'the foreign supporters of the mujahideen choosing whom to give weapons created several monsters' (LME, 2011 Annex V p. 334). Haq's October 2001 entry into Afghanistan from the southeast, attempted to hedge against an outcome similar to that of 1992 when Massoud's troops had taken the city alone, ultimately leading to inter-factional conflict over sharing power. Interestingly, there were definable windows of opportunity in 2001 that diminished with each military victory by warlords over the Taliban. However, Western commentators struggled to grasp the underlying dynamics behind the arc of cities that were held by Haq's associates and fell without fighting. By 2001, Haq's jihad-era commanders held positions in the military axis of the Taliban regime and were ready for a new order around the former king. My investigation into the Haq strategy revealed dynamics around legitimacy that remain inexplicably invisible to the CIA. For example, the CIA's regional station chief in 2001, Robert Grenier, (2015, p. 160) writes about Haq: 'We just didn't see any military capability there, whatever Haq's political appeal.' The CIA was assessing allies based purely on perceived military capability, regardless of political acceptability or legitimacy. Pakistan also continued to enjoy disproportionate influence over many agents' the West supported in Afghanistan while the CIA seemed ambivalent to this (see LME 2011; p 197, 201-4, 284 and 287 and LME et al, 2013, pp 4-6). The effects of this policy, and the beliefs underpinning it, remained prevalent in the co-constitution of particular factions post-9/11.

Loss of state control over security

There was also a reduction in the monopoly of power over security as a result of the policy of empowering regional warlords. As time passed, and warlords consolidated their regional power bases, security grew worse. There were

contradictions between, for example, the stated objectives and the reality on the ground - in Disarmament Demobilisation and Re-integration (DDR) programmes. So even as the UN dis-armed factions of the ANA, the US continued arming strongmen allies in the north (LME, 2011, Chapter 9, p. 140). Although DDR initially focused on the ANA, in reality it was a subsidy to the faction of Mohammad Fahim who was Northern Alliance chief and, immediately after the capture of Kabul, Defence Minister. Fahim took over the military infrastructure of the departing Taliban 'national army' of Afghanistan in November 2001, immediately transporting its equipment to the Northern Alliance stronghold of Panjshir (See LME, 2011, p. 259). Disarmament programmes also failed to deal with the other militia associated with the West's new allies in Afghanistan (LME, 2011 p 258-9). By 2005, the EUSR office, where I worked, estimated that there were around 1700 illegal militias (see LME, 2011 p 220 - 221) associated with regional warlords in the countryside. Though there was a proposal for a Disarming Illegal Armed Groups (DIAG) programme, by 2005 the Western military leaders of the PRTs were not keen to disarm strongmen on whom they relied for force protection, provision of militias, guarding of routes and provision of land in their quest to fight the Taliban (See LME, 2011, p. 258-9).

From 2003, the enrichment of strongmen continued under NATO with lucrative contracts awarded for guarding routes, providing militias, renting land (often illegally) and transporting oil. Some warlords played both sides (e.g. NATO and Taliban) for financial gain. Partly as a result of these contradictions, the initial policy of building a central ANSF had not achieved its objectives by 2006. Hence, from 2006 the West began a project to support the centre by creating militias (paramilitary groups) in the regions. By 2012, ICRC remarked that the multiplicity of armed groups now roaming the countryside was contributing to decreasing levels of security.²⁵ The line between militia and non-state actor is fluid, especially where militias engage in illicit or random criminal activity, as part of local or international networks (See LME 2011, 2015). In re-constituting militias with Western influence and rents, and making them answerable to the Ministry of Interior (MOI) in Kabul, there have been problems with accountability at the periphery (LME, 2010, p. 968). In LME, 2010 (p. 968) I detail the multiplicity of militia set up by the US. Hence, in LME et al (2013, pp 10 - 13), we argue for devolution of security in order to build accountability locally so as to resolve problems in the security sector.

By 2013, the general discourse acknowledged that the ANSF, despite a massive financial outlay, would not provide adequate security; a view reinforced by Sharan (2014) who posits that the security of an individual in post-2014 Afghanistan is related more to their engagement in a network than security afforded by the state. The view among Afghans during both of my visits in 2013 was that inequality and crime continued to decline. An Engineer told me that life was better, with less inequality, under the last communist leader, Dr. Najibullah in the late 1980's. This underlines the general preference for a rules-

²⁵ September 2012 ICRC Press conference to mark departure of Mission head Reto Stocker from Kabul after six years in post.

based system, whether it is Western or grounded in traditional forms of legitimacy.

b) How Security Politics Impacted upon the Political Settlement

Political legitimacy in Afghanistan post-2001 was progressively impacted upon by the policy of supporting warlords. This affected political legitimacy because steps were taken without conditions being met early on to support the rule of law, accountability or side-lining those involved in previous rights abuses and compensating victims. Instead, external support for warlords, in altering power politics, impacted upon political stability, security and ungoverned space at the periphery. Meierhenrich, (2004, p. 156) speaks of legality and bureaucracy as the “most important tasks in state formation after state failure” for “both can “lock in” stakes for those who stand to lose from the reformation of a state.”

My work goes beyond assessing whether the intervention was, in fact, a liberal peace. I aim to show the consequent effects on legitimacy, stability and the workings of power arising from warlords’ renewed strength from 2001 onwards. This warlord strength was generally at the expense of ordinary Afghans and flowed from the initial military strategy, the Bonn Agreement and later the ELJ. The late Sebhagatullah Sangar, former leader of the Republican Party (who I call ‘Musa’ in my 2011 book to protect him), infers the hypocrisy of the then Special Representative of the Secretary General in Afghanistan, Lakhdar Brahimi, in brokering a Faustian deal at the ELJ with the warlords but then complaining in UNAMA reports to the Security Council of a breakdown in security beyond Kabul (see LME 2011, p. 144, 146.). I describe how ordinary elected delegates felt betrayed by the international community (LME, 2011 p 34, 37, 48, 49). By empowering warlords, results were felt immediately with detrimental effects on women’s rights, the media and justice (see LME, 2011 p. 47-52, chapter 2). Impact was also felt by fledgling political parties who (e.g. those with no ‘Political Parties’ law and little military power) were at a disadvantage to the politico-military factions of the warlords (see LME, 2011 p. 50 and 148-9). I note the close relationship between, for example, MI6 and their chosen warlord in Jalalabad (LME, 2011 Chapters 3 and 8), and how this relationship distorted the UK’s response to the poppy scheme and how locals perceived the UK as a result.

The effect of ‘Peace versus Justice’ on a rules-based system

Political empowerment of warlords, which began at Bonn, continued at the ELJ, the first stage of the state-building process. CIA staff, through an affiliate called The Asia Foundation were involved in running the ELJ.²⁶ The strategy of allowing warlords immunity was dubbed ‘Peace versus Justice’ by Mr Brahimi (LME, 2011, p. 36).

Little was reported in the press about the violent arrival of the warlords to the ELJ (LME, 2011, p. 22) or how the democratic process was subverted by the US decision to allow them into the meeting (LME 2011, p 19-24, 26, 30-32). Consequently, delegates were side-lined and threatened into supporting Karzai

²⁶ I worked for the Asia Foundation from April to July 2002 as an election ‘monitor’.

over the former king, a process overseen and backed up by the NA-controlled NSD (LME, 2011 p. 26, 27, 32–34, 36, 54). This process allowed warlords to shape the outcome of the ELJ, effectively seizing the state (LME, 2011, 28-29, 30, 32) from meetings conducted in a ‘VIP’ side-tent, while candidates who *had* been democratically elected were ignored. Dissenters were later harassed, disappeared or forced into hiding (LME, 2011, p. 37). I describe the reaction of elected candidates and women to the arrival of the strongmen (LME, 2011 p. 20-4, & p 48). With the press effectively corralled off –the ELJ site, I am one of few writers able to describe this event in detail. Later in 2002, I conducted research on transitional justice for ICG which enabled me to describe reactions to ‘peace versus justice’ by Afghan civil society (e.g. AIHRC, by RAWA), Afghan and Western technical specialists, Afghan ministries and foreign diplomats (see 2011, LME, 47- 52). The overall view was that ‘Peace versus Justice’ was simply a means to rent peace, which enabled newly-empowered strongmen to return to their fiefdoms and subdue democratically-elected Afghans who had challenged them at the ELJ (LME, 2011, p. 35-36). This set the stage for a feeling by ordinary Afghans of betrayal by the IC and alienation from their own state. Both Brahimi and the warlords accused of crimes claimed rather disingenuously to journalists that they could not be considered war criminals for they had never been tried before a court of law (LME, 2011, pp. 30-31, 36). The ‘Peace versus Justice’ policy and its effect is analysed (see LME, 29-36 and 47-55, specifically p. 36 and p. 49. Also p. 305-9 and p. 260). In sum, the policy took up political space and greatly reduced any hope of a rules-based, inclusive and ultimately legitimate settlement.

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Other ways that the legitimacy of the entire project was undermined include the fact that in 2003 fledgling democratic parties complained that they were disadvantaged compared to the politico-military factions which had operated from the outset. This was due not only to military power but because the IC was seemingly unable to stop the ‘Political Parties Law’ from being delayed (LME, 2011 p. 145). Interestingly, Brahimi, when interviewed by The Nation magazine in 2009, admitted that there were some mistakes in the initial policy.²⁸

²⁷ The need for inclusivity as a crucial element underpinning legitimacy in Peace Settlements is analysed by Tim Murithi and Paula Murphy Ives in ‘Under the Acacia; Mediation and the dilemma of Inclusion’ pp. 77-86 Africa Mediators’ Retreat.

http://www.hdcentre.org/uploads/tx_news/108UndertheAcacia_Mediationandthedilemmaofinclusion.pdf. The fact the 2001 ‘Bonn Agreement’ was not an inclusive settlement but a ‘victors peace’ failing to include either the Taliban or many Pashtun tribal leaders, undermined its legitimacy with Afghans.

²⁸ Responding to questions put by Barbara Crossette of The Nation magazine on 9 March 2009, Mr Brahimi admitted “*We are now paying the price for what we did wrong from day one. First, the people who were in Bonn were not fully representative of the rich variety of the Afghan people. I underlined this fact to the thirty-five delegates we brought together in Bonn again and again. I made the point once more when an agreement was reached and we all prepared to return to Kabul: the popular base of the interim administration put together in Bonn under President Karzai was far too narrow. We all vowed to work hard to widen that base once we returned to Kabul. Unfortunately, very little was done. On the contrary, the Northern Alliance [the remnants of the old mujahedeen], which had been thoroughly defeated by the Taliban and had been literally resuscitated from certain death by the US, was actively engaged in consolidating its grip over the country. We now have a very, very serious situation. To be sure, the Taliban are not universally liked in Afghanistan. But when they first erupted on the Afghan scene in 1994, their success was due*

The 2005 parliamentary elections enabled warlords or their associates to further consolidate their control over the machinery of the state and won seats, often through bribery and intimidation. The new parliament quickly pushed through a law granting warlords amnesty from prosecution for previous crimes. Niland (2010) described how the failure of the IC to value the rule of law sent a signal to power holders that they would not be accountable. The corollary was more serious crime, which further eroded the trust of ordinary Afghans in the Western-backed intervention. The failure of the IC to ensure proper vetting of candidates to ensure the removal of links between armed groups and those seeking political office, both undermined the moral authority of the IC and the possibility to sustain a 'rules-based' system. Thus, power structures and stability continued to be altered (LME, 2010, p. 979 and LME, 2011, p. 258-9). The effects on political legitimacy, security, regional government appointments and how this undermined the centre and the state-building project are analysed (LME, 2010, p. 977- 9). As warlord governors failed to deliver basic services, local people felt unrepresented (see LME, 2011 p.260, 306-7). The result has been local accommodations with the Taliban, especially in the south, the heartland of the insurgency, and where a system of 'shadow Taliban governors' was able, from 2005 onwards, to gain traction by providing, for example, quick recourse to justice (LME et al, 2013 p. 11 and LME, 2014, pp. 611-612).²⁹

The policy of CIA and Special Forces backed militia (expanded since 2006) has led to further conflict and violence with a proliferation of armed groups across the countryside. I analyse the comprehensive approach' military-led model of state-building because, from 2003, this became the principle means through which the West (through both NATO and OEF) delivered support to Afghanistan (LME, 2010, pp. 975-9).

Unfortunately the military approach dominated coordination and its focus on force took precedence over governance and the need to understand the complex issues underpinning the conflict (LME, 2011 p 309-311). From 2003, when NATO expanded into the countryside, the PRT leaders' often had little appreciation of the wider political context in which they were operating. I discuss this situation and its impact in (LME, 2011, 216-8).

Peripheral areas are not simply ungoverned space or a *tabular rasa* but are where informal local governance takes place. Informal mechanisms, if properly understood, can be used to help bring about stability (LME 2014, LME et al, 2013, pp. 10-14, and LME, 2011, pp. 248-255, 309-11). Although the tribal system was altered from the 1980s onwards by a jihad-era policy of arming proxies and moving from a system of consensus-building to one of rent-seeking and from 'jirga' as the main vehicle of representation to 'shura' which was associated with

to the fact that those who were in charge [the mujahedeen] were much worse. I am afraid today's government is not much better than that of the mujahedeen after the withdrawal of the Soviet Union and the fall of the man they left in charge, Najibullah.

²⁹ Reasons for the growing preference for Taliban courts is described well by Azam Ahmed, *Taliban courts gain favor in Afghanistan*, New York Times, 2 February 2015.

jihadi leaders, traditional elements *do* still exist and encompass their own set of rules, beliefs and forms of consent. Sadly, the policy of supporting warlords has further fissured these customary mechanisms. For example, I describe how a model consultative shura in Jalalabad (LME, 2011, chapter 18) was undermined by the militarisation of Western funds. The effect was to attract local strongmen into governance issues which meant locals felt alienated from the benefits.. President Karzai, wanting to exert control, also undermined the possibility for the development of the consultative shura system which had been successfully developed in Eastern Afghanistan. This accords with David (1997 p. 561), who posits that often the strengthening of central authority as opposed to its weakening/collapse is a permissive cause of internal war.

Though the choice to work with warlords fulfilled short-term military objectives, it failed to appreciate the regional context of a war which had been ongoing for 23 years by 2001. As warlords were progressively incorporated into the state, abuses against normal Afghans worsened (LME, 2011, chapters 1 and 2 and pp. 144 and 146) and people felt increasingly alienated from their political system. The situation was paradoxical as strongmen were empowered at the cost of the local population who suffered the burdens of warlord impunity and predation. Examples include expropriation of their children or property through growing criminality (see LME, 2011 pp. 257-261) or the inability to find recourse to justice and services. Meanwhile, the West, blinded by the idea of the Taliban being the sole, monotheistic enemy, failed to understand the more complex nature of the insurgency. This cognitive dissonance was reinforced when NATO moved from Kabul to the regions in 2003 to establish PRTs, awarding lucrative contracts to local strongmen who were supposed to have been disarmed (LME, 2011, p. 259).³⁰ Therefore, to locals, the Western presence seemed mostly about the protection of NATO soldiers rather than their own security.³¹ Ultimately, the Western project since 2001 in Afghanistan cannot be described as one that created a regime or a state conforming to Beetham's notion of acceptable rules (in the normal sense), beliefs or consent. There seemed to be a collective blindness from NATO about the fact that locals loathed the arbitrary criminality of warlord rule.

Legitimacy and National Identity

Ironically, had the West retained certain aspects of a liberal peace instead of a militarised version of *realpolitik*, some objectives of state legitimacy may have

³⁰ I attended meetings on disarmament between GoA and the international community (2005/5) and witnessed the refusal by NATO Commanders to support a Programme for disarming 'illegal armed groups' (known as DIAG) in 2005. This was due to the implications this might have for 'force protection' of NATO soldiers at the PRTs. The corollary, was that NATO bases and PRTs increasingly worked with local warlords and commanders and further empowered them financially with contracts. This had the effect of awarding them further political legitimacy, to the bemusement of locals who expressed the desire for 'protection' by the west from the warlords, but were ignored.

³¹ 'Force Protection' was another reason NATO chiefs were unwilling to challenge newly empowered strongmen in the regions when there was discussion in 2005 about 'disarming illegal armed groups' associated with regional strongmen. NATO preferred to make them its allies (in spite of local perceptions).

been realised for the Afghans. In contrast to Afghanistan, other liberal interventions such as in the Balkans³² and Sierra Leone during the 1990s featured a policy of accountability for those who had committed rights abuses. Yet, in Afghanistan, similar figures were allowed to take military and then political power even though Afghans had expressed their desire for accountability in a nationwide survey undertaken by the AIHRC and published as 'A call for Justice', 2003. Haq also emphasised the need to support this process from the outset. Others said Afghan society must confront its past and bring about a real degree of reconciliation. Such principles were outlined by Louis Joinet in a paper endorsed by the UN in 1997.³³

Afghans remembered former King Zahir Shah's reign as forty years of peace and for this reason Haq desired to use the former king as the centre of his own 'Afghan Solution' for toppling the Taliban in 2001 (see LME, 2011 p. 194, LME 2010 pp. 974-5, 982-3 and 2014 p. 612). The King would be the unifying figure to reinforce an idea of legitimacy and national identity. For example, Rustaw (1970, pp. 337-363) emphasises that the idea of nationhood (possibly within Migdal's schema of the collective conscience or Beetham's set of beliefs underpinning consent) is 'a vital pre-requisite for democracy in any transition' (LME, 2014, p. 612). This lost opportunity could have underpinned a more egalitarian power share between the ethnic groups. Sadly, in acquiescing to the demands of the warlords in late 2001, an opportunity for working with shared beliefs based on consent to bring about national unity, stability and building political legitimacy in Afghanistan, was missed. Haq had recognised this and, for that reason, despite originating from the Ghilzai tribe, traditionally in competition with the Durrani tribe of the king's family, as Barfield notes, (2010) he understood the importance of the former king as a central figure around which disparate groups could unify.

Conversely, the warlords were adamant that Zahir Shah should be excluded from the political settlement following the capture of Kabul (LME, 2011, chapters 1 and 2 and conclusions, LME, 2014). As Haq had forewarned, the possibility for a balanced, inclusive and legitimate political settlement was lost once the warlords took Kabul in November 2001. The result was an immediate loss for the West of the military leverage required to enforce a more balanced, and hence acceptable, political settlement.

Conclusions and implications

My work challenges the assumptions about the policy of arming warlords as a successful factor in the post-9/11 Afghan war. I show that success defined solely on short-term military factors was an illusion and for longer term stabilisation, more complex political issues, legitimacy and the concerns of locals must be referenced from the outset. This is because military action has immediate consequences for power structures, accountability and the rule of law all of

³² Already at the time of the Dayton Agreement a comprehensive process of accountability for those who had committed rights abuses was agreed.

³³ Principles Against Impunity developed by Louis Joinet and approved by the UN Commission on Human Rights, 1997.

http://www.dealingwiththepast.ch/fileadmin/user_upload/2013_Course/Readings_2013/1_Joinet-Question_of_the_impunity_of_perpetrators_of_HR_Violations.pdf

which are issues valued greatly by people within countries where Western interventions have occurred. Today, the mistakes made in Afghanistan since 2001 have repercussions throughout the whole Middle East, for example with the development of ISIS. Hence it is important those mistakes are understood and not repeated in other situations.

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Methodological Appendix and List of Sources

The purpose of this appendix is to provide further background information about the sources I used for my work, how this related to the positions I held in Afghanistan and my life there over a six-year period. During this time spent in the country, I had many conversations with Afghans and foreigners that are unrecorded here but nevertheless contributed to my understanding. The major sources for my published materials are described within sub-sections below which give context to the situations in which I found myself. The opening section addresses my career and positionality during the time I spent in Afghanistan.

1. BIOGRAPHY, POSITIONALITY AND THE POLITICS OF WRITING ABOUT AFGHANISTAN

The various posts I worked in gave me extensive access to various different figures (both Afghan and international). Moreover, because the jobs were relatively short-term, I was able to compare and contrast a large variety of Western and Afghan institutional contexts within the country without being tied to a particular institutional agenda. Unlike those on a set career path, where organisational loyalty can impede objective interpretation of empirical information, I have always maintained my independence as a freelancer. However, I also benefitted from these positions and the privileged vantage points which they offered. Specifically, I had access to meetings between various opposition figures, Taliban, commanders, strongmen, tribal chiefs and the international community in the context of my jobs. My experience in Afghanistan was not one of short rotations, but included residence with Afghans in remote rural areas. For example, I bolstered my understanding of the Arsala family (of Abdul Haq) through reading a lot of the literature about their role during the 1980s jihad and by conducting interviews with journalists and peace makers who had known the family during various times from the 1980s until the present day.

Some accounts of Afghanistan appear partisan. This may be due to certain authors or experts having a limited possibility to travel in or around the country and see for themselves the situation. It could also be due to the culture of an organisation to which the writer feels loyalty. There is also the question of how organisational loyalty or culture can create bias, hence, former CIA agents who wrote accounts of their years in the region (mostly Pakistan) during the 1980s, were limited with regards to the extent to which they could actually travel in the country. This was not only attributable to their security arrangements but also the result of political deals made between the CIA and the Pakistani ISI such that CIA agents during the jihad years of the 1980s had to be contained mostly in Islamabad. Interestingly, other US accounts (e.g. by Tomsen, 2011, Gutman, 2008, Kaplan, 2002 and conversations e.g. with Guest and Jouvenal) dispute the version presented by the CIA. These independent journalists and researchers also sometimes comment on the 'consistency of disinformation' presented by the CIA.

In the UK there has been a particular publishing focus on books about Afghanistan since 9/11 (and more recently since the UK's deeper engagement in Helmand) by, for example, male writers, such as soldiers or officers writing their memoirs of the war. These books also have a particular view, or are marketed in a specific way, which legitimises and promotes the notion of the Afghan war as something benign. When I submitted my book manuscript to publishers, most of their agents were more interested in my personal life than the important story I wanted to tell. I believe this reflects a culture in the UK publishing and media industry that negates or distrusts the contribution of women in warzones, which are deemed to be 'a man's world', and also tends to give more credence and legitimacy to members of 'the old school tie network.' I was accused by young men in the UK publishing industry of 'having an agenda.' I was also asked by many publishers or agents whether I was a friend of Old Etonian Conservative MP, Rory Stewart, as though confessing such a friendship would confer on me the legitimacy they sought.

While in the UK my gender seemed to be an impediment to securing a good publishing deal, on the contrary in Afghanistan I felt that my gender was actually an advantage. I was often perceived by the people among whom I lived, or by my interlocutors (both male and female), to be a sort of 'third sex.' This meant I felt that people opened up to me and invited me into their homes and afforded me their trust in a way that they may not have done if I had been a man. I was able to speak to women, an opportunity which is difficult for both Afghan and Western males. I felt that although the war was 'sold' to the West as a 'liberal peace' on the grounds of Afghan female liberation, little has been heard about the actual fate of women since the war began. In fact, women have been disproportionately affected (along with children) but their stories are often not covered by the literature.

2. SOURCES - Background

During my work in Afghanistan I undertook thousands of both formal and informal interviews in Afghanistan from 2000 to 2006 and in 2013 with members of all levels of Afghan society and the international community. There were also specific interviews in relation to the Abdul Haq investigation within my book (mostly 2002-2010).

i) Posts Held

I first travelled to the region in 1999 when I visited Pakistan, travelling to Islamabad, Peshawar, NWFP (now known as Khyber Pakhtunwa), Swat and the Karakorum Highway and staying several nights in each of these places. In 2000 and 2002, I also visited Chitral, Gilgit, Lahore and Karachi. While staying in Swat in 1999, the nervousness of our hosts indicated the first stirrings of Salafist-inspired extremism beginning to take root in Pakistan.

a) Programme Manager for UN Centre for Human Settlements (UN Habitat) in Kandahar and Herat with travel to Pakistan (July - December 2000)

In the summer of 2000, I took up a post with the UNDP Afghanistan office, based in Kandahar and Herat. I worked for UNCHS on an ECHO-funded urban relief project targeting vulnerable people such as widows and the disabled. Afghanistan was already three years into a severe drought and many IDPs and returnees needed aid and shelter delivered through community development fora.³⁴ Our communications were limited to CODAN radio, or handheld 'walkie talkie' and there was no mobile phone network. Al Qaeda were prevalent in Kandahar; Osama bin Laden and his aides were present, as was Mullah Omar who lived a few hundred yards from our compound. At this stage, bin Laden had issued a *fatwa* against British and Americans located in Afghanistan. For this reason, the UN had hired me, rather controversially, by sub-contracting me to a French NGO. This meant I had no security umbrella in Afghanistan and lived independently from the UN staff, with an NGO who were nervous about my presence in case I needed to evacuate. My Belgian housemate at the time said 'something happens at least once every three months and we need to leave fast.' His assessment of the situation was proved accurate when in October 2000, Al Qaeda attacked the USS Cole in Aden. I had to leave Kandahar by road for Quetta and then Islamabad, where I worked for several months while uncertainty prevailed about US retaliation in Afghanistan as the US presidential elections results remained inconclusive. At this stage, sanctions on the Taliban were tightened, and this prefaced the destruction of the centuries-old Buddha's of Bamiyan in February 2001.

During this time, I conducted informal interviews with UNCHS staff, mostly engineers and women, local NGO staff, UNICEF local staff and doctors as well as NGO staff from ICRC, Handicap International, MSF, and IRC. Formal interviews were conducted with Taliban representatives in Herat and Kandahar.

b) Reports Officer for World Food Program – (October 2001 – March 2002)

I returned to the region after 9/11, first to visit refugee camps in Quetta in October 2001 and then to Islamabad (and later Kabul) to take up a post with the World Food Program (WFP), as reporting officer for the Regional Emergency Operation. At the time, this was the main reporting forum for most of the UN (particularly with regards to the security situation) since WFP had the greatest access to the country. I took Irish donors around several new Afghan ministries and the US and UK embassies in January 2002 on behalf of WFP.

c) Election Monitor for The Asia Foundation (April to June 2002)

From April to July 2002, I was an election monitor for *The Asia Foundation*, travelling extensively around the country monitoring district level elections in the run up to the keenly anticipated Grand Council of Elders known as the *Emergency Loya Jirga* (ELJ). At this stage, I witnessed Northern Alliance soldiers or NDS intimidating democratically-elected candidates in elections in Kabul. I also had to cancel one local election in Panjshir (after consultation with colleagues) after one warlord failed to inform the whole community of the

³⁴ After 9/11 these 'community forae' became the basis of the new *National Solidarity Programme* (NSP) funded by the IBRD.

election and transported in only his supporters on the morning of the election to vote for him. I also witnessed severe fear and intimidation tactics deployed by the strongmen who had come to power during the previous generation of war. I witnessed fighting between different ethnic groups (who shared the same villages) and tribes in Logar, the Shamali Plains and Ghorband.

Despite these difficulties, in the spring of 2002, Afghans I met believed the international community had come to 'save' Afghanistan, and that this was a 'liberal peace' intervention whereby democracy and women's rights and economic development would prevail and that the world had not forgotten Afghanistan. However, difficulties with the elections and tensions between the people and the strongmen who were returning from exile, supported by Western intelligence agencies, were evident. The ELJ was supposed to be a significant turning point for Afghanistan. Sadly, it was a turning point in my understanding about whether this project really was a liberal peace. From September to December 2002, I undertook research on transitional justice for the International Crisis Group. I interviewed a wide range of international diplomats, Afghan intellectuals (including those who had been on the Constitutional Drafting Commission), the leaders of fledgling political parties, women's groups, the AIHRC and the Afghan Justice Project among others. The intention was to gather an idea of the prospects for peace and to learn their view of 'Peace versus Justice' and its effect on the Afghan state. This is further analysed as the book develops. Interestingly, Abdul Haq had himself called for a process of accountability, saying that without it, there could never be elections, stability or democracy. His view was that this would need to be sanctioned by the ICC so that some of Afghanistan's more notorious rights abusers could be side-lined.

d) Observer at Emergency Loya Jirga (June - July 2002)

During this time, I conducted informal meetings/observations with elected Afghan representatives, other ELJ monitors, UN staff, journalists and women's representatives (eg Massouda Jalal).

e) Freelance Journalist (July 2002 - September 2003)

From the summer of 2002, I became a freelance journalist and travelled the country extensively. I first visited Jalalabad in September 2002, while researching the narcotics situation and was introduced to the family of Abdul Haq. At this stage, I began to appreciate the importance of face value politics and the relevance of a patriarchal system, and historic and traditional legitimacy rather than the rational-legal style system that was then being constructed in Kabul, with its putatively 'secret ballot' voting system.

f) Work on 'Transitional Justice' issues for the International Crisis Group (ICG) (September - November 2002)

I worked as a researcher on justice issues, gender issues and the state-building project.

g) Monitor in currency exchange project - Louis Berger (November 2002 - March 2003)

I met with local Afghan government representatives, including Afghan central

bank staff and ministers and governors of provinces in regions where I observed the counting and burning of the old currency notes in preparation for the exchange with the new Afghani notes. Regions visited included Loya Paktia, Loya Paktika, Khost, Herat, Nuristan, Gardez and Wardak. I also worked in Kabul at the Central bank where I interacted with its chiefs, and with finance ministers.

h) Co-Producer of Channel 4 Documentary titled 'Here's one we invaded Earlier' (April - May 2003)

This encompassed setting up travel and interviews for recording in Herat, Kabul and Jalalabad with a broad range of interlocutors.

i) Political Advisor to the EUSR, Kabul (November 2004 - June 2005)

As Political Advisor to the EUSR (November 2005 to July 2006) my remit was narcotics, security, civil military relations (including disarmament) and occasionally donor meetings. I thus regularly attended meetings between the Afghan government, the international military and diplomatic corps and civil society on the following issues:

- Narcotics
- Civil Military Relations (the Provincial Reconstruction Team Steering Committee, the PRT Working Group)
- Demobilisation, Disbandment and Re-Integration (DDR)
- Donor Round Table

j) Country Expert to the EU Chief Election Observer for the 2005 Afghan parliamentary elections (June - November 2005)

As Political Advisor to the EUSR and then Country Expert to the Chief of the 2005 Afghan parliamentary elections I travelled (either alone or later with the Chief Observer and her assistant) to most provinces of the country and met with local governors, warlords, opposition figures, commanders, leaders of political parties or politico-military factions, local administrations, police chiefs and the international military and civilian heads of PRTs. We also met with Afghan civil society groups such as women's groups and their leaders (e.g. in Kandahar and Kabul and most provincial capitals which we visited), the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC), other INGOs, local NGOs, farmers and local people. I also met with many electoral candidates and many members of the National Coalition for Dialogue with the Tribes, through its Head, Prince Ali Seraj. In addition, the civil and military leaders of the NATO-led PRTs in Jalalabad (December 2004), Faizabad, (February 2005), Mazar-e-Sharif (July 2005), Kunduz (August 2005), Kandahar (August 2005) and Herat (August 2005). As a representative of the EU I had to arrange meetings with most national political figures, international diplomats and senior international military for the Chief Observer and myself to ascertain their views on the elections. I myself also met many, many elders who were sent to my office by the National Coalition for dialogue with the Tribes. Ultimately, many were very disappointed in the 2005 elections.

.....

I left Afghanistan in December 2005 to move to Geneva with my husband. Meanwhile, I undertook several consultancies including for the Geneva Centre for Security Policy (writing on integration on defence, development and diplomacy issues), for the Aga Khan Foundation on participatory governance and for the Womanity Foundation (2013). I also wrote several academic papers before and after the publication of the book in 2011. I returned to Afghanistan twice during 2013 to meet with interlocutors in January and to undertake a consultancy on women's empowerment and education for the NGO 'Womanity' in June.

iii) List of Interviews held

a. Elite interviews

1. Minister of Women's Affairs, Sima Samar, Jan 02 – Kabul – English
2. WFP bakery local female staff, Jan 02 – Kabul - Dari
3. Local office WFP staff (e.g. Massouda Jalal who would be first female Afghan presidential candidate), Jan 02 – English
4. US Embassy staff (including USAID, the US Ambassador, Military chief), Jan 02 – Kabul – English
5. UK Embassy staff, Jan 02 – English
6. With Ministry for Public Works, Jan 02 – Dari
7. President Karzai, April 2003 - Kabul - English
8. UN Security Chief, April 2003 - Kabul - English
9. UN Heads of Mission in Herat and Jalalabad, April 2003
10. Pashtu traders in Herat, April 2003
11. Pashtu traders in Jalalabad - September 2002
12. Opium farmers Nangarhar - September 2002
13. Chief of Republican Party (a fledgling opposition party), Sangar Sebatullah, September 2002 and April 2003
14. Chief Justice Shinwari, September 2002 – Kabul - Dari
15. Attorney General, Dr. Rahimi, September 2002 - Kabul - Dari
16. Head of Constitutional Drafting Committee, Dr. Fasili, September 2002
17. Afghan Independent Rights Commission, Simar Samar and Nader Naderi
18. Representative of RAWA, September 2002
19. Head of Women Judges Association, September 2002
20. Head of Afghan Red Crescent Society, Mohammad Qar-a-beq
21. Head of ICRCa, September 2002
22. UK Ambassador, August 2002
23. UN Deputy SRSG (Jean Arnault), September 2002
24. UN SRSG (Lakhdar Brahimi), September 2002
25. UN Political Officers - various (informal interviews mostly)
26. UN Human Rights officer, September 2002
27. EU Ambassador Francesc Vendrell, September 2002
28. Italian Ambassador Domenico Georgy, September 2002a
29. Head of UNHCR, Mr Lubbers, September 2002
30. USAID representative, September 2002 – Kabul - English
31. Demining representatives, September 2002

b. Group interviews with International NGOs

1. IWPR
2. Medica Mondiale
3. ICRC
4. MSF
5. ACF
6. Oxfam
7. IRC
8. CARE
9. CIVIC
10. IFHope
11. ICG

1. Interviews with governmental and quasi-governmental institutions, business persons, local NGOs, Commanders, Taliban figures, tribal leaders and members of political parties or civil society

2. AINA - October 2002
3. RAWA - September 2002
4. Female inmates and the female 'guards', Marastoon, asylum for Afghan women run by the ARCS, September - October 2002. I interviewed several
5. AREU - September 2002
6. TLO - February 2005
7. AIHRC Head Office in Kabul - September 2002 (Nader Nadery), January 2002 (Dr. Sima Samar), January 2005, (Dr. Samar), July 2005, (Dr. Samar), January 2013 (Nader Nadery), June 2013 (Dr. Samar)
8. AIHRC local counterparts offices in Kandahar (June 05 and August 05) and in Faizabad (February 05 and July 05)
9. Opium farmers, Jalalabad (September 2002), Pashtu (April 2003)
10. Governor Haji din Mohammad, September 2002, April 2003 and August 2003 - Pashtu
11. Deputy Governor of Jalalabad, August 2003 - Pashtu
12. Head of Border Guard, Haji Zahir, September 2002, October 2002, January 2003
13. Corps Commander Hazerat Ali, September 2002 - Pashtu
14. Local government officials and farmers, May 2003 - Shinwar, Pashtu
15. Local officials, August 2003 - Dur Baba, tribal areas - Pashtu
16. Villagers, summer 2003 - Anar Gai, Lal Pura, Mohmand
17. Indian and Pakistani Consulate representatives - Jalalabad (August 2003), Kabul (Aug 2003)
18. UN officials, April 2003 and August 2003 - Jalalabad - English
19. Local government officials, May 2003 - Shinwar - Pashtu
20. Head of Nangarhar Daily News, Autumn 2002 and 2003 - English
21. Head of Mohmand Tribe, Faraydoon Mohmand, Autumn 2002 - Pashtu
22. First Secretary, Indian Consulate in Jalalabad, August 2003 - English
23. First Secretary, Pakistan Consulate, Jalalabad and Kabul, August 2003 - English
24. Head of Tribal Affairs Office, August 2003 - Jalalabad - Pashtu
25. CIA representatives, August 2003 - Jalalabad - English
26. Head of PRT, Jalalabad, December 2005 - English

27. Head of PRTs in Faizabad (civil and military leaders), February & August 2005 - English
28. Head of PRT in Kandahar, May and July 2005 - English
29. Head of PRT in Bamyan, August 2005 - English
30. Head of PRT in Mazar, September 2005 - English
31. Head of PRT in Herat, September 2005 - English
32. Civilian Advisor to PRT, Jalalabad, January 2005
33. Commander of Afghan Border Guard for Nangarhar, Lal Pura, Mohmand - Pashtu
34. Various farmers, August 2003 - Lal Pura, Goste, in Mohmand
35. Mullah Malang, September 2002, December 2004 - Jalalabad and Kabul - English
36. Khan Mir, August 2003 - Jalalabad - Pashtu
37. Mullah Rocketti, December 2004 - Kabul - Pashtu
38. Hazerat Ali, September, 2002 - Jalalabad - Pashtu
39. Faraydoon Mohmand, May 2003 and August 2005 - Jalalabad - Pashtu
40. Aga Jan, January 2005 - Sarobi - Pashtu
41. Amin Wardak, July 2005 - Kabul - English
42. Ali Wardak, summer 2003
43. Khairullah (Haq's secretary), July 2003 - Jalalabad - Pashtu
44. Haji Baryalai (brother of Haq), various interviews (informal), 2002 -2005
45. Haji Daoud (brother of Haq), August 2003 - Jalalabad - English
46. Haji din Mohammad, Governor of Nangarhar and then Governor of Kabul, September 2002, December 2004, June 2005 - Jalalabad - Pashtu
47. Haji Zahir (nephew and son of VP Haji Qadir), September 2002, April 2003, July 2003, January 2004, December 2005 - Jalalabad and Kabul - English
48. Majeed Arsala (Haq's oldest son), August 2004
49. Abdullah Arsala (Haq's aide during time in Peshawar after 9/11), August 2003
50. Farid Zikria, Afghan Ambassador to UAE, January 2004
51. Taliban Deputy Interior Minister, Mullah Khaksar, January 2004
52. Mullah Zaeef, June 2005
53. Naeem Kochai, June 2005
54. James Ritchie, October 2002 and summer 2003
55. Sir John Gunston, September 2003
56. 'RAM' Seeger (former Head of UK SBS), Autumn 2003 and 2007-2012
57. Ken Guest - October 2002 and 2007-2012
58. Peregrine Hodson, 2002
59. William Reeve (BBC), 2004
60. Peter Jouvenal - BBC - 2002 - 9
61. Jon Swain - April 2002
62. Antony Lloyd - April 2002
63. Steve Masty - September 2005
64. Barnet Rubin - April 2005
65. Peter Tomsen, US Ambassador to the Afghan Mujahideen (1989-92) (by email)
66. Helena Malikyar, January 2004 - Kabul - English
67. Hedayat Arsala, January 2005 - Jalalabad - English

68. A former aide to the King, February 2005 - Kabul - English
69. Prince Mustafa (a brother of Mustafa), February 2005 - Kabul - English
70. Ismael Khan, April 2003, December 2004 and July 2005 – Herat and Kabul - Dari
71. Abdullah Abdullah, July 2005 - Kabul – Dari
72. Prof. Burhannuddin Rabbani, July 2005 – Kabul - Dari
73. Abdur Rashid Sayyaf, April 2002 – Kabul – Pashtu
74. Ustad Atta Mohammad, July 2005 – Mazar-e-sharif and Balkh - Dari
75. Mohaqek – July 2005 – Kabul - Dari
76. Rashid Dostum, July 2005 - Kabul - Uzbek
77. Pir Gailani, Head of NIFA party, August 2005 - Kabul - Pashtu
78. Mohammad Gailani (Pir's cousin), July 2005 - Kabul
79. Former Communist Governor of Kandahar, September 2005
80. Governor of Kandahar, Wali Karzai, June 2005 and September 2005 - Pashtu
81. Governor Shirzai, September 2005 – Jalalabad - Pashtu
82. Mohammad Daoud, Minister of Narcotics, December 2004 - Kabul - Dari
83. Mullah Izat, summer 2003 and summer 2005 - Qarga region, Kabul - Pashtu
84. Asadullah Khaled, March 2005 – Ghazni - Pashtu
85. Rahim Wardak, Ministry of Defence, December 2004 – Kabul - English
86. Fatima Gailani, Head of ARCS, February 2005 and July 2005 - Kabul - English
87. Massouda Jalal, Women's Minister, November 2004 - English
88. Mrs Kakar, Women's Minister, September 2002 - English
89. Mahbouba Seraja, Women's NGO chief and advocate, January 2013 and June 2013
90. Hassina Sherjan, Women's education NGO, January 2013 and June 2013

iv) Informal observations and conversations

a. Conferences and Meetings attended

Ditchley Park – on international intervention – May 2012

Wilton Park – on transitional justice, development and security (for which I was the rapporteur) – January 2013

Oxford University Changing Character of War Programme conference on 'Transitions' – December 2012

b. Informal Conversations

Because my home base was Afghanistan during much of the period 2000–2006, I had countless informal conversations with Afghans, foreigners, military and civilian personnel. I do not have the space here to list all of these. Some are recorded though in my extensive personal diaries.



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CSD analysis

How the 'entry' defines the 'exit': contradictions between the political and military strategies adopted in 2001 and how they have deleteriously affected the longer-term possibilities for stabilisation in Afghanistan

Lucy Morgan Edwards

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Abstract

Focusing on the period 2001–2003, the paper discusses how the Western military intervention in Afghanistan changed power structures early on, undermining the political settlement in the long term and culminating in the present electoral crisis. Key concepts, a theoretical framework and the initial military approach (including how the initial military strategy undermined an indigenous solution for toppling the Taliban) are outlined and literature focused on hybrid governance and ‘legitimacy’ as an important but overlooked facet of peace-building is presented. Examples of ‘lessons learned’ in relation to the failure to engage with traditional forms of governance—early on in the Afghan conflict—are set out. The objective is to show that the military strategy adopted in 2001–2002 had adverse long-term consequences that were hard to reverse later on (e.g. by shifting the goalposts of military activity to, for example, a counter-insurgency strategy from 2005 onwards). This paper does not aim to resolve these paradoxes in the Afghan context going forward but offers implicit recommendations based on ‘lessons learned’.

State-building in Afghanistan: a case showing the limits?

Lucy Morgan Edwards

Lucy Morgan Edwards is a former Political Advisor to the EU Special Representative in Kabul and has completed a book on the alternative to war offered by Commander Abdul Haq for Afghanistan in 2001. It is to be published in 2011.

Abstract

Since the 1990s, the concept of ‘state-building’ has become the means by which intervenors have attempted to tackle ‘state failure/fragility’. The ‘ideal’ referred to when attempting to do this – both theoretically and in practice – has been that of the classic ‘nation-state’ as developed by Max Weber. To answer the question posed by the title above, the article first looks generally at the evolution of the current state-building paradigm and global governance discourse. Second, a background of historical attempts at state-building in Afghanistan is given. Third, an assessment is made of the international community’s approach to Afghanistan since 2001. Finally, the appropriateness of replicating a Weberian state-building model onto more traditional societies such as Afghanistan – where modes of governance and authority are often informal, complex, and characterized by historical and charismatic sources of legitimacy – is addressed. Until now, such contexts have barely been acknowledged, still less understood, by intervenors. Today, however, some academics are beginning to outline an alternative response to state fragility, recognizing more traditional sources of legitimacy and a hybridity of political order.

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By 2010, nine years after the events of 11 September 2001 (9/11), the Afghan state appears to be characterized by a centralization of power. The situation is similar to that faced by the Soviets in 1987, in that the state is fiscally unsustainable and the government is only able to function in cities.¹ Moreover, the state is run by a political elite whose objectives seem diametrically opposed to those of the

international community – a dynamic similar to one identified in Somalia.² Like the Soviets halfway through their ten-year engagement in the 1980s, the international community, struggling to extricate itself from its nearly decade-long engagement in Afghanistan and faced with a steady deterioration in security since 2005–2006, is starting to focus on expensive militaristic ‘stopgap’ measures. These have been characterized by Kipping as ‘somewhat similar to the 1980s’.³ They are also a desperate attempt to shore up the state security apparatus, and include the establishment of militias whose loyalty is questionable.⁴ For example, the Afghan National Auxiliary Police were deemed a ‘quick fix effort’⁵ to stabilize the south but were in reality led by their former militia commanders, often in pursuit of somewhat criminal agendas. In 2008 there followed the Afghan Public Protection Force, which US Special Forces, encouraged by the Sunni militia ‘Sons of Iraq’⁶ experience, hoped would replicate that development in Afghanistan. But, like other irregular security forces, this too was criticized as potentially fuelling ethnic problems owing to the arming of communities in conflict with others. There was also the issue of a further weakening of the state’s claim to a monopoly on the use of force.⁷ In 2009 further initiatives to set up militias were taken, including the Ministry of the Interior’s Civil Defence Initiative.

With the ongoing justification for the war being to ‘dismantle, disrupt and defeat’ the Al Qaeda terror network, efforts to strengthen and sustain the Afghan government have been a secondary priority ranking far behind military operations.⁸ Relatively late in the day, much of the rhetoric now relates to the issue of ‘ungoverned space’ and ‘governance’. Nine years into the war, however, there remains huge uncertainty in that regard. The Center for American Progress states that:

building legitimate, responsive and self-sustaining Afghan government institutions is essential if the United States and its NATO International Security

- 1 Martin Kipping, *Two Interventions: Comparing Soviet and US-led State-building in Afghanistan*, The Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN), Thematic Report, January 2010, available at: http://aan-afghanistan.com/uploads/AAN_Two_Interventions.pdf (last visited 8 February 2011).
- 2 In Somalia, continued instability ensures the government an ongoing revenue stream and allows it to maintain a façade of ‘importance’, as discussed in Ken Menkhaus, ‘Governance without government in Somalia: spoilers, state building, and the politics of coping’, in *International Security*, Vol. 31, No. 3, pp. 74–106.
- 3 M. Kipping, above note 1, p. 13.
- 4 *Ibid.*
- 5 Robert M. Perito, *Afghanistan’s Police: The Weak Link in Security Sector Reform*, United States Institute of Peace (USIP), Special Report No. 227, August 2009, p. 9, available at: http://www.usip.org/files/afghanistan_police.pdf (last visited 8 February 2011).
- 6 Fred W. Baker III, ‘Petraeus parallels Iraq, Afghanistan strategies’, in *American Forces Press Service*, 28 April 2009, available at: <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=54107> (last visited 8 February 2011).
- 7 Waheedullah Mohammad, ‘Can Afghanistan’s new “Guardian” militia restore security in the provinces?’, in *Terrorism Monitor*, Vol. 7, No. 20, p. 5.
- 8 Colin Cookman and Caroline Wadhams, *Governance in Afghanistan: Looking Ahead to What We Leave Behind*, Center for American Progress, May 2010, p. 1, available at: <http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2010/05/pdf/afghangovernance.pdf> (last visited 8 February 2011).

Assistance Force allies are to withdraw their military forces from Afghanistan and keep them out over the long term without the country descending into civil war and regional proxy fighting. To accomplish this, Congress, the Obama administration, and the American public need a clearer understanding of the full dimensions of Afghan governance and the many international actors and programs whose activities affect the issue.⁹

The outlook is not good: some studies demonstrate a low success rate in externally led state-building projects over recent decades. For example, Doyle and Sambanis surveyed 121 processes of post-conflict peace-building from 1945 to 1999, and found that less than half had achieved an end to war and violence. More difficult goals, such as a basic level of political openness, were even more problematic. Significantly, the activities of external peace-keeping forces had negligible effect on the likelihood of success, although a sustainable peace was a little likelier in those countries with a UN-mandated intervention force.¹⁰ Meanwhile, Paris compared eleven UN peace-building missions from 1989 to 1999. He found that only two had been successfully concluded (Namibia and Croatia), two had failed (Angola and Rwanda), and the remaining seven presented a mixed outcome.¹¹

To assess whether Afghanistan constitutes ‘a case showing the limits’ to state-building it is first necessary to define the concepts of state-building aimed for, and also to determine the historical role of state-building in Afghanistan.

Concepts

Differing theoretical traditions of the ‘state’ and state ‘functions’

Historically, philosophers ranging from Machiavelli to Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Max Weber, John Stuart Mill, and John Dewey (among others) have held a variety of views about the state and its functions. However, the model that has emerged as the basis of today’s world order is that of the ‘nation-state’ as espoused by Max Weber during the 1918 Bavarian Revolution and the First World War. He defined the state as a human community that claims a monopoly on the legitimate use of force within a given territory, and noted the intimate relationship between the state and violence.¹² Lockhart and Ghani (former World Bank employees who wrote much of the 2001 Bonn Agreement that prescribed the state-building project for Afghanistan) assert that Weber articulates a ‘clear, functional view of the state,

9 *Ibid.*, pp. 1–2.

10 Michael W. Doyle and Nicholas Sambanis, *Making War and Building Peace: United Nations Peace Operations*, Princeton University Press, Princeton and Oxford, 2006.

11 Roland Paris, *At War’s End: Building Peace after Civil Conflict*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2004.

12 See e.g. Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, edited by Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich, Bedminster Press, New York, 1968.

and describe its “basic functions” as the legislature, the police, the judiciary, and the various branches of civil and military administration’.¹³ In such a model, however, state institutions are distinct from civil society, having their ‘own interests, preferences and capacities’.¹⁴

Evolution of the state-building paradigm

State-building strategies

Over the past decade, the issue of state fragility – and state-building as a response to it – has become a major area of interest for the donor, peace-building, and security communities, marking a shift from the 1980s belief that the ‘market’ (the rhetorical term then was ‘structural adjustment’) could solve these problems.

Various interventions by the international community have taken place in Afghanistan, Bosnia, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Haiti, and Iraq, with ‘state-building’ perceived as the dominant ‘solution’ for places deemed to have ‘failed’.¹⁵ A variety of definitions exist, which encompass ‘failure’, ‘weak’, or ‘fragile’,¹⁶ but there remains a vagueness and sometimes a blurring of distinctions between these.¹⁷

Boege *et al.* assert that the focus of the security and development environment is on the ‘lack of willingness or capacity [of state institutions] to perform core state functions in the fields of security, representation and welfare’.¹⁸ The authors recognize the existence of a consensus that different degrees of state fragility or different stages of state failure can be identified, that the phenomenon is increasing, and that the solution generally recommended is ‘state-building’.¹⁹ This encompasses: ‘sustainably strengthening state institutions in addition to enhancing the capacities of state actors for control, regulation and implementation, particularly in the core fields of state-hood, namely internal security, basic social services, the rule of law and legitimacy of government’.²⁰

13 Ashraf Ghani and Clare Lockhart, *Fixing Failed States: A Framework for Rebuilding a Fractured World*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2008, pp. 116–117.

14 Achim Wennmann, *Grasping the Strengths of Fragile States: Aid Effectiveness between ‘Top-down’ and ‘Bottom-up’ Statebuilding*, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the Centre on Conflict, Development and Peacebuilding (CCDP) at the Graduate Institute, Geneva, CCDP Working Paper No. 6, 2010, p. 16, available at: http://graduateinstitute.ch/webdav/site/ccdp/shared/6305/Working%20paper_6_BD.pdf (last visited 8 February 2011).

15 *Ibid.*, p. 2.

16 Tobias Debiel, and Axel Klein (eds), *Fragile Peace: State Failure, Violence and Development in Crisis Regions*, Zed Books, London, 2002.

17 See Tobias Debiel and Daniel Lambach, *Global Governance Meets Local Politics: On Western State-building and the Resilience of Hybrid Political Orders*, paper presented at the Global Conference of the International Peace Research Association (IPRA) 2010, Sydney, Australia, 6–10 July 2010.

18 Volker Boege, Anne Brown, Kevin Clements, and Anna Nolan, *On Hybrid Political Orders and Emerging States: State Formation in the Context of ‘Fragility’*, Berghof Research Centre for Constructive Conflict Management, Berlin, 2008, p. 3.

19 *Ibid.*

20 *Ibid.*

Bøås and Jennings²¹ contend that ‘fragile states are seen through the dominant lens of Western security interests’ and that in this context they appear as little more than fertile breeding grounds for the export of terrorism or safe havens for terrorists.²² As such they become a threat to ‘the national security of the USA’ and to ‘international security’. Hence, ‘rebuilding states’ is seen as a challenge that US policy must take on. As such:

The focus of state-building generally is very much on the security dimension, with building the capacity of security agencies (police, military, customs and border protection) as a priority field of external assistance. This becomes an avenue for security agencies to address development issues, to ‘securitise’ these issues and thus add to the legitimacy of the military and other security agencies which are expanding their areas of activity.²³

In Afghanistan, the result since 2001 has not necessarily been an effective means of ensuring security in ‘ungoverned space’.

The 1990s ‘global governance’ discourse

The current state-building paradigm emerged largely from the ‘global governance’ discourse of the mid-1990s, according to which rapid de-borderization, globalization, and turbulence formed the basis for a new concept. Rosenau referred to a ‘bifurcation’ in world politics, whereby the sphere of non-state actors gained relative influence ‘acting according to its own goals, instruments, modes of cooperation and patterns of legitimacy’.²⁴ Based on these assumptions, global governance was defined as ‘systems of rule at all levels of human activity – from the family to the international organization – in which the pursuit of goals through the exercise of control has transnational repercussions’.²⁵

Concepts of ‘global governance’, including the ‘right to protect’ and the ‘right to rebuild’

Debiel and Lambach describe how the global governance ideas were soon embodied within the prescriptive frameworks of the UN system (Commission on Global Governance, 1995), resulting in new debates on ideas of national sovereignty and ultimately the ideal of the ‘responsibility to protect’ formulated by the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) in 2001, which ‘juxtaposed the view that state sovereignty was not only a right to prevent interference from outside with one that considered [the said responsibility] also to

21 Morton Bøås and Kathleen M. Jennings, ‘Insecurity and development: the rhetoric of the “failed state”’, in *European Journal of Development Research*, Vol. 17, No. 3, p. 388.

22 V. Boege *et al.*, above note 18, p. 3.

23 *Ibid.*, p. 4.

24 James N. Rosenau, *The United Nations in a Turbulent World*, Lynne Rienner, Boulder, CO, 1992, p. 20.

25 James N. Rosenau, ‘Governance in the twenty-first century’, in *Global Governance*, 1995, No. 1, p. 13.

be an obligation of the state towards its citizens'.²⁶ The authors suggested that the 'responsibility to protect' might shift from national to global level if gross human rights violations occurred and were not stopped.

An implication of this concept was that 'spaces in which the state is either not willing or able (or both) to secure the safety of its citizens, should and can be globally governed';²⁷ the corollary was that the concept of 'responsibility to rebuild' became an aspect of the ICISS report.²⁸ In other words, the international community gave itself the responsibility/right to tackle the problem of 'ungoverned space'. But, ten years on in Afghanistan, it has yet to achieve success in this domain.

Wennmann, referring to the security, donor and development 'communities', adds: 'Despite different institutional perspectives, the debate over fragile states has reflected an implicit consensus in these communities that a strong and functioning state is the instrument to solve the challenges of poverty, armed violence, and sustainable development'.²⁹ As such, the Weberian/Westphalian nation-state model came to be perceived as a solution to state failure, and the interventions of the late 1990s were characterized by a top-down, centralized focus with emphasis on controlling the use of force. Usual tasks included providing infrastructure, training civil servants, and initiating organizational reforms.³⁰ However, although the approaches produced quick results, 'the role that informal actors and institutions, culture and identity play'³¹ was downplayed. Meanwhile 'the political dimensions of seemingly apolitical reforms were grossly underestimated'.³²

Historical overview of the state in Afghanistan

Rule of the monarchy

Before 1747, when Ahmad Shah Durrani established a confederacy at Kandahar under the unifying name of Afghanistan (the 'Land of the Afghan'), Afghanistan was known as '*Sarzameen-e-Bay*', the lawless land. Autocratic rule continued under Durrani, who managed to unify the tribes. At the end of the nineteenth century, unification was more pronounced under the forceful 'Iron Amir', Abdur Rahman Khan, who used a mix of force and guile to cement the tribes together. The first Afghan constitution was enacted in 1923 under King Habibullah.

Divisions between modernizers and traditionalists (a tension that continues to exist in Afghanistan) became more evident in the summer of 1928, when

26 T. Debiel and D. Lambach, above note 17, p. 2.

27 *Ibid.*

28 *Ibid.*

29 A. Wennmann, above note 14, p. 2.

30 Ulrich Schneekener, *Fragile Staatlichkeit: 'States at Risk' zwischen Stabilität und Scheitern*, Nomos, Baden-Baden, 2006.

31 T. Debiel and D. Lambach, above note 17, p. 3.

32 *Ibid.*

Habibullah's son, King Amanullah – looking towards what Kemal Attaturk was doing in Turkey – tried to introduce modernizing reforms. These included the establishment of a Western-style constitutional monarchy and the abolition of the veil. However, the *Loya Jirga* – which itself is a version of direct democracy similar to the traditional *Landesgemeinde* or cantonal assembly of the older Swiss cantons – rejected most of the proposals. An insurrection followed, begun by Shinwari tribesmen who burnt down the king's palace (and the British Consulate) in Jalalabad. This led to Amanullah's eventual exile, opening the way for General Nadir Shah, who had defeated the bandit forces, to occupy Kabul.³³

Nadir Shah became king in 1930, after his legitimization by a *Loya Jirga*. His 1931 constitution was essentially a promulgation of an 'autocratic monarchy allied to religious conservatism'³⁴ in an attempt to consolidate power by appeasing the mullahs who had brought about the downfall of his predecessor. Accordingly, the first article of the new constitution officially decreed that the religious law of the Hanafi school of Sunni Islam was to be the basis of law in Afghanistan. Nadir Shah's reign ended with his assassination in 1933 by a high-school student in Kabul.³⁵

His son, Mohammad Zahir Shah (1933–1973) succeeded him and his rule lasted for forty, relatively peaceful, years. In 1964, the third Afghan Constitution created a constitutional monarchy with a legislature. Although *Sharia* (Islamic law) was referred to, the basis of law became that of a secular legal system because the constitution introduced an independent judiciary. Most power, however, remained with the king.³⁶ In 1965, elections were held and resulted in a lower house of parliament, the *Wolesi Jirga*, which was broadly representative and included anti-royalists. The king had allowed the establishment of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), which had two wings, Khalq and Parcham, comprising rural Pashtuns and left-leaning urbanites (who were often *dari* speakers) respectively.

The Soviet era

Soviet influence had continued to gain traction throughout the 1970s and, in December 1979, resulted in the invasion and occupation of Afghanistan. An interim constitution followed in 1980, even as various resistance groups began to organize themselves from their base in Peshawar. They ranged from traditionalist groups interested in restoring the former king to minority Shi'a groups and the more fundamentalist Islamist groups of strongmen such as Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and Abdur Rab Sayyaf. The aim of most of these groups was not democratic rule but a redefinition of Islam in Afghan society.

33 Angelo Rasanayagam, *Afghanistan: A Modern History*, IB Tauris, London, 2004.

34 *Ibid.*, p. 23.

35 *Ibid.*

36 *Ibid.*

The Mujahideen and Taliban era

The West provided aid and ordinance to the resistance groups and, by the time the Soviets were defeated in 1989, Afghanistan faced a new crisis: the economy was now based on drugs, the country was flooded with weapons, and Afghan civil society had been decimated. This situation enabled the Taliban, since they set about restoring order, to gain the support of the populace in much of the country. Though seen as ‘occupiers’ in the cities of Kabul, Mazar, and Herat, they thus easily gained control over most of Afghanistan and – despite UN sanctions – refused to give up Osama bin Laden and believed that they could win the remaining territory in the north-east still occupied by the Northern Alliance.

Attempts to broaden loyalty from traditional structures to a concept of ‘nationhood’

As early as 1973, the US anthropologist Louis Dupree identified a tension within Afghan society between those desiring to promote the concept of ‘nation-state’ and those who preferred a more traditional society based on ‘kinship’. Dupree defined the ‘nation-state’ as: ‘in the western sense, more a set of attitudes, a reciprocal, functioning set of rights and obligations between the government and the governed – with emphasis on the individual rather than the group’.³⁷ In contrast, he wrote that ‘tribalism’ occurs ‘in non-literate societies ... when kinship replaces government and guarantees men and women born into a specific unit a functioning set of social, economic and political rights and obligations’.³⁸

This tension still exists in Afghanistan today and encompasses differences between rural and urban traditions, between youth and older people, between modernizers and traditionalists, between diaspora Afghans and those who remain within Afghanistan. Interestingly, Dupree identified diaspora Afghans as those pushing for the nation-state ideal.

Shahrani repeats Dupree somewhat when he says that previous attempts at political reform in Afghanistan during the twentieth century had not enjoyed success in broadening loyalty from clan-based or tribal networks to a concept of nationhood.³⁹ Although he adds that much of the difficulty has been historically related to limited literacy and problems in communication and transport networks, a lack of revenue also curtailed the state’s attempt to legitimize power, so that successive leaders had to play one group off against another (with political and financial incentives). His view is that, over time, the central power was forced to turn more and more to regional leaders for financial and military assistance, thereby enabling tribal and traditional structures of authority to become entrenched. Some commentators argue that this phenomenon has succeeded only

37 Louis Dupree, *Afghanistan*, 1980 edition, Rama Press, New Delhi, 1980, p. 659.

38 *Ibid.*

39 M. Nazif Shahrani, ‘Afghanistan: state and society in retrospect’, in Ewan W. Anderson and Nancy Hatch Dupree (eds), *The Cultural Basis of Afghan Nationalism*, Pinter Publishers, London, 1990, pp. 41–49.

in accelerating the tendency of religious and ethnic pluralism to develop into social fragmentation.⁴⁰ Others would contend that this has always been so in Afghanistan, and is echoed today because Hamid Karzai's ability to hold onto power is largely determined by patronage (in this case, the spoils of foreign aid and lucrative sinecures, i.e. 'police chief' positions).

During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the British were Afghanistan's main source of revenue during nation-building exercises. From the 1950s, both the USA and the USSR provided support, and in the 1980s the USSR provided massive financial investment while occupying Afghanistan. Latterly, there have been contributions (during the Mujahideen era) from the US and other Western nations, and since 9/11 the West has been providing most of the revenue to shore up the state.

The post-9/11 intervention

The post-9/11 intervention comprised three elements: military, political, and security sector reform.

The military response: Operation Enduring Freedom and NATO

The military effort in Afghanistan has been under the remit of both Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and – since it moved beyond Kabul in 2003 – the UN-mandated International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) under NATO command.

The attacks of 11 September 2001 led to the unprecedented invoking by NATO of Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, according to which an armed attack on one member state is deemed an attack on all. NATO thus committed itself – for the first time – to an operation beyond its immediate borders. Though there was political will by NATO to contribute troops, US General Tommy Franks, then leading Operation Enduring Freedom, made clear that he wanted exclusive control over the theatre of operations beyond Kabul.⁴¹ As such, ISAF was confined to Kabul. On 11 August 2003, NATO assumed leadership of the ISAF operation, ending the six-month national rotations.

A key part of the OEF strategy – the use of Northern Alliance militiamen as ground forces to oust the Taliban – was perceived as a means of averting the need for the US to commit ground troops in significant numbers. Instead, the strategy was to support a disparate group of mostly Tajik warlords based in the north and east with over one billion US dollars' worth of cash and

40 Barnett Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan: State Formation and Collapse in the International System*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1995.

41 Lucy Morgan Edwards and Shambhu Simkhada, *Defence, Diplomacy and Development (3Ds): A New Approach to International Relations?*, report commissioned by and written for the Swiss Agency for International Development and Cooperation (SDC), 2008.

weapons.⁴² The fact that the Northern Alliance had been involved in an ongoing civil war with the mostly Pashtun Taliban was overlooked, even though other Afghans criticized their use as inevitably leading to a lopsided political settlement. This development was accelerated when the US bombed Taliban front lines in October 2001, as the Northern Alliance were thereby enabled to take Kabul, and with it the key ‘power’ ministries of Defence, Interior, and Foreign Affairs.

The Bonn Framework 2001–2005

The political response was mapped out by the international community, the UN, and certain Afghan groups in December 2001 in Bonn. Afghan representatives from different exile groups – but crucially not the Taliban, and with few significant Pashtun tribal leaders present – signed the Agreement on Provisional Arrangements in Afghanistan Pending the Re-establishment of Permanent Government Institutions.

The Bonn Agreement was intended to ‘initiate a state-building process’.⁴³ It envisaged the initial establishment of an Interim Authority followed by an Emergency *Loya Jirga*, to be held in 2002, at which a Transitional Administration would be established and legitimized until presidential and parliamentary elections elected a government in 2004.⁴⁴

Under the Interim Administration a constitutional drafting committee was set up to prepare for a Constitutional *Loya Jirga*. The Constitution was intended to establish Afghanistan as a state with executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government. A Judicial Commission was to rebuild the justice system in accordance with Islamic principles, international standards, the rule of law, and Afghan legal traditions. A Supreme Court was also to be established.

Security Sector Reform (SSR)

Alongside the Bonn process and Operation Enduring Freedom, G8 donor countries decided on a ‘lead nation’ approach to SSR in 2002. The Security Sector was divided into five pillars: Germany would lead on police reform, the US on military reform, Italy on judicial reform, the UK on counter-narcotics, and Japan on the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) of former combatants.⁴⁵ That approach marked the beginning of what would become the main plank of the West’s perceived ‘exit strategy’ from Afghanistan, namely by building up Afghan security forces.

42 Gary C. Schroen, *First In: An Insider’s Account of How the CIA Spearheaded the War on Terror in Afghanistan*, Ballantine Books, New York, 2004.

43 Joint Electoral Management Body Secretariat (JEMBS) background document, 2005.

44 *Ibid.*

45 Cyrus Hodes and Mark Sedra, *The Search for Security in Post-Taliban Afghanistan*, International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), London, August 2007.

Outcomes of the approach adopted

The military response

Although the Taliban regime was soon toppled, the movement was not so easily destroyed but merely retreated to remote parts of Afghanistan and safe havens in Pakistan, from where it has – since 2004 – mounted an increasingly successful insurgency campaign.

Afghanistan was a ‘quickly won’ war, but a failed peace. The US decision to use the Northern Alliance as a proxy to rout the Taliban was widely criticized because:

The more this [i.e. payoffs by the Coalition] ... happened in the name of hunting down their prized catch, Osama bin Laden, the more the Americans undermined the interim administration and destroyed hopes of building a viable central administration for Afghanistan.⁴⁶

Moreover, the return of strongmen (often after several years of exile abroad) to the fiefdoms that they had occupied prior to the arrival of the Taliban enabled commanders ‘to use the money and arms they received to invest in drug production and engage in land grabs, predation, political intimidation, and ethnic cleansing – a major source of insecurity for Afghans’.⁴⁷

This set the stage for anarchy in the provinces and led to a feeling by many Afghans of alienation from the state, which was not perceived to be serving their interests. By 2005 insecurity had spread beyond the Pashtun belt and the south to many areas of the north and east, enabling the Taliban to make their presence increasingly felt.

The Bonn Process

The feeling that many significant Pashtun leaders (as well as the Taliban, of course) had been sidelined from the meeting in Bonn and the political settlement that followed amplified the feeling (for Pashtuns) of alienation from the central government.

The last-minute participation of fifty unelected governors (in reality ‘warlord strongmen’) in the 2002 Emergency *Loya Jirga* was dubbed the ‘big tent’ approach by the presiding US Ambassador, Zalmay Khalilzad. Meanwhile, the UN chief, Lakhdar-i-Brahimi, told journalists that it had been necessary in order for ‘peace’ to be able to take precedence over ‘justice’. Others disagreed with the approach, believing that this was only a temporary solution akin to ‘renting peace’,

46 John Kampfner, *Blair's Wars*, Free Press, London, 2003, p. 146.

47 Barnett R. Rubin, *Afghanistan's Uncertain Transition from Turmoil to Normalcy*, Council Special Report No. 12, Council on Foreign Relations Press, March 2006, pp. 5–6.

which would soon give way to anarchy.⁴⁸ As Debiel and Lambach assert, such an approach to state-building was characterized by a top-down focus promising quick results but downplaying the role of informal actors and grossly underestimating ‘the political dimensions of seemingly apolitical reform’.⁴⁹

The ability of the warlords to shape the outcome of the 2002 Emergency *Loya Jirga* has had a long-term deleterious effect on the state-building process, not simply because it enabled them to claim the political legitimization of the international community (whereby, instead of being called to account for their often dubious history of alleged rights abuses, they were now sharing out ministerial positions with the approval of international diplomats). It also enabled strongmen to influence key appointments both regionally and at central government level⁵⁰ and to affect the composition and outcome of the constitutional drafting committee and ultimately, therefore, the Constitution. The corollary is an extreme form of centralized government that protects the interests of an elite group of strongmen with whom Karzai maintains allegiances. It has also put a brake on judicial reform⁵¹ and hampered the reform of security institutions both locally and centrally.⁵²

Despite the enthusiasm by the international community for the completion of presidential and parliamentary elections in swift succession (arguably driven by US/UK domestic politics whose imperative was to demonstrate the ‘success’ of democracy in Afghanistan), law, order, and security have continued to break down in the countryside. Narco-trafficking and corruption are now known to reach the highest levels of the Afghan government, as shown by the recent corruption scandal at the Kabul Bank, the interference in the Anti-Corruption Commission by President Karzai himself, and the fact that the Afghan Deputy President, Zia Massoud, was alleged to have been found in Dubai with US\$ 52 million on his person.⁵³

Security Sector Reform

In 2005, one of the ‘flagship’ programmes of SSR – that aiming to disarm, demobilize, and reintegrate (DDR) tens of thousands of combatants and called the Afghan New Beginnings Programme (ANBP) – was trumpeted a success by the

48 The author was present at the Emergency *Loya Jirga* in June 2002 and has written about what happened in her forthcoming book, *The Afghan Solution: The Untold Story of Abdul Haq, the CIA and how Western Hubris Lost Afghanistan*, to be published in 2011.

49 T. Debiel and D. Lambach, above note 17, p. 3.

50 Sarah Lister, *Understanding State-building and Local Government in Afghanistan*, Crisis States Research Centre, LSE, Working Paper No. 14, London, 2007, available at: <http://www2.lse.ac.uk/internationalDevelopment/research/crisisStates/Publications/phase2papers.aspx> (last visited 8 February 2011).

51 C. Hodes and M. Sedra, above note 45.

52 S. Lister, above note 50.

53 Various articles published by the *New York Times*, including that on the Kabul Bank by Dexter Filkins, and leaked cables published by WikiLeaks in November 2010.

international community.⁵⁴ Though its prospective target was originally 140,000 combatants, the numbers were reduced first to 40,000, then to 10,000.⁵⁵ Crucially, ANBP also only tackled the demobilization of so-called 'official' Afghan army units, that is, those militias of the Northern Alliance leader Mohammad Fahim, who, in late 2001, had taken over the army units left by departing Taliban.⁵⁶ As such, ANBP did nothing to tackle the more serious problem of the 'unofficial' militias belonging to the strongmen controlling the countryside. These were known as 'illegal armed groups' and there were estimated to be some 1,800 such groups throughout the country in 2005.⁵⁷ Although a Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups (DIAG) programme was mooted by the UN in 2005, in reality neither NATO nor the Coalition had the political will to undertake such a programme because the militias had links with the strongmen, who – since 2001 – had been allied with the Coalition. Indeed, many of these strongmen were now in government or, in 2005, about to be elected as members of parliament.⁵⁸ There has also been widespread criticism of the ethnic imbalance of the Afghan National Army, which remains largely Tajik and dominated by Northern Alliance generals.⁵⁹

Meanwhile reform of the justice sector has been very weak. Besides lagging behind schedule, it has been hampered by some of the leaders, who themselves have known fundamentalist leanings and extremely chequered histories. For example, Abdur Rashid Sayyaf is thought to have had undue backroom influence, including the appointment in 2002 of Mullah Shahrani as Chief Justice (who promptly reintroduced the hated religious police). Overall then, the decision by the West to sponsor strongmen who many believe ought instead to have been indicted for their previous rights abuses⁶⁰ has had extremely negative consequences for the post-9/11 state-building project in Afghanistan.

In her assessment of state-building at the local level in Afghanistan, Sarah Lister concludes:

Disarmament, the reform of the police, and the judicial sector and close attention to the quality of senior appointments are all measures that would have contributed to shifting 'the rules of the game' in Afghanistan from informal patronage based systems, and towards a more depersonalized, formalized and rationalized exercise of power through the state. Instead their neglect at a

54 S. Lister, above note 50.

55 *Ibid.*, p. 13.

56 *Ibid.*

57 C. Hodes and M. Sedra, above note 45.

58 Author's experience of meetings between the international community and Afghan government on DIAG in Kabul, 2005. See also Andrew Wilder, *A House Divided? Analysing the 2005 Afghan Elections*, Afghan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU), 2005, available at: http://www.areu.org.af/index.php?option=com_docman&Itemid=&task=doc_download&gid=254 (last visited 7 January 2011).

59 'Afghanistan's troubled National Army: fixing the unfixable', in *The Economist*, 19 August 2010, pp. 39–40.

60 Patricia Gossman, *Casting Shadows: War Crimes and Crimes against Humanity: 1978–2001*, Afghan Justice Project, 2005, available at: <http://www.afghanistanjusticeproject.org/warcrimesandcrimesagainsthumanity19782001.pdf> (last visited 8 February 2011).

critical period has enabled local powerholders to continue to use the state as a means to exercise power, resisting or co-opting attempts to create new structures and impose bureaucratic rules.⁶¹

Constraints on the West's ability to conduct a successful post-9/11 state-building exercise in Afghanistan

A historical perspective of state-building

Boege *et al.* remind us that, although processes of state formation in the Western world were undertaken over a period of centuries and often involved much violence, since the era of decolonization Western state forms have been 'delivered' relatively fast to many parts of the Global South. This 'delivery' has tended to be guided by 'the replication of European political models'.⁶² At the time of independence, these newly formed 'states' therefore:

lacked roots in the recipient societies, particularly where there was no unitary form of rule pre-existing colonial government. The global delivery of Weberian systems was not accompanied by the development of the economic, political, social and cultural structures and capacities that had provided the basis and framework for an efficiently functioning political order in the course of the evolution of the state in European history. ... An identity as 'citizens' and the 'idea of the state' does not meet with much cultural resonance within these societies, as people are relatively disconnected from the state, neither expecting much from state institutions nor willing to fulfill obligations towards the state (and often with little knowledge about what they can rightfully expect from state bodies, and what the state can rightfully expect from them).⁶³

Hence interveners have often failed to understand what really constitutes 'political order' in regions of fragility. This is also reflected in the experience of recent attempts to transpose the 'ideal' of the European nation-state to the South. To understand true 'political order' in such regions, therefore, Boege *et al.* recommend moving beyond the narrow 'state-centric' discourse to understand the importance of 'legitimacy' and hybrid political order.⁶⁴

Just as Dupree noted in 1973, Kevin Clements in 2009 recognized the essential elements of indigenous or tribal society whereby:

Most of the customary sources of legitimacy are based on norms of trust and reciprocity. The core constitutive values that lie at the heart of traditional legitimacy are the values that enable kin groups, tribes and communities to

61 S. Lister, above note 50, pp. 15–16.

62 V. Boege *et al.*, above note 18, p. 6.

63 *Ibid.*

64 *Ibid.*, pp. 6–13.

exist, satisfy basic human needs and survive through time. Traditional legitimacy rests on complex patterns of power, responsibility and obligation, which enable social groups to exist and co-exist.⁶⁵

The link between 'legitimacy' and 'capacity'

A reason for the West's failure in assisting former colonial states since independence lies in an underestimation of the inextricable link between capacity and legitimacy. Since independence, many such states have had difficulty in establishing their legitimacy and effectiveness.⁶⁶ Clements says that the same problem exists with fragile states, and defines legitimacy as 'a complex set of beliefs, values and institutions (endogenous and exogenous) about the social compact governing state–society relations'.⁶⁷ He asserts that legitimacy:

helps generate social and political trust and predictability; public acceptance of dominant power relations and an awareness of reciprocated rights and responsibilities. If these are not present the possibility of state systems being able to act effectively, or claim legitimacy, is very slight indeed.⁶⁸

Clements cites as a possible explanation for the underestimation of the link between capacity and legitimacy the fact that concepts of legitimacy most often invoked by donors are 'almost exclusively seen in Western enlightenment terms and as some variant of the Weberian ideal type of rational-legal legitimacy'.⁶⁹ Consequently, such analyses focus solely on 'process and performance' legitimacy or that of institutional sources of 'rational-legal types of legitimacy (e.g. security of the state, rule of law, provision of public goods etc.)'. Very little attention is paid to traditional community and social institutions, nor to the 'interactions' between the 'two different sources of legitimacy, namely those located within the state realm and those located within the social and community realms'.⁷⁰

Clements stresses that 'rational-legal legitimacy ... as found in western OECD states is only one type of legitimacy in fragile states'. Donors, he says, 'will have to engage with other types of legitimacy if they want to help build effective, resilient and legitimate states in fragile situations'.⁷¹

65 Kevin P. Clements, 'Note on building effective, legitimate and resilient state institutions', Headline Seminar on Deteriorating Governance, presented at the World Bank, Washington DC, April 2009, p. 4, available at: http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTLICUS/Resources/511777-1224016350914/5474500-1257529177557/Notes_Clements_Institution_Building_HS_Apr8_09.pdf (last visited 25 January 2011).

66 Paul Collier analyses these factors in *The Bottom Billion*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2008.

67 K. P. Clements, above note 65, p. 1.

68 *Ibid.*

69 *Ibid.*, p. 2.

70 *Ibid.*, p. 3.

71 *Ibid.* Clements indicates that the argument in his paper is based on the three 'ideal types of legitimacy' as espoused by Max Weber, i.e. 'legitimacy based on (1) Rational grounds – "resting on a belief in the "legality" of patterns of normative rules and the right of those elevated to authority under such rules to issue commands (legal authority). (2) Traditional grounds – resting on an established belief in the sanctity of immemorial traditions and the legitimacy of the status of those exercising authority under

The failure by intervenors to distinguish ‘limited access’ from ‘open access’ orders

North *et al.* suggest that different dynamics within states (as regards political and economic opportunities) can be characterized as either ‘limited access orders’ or ‘open access orders’.⁷² In the latter, governments structure access to political and economic opportunities competitively via markets, merit, and elections. In the former, access to political and economic opportunities is limited to elites who are apparently dissuaded from fighting one another because they are better off ‘participating in a patrimonial network than by challenging the authorities violently’.⁷³

The mistake of the international community (in Afghanistan) has been a failure to distinguish between ‘limited’ and ‘open access’ orders. This, according to North *et al.*, has led to a failure of development policies:

because they try to transplant elements of the open access order – such as competition, markets, and democracy – directly into limited access orders. These reforms threaten the rent-creation that holds the society together and in many cases challenge the very logic on which the society is organized. Not surprisingly, the elite and many non-elite resist, sabotage, or subvert such reforms in limited access societies that are not ready for them.⁷⁴

In other words, Afghanistan continues to embody a system based more on kinship and patronage, such as a tribal people relate to, than on a rational-legal system, which is found in a Weberian state. The problem is that intervenors have proceeded to intervene on the basis that a rational-legal type of political order system can exist in a tribal society that has hitherto functioned on the basis of patronage and ‘traditional’ authority.

Sometimes there is an assumption by intervenors/donors ‘that there is some natural trajectory whereby local “traditional” sources of legitimacy evolve in the direction of a rational-legal political order’.⁷⁵ There is also the danger of relying

them (traditional authority); or finally (3) Charismatic grounds – resting on devotion to the specific and exceptional sanctity, heroism and exemplary character of an individual person, and of the normative patterns or order revealed or ordained by him (charismatic authority)”. *Ibid.*, p. 3, note 5, quoting M. Weber, above note 12, p. 46. Clements explains how Weber has thus ‘firmly linked the question of legitimacy to specific modes of production, particular types of decision-making and law-making processes and wider theories of social change’ (*ibid.*).

72 Douglass C. North, John Joseph Wallis, Steven B. Webb, and Barry R. Weingast, ‘Limited access orders in the developing world: a new approach to the problem of development’, The World Bank, Policy Research Working Paper No. 4359, Washington DC, 2007, available at: http://www-wds.worldbank.org/servlet/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2007/09/19/000158349_20070919115851/Rendered/PDF/WPS4359.pdf (last visited 8 February 2011).

73 A. Wennmann, above note 14, p. 26.

74 D. C. North *et al.* above note 72, p. 5.

75 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), *The State’s Legitimacy in Fragile Situations: Unpacking Complexity*, Conflict and Fragility Series, OECD, Paris, 2010, p. 54.

on ‘local “champions” of a rational-legal approach to reform’ in advancing a Western state model, whereas engaging with a wider range of stakeholders might be more realistic.⁷⁶

Since 2001 the West has engaged in Afghanistan mostly with a ‘patrimonial network’ limited to the elites of the Northern Alliance strongmen (with Karzai as the Pashtun figurehead). However, this key elite has failed to build a relationship with a broader constituency – particularly the majority Pashtun population – by providing protection, welfare, jobs, and justice systems. The Taliban has therefore filled the vacuum, providing jobs and justice, especially in the south, where the Pashtun majority have felt alienated.

The above encapsulates the problem described by Dr Ken Menkhaus, whereby the objectives of the international community – in building a strong state – can often be at odds with that of the local governing elite, whom the international community is essentially ‘propping up’ (in the fragile states concerned).⁷⁷ For this elite, continuing instability equates to continued funding (in the case of Afghanistan, for so-called ‘Taliban reconciliation schemes’, building up the Afghan National Army, aid money, and so forth).

The weakness of global actors in local situations

Much of the problem for intervenors (or ‘global actors’) is that, despite often having advantages in terms of resources, they still find themselves outmanoeuvred by local counterparts. Often this has to do with the fact that policy is decided far away in the intervenors’ capital city, and by the time it reaches the personnel representing them in base camp (or ‘the bush’) that policy bears little resemblance to realities on the ground: ‘The personnel in the metropolitan headquarters or in the base camp do not possess knowledge of local power structures and as a result perceive the space of the intervention as being void of any power structures’.⁷⁸

Kipping has compared the 1980s intervention in Afghanistan by the USSR with that of the present day. He concludes that – like the USSR then – the West is now further ‘militarizing’ its intervention in response to a failure that is characterized by an inability to project the state beyond major urban centres into rural areas.⁷⁹

76 *Ibid.*

77 K. Menkhaus, above note 2.

78 Klaus Schlichte and Alex Veit, *Coupled Arenas: Why State-building is so Difficult*, Junior Research Group ‘Micropolitics for Armed Groups’, Humboldt University, Berlin, Working Papers Micropolitics No. 3, 2007, p. 26.

79 M. Kipping, above note 1.

The link between a ‘legitimacy deficit’ and deteriorating governance

A major problem with externally imposed state-building projects is a failure to understand the local context and hence what constitutes legitimacy locally. Accordingly:

Unless there is a close connection to deep sources of individual and collective (kin, clan, community) identities and belonging; externally imposed or supported systems will never generate that ‘taken for granted’ trust and legitimacy that exists between state and people in the West.⁸⁰

The result is a breakdown in relationships and – in fragile societies – deteriorating governance. The salient indicators of deteriorating governance include abuse of power, declining security, corruption, exclusion, and failure to serve the public. Clements has identified further indicators of deteriorating governance as including:

- a) polarization between endogenous customary/traditional institutions and actors and exogenous imposed/introduced institutions/actors with regard to the reach and significance of the state;
- b) reliance by political leaders on external sources of legitimacy (aid, development organizations, neighbouring states, etc.) rather than indigenous sources of legitimacy;
- c) disagreement (along customary/non-customary lines) about accepted rules for decision-making, e.g. when community actors rather than state actors deliver welfare and education services more effectively than the state, or when customary leaders invoke traditional beliefs to invoke concepts of public/community good versus state predation;
- d) when external actors withdraw their legitimization of states or regimes;
- e) when religious leaders stand in opposition to states and mobilize the faithful to oppose the state;
- f) when there is open competition over which ‘legal system’ should take precedence, e.g. in relation to endogenous/exogenous settlement of ‘land disputes’;
- g) when state power is challenged and lacks the legitimacy to govern by peaceful means;
- h) when taxes are low or non-existent and states rely on ‘unearned income’ such as oil, diamonds, aid, logging, customs duties.⁸¹

Many of the above characteristics (or indicators) of deteriorating governance are currently found in Afghanistan.

Some academics, referring to Somalia, argue in favour of a ‘third way’ of ‘ordered anarchy’ beyond the centre. Their view is that external actors should focus

80 K. P. Clements, above note 65, p. 3.

81 *Ibid.*, pp. 4–5.

only on basic functions – for example, minimum security and protection of trade routes – while aid should be sent directly to the regions on the basis of institutionalized relations with warlords and of central government acting as mediator.⁸² However, such an approach possibly overlooks the complexity of patterns of legitimacy at the local level. For, in Afghanistan, warlords are often not necessarily historically legitimate – particularly in the south and east – even though external proxies have changed power patterns over the past decades, endowing such strongmen with ‘force’.

There is a challenge for intervenors in understanding what constitutes traditional/customary legitimacy in fragile situations, because these elements are in constant flux and must be continuously reinterpreted to suit local conditions: ‘sources of traditional legitimacy matter a lot in fragile situations and external actors have to work with their advocates to the widest possible extent in order to promote progressive state formation, stable peace and development’.⁸³ Given this difficulty, the design of intervention strategies ‘capable of generating higher levels of political legitimacy in such circumstances’ can be extremely challenging. Additionally there is often confusion about differing types of legitimacy, including which types reside with the state as legislative, executive, and judicial institutions, which lie with governments or regimes, and which lie with communities and social institutions. A particular problem is knowing the internal dynamics of these various arenas. Hence, more research is needed.

Clements focuses on the interaction between state and non-state actors who enjoy ‘grounded legitimacy’, that is, the interaction that is rooted in ‘frameworks of customary tradition and values, from which people derive their social meaning’.⁸⁴ One could even call this ‘customary governance’. This, he says, would surprise Weber today because, although the introduction of Western values changed ‘popular understandings of culture and custom’, it did not manage to destroy most of the central ‘integrative elements’. As such,

people living in societies that have strong indigenous cultures have a choice of utilizing customary provisions and/or relying on state provisions. If the state is unwilling or unable to provide any meaningful security or other public goods, there is a strong willingness to resort to customary sources.⁸⁵

The Taliban have – since 2001 – recognized this and filled the vacuum left by the international community and the Karzai government with a parallel

82 Marina Ottaway and Anatol Lieven, *Rebuilding Afghanistan: Fantasy versus Reality*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Policy Brief No. 12, 2002, available at: <http://carnegieendowment.org/publications/index.cfm?fa=view&id=883> (last visited 8 February 2011).

83 K. P. Clements, above note 65, p. 3.

84 *Ibid.*, p. 4.

85 *Ibid.*

administration system in many provinces, including shadow governors and justice systems.⁸⁶

Ways forward

The need to reconceptualize thinking and accept alternative (or ‘customary’) governance mechanisms

Over recent decades the discourse on state fragility and the state-building policies allied to it have tended towards a replication of the Western-style Weberian/Westphalian state, despite the fact that this form of statehood barely exists outside the world of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). In recognition of this problem some thinkers are advocating reflection on the concept of a ‘post-modern nation-state’ order.

In Afghanistan, for example, intervenors would need to take greater account of traditional legitimacy:

It is clear however, that legitimacy needs much more systemic attention in its own right and should be placed at the heart of the discourse on state effectiveness. States can only govern authoritatively and with minimal coercion if their citizens/peoples accord them legitimacy.⁸⁷

The corollary of traditional legitimacy is the need to recognize and work with ‘hybridized governance mechanisms’, also sometimes referred to as ‘customary governance’ or ‘mediated states’. For example, in writing about Somalia, Menkhaus says:

The government relies on partnership (or at least co-existence) with a diverse range of local intermediaries and rival sources of authority to provide core functions of public security, justice, and conflict management ... Mediated states are intrinsically messy, contradictory, illiberal, and [involve] constantly re-negotiated deals – not ideal choices for governments but often the best of bad options for weak states.⁸⁸

The concept of ‘hybrid political order’ is gaining traction, with advocates saying that this opens up new options for conflict prevention and development, as well as for new types of state-building. It also offers an alternative interpretation of governance in fragile states, case examples of the limitations of externally led state-building, and ultimately a reinterpretation of whether ‘state fragility’

86 Ken Guest, RAM Seeger, and Lucy Morgan Edwards, ‘The tribal path: commanding the prime battle space: a more hopeful strategy for Afghanistan’, in *Small Wars Journal*, March 2010, available at: <http://www.the-beacon.info/images/Tribal%20path%20May%202027.pdf> (last visited 11 January 2011).

87 K. P. Clements, above note 65, p. 1.

88 K. Menkhaus, above note 2, pp. 74–106.

and ‘patronage’ systems (as opposed to rational-legal systems) are such a bad thing.⁸⁹

The idea of understanding and working with a ‘hybrid political order’ is discussed further in the following sections, in particular its potential as a means of improving ‘state effectiveness’.

The need to understand the ‘context’ of ‘customary governance’ in fragile states in order to improve state effectiveness

Donors and intervenors need to understand better the ‘context’ of fragile societies/states before engaging with them. A first step is to recognize that such places often exhibit features whereby:

diverse and competing claims to power and logics of order co-exist, overlap and intertwine, namely the logic of the ‘formal’ state, of traditional ‘informal’ societal order, and of globalisation and associated social fragmentation ... In such an environment, the ‘state’ does not have a privileged position as the political framework that provides security, welfare and representation; it has to share authority, legitimacy and capacity with other structures.⁹⁰

When such customary arrangements work well (be they economic, social, or political), they can be an effective means of delivering consensus, security, representation, and welfare to people. In many of the more remote regions of Afghanistan, for example, these customary governance arrangements are the only source of such benefits.

Because such arrangements (or customary governance) can play a positive role in expanding the reach, power, and effectiveness of the state, it makes sense for intervenors not to dismiss them as ‘too complex’ to work with, or as remnants of an outmoded system of governance to be ignored. Unfortunately, this has tended to be the case in Afghanistan since 2001. Thus elements of these customary ‘systems’ have sometimes stood in opposition to the post-9/11 state-building project, while the Taliban – who have understood their relevance – have made more use of them, ultimately to their strategic advantage.⁹¹

Bridging formal and informal institutions

In other words, rather than simply being ordered along the Weberian model, we need to recognize the hybridity of political order that often exists in fragile societies and post-colonial states. Wennmann, in advocating a bottom-up approach to state-building, says that ‘hybrid political orders’, ‘mediated states’, and ‘pockets of

89 V. Boege *et al.*, above note 18.

90 *Ibid.*, p. 10.

91 K. Guest, RAM Seeger and L. Morgan Edwards, above note 86.

authority' in fragile states should be leveraged by development assistance agencies because:

They are forms of authority that often go unrecognised but show that something can work in fragile states, and that they follow a particular political or economic logic or order that, alas, does not always coincide with Western perceptions of the way a state or society should work. There may be much to gain for development policy from reaching out to these existing governance arrangements and recognising them as a policy opportunity. Rather than building parallel state structures that marginalise functioning structures already delivering protection, welfare and justice to local populations, donors should explore the implications of integrating them into a long-term transition process. The starting-point for statebuilding should, therefore, revolve around what *is* there rather than what *should be* or *is not* there; hence emphasising the need for assessments of strengths rather than weaknesses.⁹²

There is also a need to see the legitimacy accorded to traditional authorities and charismatic leaders as a resource underpinning contributions to governance and law and order at local level, and 'as a potential resource to be drawn upon by the state system through greater interaction and engagement with local communities and their leaders'.⁹³ There is a need for intervenors to use 'bridging institutions' in order to open up use of this potential resource for purposes of state formation. In Afghanistan, the Tribal Liaison Office has tried to propose ways in which informal and formal systems of governance and justice can be bridged so that the concepts (and benefits) of statehood can be leveraged by local actors (and vice versa).⁹⁴ This work has only lately begun to be appreciated by donors (and intervenors).

The OECD⁹⁵ makes useful recommendations for external actors on how to improve the way they intervene, and in particular on the need not to intervene without a very comprehensive actor/issue analysis. Clements, who is also one of the key OECD working group contributors, adds that there is a need to understand that:

The main problem is not the fragility of state institutions as such, but the lack of constructive linkages between the institutions of the state and society ... Focusing on states alone often results in the external legitimization of internal legitimacy.⁹⁶

92 A. Wennmann, above note 14, p. 27, emphasis in original.

93 See K. P. Clements, above note 65, p. 5.

94 Masood Karokhail and Susanne Schmeidl, 'Integration of traditional structures into the state-building process: lessons from the Tribal Liaison Office in Loya Paktia', in Heinrich Böll Foundation (ed.), *Issue 1: Afghanistan*, Publication Series on Promoting Democracy in Fragile States under Conditions of State Fragility, Berlin, 2006, pp. 59–78, available at: <http://www.tlo-afghanistan.org/sites/default/files/About-TLO/Boell-Afghanistan-en-Integration-of-Traditional-Structures-into-the-State-building-Process.pdf> (last visited 10 January 2011).

95 OECD, above note 75.

96 K. P. Clements, above note 65, p. 5.

Intervenors must also understand how traditional governance and charismatic movements assert themselves (for example, in the face of social and economic change) and how customary institutions interact with state institutions (and other social agencies) to generate or hinder positive change that includes and reaps benefits for marginalized societal groups.

Multilateral development agencies, too, must change their attitude to face-to-face relations and value them as much as they have previously valued bureaucratic forms of organization. Alongside this they must change their attitude to 'time-frames' because '[d]eveloping knowledge and understanding of the local everyday life of the people on the ground requires a long-term presence. Trust, built on personal relationships, might be more important than bureaucratic accountability procedures'.⁹⁷ There is a need to take into account

traditional forms of accountability that reach beyond conventional donor understandings of accountability. Notions of moral obligation and inter-personal accountability in the context of kin and other customary relations can be drawn upon; they are not merely sources of clientelism and corruption (which is the conventional donor perspective), but they can also be sources of social welfare and security.⁹⁸

Suggestions for further research

The OECD has recognized these issues and is trying to push donors to do the same. Its International Network on Conflict and Fragility (INCAF) has a remit to improve understanding of state-building processes. A recent report by this group explains why the promotion of 'rational-legal' political institutions as a means of strengthening state capacity and legitimacy in fragile environments has largely failed. The report makes a variety of recommendations, including the importance of understanding 'country context' rather than 'the promotion of a particular donor-led agenda' as a starting point for intervenors.⁹⁹

However, the OECD report sometimes fails to distinguish between legitimate sources of local governance and governance 'imposed' by strongmen who have asserted themselves as a result of external patronage over the past three decades and – since 2001 – through the international community's failure to exclude known rights abusers from political office. In this sense, the international community has been complicit in allowing a crisis of impunity to develop in Afghanistan that will be hard to reverse, given the increasingly 'globalized' relationships (such as mafia linked with illegal activities) and sources of income enjoyed by the strongmen.¹⁰⁰

97 *Ibid.*, p. 6.

98 *Ibid.*, p. 7.

99 OECD, above note 75.

100 Alex de Waal, 'Dollarised', in *London Review of Books*, Vol. 32, No. 12, 24 June 2010.

Further research would be useful to clarify, for example, how traditional systems of integrity, transparency, and accountability work; how hybrid political orders function at various levels (e.g. province, district); how legitimacy at this level is generated; and where the limits of traditional and charismatic legitimacy lie with respect to youth, urbanization, shadow economies, and organized crime. It would also be useful to find out whether traditional legitimacy can meet the aspirations of young people; how communities arrive at consensus over who is a legitimate or charismatic leader; and how they ensure that such leaders play a positive role in development, governance, community problem-solving, disputes, and so forth. Furthermore, there is the question of how electoral processes impact on the legitimacy of leaders and how such processes relate to the legitimacy of such charismatic and traditional leaders.¹⁰¹

The overall conclusion of the OECD report is that intervenors must focus on ‘legitimacy’ instead of on capacity development and institution-building – as they have done in Afghanistan since 2001. Its individual conclusions reflect ways of limiting the ‘indicators of deteriorating governance’ identified earlier:

Legitimacy matters because it transforms power into authority, allowing rule by non-coercive means. In fragile situations, a lack of legitimacy undermines constructive engagement between state and society, which weakens state capacity and thus contributes to fragility. Multiple sources of legitimacy often compete and conflict. Conflicts between external sources of legitimacy and internal sources contribute to fragility. Large variations in perceptions of legitimacy between different areas and among different communities confront governments (and donors) with different judgements about when to negotiate with and accommodate competing, non-state actors and when to ignore or attempt to suppress them. Conflicts between pre-existing customary practice, and ‘introduced’ laws and institutions can also undermine the legitimacy of public institutions. Challenges from leaders with authority that derives from charismatic legitimacy pose a threat to those whose authority is based on both rational-legal and ‘traditional’ sources of legitimacy.

All of this contributes to fragility because it impedes constructive relations between state and society, and leaves the state unable to impose the ultimate rules of the game, and to provide a shared social and cultural framework within which people think and act.¹⁰²

Ultimately the OECD recommends that: ‘Donors working in fragile situations need to invest far more effort in gaining a detailed, empirical understanding of local sources of legitimacy – of both state and non-state actors and institutions – and in monitoring the impact of their own interventions’.¹⁰³

101 K. P. Clements, above note 65.

102 OECD, above note 75, p. 59.

103 *Ibid.*

Conclusion

Since 2001, the Afghan example has taught intervenors the limits of the Weberian state model in stabilizing a fragile, tribal society that never had a strong centre. Even within that context, however, Western intervenors failed to address salient issues that have ultimately affected the legitimacy (as seen by Afghans) of their state. These included what many Afghans perceived to be the unjust political settlement in Bonn, the failure of the ‘peace versus justice’ strategy (and the concomitant inclusion within the government of an ‘elite’ cadre of strongmen whom many Afghans associated with rights abuses), a failure to deliver services and justice locally, and a military strategy that has appeared to operate in complete detachment from the political situation.

There has also been widespread resistance by intervenors to the need for a longer-term perspective and for a greater attempt to understand and to work with the Afghan context. One example thereof is continued (and sometimes deliberate) conflation of the term ‘warlord’ with ‘tribal’ or ‘tribal legitimacy’ and general dismissal of the idea of engaging with tribal contexts as ‘too complex’. There may be political reasons for this – for example, the desire for ‘quick-fix’ solutions to demonstrate ‘success’ to the domestic electoral audience of the intervening state.

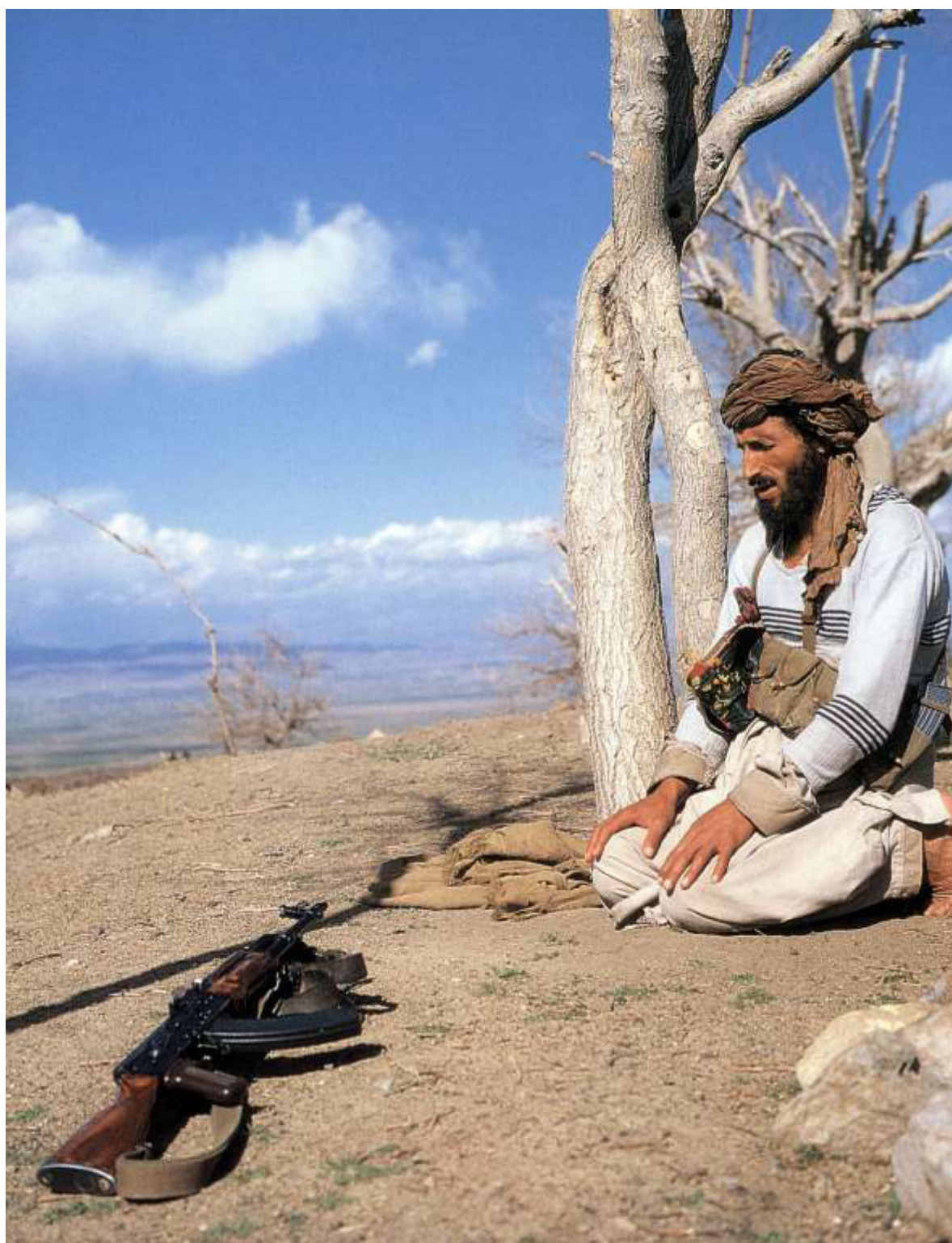
Yet, as the work by several authors and the OECD shows, there is clearly a need for intervenors (whether military, development, or donors) to reconfigure their objectives for – and their approach to – state-building in fragile contexts such as Afghanistan. A longer time-frame and greater understanding of complex local contexts will be needed. Only then might it be possible to say whether Afghanistan is indeed ‘a case showing the limits’ or not. For, as Chesterman *et al.* say:

States cannot be made to work from the outside. International assistance may be necessary but it is never sufficient to establish institutions that are legitimate and sustainable ... international action should be seen first and foremost as facilitating local processes, providing resources and creating the space for local actors to start a conversation that will define and consolidate their polity by mediating their vision of a good life into responsive, robust and resilient institutions.¹⁰⁴

104 Simon Chesterman, Michael Ignatieff, and Ramesh Thakur (eds), *Making States Work: State Failure and the Crisis of Governance*, United Nations University Press, Tokyo, p. 384.

A BETTER PATH TO PEACE

A more optimistic solution for Afghanistan



Compiled and written by Ken Guest, 'RAM' Seeger and Lucy Morgan Edwards

17 November 2012

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Ken Guest is a former Royal Marine and photo-journalist. He has recently been working in Kabul and has now been closely involved with Afghanistan for 32 years. During its struggle against the Soviets he probably spent more time inside Afghanistan, living and working with the Mujahedin, than any other Western witness to that conflict. As a result of that past, he has a first hand knowledge of not just how the ordinary Afghan thinks, but how the Taliban and Al Qaeda think and act. Ken has written, contributed to and illustrated several books and feature articles, eg *Flashpoint !* (Brassy's) and *British Battles* (Harper Collins) and most recently at the request of the ICRC 'The dynamic interplay between Islam and Conflict in Afghanistan' (International Review of the Red Cross, Vol. 82, No. 880, Dec 2010).

'**RAM**' **Seeger** is a former Royal Marine who left the Corps in 1976 after commanding the Special Boat Service. He won a Military Cross with 40 Commando during the Borneo confrontation, was an instructor at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, and attended the Army staff college at Camberley. After leaving the Corps he set up a Special Force for the Sultan of Oman and then became a security consultant. During the early 1980s he made a number of trips into occupied Afghanistan to give training and help to the Mujahedin. Most of these were to the Panshir valley for **Ahmad Shah Massoud**. After this he did an MA degree in War Studies at King's College London. In 2001 he lobbied for Western support of **Abdul Haq**, along with Ken Guest and another friend and colleague – Sir John Gunston.

Lucy Morgan Edwards is a researcher in politics and regional studies at the University of Exeter. She first worked in Afghanistan during the Taliban period running urban development projects for UNCHS in Kandahar and Herat. The 'community forum' aspect of these programmes later became known as the National Solidarity Programme. After spending five years in Afghanistan as an election monitor, researcher on transitional justice for the International Crisis Group and correspondent for the *Economist*, she was Political Advisor to the EU Ambassador (with responsibility for security sector reform, narcotics and civil military relations). She was then 'country expert' to the EU Chief Election Observer on the 2005 Parliamentary elections. She has written a book on her experiences of the current intervention whose central theme is an investigation of the internal plan for toppling the Taliban advocated by famed resistance Commander, **Abdul Haq**, using the ex King Zahir Shah as a rallying point.

THE WRITING OF THIS PAPER

The authors of this paper have been watching the unfolding tragedy of these last eleven years with consternation and huge sadness. We have all had practical outside the compound experience of Afghanistan ie we have walked, talked, worked and in Ken Guest's case, fought with ordinary Afghans over prolonged periods of time and as a consequence have much affection and great respect for the Afghan people. We also have profound admiration for the courage and fighting skills of the ISAF soldiers and deplore what is likely to become a waste of young men's lives. Ken and RAM as former soldiers feel this especially.

Ken did **34 trips** into occupied Afghanistan during the Afghan-Soviet war, saw ISI agents at work in the 'Jihad theme park' at Ja Wa, Paktia, watched their grooming of **Jalaluddin Haqqani** and Haqqani's development from a resistance fighter to Jihadist leader, and most unusually perhaps, met and discussed religion with **Osama bin Laden** and witnessed his panicky reactions in a combat situation. None of us, however, have had the time or secretarial back up to produce a fully researched and argued academic study. **We have therefore deliberately kept our paper short and to the point.** We have added some notes at the end by way of elaboration, and can add to these if required.

A BETTER PATH TO PEACE

A more optimistic solution for Afghanistan

(17 November 2012)

“We have bought into a policy which will fail. If we are honest, everyone is simply crossing fingers and hoping for the best. In so doing we have continued a pattern of allowing ourselves to be pushed about by events, rather than being active and creative in seeking a solution that would and will be acceptable to all Afghans save the few who have a stake in the continuation of a corrupt and discredited government. The consequences of continuing down this path will be severe, damaging and immediately apparent. As matters stand we are simply, through ennui fatigue or laziness, consciously allowing Afghanistan to drift.”

Frank Ledwidge – author of ‘Losing Small Wars – British Military Failure in Iraq and Afghanistan’(1)

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this paper is to stress the dangers and consequences of negotiating with the Taliban, and to present an alternative way forward.

Negotiation with the Taliban will not work – at least not in the way we want or expect – and the consequences – to quote Frank Ledwidge above – *will be severe, damaging and immediately apparent*. Negotiation with the Taliban will be orchestrated by the ISI, will result in a Jihadist controlled government and is not the right path to follow. We are wrong to pin our hopes to it.

An equally bad course of action is to continue on the present path. After eleven years of war, heavy costs and failure this is unlikely to suddenly succeed. It too will end with a Jihadist controlled government. Our only hope is that the government we supported and funded, and its large ethnically unbalanced army, will last long enough after our departure for us to claim that this was not our fault.

Given these two very unsatisfactory options we should instead adopt a very different path. Rather than negotiating with the Taliban, we should be thinking in terms of negotiating with the ordinary people of Afghanistan and giving them the space to run their affairs in the way that best suits them. This could be done through devolved government and empowerment of the tribes – a course of action that believers in the centralised Western template will, no doubt, regard as a retrograde and ill-starred step, and one requiring far too much time and effort to implement at this late stage.

However, as we hope to show, given the track record and likely outcomes of the other two alternatives, our third option, although radical, is not as inapt or as impractical as it might at first appear.

WHERE WE WENT WRONG

To fully appreciate the dangers we are warning against and our proposals for devolved government, we need to understand and accept where we went wrong in the past. In summary only, as the intention of this paper is not to conduct a post-mortem on past failures, our main mistakes were as follows.

- We declined the opportunity for a quick and acceptable solution by not backing Abdul Haq and instead selecting Hamid Karzai. Haq was an honest, independent and much respected Pushtun war leader. He bridged the ethnic divides, had reached agreement with Ahmad Shah Massoud and could have overthrown the Taliban with only modest help from the West. (2)
- We fought the wrong war – Kinetic instead of Perceptual. (3)
- We misjudged the role and influence of Al Qaeda and spent too much time and effort on reducing this. (4)
- We tied our credibility to a Government widely perceived to be corrupt and illegitimate – a major handicap and early mistake.
- We failed to play the Tribal card – see comments later in this paper.
- We failed to play the Islamic card. The Taliban should have been challenged on Islam. They should have been shown to have violated Islamic principles and Pushtunwali. (5)(6)
- We tried to impose a Western template (big government, big army etc) on a mainly rural, conservative, poor and primitive society. We failed to realise that 'it was all about local' and failed to give the people what they wanted. Instead we tried to give them what we thought they ought to have,
- Finally we allowed Pakistan to support and control the Taliban - which not only helped the Taliban to conduct an insurgency, but is one of the main reasons why negotiating with the Taliban is not a good option.

THE DANGERS OF NEGOTIATING WITH THE TALIBAN

In our desire for an early exit, we are convincing ourselves that there is a hawk/dove divide within the Taliban leadership and that we can negotiate an acceptable solution with the more reasonable and practical of the Taliban leaders (See Michael Semple interview and RUSI paper)(7)

We do not think this is possible for three reasons.

Firstly, because if there is any divide within the Taliban, it is between the local Afghan Taliban (who don't like foreign soldiers on their land, have lots of relatives to avenge, want law, order and justice, and see the Government as illegal and corrupt) and the Pakistani influenced Jihadist Taliban who form the bulk of the leadership and are fighting for mainly ideological reasons, and it is this latter group that we will be forced to deal with.

Secondly, because as far as this Jihadist element is concerned, they are winning or have won the war, so any negotiation is simply a discussion of surrender terms and their path to power.

And thirdly, because the ISI (Pakistan's Inter-Service Intelligence), who support and control them, will try indirectly to orchestrate the negotiations and ensure that any agreed post conflict Government is firmly under the control of the Jihadist element.

The ISI want (and need) control of Afghanistan and see the Jihadist Taliban as the best means of achieving this. They see the Jihadist Taliban as their proxies (they have, after all, supported and controlled them from the outset) and if the Jihadist Taliban are in a position to control an Afghan Government, so too will be the ISI.

The ISI see control as necessary for a growing number of reasons - strategic depth, fear of Indian encirclement and to make trouble against her, to restrain Baluchi and Pakistani Pushtun aspirations for independence in the Tribal Areas, to preserve the Durand line, to gain regional influence and last but not least for financial gain – from Afghan natural resources (copper, rare earth etc), trade (and traffic into and through Afghanistan), oil and gas from the Central Asian Republics and the flow of copper out of Afghanistan into China.

A strong, stable and independent Afghanistan is not perceived by Pakistan to be in Pakistan's interest, so the ISI are unlikely to waste the opportunity of ensuring that this does not happen. To this end they will try to ensure that the 'reasonable and practical' negotiators that the West appear to be choosing are in fact chosen by the ISI, that any 'negotiated settlement' is framed by the ISI, that the West are excluded from the real horse trading, and that the West can believe they have achieved 'exit with honour' – military spin speak for lose without loss of face.

The ISI will be aiming for three things –

- Recognition of those they want to be recognised.
- Collusion by the West in achieving this (so it will become near impossible for them to back out of).
- The morphing from a pariah Jihadist organisation (mistakenly seen in the West as Islamic) into a UN recognised Government.

On past and present showing they are likely to achieve all three of these aims. While they know what they are doing, have clear objectives and will field their best team, we have flexible objectives, uncertain hopes, and if the present Afghan government has any input, are liable to field a failed cabal of former warlords and gangsters propped up by our funding.

The Jihadist Taliban, for their part, are likely to accept their proxy role, because, contrary to popular thinking, they have no supreme leader or master plan of their own (Mullah Omar is a Pakistani installed figurehead) and because they have always done what Pakistan directed (he who pays the fiddler, calls the tune). Many of them are also Pakistanis, live in the Tribal Areas and/or were brought up in Pakistan. (8)

To achieve their ends both groups – the ISI and the Jihadists, will be prepared to accept any government dressed up to be acceptable to the West providing they can directly or indirectly control it.

Both see control as their main aim and they will happily cede short term tactical gains for this ultimate power. They will be quite happy not to be seen to be in control but will of course want international recognition of the Government that they are in.

Although this will be against their interests and wishes, it is unlikely that the Northern Alliance, or any other non-Pushtun or anti-Pakistani groups, will be able to do anything about it. With a Jihadist controlled but UN/Western recognized government in power (and all the financial and military backing that this will entail) it will be very difficult for them to protest without finding themselves suddenly cast in the role of the bad guys. This apart, as soon as they see the way the wind is blowing, actors like Abdul Rashid Dostum will change sides and all opposition will fade away.

THE LIKELY CONSEQUENCES

Assuming our aim is not just to get out as quickly as we can, but to achieve the best possible settlement under the circumstances, all of the above is not good news.

Apart from the fact that it will not be in the best interests of the Afghan people, a Jihadist controlled Government will be widely propagated and perceived as defeat for the West. We will lose much face and the worldwide spread of Jihadism will be much encouraged. This is particularly likely in Pakistan, where their growing Jihadist movement may additionally (and ironically) be able to gain strategic depth from the use of safe havens and bases inside Afghanistan. (9)

The ISI, in their vanity, think this will not happen and believe they can control Jihadism and use it for their own purposes as a 'smart' weapon – to further Pakistan's frontier and regional policies (as already explained) and as a threat to others to leave Pakistan alone. There is a real danger however that they cannot. Once the genie is out of the bottle, it is very hard to force it back in again. (10)(11)

If the ISI are proved wrong, this growing and out of control force of Jihadism will threaten the Pakistan state, spread to other countries, destabilise the region, force interference from China, India and Iran and have long term implications for the security of the West. If Pakistan's nuclear assets come under Jihadist control, there is the danger of nuclear leakage or misuse. (12)(13)(14)

The end result therefore will be that we will have fought and paid for an Afghan war, only to have recognised and allowed the very things that we went to war to prevent. (15)

MORE OF THE SAME

Given our past mistakes and need soon to withdraw from Afghanistan, the continuation of current policies is not a serious option. If we, the West, like the Russians before us (with similar aims and policies) are unable to defeat an Afghan insurgency, it is highly unlikely that Karzai's government and army (modelled on ours) will be any more successful. Nor are they likely to last any longer after our departure than Najibullah's

did after the Russians ended their funding. The increasing number of green on blue killings – an attempt to make amends and protect families against reprisals - is a sure sign of declining confidence. As stated earlier the end result will be the same as negotiating with the Taliban – a Jihadist controlled government.

A BETTER PATH

Contrary to common perceptions, the choice is not between more of the same - ie continuing war and corrupt government, and negotiation with the Jihadist Taliban. It should still be possible, by engaging with the Afghan majority, to give it what it has always wanted – no war and no return of the Jihadist Taliban. Jihadist Taliban, it must never be forgotten, is an imported concept that was designed and launched by the ISI in 1993. It is not an Afghan concept and runs against the Afghan nature. The 2001 collapse of Taliban authority was widely welcomed by the vast majority of the population who were fed up with its interference in their daily and very traditional lives.

We maintain that the best way of getting in contact with the ordinary Afghan and marginalising the Taliban is by reducing the power and scope of the central government, establishing semi-autonomous regions and following what we have come to call the Tribal Path. (See our paper ‘The Tribal Path’ dated 9 June 2010)(16)

Regional Government would be more in keeping with Afghanistan’s historical past. It would allow us, without loss of face, to correct past mistakes and be harder for the ISI and Jihadist Taliban to control. Instead of having to infiltrate a single central government, they would have to infiltrate multiple governments many of which would be ethnically different and jealous of their independence. By following the prescriptions advocated in the Tribal Path it should be possible to reduce most of the difficulties and dangers, win over the moderate Afghan Taliban, and bring new hope to the Afghan people. (17)

DIFFICULTIES AND DANGERS OF REGIONAL GOVERNMENT

The difficulties and dangers of Regional Government could be considerable.

For a start the concept is unlikely to be well received by the current Afghan Government who will see it as an unwelcome dilution of power and loss of control.

It might also mean multiplying the central government corruption problems by the number of regions to which power is devolved and lead to inter-factional feuding, civil war and Balkanisation.

These dangers can be minimised, providing:-

- The devolution process is carefully and securely planned.
- The regional division is correctly balanced – this is the essential first step. Get this wrong (as we did with the Durand line) and the concept is under a permanent handicap.

- Regional governments do not mimic the strong central government we are trying to get away from. They too must have a light footprint.
- Suitable regional governors are democratically elected and all decision making and ownership is as transparent and as close to the people as possible. This means devolving power to tribes and local communities and following the principles of the Tribal Path.
- The Afghan Security Forces are restructured, reformed and reduced in size with the use of traditional Tribal Forces as the front line first responders.

HOPE AND OPPORTUNITY

Whilst the difficulties and dangers should not be underestimated, we would argue that they are, at least, no less than those attached to negotiating with the Jihadist Taliban or continuing on our present course, and at best, offer far more hope of achieving a peaceful outcome.

If we can accept them, make a start on devolving power to regions and local communities and reduce the Army to a more manageable and effective size, we will be giving Afghan morale what it badly needs – a highly visible indication of beneficial change.

The need for this is paramount, as it is the only way of capturing the enthusiasm, hope and backing of the Afghan people and ensuring that the expenditure of blood and treasure since 2001 has not been entirely in vain.

PROPOSED REGIONS

The obvious solution of forming regions round the country's main towns leaves much to be desired. Space is as important as population, and Afghanistan is still predominantly rural. Other critical factors are trade routes, security, ethnicity, easy access to the regional capital, and speedy Quick Reaction Force (QRF) access to all corners of the region.

Taking all these factors into account, we feel that the country could be divided into seventeen regions. (See map at end of paper after 'NOTES'.

The population based regions would be **Kabul, Jalalabad, Kandahar, Herat and Mazar**, while other possibilities subject to further and more detailed consideration could be:-

Meaymaneh (Faryab). This area offers alternative routes to Turkmenistan and splits the distance between Mazar and Herat. It will act as a trip wire aiding northern border security. Whilst the northern reach of the Afghanistan ring road is being developed, Taliban activity develops at a faster pace. Significant effort and resources need to be focussed on its completion.

Kunduz. This is Hekmatyar's home ground and the Taliban have been expanding their activity in this region. It therefore needs special attention if it is to be kept under control, not least because the Taliban are beginning to expand their circle of recruitment. This

development represents a serious risk, which, if it becomes wide spread, changes the dynamics of the operational environment in the north.

Badakhshan with its capital in Faizabad. This is a large area with a low population, so is often seen as less important. But it is part of the access route to the north, and includes the Wakhan corridor to China. It also borders with Pakistan and Tajikistan. Poor security here has allowed the Taliban to use the area as a rat run and supply route to Kunduz and other northern regions (18). Although the ground is physically challenging, the Taliban have been able to move through it relatively easily. As they are channelled through high passes, a focused effort by suitably trained and supported forces could cause significant disruption.

Panjshir. As the Tajik heartland, this is a secure area and the purpose of placing a regional centre here would be to reward success and consolidate security. It would serve as a base against Taliban infiltration routes through southern Badakhshan and Northern Nuristan and give support to their regional centres.

Nuristan. This is one of the Gateway provinces, and used by the Taliban as a passage north to Badakhshan and west to Laghman and Kapsia. Nuristan would act as a central buttress mutually supported by Panjshir to the north and Jalalabad to the south.

Khost. This has to be a separate region as border crossing points are cut off from Nangarhar (Jalalabad) and Logar (Ghazni) by high mountains. The area is also the stamping ground of the Haqqani Network, so for this alone merits special attention.

Paktika. This area plugs the gap between Khost and Kandahar. Development of the road from Gardez to Paktika and on to Kalat would enable an outer trip wire route, offering additional protection to the main Kabul-Ghazni-Kandahar highway.

Ghazni. This is an important staging point and security hub, on the highway between Kabul and Kandahar.

Lashkar Gah. A region here would protect part of the main Kandahar-Herat highway and act as a point from which to connect with the Afghan Baluch community. The Baluch are ethnically different from the Pushtun. Baluchistan is also a sensitive issue for the Pakistanis, and more effective Western connection to the Baluch could be used as a pressure point to encourage co-operation by Pakistan.

Farah. A regional hub in Farah would help protect the Kandahar-Herat highway. Subject to regional political needs, it might become the hub for a new border trade and supply route serviced via Iran and their deepwater port of Chah Bahar. In addition to increasing trade benefit, the potential use of Chah Bahar might prove a useful tool for leveraging more effective Pakistani support, as it competes with the new Pakistani deepwater port in Gwadar. It could also impede the transport of drugs across to Iran.

Chaghcharan. This would give a region to the Aimaq people. It would help to secure the central highway trade route and impede Taliban supplies and personnel heading north towards Badghis and Faryab. It also represents a suitable staging post, as it is presently about a one day drive from Herat.

Bamian. By including Bamian, the Hazaras would have their own region. The central highway trade route security would be better serviced as Bamian is about a days drive from Chagcharan. Having both Bamian and Chagcharan would mean the Herat-Kabul drive was broken down into manageable legs, with sizable staging posts and security hubs at the end of each days drive.

Increased use and security of the central highway would provide competition for the Kabul/Kandahar/Herat road ie trade and revenue would follow the most secure route. Local communities would then not only gain from improved security, but lose if they failed to provide it.

THE TRIBAL PATH

The Tribal Path paper we wrote in 2010, advocated four things, all of which are relevant to regional devolution and, if devolution is to be successful, should be incorporated into regional institutions:-

- Bottom up community governance.
- Tribally raised and tribally controlled Tribal Forces.
- The importance of building up trust and allowing the Tribes to lead the way.
- A properly sponsored and authoritative study to find out more about the Tribes and local communities than is currently the case.

Tribal based Community Governance

Local governance should be based on the tribal system because:-

- Tribes and local community structures still matter in Afghanistan. Afghanistan is still a traditional, kinship-based and mainly rural society. If its people are not always as tribal as each other, they are likely at least to be clannish by nature and conservative in outlook. They are likely to have more in common with each other than divides them. They share a common experience and respond in similar ways. Tribes are used by the people (who can expect more certain and reliable support from them than from other organisations), the Central Government (to an extent), and the Taliban (see below).
- For the Afghan, the traditional Jirga, with its open forum assembly, transparency and accountability, is much fairer and more democratic than a Western electoral system which can be misunderstood, difficult for rural Afghans to participate in, and easily manipulated. The system has always worked well in the past, and has shown itself to be trustworthy and sustainable. It was collective and transparent and well suited to the people it managed. There were Jirgas at different levels of society, with every member of the tribe and community being allowed to attend their meetings. Tribesmen received information through their representatives in the Jirga, and everyone was fully aware of decisions made, and allowed to ask their leaders and representatives to justify these. Jirga members were voted in on grounds of capability and included women, often from non-prominent households. (19)

A common criticism is that tribal structures have been weakened by the pre-9/11 Communist, Mujahedin and Taliban regimes, and since then by the assassination of uncooperative leaders by Taliban insurgents. These have certainly damaged the structure but not fatally.

Perhaps the strongest argument for following the tribal path, is the use made of it by the Taliban. Unlike the West or the Afghan Government, the Taliban have taken active (and successful) steps to utilise the tribal dynamic – at first using its support and then replacing it with its own direct influence and control. A policy of tribal empowerment and cooperation would not only give the government a very effective asset, it would deny the same to the Taliban. This is important because **if the Taliban lose the support (20) of the tribes - they will ultimately fail, while if they retain their dominance over this resource, it will be almost impossible to defeat them.**

Tribal Forces

Our Tribal Path proposal for Tribal Forces was more controversial, but only because, quite wrongly, it evoked memories of warlord militias (paid retainers of mafia thugs) or central government militias, which were more of a source of enrichment and prestige to government ministers than a threat to the Taliban. (21)

Properly structured however, Tribal Forces are a cost effective way of securing tribal lands, although they must be controlled by their own tribes-people and tribal leaders, operate in their own areas, and work for the readily perceived benefit of the tribe providing them - eg community defence and the ejection of unwelcome intruders. Local security and stability is now becoming a major issue for ordinary Afghans as they face an increasingly uncertain and turbulent future. Responsible and accountable Tribal Forces who can safeguard tribal space will do much to reduce this concern. (22)

Although regional and central governments should resist the direct control of tribal forces, they must still support them, and provide escalating layers of follow up forces for situations they cannot control or deal with. Working together in this way should allow both sets of forces to develop a sense of interdependence and mutual respect.

We would see the Tribal Forces being structured on traditional tribal lines. These involved three kinds of force – the *Kishakee* who gathered intelligence, the *Lashkar* who were a large grouping called together for defence against a common enemy (usually also an enemy of the country), and best known and most used, the *Arbakai*.

The *Arbakai* were volunteers and respected members of the community. They were embedded in the community, engaged on community tasks, and were answerable to the community. Their main duties were to implement their Jirga's decisions, maintain law and order, and protect the borders and boundaries of the tribe or the community. **Unlike militias they were unpaid and not used for the political or financial interests of individuals.** Moreover, whilst being an *Arbakai* member was considered an honour, belonging to a militia was considered shameful. (23)

Tribal Police

Working alongside the traditional Tribal Forces should be a specially recruited and formally recognised tribal police force. This would function in a way not dissimilar to how tribal police are used in the USA on Native American reservations.

Scouts

Based on the old North West Frontier Scouts, should be a para-military regional organisation recruited from the Tribes, but not tribally owned or part of the Police or Army. They would be controlled by a Political Officer, and would be used to back up local forces, keep quarrelling tribes apart, or punish misdemeanours of tribe against tribe.

Quick Reaction Forces (QRFs)

Efficient, effective and highly mobile QRFs are essential to the concept of escalating layers of Government support for Tribal Forces. Whenever possible these should be heliborne.

Where the QRFs are located is important, as this will affect how quickly they can reach likely trouble spots. Any area they are unable to reach easily will soon be realised by the insurgents and used by them to advantage.

The concept of relentless pursuit is essential and to this end combat tracker teams must be developed with expert human trackers.

Building up Trust and Allowing the Tribes to Lead the Way

Having decided that the Tribal Path is worth following, it is important to understand that even after finding the right people to deal with, it will take time to build up bonds of trust.

And having won the trust and cooperation of the Tribes, the next step is to realise that in order to keep this and use it productively, the Tribes must lead the way in the use of Tribal Forces.

Tribal Forces will work if they are raised and controlled by the Tribes and seen by the tribes as working on their behalf. They will not work if they are merely an extension of government power in tribal disguise.

Need for a Tribal and Local Community Study

An independent and authoritative study is necessary as the tribal situation in Afghanistan is a complicated one. The study would involve not just tribal mapping (which to a large extent has already been done), but establishing the social, economic and historical inter-relationships between the tribes.

RESTRUCTURED STATE SECURITY FORCES

Paralleling the devolvement of power to Regions and local communities, should be a restructuring and reforming of the Afghan State Security Forces. Neither the Army nor the Police are functioning properly and despite optimistic Western forecasts are unlikely to. This should take place at the same time as changes in governance.

A More Sustainable and Acceptable Army

The Army should be renamed as the Afghan Defence Force, reduced in size, and be reorganised into regionally recruited regional regiments. The Army should be of a limited size so that it can be more sustainable, better trained, better paid and more effective. It should wear local style uniforms with the traditional *salwar*. Basing it on the failing model of a large US/ISAF army was a mistake. (24)(25)(26)

Western Officers

Initially at least, the Army could also be partially officered by Westerners – some of whom might be seconded, others of whom might be contracted. A model for this might be the highly competent and successful Sultan of Oman's Armed Forces (SOAF) during the Dhofar war.

Loyalty of Afghan troops to Western officers need not be a problem. In a properly run regiment, with Western officers speaking the language of their men and committed for a period of several or more years and where the troops are well equipped, well looked after and confident about the future, the situation could be very different from the present one. **In the Indian army, there was no problem in recruiting and holding the loyalty of Pushtun soldiers even when they were used on the frontier against other Pushtuns.**

Restructured, Renamed and Better Paid Police

A better structured and more effective police force is essential. As a first step in countering this, the pay for the Police should be increased. Rural police should be recruited on a regional basis from the areas they are to police. City police should have a wider regional and ethnic mix and more women. The force should also be renamed as the Afghan Nation Police instead of the Afghan National Police. They too should be given new uniforms with a specially coloured *salwar*.

REGIONAL ISSUES

We see regions breaking down into provinces and districts under Regional and Provincial Governors and District Officers. As with the new regional boundaries, provincial and district boundaries will need to be the subject of a careful and detailed study. This should take full note of the tribal and local community study we are also proposing.

The new governments should try to follow the principles and practices of the tribal path as completely as possible. Some examples of where this can be applied are the selection of Governors and District Officers, governance by committee, selection and use of Political Officers, control of budgets and allocation of funds.

Governors and District Officers should be elected, governance committees should replicate the jirga system and include tribal representation from local jirgas. Political Officers should be specially qualified and appointed. Their prime duty would be to liaise with the Tribes and be responsible for tribal affairs. The Regional Government should control its own budget.

Priority issues for the regions are likely to be Aid, Justice, Reconciliation and Revenue collection.

Properly administered Aid will be the most visible gain for local communities so must be the top priority if their support is to be won. Next in line is Law and Order and Justice (27). This is a prime concern for the ordinary Afghan, and must run in tandem with Aid or we run the risk of Aid fuelling corruption and injustice, as is the case now. With visible local benefits and improved Law and Order, the space for local Reconciliation is created. Last in line is Revenue collection as it can only come from a stable environment, and if given priority would undermine the scope for creating the stability it needs. Note Law and Order is a rallying cry for Taliban. We need to own that banner.

WIDER CONSULTATION

Our final plea, whatever the course of action, is to widen the consultation process to include those with practical experience of living and working with ordinary Afghans and travelling throughout the country. This is not to knock academic study or the efforts of MOD and FCO officials, it is simply to point out that because of the security situation getting this experience nowadays is very difficult, so those who have been lucky enough to have obtained it are a valuable and dwindling resource, which should be used more than has been the case hitherto.

CONCLUSION

We are at the eleventh hour. For the past eleven years we have failed to make sustainable progress in Afghanistan. This is mainly because we've used the wrong models for the development of the Government, Army and Police. If we can resist the siren call of negotiation with the Taliban, it is possible to recover from this faulty start, but only by radically changing our approach and building these institutions on different lines. If we cannot embrace such change we will, most certainly, embrace failure.

NOTES

(1). 'Losing Small Wars – British Military Failure in Iraq and Afghanistan' by Frank Ledwidge. ISBN 978-0-300-16671-2.

(2). See Lucy Morgan Edwards' book - 'The Afghan Solution – the inside story of Abdul Haq, the CIA and how Western hubris lost Afghanistan' published by Pluto Press/Palgrave Macmillan (USA). ISBN 978-0-9568449-0-3.

(3). Instead of imagining the opposition as a physical mass with a weakness at the centre, we should have seen it as a formless gas affected by all kinds of indirect factors. We should have made more of an effort to target how the enemy thinks and so perceives and structures for the contest. For example, while we might see drones as a calculated and effective way of striking at the enemy leadership, the Taliban perceive them as a sign that the West is too weak and frightened to fight man to man.

(4). Al Qaeda never existed in large numbers, was never a major participant and never had a chance as a non-Afghan enterprise of functioning inside Afghanistan in the way the Americans imagined. More dangerous than the organisation is the idea that drives it. This is a general

dissatisfaction with the Muslim lot, which is blamed on the West. Al Qaeda is the smoke, not the fire.

(5). We should have created debate and seeded doubt. We should have attacked their pillar of presentation, that they are engaged in a war against non-Islamic occupying forces, by stressing that the only real invaders are those infiltrating from Pakistan, intent on destabilising and destroying Afghanistan.

(6). Clearly the UK government has no credibility as a commentator on Islam. However, friendly Islamic authorities (*ulema*) could have been approached either directly or through friendly governments. Such authorities include Al Azhar University in Cairo, the centre of mainstream Sunni theology, the many sound Pakistani authorities or Islamic scholars at our own universities (there are some fine ones at Oxford for example); or all of the above. All have expressed a willingness to name Al Qaeda's approach as heretical.

(7). See the Emma Alberici/Michael Semple interview on ABC News Australia, 4 September 2012 and the RUSI Briefing paper September 2012.

(8). Within ISI arsenal are firm allies, such as Jalaluddin Haqqani, but even Haqqani is not a Pakistan puppet, although he will accommodate them as long as it suits him. The proof of that is what happened immediately after 9/11. Pervez Musharraf rushed to offer Haqqani an opportunity to become the acceptable face of Taliban, replacing Mullah Omar, but Haqqani turned Musharraf down. Mullah Omar is Pakistan's puppet, Haqqani is not. Haqqani has the capacity to become the prime focus of Jihadism along the Pakistani N.W. Frontier, easily outpacing Mullah Omar. Mullah Omar is and always was, merely window dressing.

(9). Jihadism in Pakistan developed in the 1980s out of a controlled ISI experiment. Its purpose was to use Islamic credentials to legitimise the holding onto power by the military. However as this aggressive use of Islamisation gathered popular support – it was a powerful rallying cry among the deprived rural population for whom the government had done little – it began to gather its own momentum. This was accelerated by an unrealistic evaluation of the role played by the Islamic resistance in the 'defeat' of the Soviets in Afghanistan, seen by some as proof that Allah was on their side. That perception increased the pace from Islamisation to Jihadism.

(10). Jihadism in Pakistan has now become a serious threat, as its expansion has left the ISI with a fragmented web of factions it finds hard to control. Some will be loyal cohorts, some will be allies of expediency, and some will be opposed, resenting attempts to impose controls or frustrated by any one of a number of issues which vex them.

(11). Pakistan believes it won the Soviet-Afghan War by 'controlling' Jihad like a 'smart weapon'. It thinks it is winning now in Afghanistan in the same way. In reality it is achieving its ambition far more on the back of Western failures than its own brilliance. The 'smart weapon', overall, is not obedient and has the capacity to bite the hand that feeds it.

(12). Although the ISI/Jihadist movement in Pakistan is more interested in controlling Afghanistan and influencing near neighbours than it is in exporting Jihadism world wide, its use of Jihadism as a threat to others to leave Pakistan alone is likely to increase. Meanwhile the Jihadist elements within Pakistan are likely to expand to a point where the ISI can no longer contain their threat to the state.

(13). The Jihadists who morph out of ISI patronage will have a much more far reaching view of 'Jihad', not least because they are infused with Wahhabi ambitions. They will see it as their duty to overthrow the West, making penetration of Western Islamic enclaves a key part of their strategy. Interestingly, they will attempt to do what the West should have done in Afghanistan. They know they cannot hope to occupy the battle space physically, so will make their 'frontline' a battle for perception among the resident Islamic community in the West. They will do this by

exploiting grievances, pushing for favourable political reforms, uniting and mobilising the disaffected, agitating to seed chaos, in fact using all the essential ingredients for war by other means. Added to this will be a certain amount of kinetic activity to force heavy handed counter measures which can then be used for propaganda purposes. Their aim will be to establish cells that are self-motivating rather than operating in a conventional command and control organization.

(14). The danger is that the 'secure cordon' that the ISI describe as protecting their nuclear systems faces the wrong way. In theory it protects by preventing entry, in practice, the most likely source of danger is not Jihadists climbing over the wire but facility staff already inside the compound.

(15). One can admire the skill of the ISI without being blind to the weak link in their armour - ego. This infuses them with an absolute conviction of their own invulnerability. Admittedly the West has given them ample reason to bond with that perception. However, in our opinion, in doing so they credit their own performance more than it deserves. It does deserve a lot but it should be balanced against the degree to which the West has defeated itself. In effect, the ISI on its own could not win. It needed the West to fail, making significant mistakes. This the West did, and it was these mistakes, more than ISI perfect planning, which is delivering victory to the ISI.

(16). 'The Tribal Path – Commanding the prime battle space' dated 9 June 2010 by Ken Guest, RAM Seeger and Lucy Morgan Edwards. Published earlier in March 2010 in the Small Wars Journal. See also <http://thetribalpath.weebly.com/the-tribal-path-9-june-2010-pdf.html> (click on view in full screen)

(17). For a supporting perspective on the Tribal path and ISI manipulation see the Pushtun Awakening brief by the NWSC (New World Strategies Coalition) which describes the Taliban as "a religious mafia concocted on white boards in Rawalpindi" (<http://www.eurasiareview.com/15092012-pashtun-awakening-defeat-the-taliban-by-changing-the-narrative-analysis/#comment-435357>)

(18). August 2010 saw the murder of 8 expatriate aid workers in one attack in Badakhshan, when it was reported the local police chief had an agreement with Taliban to allow safe passage through his space in exchange for allowing illegal smuggling of semi precious stones from mining activity he had a share in.

(19). Tribal Security System (Arbakai) in Southeast Afghanistan – Occasional Paper no 7 – dated December 2008 by Mohammed Osman Tariq from the Crisis States Research Centre. <http://www.crisisstates.com/download/op/OP7.pdf>

(20). This tribal support has never equalled approval or a willingness to see the instalment of a Jihadist Taliban regime.

(21). An example of what the Tribal path is not about, is the Warlord force allegedly recruited by Ahmed Wali Karzai and his associates and known as the Kandahar Strike Force. Such militias have been accused of murder, rape and extortion, while this particular one was investigated for shooting dead Matiullah Qateh, the Kandahar chief of Police (see article by Stephen Grey <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/may/16/afghan-prosecutor-arrest-warrant-us-officer>). As mercenary forces, Warlord militias are notoriously unreliable, with loyalty, at best, questionable (as shown by the number of times people like Abdul Rashid Dostum have swapped sides) and their performance, as part of legitimate government, extremely counter-productive.

(22). Recent reports recount that the going rate for an AK47 have increased to \$1,000 from \$300 a year ago.

(23). As for Note 19.

(24). Even some of its own commanders acknowledge that it is far too large and highly likely to fragment after NATO's withdrawal.

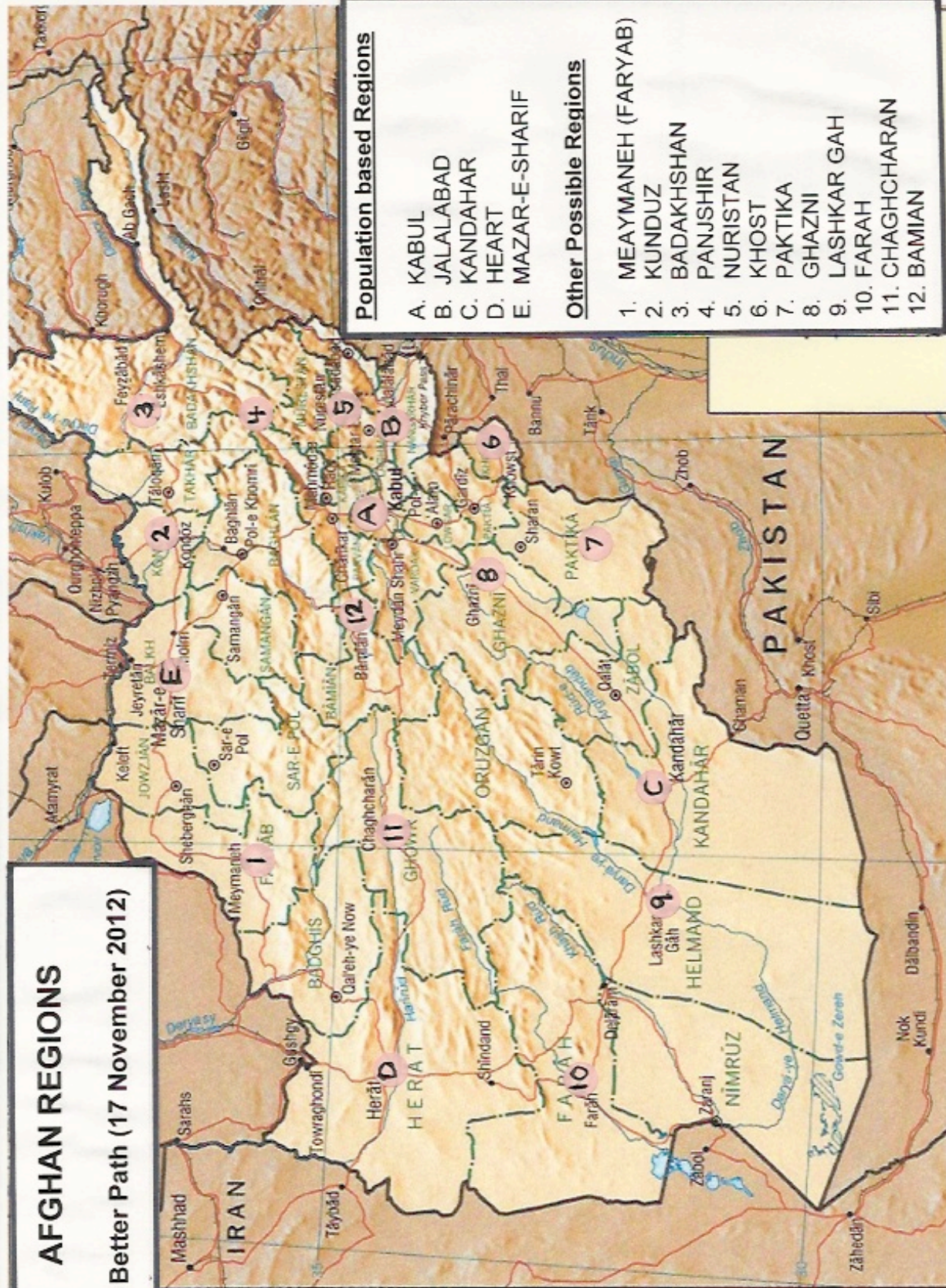
(25). It naturally follows, if the power is decentralised to natural regional locations then the military force at its disposal must also be decentralized and operate in a more local manner whilst reflecting the ethnic balance of their home regions. This removes the need for the mass mini-me preference of the US, reduces cost and permits a custom made structure for the environment in which it must function.

(26). Frank Ledwidge author 'Losing Small Wars' recounts a telling story of how a group of Pushtun Taliban prisoners being guarded by British and ANA soldiers watched with surprise when the ANA soldiers (Tajiks in Western style uniforms) went off to pray. They asked the British soldiers what the ANA soldiers were doing. "Praying" replied the Brits. "But why" said the Taliban, "They're Russians aren't they?"

(27). A major justice problem is deciding how to deal with those personalities that the West empowered after 2001, who instead of being indicted (as they should have been), have remained in power and are continuing to orchestrate mafia heists of resources in Afghanistan.

AFGHAN REGIONS

A Better Path (17 November 2012)



Population based Regions

- A. KABUL
- B. JALALABAD
- C. KANDAHAR
- D. HEART
- E. MAZAR-E-SHARIF

Other Possible Regions

1. MEAYMANEH (FARYAB)
2. KUNDUZ
3. BADAQSHAN
4. PANJSHIR
5. NURISTAN
6. KHOST
7. PAKTIKA
8. GHAZNI
9. LASHKAR GAH
10. FARAH
11. CHAGHCHARAN
12. BAMIAN

BACTRIA PRESS

THE AFGHAN SOLUTION

Lucy Morgan Edwards arrived in Afghanistan as an aid worker at the height of the Taliban regime in Kandahar. She was an election monitor at the 2002 Emergency Loya Jirga and then a freelance journalist, writing for the Economist and Daily Telegraph. From 2004 - 5 she was Political Advisor to the EU Ambassador in Kabul. She lives with her husband and two children in Geneva. She is married to Philip Spoerri who is Director of Law for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

A devastating indictment of the intelligence and strategic failures that have led us into the current tragedy in Afghanistan. This book is also an insight into the Peace Plan that might have averted the conflict; something that western policy makers must be aware of as they seek to stabilise the situation and to extricate NATO forces from Afghanistan. A wonderful account ... essential to understanding the history of this tragedy.

- WILLIAM PFAFF, author of *The Irony of Manifest Destiny: The Tragedy of America's Foreign Policy*
and longtime columnist for the *International Herald Tribune*.

The Afghan Solution is an important and revealing book. Lucy Morgan Edwards has written a rich and compelling account of how Abdul Haq might have saved Afghanistan – and what the West can still learn from his singular vision of a post-Taliban nation.

- DAVID ZUCCHINO, Pulitzer-Prize winning journalist,
The Los Angeles Times

With US and UK military engagement in Afghanistan at a critical juncture, this book provides a timely reminder of the roads not taken and strategic options left unexplored. The cumulative effect constitutes a compelling indictment of state-building through external imposition. This book blends personal insights with a professional detachment and will appeal to the analyst, policymaker, practitioner and, not least, the decision-makers of tomorrow: the students of today.

- DR GRAEME HERD, The Geneva Centre for Security Policy

A deeply reported, well argued and deftly written account of the opportunities not taken since the fall of the Taliban. This important account is based on her own deep knowledge of Afghanistan; acquired as a journalist, EU diplomat and aid worker. It helps illuminate why the country is in its present mess.

- PETER BERGEN, author of *The Longest War: the Enduring War between America and al Qaeda*

A fascinating insight into how political and territorial rivalry between Pakistan and Afghanistan is played out on the ground along the Durand Line; a British Colonial legacy that has plagued relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan since the latter's creation.

BAQER MOIN, former Head of BBC's Persian service
and author of *Khomeini: Life of the Ayatollah*

This original and beautifully written book presents a case study in everything that western policymakers got so dreadfully wrong ahead of their Afghan adventure. It is vital reading for everyone who truly wants to understand this tragic conflict.

- PETER OBORNE, Political Editor, *Daily Telegraph*
and author of *The Triumph of the Political Class*

By far the best account of Afghanistan during the period that I have read. It combines the pace of a page-gripping thriller with the insights of travel writing and political journalism at their best. There were times when I felt that I could smell and taste eastern Afghanistan.

- CONOR FOLEY, author of *The Thin Blue Line: How Humanitarianism went to War*

BACTRIA PRESS

Bactria Press, London.

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THE AFGHAN SOLUTION

THE INSIDE STORY OF ABDUL HAQ, THE CIA
AND HOW WESTERN HUBRIS LOST AFGHANISTAN

LUCY MORGAN EDWARDS

BACTRIA PRESS

This book is dedicated to my husband,
Philip
And in fond memory
of
Omar Nassih

An American businessman who has been assisting and lobbying for Haq around US Gov called this morning and believes that following an initial interest with Haq – which still exists – the hawks have won with their plan to attack and remove the Taliban with coalition forces.

Though there is no other source for this alarmist scenario it could explain the latency with which Haq has been treated.

I need hardly add that the Pashtun response will be one to unite and “all will be against the foreigner”. The Haq option will be dead in the water and the US could well be in for a Soviet experience. In the Islamic world it would be a disaster.

‘Words from Washington’, SITREP, October 2001

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

Since 2001, I have interviewed hundreds of Afghans and others about the events described in this book. There are many others to whom I am indebted, but who prefer not to be named. Some names have been changed.

Much of the dialogue is from those interviews. Sometimes my interlocutors or I referred back to contemporary notes or letters or had a strong recollection of what was said. I have rendered such dialogue in quotation marks.

Quotations and information taken from other books, articles and other published materials are listed in the endnotes and bibliography. Permissions have been sought for the longer quotations made in the text.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book owes a debt to many people beyond those already mentioned in the Author's Note. At UN Habitat, Samantha Reynolds set me off on this journey by first assigning me to work on UNCHS's 'community forum' projects and urban development programmes aimed at drought relief for vulnerable Afghans in Kandahar and Herat back in 2000. These later became the basis for what is now known as the 'National Solidarity Programme'. Chris Lockwood at *The Economist* encouraged me to report for him from Afghanistan both during and after the Taliban period. In 2002, Samina Ahmed at the International Crisis Group in Islamabad assigned me to undertake research into Transitional Justice in Afghanistan. This issue became a core theme of the book.

Of those Afghans and non-Afghans who have shared their insights and knowledge on both Afghanistan and Abdul Haq, I would particularly like to thank James and Joe Ritchie, Sir John Gunston, Ken Guest, 'RAM' Seeger, and Peter Jouvenal. Ken Guest and Sir John Gunston were particularly generous in sharing their very impressive understanding of battlefield strategy, Afghan history, the history of conflict in general and insights on the jihad. I owe them a great debt.

I acknowledge the hospitality, kindness and insight extended to me by Abdul Haq's family, the Arsala family, and would like to thank especially Haji Din Mohammad, Haji (Baryalai) Nasrullah Arsala, Haji Zahir Qadir, Majeed, Abdullah, Khalil and Khushal Arsala. I am particularly grateful to the family for sharing with me some of Abdul Haq's extraordinary letters. I am also indebted to Abdul Haq's former Commander's Khan Mir, Mullah Malang and Aga Jan for their descriptions of various of Haq's Operations carried out during the anti-Soviet Jihad and of his last mission and to Mullah Khaksar for his insights on Haq's Plan in relation to the

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Taliban. Thanks also to Mahboub and 'Captain' for looking after me so well whenever I stayed in Jalalabad.

Malcolm Brinkworth at Touch Productions allowed me to use transcripts of interviews from his film, *Afghan Warrior*. And Peter Tomsen, former US Ambassador to the Mujahideen shared his insight and a letter Haq had written to him in 1994 on the capture of Kabul by Commander Massoud. Steve Masty shared insights with me about the jihad and Abdul Haq.

I acknowledge the work of the many writers and journalists who spent time in Afghanistan before me and produced books which have contributed to my understanding; in particular excellent work has been done by Ahmed Rashid, Barnett Rubin and Steve Coll. However because I have deliberately chosen a different tack, sometimes my reflections and discoveries may be perceived to be at odds with their viewpoint. Coll's book *Ghost Wars* ends at 10 September 2001, whereas mine takes the story forward through the Bonn Process. Where Coll's sources often relate the Tajik perspective of Commander Massoud - as well as the CIA and Hamid Karzai, I have focussed on the majority Pashtun angle and the potential presented by Abdul Haq. I also feel that Afghan writers and experts were rather quick to embrace Hamid Karzai as Afghanistan's 'leader' despite (as I have found from my research) the seemingly great ambivalence towards him by both Afghans and even journalists who had covered Afghanistan from the 1980s onwards. The fact that the Northern Alliance were willing to accept him at Bonn may have had more to do with his malleability than with his legitimacy or status as a 'National figure' or even his significance as a key member of the 'Rome Group'.¹ Yet this issue seemed to me to have been overlooked in many of the books written since 9/11. Although authors Ahmed Rashid and Barnett Rubin have produced an important body of work they have also, I feel, sometimes been rather too close to the political strategy adopted - both pre and post 9/11. See my footnote on this.² In relation to this I believe that - what has become - a tightknit group of Afghan 'experts' have focused

much of their criticism on aspects of the US led military intervention (eg lack of resources given to Afghanistan after the decision to invade Iraq) rather than the political strategy. Barnett Rubin was apparently given diplomatic status by the UN to participate in the meeting held in Bonn at which the Agreement (for the political strategy) was thrashed out.³ Though this book is not about one leader versus another; Abdul Haq ‘versus’ Hamid Karzai; the book is perhaps more critical of Hamid Karzai as a virtually un-assailable ‘leader’ of Afghanistan and more critical of the political chicanery of the Bonn Agreement and the ‘Peace versus Justice Strategy.

Those who have supported me the most in this project are Cherry Spencer, and Sahar al Huneidi, both of whom encouraged me to take up the opportunity to work in Kandahar at the beginning and have remained interested in my Afghan adventures. This book has had a long gestation and during that time I have benefitted from the support of many friends but especially my father, Liz Scott, Emma Passmore, Kathryn Grusoven, Anita Gupta, Alex Grinling, Charlotte Marshall, Evelyn Partridge, the Reverend Maree Wilson, Rani Treichel, Elspeth Scott, Alessia Castelfranco, Anna Martinssen Pont, Amandine Roche, Diana Barrowclough, Lindsey Anderson, Miranda Rhys Williams, Iris and Thomas Ruttig, Poplar and Chippewa Cosmo, Zaved Mahmoud, Filippo di Robilant and Tiziana Assal, who generously allowed me to use her delightful chalet in Grimontz to bring about an end to this long work. The staff at the Society of Authors have shown great patience in answering so many of my questions over the years while Susan Tiberghian at the Geneva Writers Group is eternally generous with her advice, warmth and encouragement. To all of them I owe a debt of gratitude.

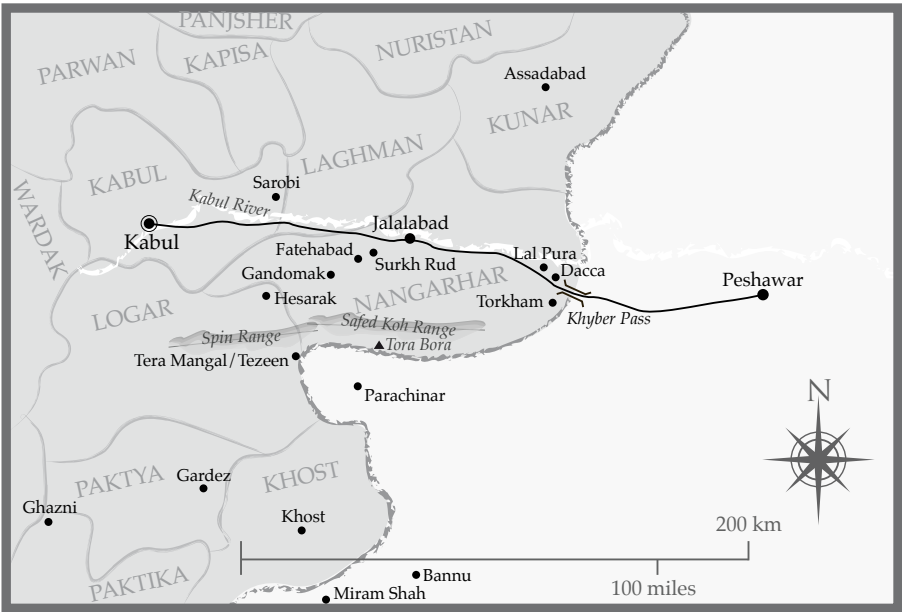
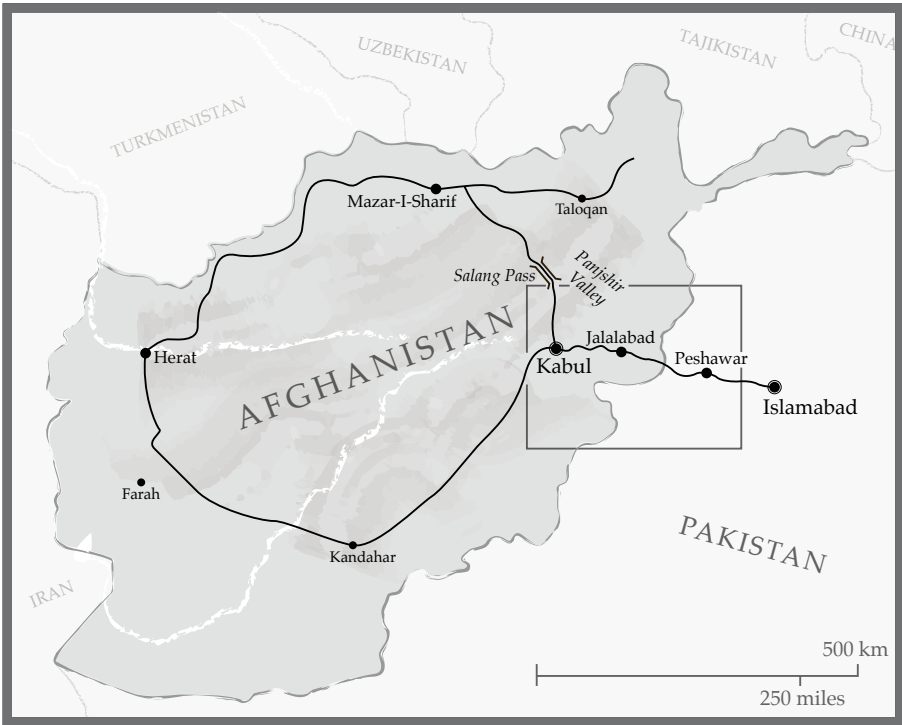
I am also grateful to those who commented on early versions of the manuscript. They include Peregrine Hodson, Graham Herd of the Geneva Centre for Security Policy, Professor Charles Norchi of the Harvard School of Governance, Lara Santoro, David Ward, George MacPherson, Peter Morgan, Rachel Fountain and Amanda Baumgartner. For later versions: my father Quentin Morgan

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Edwards, Dr Toni Pfanner, Lea Mattheson, Andy Sundberg, Antonio Donini and Norah Niland. I am grateful to the Royal Society of Asian Affairs and particularly to Briony Watson for her help in locating maps and to Diana Merylees for her kindness and encouragement. Also to Ben Evans for his editorial help and Matthew Swann for his help in the design and production of this book.

Lastly I must acknowledge the great support, love and patience of my husband Philip; without which the book could never have been finished. As well as the forgiving nature of my two sons, Oscar and Henry, who have endured hours of babysitting while their mother made this work a priority. I hope one day they will share in my passion for Afghanistan.

MAPS



DRAMATIS PERSONAE:

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS OF THE NARRATIVE AND THEIR POSITIONS IN 2001 - 2002

THE ARSALA FAMILY

An Eastern Pashtun family of eight brothers who fought the Soviets and the Taliban. They belong to the Ghilzai branch of the Pashtun:⁴ their tribe are the Ahmadzai; their sub-tribe is Jabbarkhel. The most famous were:

Commander Abdul Haq – Famed Pashtun Commander of the Jihad and the only Commander to take the fight to the centre of the Soviet regime in Kabul. He is the principal character of this book. Assassinated in October 2001 by the Taliban.

Haji Abdul Qadir – Former Governor of Jalalabad, until the Taliban drove the family out in 1996. Governor again after their rout in 2001. During the early 1990s, Qadir was nominally head of the ‘Eastern Shura’ which comprised representatives from Nangarhar, Nuristan, Laghman and Kunar. He rose to fame as one of the most effective commanders in the East during the 1980s war against the Soviets. Awarded position of Vice President in the ‘Interim Administration’ (June 2002) but was assassinated within weeks.

Haji Din Mohammad – Governor of Jalalabad following Haji Qadir’s assassination in 2002. The most pious of the eight brothers, he is the one that the rest of the family look up to. Governor of Kabul 2005-9.

Haji Nasrullah (known to me as Baryalai) – One of the younger brothers. After returning from Germany in 2001, he set up ‘The Abdul Haq Foundation’ and later a shura, both aiming to continue the community based work advocated by Abdul Haq.

Haji Zahir – Son of Haji Qadir and now Head of the Border Guard. Though only twenty-seven years old, he has already escaped a

Taliban jail with Ismael Khan and led a force at the battle of Tora Bora, where he captured twenty-two al Qaeda prisoners (and famously had them filmed by CNN).

Abdul Majeed Arsala – Haq’s oldest son.

Hedayat Amin Arsala – A cousin who worked for the World Bank in Washington DC for twenty years and became Vice President after the death of Haji Qadir. Currently a senior minister in Karzai’s government.

FORMER COMMANDERS CLOSELY ASSOCIATED WITH ABDUL HAQ

Jalaluddin Haqqani – Ex Khalis Commander (see below under section titled the ‘Armed Opposition’).

Aga Jan – based in Sarobi, a strategically important ‘crossroads’ between the east, the north east and Kabul. Famed for conducting important operations against the Soviets. Ex Khalis Commander.

Mullah Malang – well known for the brilliant operations he conducted against the Soviets in Kandahar during the jihad. Also has influence in areas as diverse as Badghis, Ghor, Daikundi, Ghazni, Wardak and Gardez. His men constituted the bodyguard of Mullah Omar. Ex Khalis Commander.

Abdul Salam Rocketti – Received his name as a result of his prowess in launching rockets against Soviet tanks during the jihad. Served under the Taliban regime as ‘Corps Commander’ firstly in Zabul Province and later in Jalalabad, where he was at the time of September 11. Ex Sayyaf / Khalis Commander.

Khan Mir – with influence around Paghman, north east of Kabul, from where he conducted operations during the jihad. Taliban Division Commander with 800 men. Ex Khalis Commander.

Arif Shah Jehan – Leader of Hazaras in Ghazni Province.

PRINCIPAL POLITICAL PARTIES

In reality, these ‘parties’ were politico-military factions associated with mujahideen leaders.

The Northern Alliance was a group of loosely-allied former mujahideen groups brought together by Commander Massoud. Its principal cabal, the Shura-e-Nazar (Council of the North), is associated with strongmen from the north-east, mostly from the Panjshir valley.

The original jihadi parties of the ‘Peshawar Seven’:

The three main (generally more hard-line) parties:

- Jamiat-i-Islami (led by Commander Massoud and the Shura-e-Nazar faction but whose Political leader was Professor Burhanuddin Rabbani)
- Hizb-i-Islami (led by Hekmatyar; NB when ‘Hizb’ split, Hikmatyar’s more radical faction separated from that of Yunus Khalis)
- Ittehad-i-Islami (led by Abdurrah Rasul Sayyaf; now leader of Dawat-i-Islami)

The four minor parties:

- Hizb Islami (led by Mullah Yunus Khalis, associated with the Ghilzai Eastern Pashtun, with the Arsala family as its figurehead)
- Mahaz Milli Islami (led by the Gailani Family and associated with the former King, and the National Islamic Front for Afghanistan, NIFA, in Pashtun)
- Jabha-yi-Nejat Milli (Sebhagatullah Mojadedi, Pashtun)
- Harakat-i-Inqilab-i-Islami (Mohammad Nabi Mohammadi, Pashtun)

The two main Iran-based parties and alliances:

- Hizb Wahdat (Abdul Ali Mazari & Karim Khalili, Hazara)
- Harakat Islami (Asif Mohseni, Shia Pashtun)

The final significant party is Jombesh Mille, the Uzbek faction led by General Abdul Rashid Dostum)

PRINCIPAL MUJAHIDEEN LEADERS ('WARLORDS') OF THE NORTHERN ALLIANCE

General Abdul Rashid Dostum – Uzbek warlord based in Mazar, he recently returned from exile in Turkey.

Mohammad Qasem Fahim – Defence Minister and de facto Head of Shura-e-Nazar since the assassination of Commander Massoud on 9 September 2001. Associated with much extra-judicial killing when Head of Security for Massoud during the Mujahideen assault on Kabul (1992–96).

Ismael Khan – Tajik warlord and Governor of Herat.

Professor Burhanuddin Rabbani – Political leader of Massoud's party and Islamist scholar trained in Cairo.

Abdurrab Rasul Sayyaf – Ittehad-i-Islami – Islamist scholar trained in Cairo. Fundamentalist Wahhabist who set up training camps along the border with Pakistan in the early 1990s and, through his links with Saudi Arabia, brought many Arabs and funding to the region following the jihad.

‘WARLORDS’ IN NANGARHAR PROVINCE

Hazerat Ali – Police Chief and member of the Pashai, a minor ethnic group at Dar-yi-Noor (50 km north of Jalalabad). Although originally a commander of Haji Qadir, he has now become allied with General Fahim of the Northern Alliance and, despite his unpopularity in the East, is the principal ally of the Americans in Jalalabad. He led a band of soldiers at the battle of Tora Bora.

Haji Zaman Ghamsharik – Member of the Khogiani tribe in Chaprahar. Recently returned from exile in Paris to lead some soldiers at the battle of Tora Bora. Principal ally of the British in Jalalabad. Accused by locals of having orchestrated a massacre and pocketing money from the British poppy compensation scheme.

THE ARMED OPPOSITION

The Taliban – A stratified Pashtun group, believed to be supported by Pakistan, whose regime ruled Afghanistan prior to 9/11.

Jalaluddin Haqqani – Once a Commander of Hizb Islami (the same party of Yunus Khalis and Abdul Haq), Haqqani became more radicalized and joined the Taliban where he led a front based in Miramshah, Pakistan, controlling the Loya Paktia and the Khost region of Afghanistan. Close to bin Laden whom he is thought to have invited back to Eastern Afghanistan in 1996, upon his expulsion from Sudan. Veteran Afghan journalist Kathy Gannon noted in 2005, “had he wanted to, Haqqani could have handed the US the entire al Qaeda network”. Yet after 9/11 Haqqani, who had links with the CIA and Saudi’s during the 1980s and maintains strong links with the Pakistani ISI, chose to continue fighting the US and NATO forces in ‘Af-Pak’ long after the toppling of the Taliban.

Sirajuddin Haqqani - Son of the elderly Jalaluddin, who will later lead the south eastern opposition ‘front’ against the Karzai government and US forces in Afghanistan.

Gulbuddin Hikmatyar – Radical Islamist ISI supported guerrilla, rival of Massoud. Recently returned from exile in Iran. Leading an insurgency from the areas bordering Pakistan’s NWFP.

FORMER TALIBAN

Mullah Abdul Razzaq – Taliban Interior Minister who apparently ordered the killing of Haq after he entered Afghanistan, October 2001.

Mullah Abdul Samad Khaksar – Deputy Interior Minister who had switched his support covertly to Abdul Haq.

Mullah Ahmad Wakil Mutawakil – Taliban Foreign Minister.

Abdul Salam Rocketti – see section entitled ‘Haq’s former Commanders’ (above)

WOMEN

Massouda Jalal – Female Presidential candidate in 2002 Emergency Loya Jirga

Dr Sima Samar – Erstwhile Chair of Loya Jirga in 2002, sacked by warlords. Since then, Head of Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission

Fatima Gailani – Head of Afghan Red Crescent after Qar-a-beq was finally ousted

Malalai Joya – Woman from Farah Province who challenged warlords at the Constitutional Loya Jirga in 2004. They threw her out. Elected to Parliament in 2005. Expelled by warlords after she criticised them for their human rights abuses.

INTERNATIONAL DIPLOMATS

Francesc Vendrell – EU Chief

Lakhdar Brahimi – UN Chief

Zalmay Khalilzad – US Ambassador

US SOLDIERS

Lt. General Dan McNeil – commander of the US led Coalition forces in Afghanistan in 2002

General Tommy Franks – head of CENTCOM during the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq

THE CIA

Milton Beardon – Chief of Station, Islamabad, 1986–89

Gary Schroen – Case Officer, Islamabad, 1978–80; Chief of Station designate, Kabul, 1988–1990; Chief of Station, Islamabad, 1996–1999; Deputy Chief, Near- East Division, Directorate of Operations, 1999–2001

US DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Peter Tomsen – Special Envoy to the Afghan Resistance, 1989–92

ABDUL HAQ'S US BACKER'S

James and Joe Ritchie – American brothers who were brought up in Afghanistan. After making money as Chicago options traders, they initiated and funded a series of Loya Jirga meetings outside Afghanistan during the Taliban years. They attempted, through working with Haq and the ex-King, to support the process of providing an alternative to the Taliban for the people of Afghanistan.

Robert 'Bud' McFarlane – Former US National Security Advisor under President Reagan. Worked alongside the Ritchie brothers in attempting to find support for Haq in Washington DC both before and after September 11.

HAQ'S BRITISH SUPPORTERS:

Ken Guest – Former marine and cameraman who travelled extensively with the mujahideen from 1980-89 during which time he met bin Laden, Jalaluddin Haqqani and most mujahideen leaders.

Sir John Wellesley Gunston – A photographer during the jihad, who travelled extensively with the mujahideen during the jihad, went to support Abdul Haq in Rome after September 11, and then Peshawar before he left on his last mission, attended the Bonn Conference with Haji Qadir (as 'advisor') and the battle of Tora Bora. He also attended installation in December 2001 of Hamid Karzai.

'RAM' Seeger – Former Head of the Special Boat Service (SBS) who worked alongside Guest and Gunston in attempting to find support for Haq in Whitehall and amongst the British defence and intelligence establishment.

BRITISH SOLDIERS AND OFFICIALS

General Sir John McColl – Commander of ISAF troops in Kabul 2002. Former Head of MI6 (1989-94)

General Lord Guthrie – Chief of the Defence Staff (1997–2001)

Sir Richard Dearlove – Head of MI6 (1999–2004)

Lord (Paddy) Ashdown – former leader of the Liberal Democrat Party and International High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina (2002–2006)

Ian Duncan Smith – then leader of the Conservative Party

MISCELLANEOUS PEOPLE

Fazl Akbar – later Governor of Kunar

Dr Abdullah Abdullah – Panjshiri who became Foreign Minister in 2001

Ayoub Afridi – alleged drug dealer who lives on the Khyber Pass. Friend of Haji Qadir

Sher Mohammad Akhundzada – Governor of Lashkargah, Karzai ally

Engineer Arif – Massoud's Intelligence Chief. Became head of the National Directorate of Security (NDS), the Afghan intelligence service, after Kabul fell to the Northern Alliance

Mohammad Daoud – Northern Alliance Commander and ally of Fahim from Konduz, would become 'Drug's Tzar' of Interior Ministry in late 2004

Hamid Gul – former ISI chief

Mullah Izat – Northern Alliance Commander

Assadullah Khaled – Governor of Ghazni until 2005 when he was moved to Kandahar. Ally of Karzai family

Mustafa Khan – Commander of Haji Zahir

Jan Mohammad – Governor of Uruzghan, Karzai ally

Najibullah – last Afghan Communist President

Nader Nadery – Deputy Chair of Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission

Arif Noorzai – Karzai ally in Kandahar

Shah Shujah – Puppet King installed by the British in the nineteenth century

Amin Wardak – ally of Abdul Haq

Rahim Wardak – Defense Minister of Afghanistan, 2004–

Qari Mohammad Yousef – Commander of Haji Zahir responsible for capturing arabs at battle of Tora Bora. Later arrested by Americans and taken to Bagram.

Qar-a-beg – Panjshiri strongman who refused to budge from the sinecure he had taken as Head of the Afghan Red Crescent, following the capture of Kabul.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Dr Asef Qazizada – Deputy Governor of Jalalabad – 2002-5

Haji Rohullah – Salafi leader from Kunar, arrested by US and taken to Guananamo in 2002

Wuliullah – cousin of salafi leader from Kunar, Haji Rohullah. British allowed him to run 2002 poppy compensation scheme in Jalalabad

THE TRIBES OF EASTERN AFGHANISTAN

Ghilzai Pashtun

Ahmadzai

Khoghiani

Shinwari

Safi

IN NURISTAN:

Pashai (on the edge of Nuristan, and Kunar at a place called Dar-yi-Noor)

Parachi

Aroki

Gawarbati

ALONG THE BORDER:

Mohmand

Afridi

Utman Khel

Daoudzai

Mahmund

Bajouri

CHRONOLOGY

Year	Afghanistan
1973	July: King Zahir Shah overthrown by his 'modernising' cousin Daoud in a military coup.
1978	April: People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan takes power with a military coup (this becomes known as the 'Saur Revolution' and marks the end of two hundred years of Durrani dominance).
1979	December: Soviet troops invade Afghanistan.
1989	February: Soviet troops withdraw from Afghanistan.
1992	<p>February: Abdul Haq convenes the 'Shura of the Commanders' in Chitral where mujahideen leaders agree to work together to secure the capital city. Massoud attends but neither Hikmatyar nor Sayyaf.</p> <p>April: The mujahideen commanders' accord is broken as General Massoud enters Kabul early and is made Minister of Defence on 5 May. Massoud and Hikmatyar's forces begin their assault on the city and the mujahideen government takes power amid continued fighting in Kabul. Disappointed with the inter-factional fighting now the Soviets have left, Abdul Haq quits Afghanistan.</p>
1993	February: The Afshar massacre (of around seven hundred mostly civilian Shiites) is prosecuted in the Kabul district of Afshar allegedly by the troops of Abdul Rasul Sayyaf and General Massoud. ⁵
1994	November: Taliban capture Kandahar.
1995	September: Taliban capture Herat.

CHRONOLOGY

1996

May: Osama bin Laden, expelled from Sudan, returns to Afghanistan (where he had participated in the jihad between 1986– 89). He is apparently invited back by Abdul Rasul Sayyaf and is based at Chiparhar, in Nangarhar, which remains under Northern Alliance control until September.

September: Taliban capture Jalalabad and Herat.

2001

September 11 attacks take place in the USA.

7 October: US-led bombing campaign of Afghanistan starts.

21 October: Abdul Haq leaves Peshawar and makes for Afghanistan.

24 October: Abdul Haq meets with Hisarak Talib commander

25 October: Arab Taliban forces converge on Tera Mangal and capture Abdul Haq.

26 October: Abdul Haq is executed by the Taliban.

13 November: Kabul falls to the Northern Alliance.

14 November: The UN Security Council agrees Resolution 1378 which mandates a 'transitional administration' for Kabul.

2–6 December: Offensive takes place at Tora Bora, from where Osama bin Laden 'disappears'.

5 December: The Bonn Conference takes place in Germany, after which it is announced that the Pashtun, Hamid Karzai, will head an 'Interim Authority' which will last until voting at an 'Emergency Loya Jirga'.

6 December: Kandahar falls.

- 2001** **20 December:** The UN authorizes the deployment of an ‘International Security Assistance Force’ (ISAF) to Kabul and its environs. Initially, ISAF comprises around 5000 soldiers.
- 2002** **April:** District and regional-level elections begin to select delegates who will attend the ‘Emergency Loya Jirga’.
- June:** ‘Emergency Loya Jirga’ held in Kabul. It is set up to select the President of Afghanistan’s ‘Interim Authority’,⁶ election of the Cabinet, selection of the constitutional drafting committee, and decisions on the type of state Afghanistan will be. Its mandate will shape the state-building project for years to come.
- 2003** **December 2002–January 2004:** Constitutional Loya Jirga held in Kabul. It opts for a strong presidential system and a weaker parliament.
- 2004** **September:** Afghan presidential elections held in Kabul.
- 2005** **September:** Afghan parliamentary elections (This marks the end of the Bonn Process).
- 2009** US President Barack Obama commits an extra 34,000 US service personnel (including troops, engineers intelligence officers) to Afghanistan, bringing the total for coalition and NATO troops in Afghanistan to around 140,000 (and of US troops to around 113,000 troops; more than the USSR committed at the height of its engagement).

INTRODUCTION

Tera Mangal, Afghanistan, 25 October 2001

'*Al humdullilah, we've caught the American and British agents!*' they heard the man say in a thick, Arabic accent, and knew the Taliban were upon them. It was around ten pm and they were in the place named Tera Mangal, crouching on scree slopes dwarfed between slabs of vertical rock face which reached thousands of metres high.

Their Taliban captors moved out of the darkness and faced Abdul Haq.

Some minutes earlier, when the group first realised the Taliban were close, Haq had instructed his men to sit apart from one another so they would not all be seen. They had left their weapons back in Hezarac village after lunch with the elders and now had nothing with which to defend themselves. As early as that afternoon, when the Taliban were in each of the four narrow Passes that met high in the Hezarac valley, it had been obvious to them there was no way out of the narrow incline.

The steepness of the slope meant Haq had been forced to dismount the pony. He leant against the animal, breathing hard. Despite being known as the 'Lion of Kabul' for orchestrating tactically brilliant operations against the Soviet regime during the 1980s, tonight Abdul Haq seemed spent. The situation was clearly hopeless. He couldn't move fast and decided to give himself up before they saw the others.

The Arab cocked his Kalashnikov as the three other Talibs moved forward, their dark turbans momentarily silhouetted against the moon. They were nervous, undecided as to what they were about to do. Three had their arms held high, intending to stop the Arab firing.

'Move, go!' the Arab screamed as Abdul Haq stepped forward from the shadow, still holding the pony by its bridle.

'I need the pony, I can't walk without my prosthetic', Haq said and his voice, normally steady, wavered.

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When I heard this story over three years later, in January 2005, I was told that the reason Haq could not walk was because his prosthetic was actually broken. He had lost his foot to a landmine during his quest to eject the Soviets from Afghanistan during the 1980s.

But that night in October 2001 the Talibs weren't listening. The pony was called for. He was helped onto the beast and led away, along with two of his commanders. Minutes later, thirteen shots were fired.

This was the capture of Abdul Haq as recounted to me, in Sarobi, by Aga Jan: the man who had been with him on this last mission, as well as countless others during the anti-Soviet jihad. There were varying accounts of what happened next. One was that Haq was tortured and shot in Rishicoor barracks in Kabul; the other, more credible, version was that a day later, the car carrying Haq from Hezarac reached Logar, on the outskirts of Kabul. A second vehicle – this one carrying the Taliban Interior Minister, Mullah Razzaq – sped towards it, from the city centre. And there, on a piece of tarmac in the open air, Razzaq grabbed a Kalashnikov from his bodyguard. Seconds later, the man Afghans knew as the 'Lion of Kabul' was shot dead.

On 5 October 2001, the London *Evening Standard* (see Appendix I) reported a veteran commander of the 1980s Soviet jihad calling for George Bush's imminent bombing campaign of Afghanistan to be delayed. The commander, whose name was Abdul Haq, needed time, he said, to implement his plan for an internal, peaceful toppling of the Taliban.

'Every time I meet commanders who cross the mountains in darkness to brief me', he said, 'they are part of the Taliban forces, but they no longer support them. These men will join us and there are many of them. When the time is right they and others will rise up and this Taliban Government will be swept aside'.⁷

Haq went on to add: 'The people are starving, they are already against them'.

But his voice, so authoritative when visiting Reagan and Thatcher to call for more support to the mujahideen during the Soviet war, was barely heard in the aftermath of September 11. The bombing started and Abdul Haq began his perilous mission. Two weeks later, on 25 October 2001, he was dead.

In November 2001, after his death, Abdul Haq's obituaries were dismissive, even overtly condemning. Not only was the manner of his death questioned but so too was his life and, implicit to that, his 'value'. When the *New York Times* described him demeaningly as 'a middle aged man on a mule'⁸ or a 'privately financed freelancer trying to overthrow the Taliban'⁹ the implication was that there should be nothing to regret about his loss. In London, an unattributed piece in *Private Eye* added snidely, 'Like so many erstwhile terrorists, Haq managed to reinvent himself as a "moderate" and a "peacemaker" – so successfully that his murderous exploits were entirely omitted from every single obituary'.¹⁰

Other pieces begged to differ and one, written by a cultural anthropologist and former US Diplomat to Afghanistan,¹¹ had a different take on the story:

To hear them talk in Washington and Islamabad, you'd think there was some doubt. In fact, you'd think his death no great loss. Listen carefully. It's scared talk, the kind of stuff you hear from bureaucrats whose backsides are exposed.¹²

Abdul Haq, they rush to insist, was on a mission of his own. Maybe he was, maybe he wasn't. Either way, it's shameful to demean him.

He added:

There is some doubt about how the man died and where and when. We know he was 'questioned' and then executed. But was it by hanging with his body then used for swaying small-arms target practice, or was he shot in cold blood in a prison courtyard? It was in eastern Afghanistan – but Jalalabad or Kabul? It was two weeks ago – but late Thursday or early Friday? There's some doubt about who sent him

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and who betrayed him. There could even be confusion about his name were it not so well known:

'Born Hamayoun Arsala 44 years ago, he became "Abdul Haq" – Servant of Justice – in the crucible of our Cold War's most decisive battleground'.¹³

As I finish writing this book, the Taliban has extended its control over large parts of both Pakistan and Afghanistan, both governments are weak and failing, and it looks as though the US and NATO will be facing strategic failure in the region.

President Obama's 'troop surge' and the strategy followed by the West in Afghanistan in 2010 remains broadly similar to that adopted at the outset in 2001.

Then, the US-led coalition provided financial and military support to the Taliban's traditional foe, the predominantly Tajik Northern Alliance which – since the killing by al Qaeda on 9 September 2001 of Commander Massoud – has been led by Mohammad Fahim. Prior to September 11, the Northern Alliance was an almost spent force, the Taliban having taken some ninety-five percent of the country.¹⁴ I remember how in Kandahar during September 2000, the Taliban celebrated their capture of Taloqan – a city in the North East and deemed vital for the Northern Alliance supply pipeline – by removing the concrete barricades which had closed the road in front of the Taliban leader, Mullah Omar's, compound. Yet only a year later, in November 2001, when the US led coalition bombed the front line between the two sides, the Northern Alliance was able to take Kabul, the key 'power' ministries and, for a short time, the country.

Following the Bonn Agreement in December 2001 and the Emergency Loya Jirga in June 2002, the ethnic Pashtun Hamid Karzai became President. Karzai was essentially a figurehead to Northern Alliance warlords who were enabled to further consolidate their control over the machinery of state. For a while, there was peace of sorts but this quickly gave way to extreme corruption, a

resurgence in opium production and eventually a breakdown in security. Seemingly defeated in late 2001, the Taliban only appeared to have 'melted away' and since 2003 their 'resurgence' has grown exponentially. Ironically they have exploited conditions similar to those which existed during their initial rise to power in 1995-6: popular discontent with the government's failure to provide jobs, security or justice, as well as a culture of impunity whose corollary has been widespread human rights violations. By 2009, the Taliban provided shadow governors and a parallel justice system in thirty-three out of Afghanistan's thirty-four provinces. Meanwhile the coalition has, in response, ramped up its military-based strategy with a 'surge' of 30,000 extra troops, bringing the overall number to over 200,000. There are also some 100,000 military contractors in Afghanistan.¹⁵ Meanwhile the number of western troops killed in Afghanistan has increased relative to Iraq. And despite the \$236 billion USD spent on Afghanistan by the US government by October 2009,¹⁶ a successful endgame for the West looks increasingly unlikely.

The chief of US and NATO forces, General McKiernan, noted upon his departure from Afghanistan in spring 2009 that, 'ultimately, the solution in Afghanistan is going to be a political, not a military solution'.¹⁷ And US General Michael Flynn said, 'Eight years into the war in Afghanistan, the vast intelligence apparatus is unable to answer fundamental questions about the environment in which US and Allied forces operate and the people they seek to persuade'.¹⁸

The West is floundering in Afghanistan and the prospect of strategic failure there by the coalition and NATO is today a very real proposition. The goalposts for withdrawal will be altered, leaving Afghanistan to its own fate. This will only empower those jihadists whom, in September 2001, we sought to overcome.

There is also now a tentative realisation that for a political solution to be durable it must also be 'internal': that is, arrived at and sustained by Afghans. Although the focus for the West's 'exit strategy' remains – in the absence of an effective political strategy – overly focused on building up the Afghan security forces, there is also talk of 'bottom up' governance at regional level. However,

there is little real commitment to this, nor understanding of how to achieve it. Increasingly too, there is chatter about the need for a 'strong leader' who is able to work with all tribes, someone who has 'no blood on his hands'.

The idea that the 'war' to topple the Taliban in 2001 was a 'success' has only been challenged relatively recently. Many commentators often added that it was 'brilliantly executed'.¹⁹ Afghanistan only failed, so the prevailing mantra went, because we went to Iraq. Sadly, this twin fallacy has obscured the root causes of why we have so comprehensively failed in Afghanistan.²⁰ And how the crucial mistakes were made at the *outset*, then compounded in 2002.

As I finished writing this book I attended a talk entitled 'Afghanistan–Pakistan: Mission Impossible?' in Geneva.²¹ There, the Pakistani Ambassador to the UN stressed the need for the international community to utilise tribal structures to tackle instability in the region. But curiously, when I asked him whether today the Afghan situation might have been different had Abdul Haq not been ignored and subsequently killed soon after September 11, his reply indicated so much about what is at the heart of the problem. 'It was', so he said, 'the greatest tragedy that he [Abdul Haq] was sent on a mission by the CIA to Afghanistan to whip up support for a Pashtun government'.

This book is also an attempt to tackle some of the false 'narratives' which certain groups, countries, individuals or organisations have attempted to sustain – through conflation, misrepresentation or under-reporting of more complex nuances – about events, histories or individual stories. Often such narratives have sewn confusion in what is an extremely complex political situation. Sadly though, it is people and society, both in the West and where the conflict continues to take place, who continue to pay the price for this. Global security at large that will be undermined when the West eventually exits a far less stable and infinitely more complex Afghanistan than that they found in 2001.

This book is not really about Abdul Haq so much as about the strategy that the West *should* have followed in Afghanistan, the one

we failed to take account of. For, as the Taliban Interior Minister told me, the Taliban killed him because 'everyone supported his plan in Khost, Paktia, Paktika'.

Thus, this book is also a first-hand witness account of some of the crucial facets of the West's post-September 11 Afghan intervention, intended for those who have an interest in why certain decisions are made and what the outcomes of those decisions can be. The book is written in narrative form because I take the reader to key events at which I was present. Many of these events became key turning points towards the outcome we see today.

The book's central thesis is the 'peace plan' which Commander Abdul Haq was working on when he was killed by the Taliban in October 2001. The book explores the reasons why Haq had warned repeatedly (in the aftermath of September 11) that the West should delay its imperative of bombing Afghanistan. And why Haq was thwarted in his attempt to put in place an 'internal' means of stabilising Afghanistan. I believe this is relevant both because of the enormous cost in both lives and treasure of the West's post-September 11 Afghan 'adventure' in Afghanistan. Also because of the failure to capture bin Laden at Tora Bora and now the likelihood of strategic failure by both NATO and the US-led coalition in Afghanistan. When one takes these costs into consideration, I believe that the story I have to tell is one that those groups who have recast the narrative to fit their own interests would rather you did not know about.

The book also tackles other related lines of enquiry: justice, impunity, Pakistan and the Pashtunistan issue, and the relevance of working with 'traditional' (i.e. tribal or quam based) structures to achieve lasting stability. On the issue of justice, I argue how the West's failure to indict former human rights abusers, instead making them its partners, has made Afghanistan a vastly complex theatre of operations characterised by a massive 'crisis of impunity'. It is now very difficult for Western forces operating within the country to know the difference between an insurgent, a Talib and a criminal drug dealer.

Other controversial issues dealt with in this account include: the fallacy of 'democracy' in a country where there is no rule of law; how the West essentially sold out Afghan women with its decision to use Northern Alliance warlords to conduct its war; how our intelligence agencies (principally the CIA and MI6) have failed to understand the most basic dynamics of this country, this region and the people who live there, thus pulling the West into a potentially interminable, unwinnable war whose 'objectives' change by the month.

Many of these problems had been written about by Abdul Haq in letters to Western leaders, sometimes as far back as the 1990s. These letters, most of which have never before been quoted, provide new insights into his thinking in the early 1990s, and are compelling particularly when one considers that he even warned of 'a cataclysmic event for the West' back in 1992.

This book is aimed at those with an interest in policymaking, whether that be military, diplomatic, humanitarian or peace negotiation. As far back as 2003, I remember an Afghan al Jazeera journalist commenting that, 'This is just a short interlude of peace in an otherwise ongoing civil war'. His words were prescient and today it appears that the West's 2001 military 'success' masked a military strategy that was more about emotion, fireworks, vengeance and Faustian alliances than about stabilising Afghanistan and building a viable state. A similar, apparently 'political' strategy was conceived at the Bonn Conference in December 2001. Some rather optimistically dubbed this a 'Peace Agreement'. It was not, for it did not include all parties to the conflict.

Despite the enormity of the West's costs in Afghanistan, and the increasing likelihood of failure, there has been a strange absence of interest in Abdul Haq and the 'solution' that he had conceived prior to September 11 for ejecting the Taliban and stabilising Afghanistan. Other Afghan commentators who have written about this 'solution' since 2001 have done so only fleetingly. Or worse, they have glossed over his role in working for an alternative to the Taliban in the years prior to September 11 (for which he paid with the murder of his wife and son in Peshawar in 1999).²² Or they have mischaracterised

his objectives; implying that Haq's objection to the US bombing of Afghanistan was limited to averting the bloodshed of civilians.²³ Or that he was simply trying to raise a force among the Ghilzai Pashtun, with the objective of avoiding a power vacuum in the east, where his family had been based.²⁴

This book is about Abdul Haq's 'solution' in relation to: the history of the CIA and Pakistani ISI in the region; US and British intelligence weaknesses in 'Af-Pak' policy prior to and since September 11; the strategy and policies that were chosen 'instead' (many of which I participated in during the six years I spent in Afghanistan); the alternative 'Pashtun rebellion' option apparently provided by Hamid Karzai in the South; the consequences of ignoring the Haq 'solution' which include the West committing itself to an unwinnable war in Afghanistan and assisting the wider region to become a crucible of fundamentalist chaos.

Some may say that the relevance of Abdul Haq's story ended with his premature death at the hands of the Taliban in October 2001. I would not agree, firstly because I believe that history is important and also because it is only through knowing the past that we can understand the present. I also believe that if more of our strategists had understood the reasons why Abdul Haq was prepared to sacrifice his life to achieve this plan, then we might not have found ourselves in such an insoluble mess in Afghanistan today. With military strategists and Western politicians keen to find an internal solution for resolving the Afghan impasse, such that our troops can begin the drawdown, there will be renewed interest in the reasons why Abdul Haq was prepared to lose his life on the mission he attempted in 2001. And indeed, why he lost his life.

In Afghanistan, the storytellers' bazaar is notorious for its conspiracy theories and webs of inaccuracy. To wade through that, any serious researcher must 'triangulate' sources to obtain the most accurate picture possible.

I have felt it important to tell this story because Afghanistan is an enigma to so many Westerners who now have a stake in it: foreign civilians working there, military forces and their families,

aid workers, diplomats and politicians. Today in Afghanistan, we are in a situation where, after eight years, we are still nowhere near what Winston Churchill defined during WWII as ‘the end of the beginning’. This is a salutary lesson for those who as early as 2001 declared victory so prematurely. For, as the Duke of Wellington once remarked, ‘The difficulties will begin where the military successes ended’. There are few who would argue this has not been the case in Afghanistan since the 2001 invasion to rout the Taliban.

But it did not have to be like that.

As the West was wondering how to be rid of the Taliban, the mantras chanted in unison by those charged with making policy after the September 11 attacks were that Abdul Haq – or ‘Hollywood Haq’ as he was dubbed by the Pakistani ISI, and ultimately the CIA and Britain’s MI6) – ‘does not have the wherewithal’ and ‘Abdul Haq has baggage’. Yet when the attacks of September 11 happened, Abdul Haq had for years been working with a group of commanders and tribal leaders around the former King. Their aim was for a peaceful toppling of the Taliban and a stabilisation of Afghanistan. By January 2001, Abdul Haq, who had been described as ‘the legendary Pashtun commander’,²⁵ felt the time was ripe.²⁶ By August 2001, he had pledges from his former jihadi commanders, many of whom were now strategically well placed within the Taliban, to move onto his side. He also had pledges from the King’s group, the promise of defections by senior Taliban Ministers and Talib commanders in key strategic cities of the South and – at a historic meeting in Khoja Bauddin, Dushanbe, in July 2001 – this ‘Pashtun hero of the war’ met with Commander Massoud, otherwise known as ‘the Tadjik hero of the war’²⁷ and they came to a ‘mutually acceptable agreement’. Above all else, Haq desired a *united* Afghanistan and ‘he was willing, if necessary, to be Massoud’s deputy if that’s what it took’.^{28 29}

He planned to implement his objective through consensus, through grass roots tribal unity and through tribal cohesion. His goal

was, like Tzun Su over two thousand years ago, to avoid achieving his objectives through military force, with its unpredictable outcomes, if at all possible. Guile was a far superior weapon. And as a guerrilla leader in Kabul during the 1980s, he had used this plentifully, developing an underground network that had penetrated the Communist Army and civil service, targeting his attacks on power stations, munitions stores and key strategic outposts.

In the tribute piece written after his death, Whitney Azoy, an American anthropologist, outlined some of Haq's Olympian achievements:

When the Soviets invaded in December 1979, he raided their convoys with, as one admirer puts it, 'little more than shotguns, deer rifles and dynamite'. He opened the first Resistance front on the immediate south and west of Kabul. Other brave commanders operated elsewhere; Abdul Haq would always concentrate on the capital city itself. He blew the Naghlu power station outside Kabul after months of meticulous preparation. He blew a seven level underground Soviet ammunition dump in nearby Paghman. The subsequent five-hour firestorm was famously videotaped 10 miles away from the roof of the British Embassy.

Azoy also indicated who his detractors were:

In the holy war's aftermath, he helped organise a multi-party shura (committee of Resistance Commanders) in an attempt to avoid civil war. It wasn't because of Abdul Haq that such efforts failed. Look elsewhere for the culprits: among ambitious and self aggrandizing Afghan 'leaders' but even more among the Islamist cadres of Pakistan's ISI. While you're looking, ask yourself where the Americans were (ungratefully gone from the scene) and to whom America had entrusted Afghanistan's future (Pakistan's ISI).³⁰

British cameraman Peter Jouvenal, who had covered Afghanistan from the early days of the Soviet intervention in the early 1980s, told me about the type of warfare conducted by Haq:

His was a very different type of warfare, much more cunning and harder. Like the kidnap of a Russian advisor, not the firing of rockets. That's what made Abdul Haq special.³¹

This book looks at Haq's skills during the anti-Soviet jihad, particularly in Kabul where he conducted several operations believed ultimately to have shaped that war's outcome. It also revisits his candid criticism of the CIA's conduct of the jihad and how this led to his being vilified by both the CIA and ISI, and how that contributed to their assessment of his plan in the run up to and after September 11.

A key question under consideration in Afghan policymaking remains that of balancing power between the 'state', or centre, and the more traditional forms of governance provided locally. In Afghanistan during the 1970s, 'the centre was strong enough to maintain law and order, but it was never strong enough to undermine the autonomy of the tribes'.³² It was in recognition of this state of affairs that Haq – who was from a leading tribal family or *khan khel*) – hoped to achieve his plan.

Although there has been some replacement of traditional village elders with jihadi ones, essentially not much has changed since the late nineteenth- century when the British General Sir Henry Rawlinson observed:

The nation consists of a mere collection of tribes, of unequal power and divergent habits, which are held together, more or less loosely, according to the personal character of the chief who rules them. The feeling of patriotism, as known in Europe, cannot exist among Afghans, for there is no common country.³³

This book aims to show what remains an enigma to most foreigners involved with Afghanistan. It takes the reader directly to the tribes and to the people who would have implemented Haq's plan. The same people the West must learn to work with if there is to be any hope of stabilising Afghanistan.

An underlying theme of this book then is the importance of finding Afghan solutions to the conflict. Afghanistan is a far more complex arena than Iraq, predominantly because it remains a largely traditional, tribal society which has never had properly functioning state institutions. Although much of the tribal means of governance has been fragmented by thirty years of war, it is still to the tribes

that rural Afghans, particularly those in the south, continue to look for direction. Networks in the north, if not so tribal, remain largely 'clannish' in nature. Abdul Haq understood the importance of using the tribes – particularly the Pashtun tribes in the border areas and the south, which is the main hotbed of the insurgency – as a bulwark against the re-emergence of the Taliban from across the border in Pakistan.

Unfortunately, since September 11, Western policy in Afghanistan has been predominantly kinetic. Where alliances have been forged, they have tended towards the paying off strongmen willing to do the West's (or CIA's) bidding. The idea of building relationships through 'traditional' power structures (as opposed to 'tribal militias') has been an anathema. The tribute piece by the American anthropologist continued:

We don't know for sure what happened when Abdul Haq left Peshawar two weeks ago and crossed into Afghanistan. There are too many unknown details, many doubts about the official story. Just who was with him? Just what promises had been made and by whom? Just who betrayed him to the Taliban and why? We don't know – just yet. Inshallah (the Muslim for 'God Willing'), we'll get to that.³⁴

Within weeks of Haq's death the war moved on, Kabul was taken and – in the tribulation and back-patting following that occasion – Abdul Haq and his warnings were soon forgotten.

I spent the greater part of six years living in Afghanistan. At the height of the Taliban regime, I ran community and urban reconstruction projects, the precursor to what is now known as the National Solidarity Programme (NSP),³⁵ in Kandahar and Herat. I lived, somewhat foolishly, under the threat of a fatwa against British and Americans issued by bin Laden. So when al Qaeda bombed the USS Cole, at Aden in October 2000, I left Kandahar for Quetta, crossing the Registan desert by taxi.

INTRODUCTION

I returned to the region in the aftermath of September 11, eagerly naive to assist in the country's planned transition to democracy, working in a number of capacities: for the World Food Programme; as an election monitor for the initial 'democracy building phase' with the 2002 Loya Jirga; as a researcher on transitional justice for the International Crisis Group; as a monitor on the currency exchange project and as a freelance journalist. By late 2004, I was Political Advisor to the EU Special Representative and then to the Chief Observer on the 2005 parliamentary elections.

This book records what I saw in Afghanistan between 2000 and 2006, from the regime of the Taliban to the end of the formal implementation of the Bonn Process, a critical period. As the West's immediate post-September 11 'success' quickly unfurled, so I became more interested in the reasons why Haq had risked his life on this apparently doomed mission.

Abdul Haq was one of eight brothers who during the jihad were dubbed 'Resistance Royalty' by journalists. Mostly, the sobriquet arose from their charisma and individual effectiveness as commanders in fighting the anti-Soviet guerrilla war of the 1980s. But as *khan khel* (chief clan) of the Ghilzai Pashtun, the family also had a long history and relationship with the tribes of Afghanistan's four eastern provinces.

I was led to Haq's family, the Arsalas, by another journalist in September 2002 when researching a story on poppy production. Their base, Jalalabad, is on the trade route between Peshawar and Kabul, considered one of the foremost poppy-growing areas of Afghanistan. By 2002, Western diplomats dubbed the Arsalas 'warlords', considered them lynchpins in the drugs trade and failed to work with them in hunting down bin Laden at the battle of Tora Bora. The Tora Bora were the caves from which bin Laden had escaped in November 2001 and which the Arsala family knew intimately, having built them two decades before, as a base from which to fight the Soviets. Within fifteen years, the family's status had evolved from 'Resistance Royalty' to pariah.

For some reason, however, they trusted me. Between September 2002 and the end of 2005, I was invited in, taken into their confidence

and allowed to stay in their houses for weeks at a time. I travelled to Kunar and Nuristan, to the drug smuggling bazaars of the Shinwar and the smuggling depots of the tribal areas. My friendship with them took me deep into the politics of the Pashtun belt, giving me an understanding of Afghanistan far removed from the Powerpoint presentations of the soldiers and diplomats among whom I later worked in Kabul. I witnessed the inter-warlord rivalries and Western intelligence mistakes that had led directly to Osama bin Laden's escape from Tora Bora. I also learnt the intricacies of rebuilding traditional structures of local governance, of smuggling, poppy and how the issue of 'Durand' – the historic difficulties over the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan – lay at the root of Pashtun nationalism and Pakistani politicking over Afghanistan. I was granted access to this family and to the tribal people of the Eastern Provinces that bore no relation to the lives of most foreigners living in the international compounds in Kabul. Possibly they trusted me because they knew I was there with an interest in their family, their history, in Abdul Haq and his role in the anti-Soviet jihad and in the Pashtun people. But also in how this tribal society worked and how it would react to the 'democracy' that the West was, nominally, delivering to Afghanistan. On the family's side, when I met them they were still reeling from the killings of both Haq and Qadir and had been sidelined by the West. I still wonder if it was for all these reasons that they allowed me access to their side of the story.

This book is both a temporal journey and an awakening about what is really shaping Afghanistan. In relation to this, I have explored the parallel 'private' US and UK efforts to find support for Haq in 2001, and have uncovered information about what was happening – primarily in the intelligence community but also among Afghan players – in the run up to and the months following September 11. This information is in the book but not yet in the public domain.

On the US side were two American brothers, James and Joe Ritchie, who had made their money as Chicago options traders but who remained impassioned by the country in which they had spent much of their childhood. For years they had financed a series of Loya Jirga outside Afghanistan, in an attempt to formulate an

alternative to the Taliban. Ultimately they decided that Abdul Haq and the banner of the King provided the best means of toppling the Taliban regime.

Meanwhile, on the UK side, an independent effort to find support for Haq was being made by three former military men who had experience in 1980s Afghanistan. One had been a renowned Head of the British Special Boat Service (reforming it in the run up to the Falklands War), another was an ex-Marine who had covered Afghanistan extensively as a cameraman during the jihad and the third was an ex-Rhodesian army officer and Guardsman, a British Baronet who had also covered the Afghan War. They hoped – in vain as it turned out – to get British intelligence agencies to take Abdul Haq seriously.

Their stories mesh with those of Haq's former mujahideen commanders (many of whom had become 'Taliban'), members of the 'Rome' group (representing those Afghans and tribal leaders willing to unite beneath the banner of the former King), UN political staff, ambassadors, senior Taliban ministers, and tribal leaders.

The book draws upon previously unpublished letters, plans, sitreps³⁶ and faxes relating to Haq's plan and both US and UK efforts to find support for him within the CIA and MI6. There are also letters written by Haq to Western leaders during the early 1990s when Haq was attempting to warn – among other things - of the unchecked radicalisation taking place amongst 'foreign fighters' in the tribal areas.

As far back as 2001, I recognised that Abdul Haq provided answers to questions that – nine years into the current intervention in Afghanistan – are only beginning to be posed. Hence it is through Abdul Haq's story that I aim to explain the present by exploring the past, indicating where the mistakes were made and which route those with an interest in stabilisation for Afghanistan should be heading towards.

The book also raises related questions. For example, when did the US 'select' Hamid Karzai and why? Was there ever an intention to deliver democracy and rights for women to Afghanistan? Why did the West opt to subvert justice and accountability for a 'peace'

with Afghan warlords that could never be sustained? The question is of prime importance, as twice now in their spectacular rise to power the Taliban have shown their version of Shariat to be a preferable alternative to the anarchy of the warlords. The re-ascendance of the warlords has probably done most to alienate ordinary Afghans from the West's intervention and impede the formation of a viable state.

Yet Abdul Haq foresaw the problems associated with the warlords taking power as far back as 1991 when – in a letter to the Saudi Ambassador in Islamabad – he prophesied:

If these radical Mujahidin elements take power in Afghanistan, there will be war forever. There will be no peace and security, and we Afghan people will have to beg for food and support for the rest of our lives. From the other side, people will come to hate the names of Mujahidin and Jihad throughout the world, and think that the word means only killing, destruction, disunity and terrorism. It will destroy the image of Mujahidin and Jihad. Moreover, the students and guests of these radical elements will find many supporters in your country and, if not take full power, still engage in atrocities and chaos. This is neither good for you, nor for us, nor for Islam.³⁷

In the aftermath of the 2009 presidential elections, this scenario looks to have taken hold. The opportunity of bringing these men to justice was ignored in 2001, when instead the West made them its allies in removing the Taliban. The result is what we see today.

After beginning this book I found myself talking to a former SIS man in Lamu, Kenya. His view of Abdul Haq seemed to typify that of the British (and indeed US) intelligence establishments when he said: 'He was dead within a couple of weeks so what did it matter?' With both Afghanistan and Pakistan now failing, causing attendant problems for the entire world, this book is about why it did indeed matter.

CHAPTER ONE

THE 'PEACE VERSUS JUSTICE' STRATEGY

The Tigers of Wrath are wiser than their Horses of Instruction

WILLIAM BLAKE

Kabul, June 2002

The evening was still and the dust had settled, now replaced by a light of such crystalline luminescence that the Mausoleum of King Amanullah stood like a cutout on its ridge above the city. On the other side of town, last-minute preparations for the Grand Assembly of Elders, known here as a Loya Jirga, were coming to an end. The buildings of Kabul's 1970s-style polytechnic had been steadily refurbished: glass puttied into shattered windows, fountains reconnected to water, coats of paint brushed over the strafe marks of machine-gun fire, landmines cleared from the long grass between dorms, piles of mouldering excrement swept from lecture theatres whose last residents had been Arab Talibs.

The delegates who would participate in the Loya Jirga had been elected in their districts and regions, and their thoughts were now pregnant with the responsibility of selecting Afghanistan's new President and the Cabinet of the country's transitional government. There was a distinct feeling that a new era of peace was about to dawn over Afghanistan, after twenty-three miserable war years. Despite some of the problems with bribery and intimidation in the first phase of the elections, the process overall had been fairly democratic and UN workers had expressed pride in achieving the election of over a thousand people³⁸ across Afghanistan.³⁹

This Loya Jirga – the first Grand Assembly of Elders to be held here in twenty years – was the first step in the Bonn Process. The Bonn Process was the roadmap, agreed in November 2001, between the international community and a select group of Afghans (some now say too select) for the state-building and democratisation of

Afghanistan. It was not strictly a 'peace plan' because it failed to include all parties to the conflict, namely the Taliban.⁴⁰

The tent where the Assembly would be held sat white and huge on the highest level of the site, dazzling in the sun against the ochres of the mountainside. The Germans had brought it from Munich, where it had been the principal beer tent at the Ocktoberfest, something the more conservative Afghan leaders coming here tomorrow would probably not be happy to know.

The screams cut through the still evening. A fellow election worker, an American, scurried up the steps shrieking that there were 'gunmen' on the site-level beneath us.

A UN political colleague walked towards us. When he heard gunmen had entered the site, his brow furrowed and he shook his head, storming away uttering expletives. His anger, so out of character for a man who was one of the 'elders' of the monitors – he had spent some twenty-five years in Afghanistan running aid projects for a Nordic organisation – was unexpected. Despite his seniority, it was obvious there was an undercurrent or an agenda of which even he was unaware.

Below us, ordinary Afghans – men and women, old and young – streamed quietly towards a large open-sided Indian *chamiana* tent with a carpeted floor. All seemed innately proud to have been elected; serious about the task they had come here to undertake: the 're-birth of their nation' in selecting its new government, and also serious about reconstructing Afghanistan after years of bloodshed and war.

However, something they had not foreseen was unfolding. Three shining black Landcruisers, codan masts still swinging after a high-velocity arrival, were parked on the level below us, surrounded by armed men. Through their open doors it was possible to see a stash of RPGs and Kalashnikovs; all strictly banned on the site. The Loya Jirga's atmosphere, so hopeful even within the past hour, was now bloating with latent violence, like a balloon filling with water until reaching bursting point, unleashing its force without being checked.

These Landcruisers had just borne some of Afghanistan's most

ignominious characters into the heart of the site and – though we did not yet know it then – into the heart of the state-building project. Now milling at the edge of the *shamiana* was Prof (Ustad) Rabbani, a thin man who, though no shia, wore an Iranian-style turban. He had been Afghanistan's President during Kabul's 1992–94 'terror'. Behind was Fahim, who looked to me almost gangster-like and was scowling. A former Afghan female colleague who had taken me to visit the World Food Programme's widows' bakery programme in January 2002 had explained the significance of the Northern Alliance to the people of Kabul when I had commented naively that with Massoud's poster plastered around Kabul, people must feel a sense of relief in this new, post-Taliban era. She had reacted with passionate fury.

'These are *not* our people, they are from the Panjshir, *not* here. The people of Kabul *hate* Massoud because of what he did to us ten years ago! And of all Afghan factions, Massoud's soldiers were the worst!' But surely, I asked, these men were better than the Taliban? 'No', she replied, 'at least with the Taliban, we knew what the rules were!' She wanted to know why the West had made Fahim Defence Minister. Didn't we realise he was a terrorist' who had executed *thousands* of people when he was head of the KHAD? Taken them out to the airfield where they were killed? Her reaction unsettled me, particularly as she herself had been imprisoned by the Taliban just weeks before September 11, for contravening some rule.

Kabul's airport had desolate, open land around it. You could kill a lot of people there with no one watching. This evening though, the warlords continued filing into the *shamiana* to take their seats. Behind Fahim came Sayyaf. Then there was the thickset, bullish General Dostum.

A couple of women, no doubt emboldened by the atmosphere of intense international interest now in Afghanistan and believing that the rules precluded those with a history of human rights abuses from participating in the Loya Jirga itself,⁴¹ unfurled questions at the strongmen like small arms fire. In short, why were the warlords, those responsible for destroying the country, here? The men stared

back unflinchingly. Another woman challenged Rabbani to explain what had happened in Badakhshan for he had apparently bribed his way into a seat by buying votes with fake money printed by the Russians ten years before. As he attempted some explanation, there were peels of laughter from the women. A fellow election monitor, Amy, the daughter of an eye doctor brought up in Afghanistan during the Afghan civil war, was incredulous, having never witnessed Afghan women challenge those who had terrorised them. But at this stage the women – and I – still believed that the international community had come to Afghanistan in the wake of September 11 not just to rout al Qaeda, but to protect these women from the abuses to which they had been subjected for so long. Perhaps that is why they believed they had the ability to hold these men publicly to account. It was a defining moment for them. But it stopped right here. The warlords sat and faced the crowd defiantly and the uncharacteristic reaction of my colleague Nils was my first indication that all was not okay.

I decided to leave. But at the gate, British ISAF soldiers, virtually incoherent with tension, said the warlords had forced their way in. ‘Put a fucking gun to the head of one of our lads’, one of them spewed, his voice tingling with nerves. ‘He was tellin’ ‘em they couldn’t come in ‘ere with them guns or cars, but the driver slammed down his accelerator and burst through the cordon. Fuck, this is fucking crazy’, he screeched.

Outside in the car park scores of Hilux jeeps, laden with armed men, surged back and forth, like wild horses in a coral throwing up a miasma of dust. I dodged to avoid them, feeling intensely visible and alienated from this display of undiluted, aggressive testosterone. My elderly driver, Jan Mohammad, sat quietly at the far end of the car park, hunched over the wheel. He looked worried and, putting the car into first gear, commented that this perplexing, superfluous display of strength by the bodyguard militias of the warlords who had come to Kabul from the provinces was *bistiar gharrab* or ‘very bad’.

We drove to the Intercontinental where I had arranged to meet

a friend, a *Newsweek* journalist. The press corps were gathered there in a gloomy interior awaiting a press conference and my friend was re-capping with his interpreter the events of that afternoon. 'Khalilzad⁴² must be out of his mind' he stormed, 'Why the *hell* make such a public display of US interference? He could at *least* have let the King say it himself?'

He was talking about a last-minute press conference which journalists had been called to attend. There, the US Ambassador, the Afghan-born Zalmay Khalilzad, had strutted menacingly up and down. Looking on were the UN chief, Lakhdar Brahimi and Hamid Karzai (who was nominally titled 'President' of the Afghan Interim Authority). But most surprisingly, in a quiet corner cowered Afghanistan's former King, Zahir Shah. The press corps were unaware why they had been called here until Khalilzad, raven-dark eyes scanning the crowd, exhorted, 'The King will *not* be running against Karzai as Head of State'.

He had apparently spun on his heels to face the press corps. An impregnable silence had fallen over the room. A protégée of Condoleezza Rice and Member of the Rand Corporation, Khalilzad had worked for UNOCAL, an American petroleum company that for years had courted the Taliban in an attempt to build a pipeline across Afghanistan.

The former King, now eighty-three years old, had seemed defenceless to the journalists. When he had returned to Afghanistan the previous week, ending twenty-nine years of exile, Afghans had gathered around ancient television screens in anticipation of his words. The older generation remembered his peaceable forty-year rule with fondness, and so it had been a momentous occasion to see him reach the bottom of the airplane steps on his walking stick. A microphone had been put in front of him, he had opened his mouth to speak and ... the sound system cut out. King Zahir Shah had mouthed words into nothingness and Afghans heard nothing of his sentiments about returning to the country of his birth after twenty-nine long years.

The relevance of the ex-King had become obvious to me days

earlier on Chicken Street where Afghans sold knickknacks and carpets. An elderly man stepped forward from a doorway to greet me and another election monitor. We were invited into his shop where Uzbek saddle bags, small rugs and old Gardener teapots were stacked. The frail old man offered tea, which my colleague accepted as we continued the discourse. The mood turned wistful: the man had tears in his eyes. Perry conversed with him in *dari* and explained that the man was happy to see foreigners again and that the last thirty years had been a time of pain for Afghanistan. Everything was okay until King Zahir Shah left, then things had become very black. King Zahir Shah emanated from Afghanistan's elite Mohammadzai clan of the Durrani Pashtun, rulers of Afghanistan since 1747. He had come to power in 1933 and presided over forty years of peace. It was only when his ambitious cousin, General Dauod, deposed him in 1973, while the King was in Italy for eye surgery, that things began to go wrong. Although Daoud had 'modernising' intentions, his was the first in a series of coups which would eventually plunge the country into war. I thought of what the old man must have seen in the years between Zahir Shah's departure and now: several changes of government and ideology, the arrival of the Russians, a ten year jihad to eject them, then chaos as the various factions vied for power before the Taliban arrived. At our guesthouse, during breakfast table conversations between Nils and the journalists, it seemed there was still hope the King would be brought back and Nils said:

He would be a useful symbol, a banner beneath which opposing factions could unite, in memory of better days. Certainly the older generation are keen for this. Afghanistan is a very conservative society. The King could provide the glue that's needed. Better than religion.

Nils had explained that the problems would begin *after* the Loya Jirga. For it was doubtful the 'Three Musketeers' – Fahim the Defence Minister, Qanooni the Interior Minister and Dr Abdullah the Foreign Minister – could all stay in the key ministries. All three were originally from the Panjshir valley, so could not all feasibly stay in power. Fahim should step down but that would be difficult;

he was now the most powerful man in the country.

'The Panjshiris stepped into the corridors of power, taking over Kabul from its inhabitants, without the rest of the country getting a look in', Nils explained to the journalists, adding that Fahim had ensured the ministries were staffed by Panjshiris loyal to him. Hence the chiefs of Intelligence and Security are both from Fahim's village in the Panjshir. Fahim was also supported by Russia, Iran and the US, who needed to decide whether they preferred using him for their 'war on terror' or whether they preferred a truly democratic Loya Jirga. The latter would be better for Afghanistan's stability.

An American journalist commented that surely the shura-e-Nazar 'deserved' to take Kabul, having routed the Taliban on behalf of the West? I should perhaps explain that Shura-e-Nazar was the name given by Massoud to his mainly Panjshiri-led 'Council of the North', a sub-set of the Northern Alliance and comprising members of Professor Rabbani's Jamiat-e-Islami Party. Throughout Kabul in the run-up to the Loya Jirga, the Shura-e-Nazar' were buying off votes in some areas, intimidating in others and generally working to control the elections. In response to the journalist's question, Nils sighed and asked them whether giving all the power to people from a valley representing less than five percent of the land area of the country was really sustainable? Afghanistan, he said, could easily end up like a federation, with the Panjshiris controlling Kabul. The problems would come when they tried to extend their influence into other areas. Then there would be fighting, and Pakistan, as well as neighbouring countries, would begin meddling again and things would get very bad.

The *Newsweek* journalist's comments about Khalilzad's bizarre behaviour at the press conference on the eve of the Loya Jirga, and its probable connection with the warlords' subsequent violent arrival at the Loya Jirga site was now obvious. Most of these strongmen had returned rather haltingly from exile to Afghanistan, in the wake

of the Taliban's recent departure. The view of the UN political staff, who had come into contact with warlords and strongmen in the spring of 2002 during elections for the Loya Jirga, was that many of those who had returned would be subject to some sort of accounting by the international community for the abuses they had committed during the civil war of the early 1990s.⁴³ But this was not to be.

The following day Amy told me that after my departure those women who had dared criticise the warlords 'were intimidated to silence by *Amniyat*'.⁴⁴ *Amniyat* was another name for the Afghan 'intelligence' police, also known as KHAD⁴⁵ (Khedamat-e-Ettela'at-e-Dowlati) after the Soviet-style state security apparatus built up during the 1980s. *Amniyat* was made up of the sunglasses-wearing men who had attended the pre-Loya Jirga elections in Kabul with notepads, apparently to record potential troublemakers at the Loya Jirga.

How these security / intelligence men had actually entered the Loya Jirga site, which was supposed to have been secured, was perplexing. Only when we saw Engineer Arif, the Panjshiri chief of *Amniyat*, who was standing at the top of the site, did it become obvious that their presence was 'official'. Arif stood imperiously, with heavy-lidded eyes and radio in hand, directing his slick-suited minions around what was supposed to be a sealed meeting for the democratically elected delegates.

These men were loyal to General Fahim, now the most powerful man in the country.⁴⁶ Earlier in the year, he had awarded himself the title of 'Marshall' and today his intelligence police came to the Loya Jirga armed with Polaroid cameras, video cameras and the threat of later retribution for 'troublesome' delegates.

The UN chief, Lakhdar Brahimi, responded to the disquiet of the election monitors by saying, 'Tell them to go!' This was transmitted – rather imperiously – via an aide. Those of us who wished to stay, so the message was relayed, could do so, but we must be content simply to monitor the intelligence police; however we were 'on no account' to interfere in their behaviour.

Looking back at what has happened – and what flowed from

this event in June 2002 – it seems obvious that, as election monitors charged with protecting the integrity of the democratic process, we should, at that stage, have walked out. Although it was obvious that something was very wrong, I myself was not yet fully aware of the significance of what was going on. Perhaps, I thought naively, a larger and more purposeful plan for peace and stability was unfolding. But many of the monitors, particularly those who had spent more time in Afghanistan, as former aid workers, diplomats and writers during the anti-Soviet jihad, were very aware. One UN colleague had even quit prior to the Loya Jirga, telling Brahimi that he could not agree with the lack of representation of Pashtun elders from the south (for the UN had apparently deemed that they would be too closely associated with the Taliban).⁴⁷ For the rest of us, it was only when the Loya Jirga had finished that we could assess what had happened in the cool light of day.

This morning I was to check that *Amniyat* were not hassling the women in their dorms. There were reports they had even been into the rooms; a surprising contravention of Afghan culture. Outside the concrete building was a huddle of women, and amidst them a former Afghan colleague, Dr Massouda Jalal. She asked why *Amniyat* were present. Masouda was not just any woman. For several months, she had been preparing her campaign to stand against Karzai as Head of State. When she had first told me I hadn't quite believed her. But it was her firm belief that if women played a greater role in politics, much of the fighting might be averted. She was nervous. An intelligence officer stood close to her robes, bent over taking notes in a scruffy notebook. She told me it was difficult for her to talk because he would report on her.

Six months earlier, a meeting with the Women's Minister, Dr Sima Samar, had foreshadowed how things were going to unfold for Afghan women. It was a day sharp with cold, in January 2002 just eight weeks after the Taliban were routed from Kabul, and I had taken some Irish donors to meet some of the new Ministers. We had gone to Samar's office which was then in a Kabul suburb, Wazir Akbar Khan.

Samar looked vulnerable, sitting on a 1950s sofa and huddled in a black overcoat. The *chekhov* style stove did little to assuage the blistering cold rising from a concrete floor in the women's NGO. After six weeks as Minister, she complained that she still had no office. The son of Ismael Khan, Governor of Herat, had taken over the building reserved for her. The act was symbolic; for despite her being a Minister now he was a strongman and she did not matter. She said that she needed an independent place, so women could come without feeling harassed. Despite representing fifty-five percent of the population, women were still at risk, and in need of lawyers to take up their cases, as well as women's shelters.

A Hazara by origin, she had a reed-fine face, short dark hair and laughter lines around the eyes. She had just returned from Washington DC with the other new Ministers. She told me:

In Washington, George Bush put his arm around me and said, 'Don't worry Sima, we are watching to see that the women of Afghanistan will be okay'. But the other ministers were watching him.

Behind her words was a degree of isolation, a plea for us to recognise that, despite the renewed interest in Afghanistan's women following September 11, an automatic progression in women's rights should not be taken for granted.

Samar somehow resembled Audrey Hepburn: was it the oversized coat, the cropped hair, or her slightness? Yet there was an underlying determination in her tone. She said she had been threatened on the plane back from Washington by the other ministers, who were asking her why she was trying to Westernise Afghan women? Now, here with me, she slapped the table and said:

But I'm not asking for abortion rights. If I say 'access to education', is it Western? The *only* way we can change society is via education. Illiterate women think they are the *property* of men. We need equality, not privilege.

The Irishmen nodded sympathetically as she added that the big challenges in Afghanistan were education and employment. She wanted to give women skills so they were empowered. But it was important that the international donors act in a way that did not

make the situation worse. She related an example of what irritated her about the weakness of donors in the face of the plight of Afghan women. A year ago the Taliban had announced that women and men should have separate hospitals. She was infuriated by the response of international donors, because the World Health Organisation (WHO) had agreed with the Taliban to 'build a *separate* hospital!' Samar said she believed that this had happened because the head of WHO was a Muslim, and added that when the Taliban closed girls' schools, UNICEF responded by closing boys' schools. 'It gave the Taliban the opportunity to *make* boys go to the madrassahs!'

Samar looked tensely into her teacup before going on:

Even Karzai was scared to push women's issues: 'He's concerned other leaders will not tolerate progress. So donors *must* make aid money conditional upon women's rights being incorporated into projects'.⁴⁸

The Irish donors, who would have several million pounds to spend on Afghan reconstruction, leant towards her, transfixed. But then she was off the issue of 'conditionality' and onto the problem of appointing fundamentalists to senior positions. She had protested angrily to Karzai about his appointment of the new Chief Justice: 'I had a *big* fight with Karzai about this; the man is almost Mullah Omar. How then could he protect women's rights or make changes?'

The men nodded sagely as she moved onto her third major issue: appointing unindicted former mujahideen to senior positions. In particular Mohammad Fahim, the Defence Minister, was 'also a problem', she hissed.

In the Defence Ministry, they have ten Generals but seven are Tajiks, two are Pashtuns and one is Uzbek. None are Hazara. Yet it was Fahim himself who gave the names to the British government. He chose his people. How *could* the British accept this? You know in Cabinet each day the leaders say they will appoint people on the basis of the Resistance rather than education.

The Afghan 'Resistance' were those who had fought the Soviets during the 1980s. Many came from rural areas and were known as 'mujahideen'. Some Resistance leaders formed factional groups,

normally on the basis of ethnicity. Their leaders, men who oversaw many commanders and dealt with foreign donors to the war, were usually called warlords. Energised with anger, Samar went on, 'But I was also part of the Resistance, only *I* did not kill anyone! And who bombed the West of Kabul? *These* men!'

One of the Irishmen finally spoke, asking for an explanation of the pictures of Massoud now pasted up on lamp posts across Kabul. The Iranians, she said, had printed seven metric tonnes of posters of Massoud and the Panjshiris were putting them up all over, 'even at a womens' conference!'

Today, at the Loya Jirga, some six months later, Sima Samar, who had initially been appointed as one of the three Joint Chairman found herself effectively sacked by Karzai. The warlords were apparently unhappy with her appointment.⁴⁹

Leaving the Loya Jirga site that day, I saw an ISAF soldier arguing with an officer of *Amniyat*. Perhaps the soldier might have been forgiven for assuming that the intelligence men, loyal as they were to Fahim, had no business being here. But evidently no one had briefed him that Mr Kar Sym Yar, now effectively Chairman of the Loya Jirga, had received a visit from the head of *Amniyat* and several Panjshiri gunmen on the eve of the meeting, the same evening the warlords had forced their way inside the site. Kar Sym Yar had then been forced to sign an 'agreement' stating that the 'security' of the Loya Jirga was no longer in the hands of the international community, but in the hands of the Panjshiri dominated intelligence police.

When the Loya Jirga finally began the next day, it had been delayed by further private meetings between the US, the UN and the warlords or 'mujahideen leaders' as they now preferred to be called. The term was a reminder of their more glorious past, when they had dispatched the Russians, before turning on each other in bloody inter-ethnic conflict, laying waste to vast tracts of Kabul and to the civilian population.

Today they arrived in their glory; in strings of black Landcruisers whistling through the site, laden with guards and ammunition. Taking their seats they were recognisable by their head-dress: the Tadjik 'Lion of Herat', Ismael Khan, wore his trademark *keffiyah*; the Pashtun Governor of Jalalabad, Haji Qadir, looked monarchical in a gold turban; Dostum, the Uzbek leader of the north, wore a sharp Soviet-style suit and was accompanied by a bodyguard with a crew cut. Finally, the Pashtun Abdur Rasul Sayyaf was crowned with a vast white turban. They sat together in the front row of the meeting, united in their audacity. Behind sat the democratically elected delegates, now hushed to silence by the presence of those who had terrorised them during the civil war years within the past decade.

Most of the Loya Jirga Commission had wanted to disbar Sayyaf's candidacy because of his human rights record, particularly his brutal campaign against the Shia in Kabul during the early 1990s.⁵⁰ But as he took his seat regally a colleague whispered, 'After the first phase of the election he invited all the candidates for dinner and threatened to slit their throats if they didn't vote for him in the final phase'. Quoting William Blake, he added, 'The tigers of wrath are wiser than their horses of instruction'.

But who were their masters? Ourselves? The Americans? The United Nations? Sayyaf wasn't just any warlord with blood on his hands; he had opened the University of Dawal al-Jihad in the tribal areas of Pakistan using a large donation from bin Laden in 1980. It became a training school for extremists,⁵¹ men recruited from across the Islamic world. The terrorists Omar Sheikh and Khaled Sheikh Mohammad, responsible for the kidnap and killing of American journalist Danny Pearl and involvement in both World Trade Centre attacks respectively were reputed to have spent time there and one former student even set up Abu Sayyaf,⁵² taking Sayyaf's name in honour.

A week into the Loya Jirga, former King Zahir Shah was to make a speech. The delegates waited expectantly to hear the words they had missed when Zahir Shah's microphone had so mysteriously cut as he had stepped off his plane from Rome. The great tent was

bathed in silence as the terrapin-like former King moved slowly towards the podium. At last on it, he gathered himself up to speak. His lips moved but his words were lost in the vast depths of the great tent. As the old King mouthed his words the delegates leant forward, straining to catch them. But oddly, the microphone which had worked perfectly just minutes before, had gone dead. It was the second time within a month. Again, King Zahir Shah's moment had passed, silently. Afghanistan's people were sorely disappointed.

As the days dragged on and the candidates sat silently in the tent, the real business of the Loya Jirga – the horse-trading – was being conducted without their involvement in a small tent marked 'VIPs only'. There, Karzai, the warlords, the US Special envoy and the UN chief Lakhdar Brahimi remained for much of the two week meeting, returning only periodically to the main tent after agreements on (unknown) key issues had been made. At the back of the tent an American Embassy staffer whispered, 'The Panjshiris are already handing out cards saying "Afghan Transitional Authority". Like they already know they'll be the new government'.

The die was cast for Afghanistan's future a day later at the Loya Jirga. The Shiite Ayatollah Asif Muhseni⁵³ called on delegates to rename the country the 'Islamic Transitional State of Afghanistan'. In unison with Muhseni's suggestion Sayyaf swept to his feet, punching the air as his robes gathered around his legs. 'Everyone must stand to signal his approval for the motion!' Sayyaf shouted and the two front rows of mujahideen, including Karzai, rose quickly, eyes darting left and right, shouting 'right!' and '*Allah e akbar*'. To be seen with your bottom still on a seat when an issue with 'religious' connotations was being debated was to invite persecution. But behind the mujahideen, ordinary delegates rose reluctantly, many forced into doing so by the intelligence police who swept the tent from behind. Incredibly, there was a lone voice of opposition from the warlords: Kandahar's jowly Governor Gul Agha Sherzai rose

from his seat, wiping a bead of perspiration from below his black and grey turban: 'I think we've had enough war since twenty-five years ago in the name of Islam'. Undeterred by a collective gasp from the audience, he continued:

This government has enough of a basis in Islam and everybody knows this is an Islamic government. We admire Islam and ... don't need to put its name on the transitional government.

But shouting broke out and men surged forwards, threatening chaos until the Governor of Nangarhar took to the podium, blue eyes flashing like headlamps beneath a gold turban. Grasping the microphone determinedly, Haji Abdul Qadir reminded the gathering that it was for 'Islam' that so many had sacrificed themselves during the jihad and the country would certainly be named an Islamic state. The motion was passed by a show of hands, few daring to dissent.

Outside the womens' dorms, Massouda was talking to another woman. She appeared unnerved and distracted. She was about to give a speech about her presidential candidacy but was scared of the reaction of the Mullahs to her candidacy: 'It is not in Sharia law for a woman to be able to run for president'.

She was hesitant as several black Landcruisers swept past. Dr Rabbani and General Dostum were leaving the site. But minutes later, Massouda, the first ever woman to run for President, gave her speech and said:

The women of Afghanistan are champions. And they have to tell the world that even though they have been forced inside the home for the last five or six years, they can free Afghanistan and the world can trust them.

Afterwards, female and male delegates gathered around her. A male Professor of Medicine at Kabul University told her: 'We see women in government positions as very patient and trustworthy, we think that if a woman was leader, Afghanistan would progress much faster'.⁵⁴

But the imam of Kabul's main mosque, Qari Abdurrahman Qarizada threatened Massouda with his words: 'Koranic law says women are too weak and unintelligent to run for president'.

The vote for president occurred by secret ballot, although in practice many factional leaders, having worked out deals in the side tent, forced the people from their fiefdoms to vote behind them. Haji Qadir managed to get most Pashtuns to vote for Karzai and so, despite visible support for Massouda (who got over one 170 votes), the overwhelming majority of votes went to the handsome young man from Kandahar who was already interim President of Afghanistan's Interim Authority.

In his first speech as Transitional President, Hamed Karzai said:

The Afghan people want to get rid of warlordism. They want to get rid of the gun once and for all. And once again we have a strong mandate.

But he then disappeared with the US Ambassador, Khalilzad and Lakdhar Brahimi. They apparently went to the Presidential Palace to make further deals about Cabinet positions with the warlords. Meanwhile, security was tightened with new checkpoints and an earlier curfew across the city.

While the dealmakers were at the Palace, the delegates sat bored, impatient for the Loya Jirga to close and humiliated to have been excluded from the debate. One of them told journalists:

I am really disappointed with the Loya Jirga. Governors and officials are telling people what to say in their speeches. I myself have been threatened into supporting Karzai and my first candidate was the former King Zahir Shah. This is just a Loya Jirga in name only. The main issues have not been discussed so far. If it goes on like this, fighting could restart because Karzai does not have the support of the majority of the people.⁵⁵

The choice of Cabinet seats was supposed to have been decided by the delegates but now that it was clear how the meeting was being conducted, the horse-trading had moved unashamedly from the VIP tent to the Presidential Palace. This went on for most of the ten day meeting.

Finally, it seemed, there had been an agreement. So on the night before Karzai was finally due to announce the Cabinet, a British ISAF soldier explained about security arrangements for the next

day. 'We're gunned to fuck', he declared nervously as a contingent of the Afghan National Guard marched past with Lee Enfield rifles swinging by their sides. Tomorrow, the tent would be filled with the more deadly armoury of the warlords' bodyguards.

Fahim's black Landcruiser tore through the site like a dust devil minutes before Karzai arrived the next day. He was a stocky man and descended the vehicle onto a red carpet on which the National Guard were lined up awaiting inspection. With his chin stuck firmly in the air and his thickset nose like a pile of squashed rugs, Fahim began to walk along the line of soldiers who towered over him.

The air inside the tent was thick with tension as everyone awaited Karzai. International diplomats and warlords alike had brought armed men. The whole event seemed like a superfluous show of testosterone as the bodyguards of opposing factions and international diplomats talked nervously into hand held radios, all the while eyes scanning the tent.

The new President had already delayed announcing the make-up of his Cabinet once and today the mood was of nervous expectation. Ordinary delegates knew that deals about which factional leaders had been chosen as Cabinet members had gone on elsewhere, instead of with their vote as promised by the Bonn Agreement. Still, they were unsure just who would be given government positions.

Finally Karzai swept in, cutting a fine figure in his long *chapan* silk coat, lambskin *karakaul* perched elegantly on his head. Taking his place on the podium, he began by making jokes to ease the tension. But he went on to announce his Cabinet haltingly. Those who had expected the Loya Jirga to rebalance the country's ethnic power were disappointed.⁵⁶ The hegemony of the Panjshiris was reinforced; of the three most powerful ministries – Defence, Foreign and Interior – the Panjshiris conceded one in name only. The only significant Pashtun to be offered a position was the Northern Alliance ally Haji Qadir, the powerful and charismatic Governor of

Jalalabad, who was made Minister of Public Works and one of the three Vice Presidents.

With the meeting closed, Brahimi and Khalilzad announced that its outcome was a triumph of 'peace versus justice'. When someone asked what this meant Brahimi explained, in a laboured way which rather implied the naivete of the journalist, that to maintain peace within Afghanistan, it had 'of course' been necessary to subvert the idea of justice. In later opinion columns, this was explained by adapting a Lyndon B. Johnson quote to refer to the warlords: 'It's better to have them inside the metaphorical 'tent' pissing outwards than outside the tent pissing in'.

But others disagreed with the view that those who had hoped for justice were simply 'naïve idealists'. One UN official admitted that the UN had ordered the Loya Jirga Commission (which was Afghan led) not to disallow Sayyaf's election. Although delegates were, under the rules of the Bonn Agreement, supposed to have signed an affidavit saying they had never participated in 'war crimes', because none of these people had ever been tried in a court of law, this could not be proven in practice. I witnessed Sayyaf make this point in response to a *Washington Post* journalist when – at an election at a school near the old British cemetery in Kabul⁵⁷ - she had challenged him on his past. As a result of this 'get out', those who had previously terrorised Afghans were allowed to lie about their past. Then they were allowed to attend the Loya Jirga and – supported by the *Amniyat* who intimidated and threatened democratically elected delegates – the warlords were able to shape the meetings' outcome and thus ultimately the outcome for the fledgling Afghan state.

Back then, in June 2002, as the monitors and UN colleagues met to assess the likely outcome of the Loya Jirga, another UN colleague commented, 'If I had been in Brahimi's shoes, I would have made a 'heavier' footprint and been more engaged. The chance to control the warlords is now lost'. The warlords, he said, would now return to their fiefdoms emboldened. They had now been 'legitimised' before ordinary Afghans in the eyes of the international community. In the following weeks, reports dribbled back to the UN of revenge attacks

by these strongmen who, once back in their localities, singled out those democratically elected candidates who had dared speak out at the Loya Jirga. Sima Samar was forced into hiding. Brahimi and Khalilzad's notion of 'Peace versus Justice' seemed dangerously like renting peace. But for how long this peace could be 'rented' nobody was sure.

Within two weeks though an event occurred that set the stage for a further breakdown of stability. On a hot day in July, when the sun had reached its zenith on the far side of Kabul's dry riverbed, Afghanistan's Vice President was assassinated as he and his nephew left his Ministry building for lunch. Haji Abdul Qadir was also the Pashtun Governor of Jalalabad who had mobilised so many votes for Karzai only two weeks before.

When my interpreter Omar and I arrived at the Ministry of Public Works, a small group of journalists were already gathered around Qadir's bloodied Landcruiser. The site was not yet cordoned off and the vehicle had been driven into a wall, its bullet-ridden sides now resembled a cheese grater. On the floor and front seats, where the bodies had been pulled from the car, the two men's ruby-coloured blood glistened. Bystanders said the assassins had rounded on Qadir as he was driven out of his Ministry's gates, not letting up their firing even as the car plunged into a wall. The killers then took their leave in one of Kabul's many thousands of yellow taxis, blending instantaneously into the traffic. Someone had clearly wanted Qadir dead and was taking no chances. 'Shame, he was a nice man', said my *Newsweek* friend quietly. His fixer then reached into the car to pull out Qadir's bloodied satellite phones and announced that in the last half hour before his death Qadir had tried, three times, to reach someone called 'Haji Z'. This was probably Haji Zaman, an enemy and rival of Qadir's from his home Province of Nangarhar, apparently driven out of the country by Qadir in the Spring. But the name which appeared on Qadir's phone did not belong to Haji Zaman.

Today had been Qadir's first official day at work as Public Works Minister. Oddly, the bodyguards normally guarding the Ministry were not Qadir's but belonged to the outgoing Minister. Someone said they had received instructions from the Interior Ministry yesterday to leave their weapons at home today. And several onlookers remarked that the assassins, who had been wearing the white *salwar kameez* of Nangarhar, Qadir's province, had been hiding in the bushes outside the Ministry for several hours waiting.

Three days after Qadir's assassination, at a registration of journalists at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Panjshiri Press Officer, a small man with a splash of dark hair, a western suit and an east-coast American accent showed us into a minimalist 1970s-style office of leathered white chairs. His look was sullen, as though he really didn't have time to deal with us. The door was closed and we were told to turn off recording equipment while he spoke: 'I have just been to a Memorial Service, for a great man. For Haji Qadir'. He paused and looked around the room. The journalists sat in silence. The Press Officer continued, hissing to the group; 'I've been reading some of your stories on his death over this weekend. Most of them are bullshit!' He looked around, checking the effect of his words before going on:

This was *not* an ethnic killing. Do I make myself clear? It had *nothing* to do with ethnicity and let me tell you people, I'm watching the stories you write and I don't want to see any more bullshit reporting, like saying this death had to do with ethnicity.

Though some of the press had said the killing could be ethnically motivated, others assumed it to be the result of a drug feud. When leader of the Eastern Shura in pre-Taliban days, Haji Qadir had apparently made a lot of money. No one was quite sure how, but everyone knew that poppy was the major crop grown in his province.

Haji Qadir had been the brother of another major Afghan commander: Abdul Haq. Ten months before, in the aftermath of September 11, the London *Evening Standard* had carried a story on 5 October 2001 about Commander Abdul Haq.⁵⁸ The headline read

'Rebel chief begs; don't bomb now, Taliban will be gone in a month'. A picture showed a large Afghan man named Abdul Haq. Another smaller photo showed him clasping Margaret Thatcher's hand. It was 1986 and she was lauding him for his role as a guerrilla commander in the Afghan-Soviet war. The reporter wrote that as well as being, 'one of the most respected mujahideen commanders in the guerrilla war against the Soviets', Haq was now 'a rebel commander at the forefront of a campaign to overthrow the Taliban'.

The Taliban is collapsing from within, Haq explained, 'The people are starving, they are already against them ... but if the missiles strike, this will be delayed, even halted. Mr Blair has the influence to put the hand of restraint on America. I beg him to do it.'⁵⁹

But recent press articles had shown Blair leaving Moscow for Pakistan on the latest round of his diplomatic mission to shore up support for imminent US-led military action. He looked like a swotty schoolboy, frenetic and reactionary, desperate for approval. In contrast, Haq's face appeared calm, cerebral even. His 'strategy', the piece said, was to persuade the Taliban's own military forces to turn against their leaders in a secret war being waged against the hardline fundamentalist regime.

Every time I meet commanders who cross the mountains in darkness to brief me, 'they are part of the Taliban forces, but they no longer support them'. Haq explained, 'These men will join us and there are many of them. When the time is right they and others will rise up and this Taliban government will be swept aside'. The only condition, he added, was that the struggle be one 'in which Afghans take the leading role'.⁶⁰

With even the most liberal commentators in Britain subscribing to the idea of unleashing the full might of the West's military hardware on Afghanistan, the quiet words of this open-faced commander struck me.

That weekend the US-led bombing campaign began. It was Sunday 7 October 2001. A diplomat I'd known in Islamabad met me for supper. He now worked on the 'Afghan desk' in Charles Street, but like many Foreign Office officials, hadn't visited the country.

The FCO Security policy was so tight that the Islamabad-based diplomats were not, back in 2000, even been allowed to take a tourist trip up the Khyber Pass. But he had been fascinated by my stories of Kandahar. Tonight he was excited the bombing had begun. On the question of whether the strategy was really to use the Northern Alliance to oust the Taliban, he indicated that this was not the plan, even though, with most of the journalists behind Northern Alliance lines, this seemed unlikely. But he would not say just *what* the plan was because of 'security' constraints. So what was the plan?

'Pashtun Commanders', he sighed. 'We're going to use Pashtun Commanders. So you see we're *not* relying on the Northern Alliance'.

I asked if that meant they were going to use Abdul Haq, but he asked, 'Whose that?' I told him I had read about Haq in the papers the week before. He shrugged, 'Not so far as I know'.

'But who else is there?' I replied, 'He's the obvious one isn't he?'

'No, not as far as *we're* concerned'.

Haq's brother, Haji Qadir's strength had been as a pacifier, a bridge between the Northern Alliance and Pashtuns. During the jihad he had, unusually, been a Pashtun Commander representing the Northern Alliance in Kunar. This background had enabled him to push the Pashtun vote for Karzai during the Loya Jirga, while simultaneously keeping the Northern Alliance on board. As such he'd earned the sobriquet 'Kingmaker'. This was deemed important during those days as the Americans were busy fighting the Pashtuns in the South. But Qadir was seen as the last man after Abdul Haq with significant cross-tribal following. Now both he and Haq were dead.

CHAPTER TWO

REIGNITING FUNDAMENTALISM

Nothing on earth can ever justify a crime ...
if you grant an amnesty to the past, you are corrupting the future.

BENJAMIN CONSTANT, *Des Effets de la Terreur* (1797)

Kabul, July–October 2002

The soldiers directed us to some buildings on the far side of the compound, a short drive from the warlords' office. When we found two women huddled together beneath a tree, one rocking on her bare haunches, it was obvious we had reached the women's asylum.

I was here two months after the Emergency Loya Jirga. But what I was about to learn here would illustrate how those who had gained most from the Loya Jirga – Afghanistan's former mujahideen strongmen – were already imposing their stamp on society and the state-building project at large.

Today, a middle-aged minder with a stern face and the black skirts of a Sicilian widow bustled towards us. 'You must wait', she explained to Omar. Many of the women were apparently in a state of undress. Muffled screams came from the solid Victorian building.

Eventually the minder led us through a narrow corridor into the darkness and a vast hallway of stone, dank with the stench of urine. Gradually, the blur sharpened, revealing several ghostly figures: a cross-eyed dwarf woman and a girl wearing a shell necklace. They watched me intensely. The girl smiled faintly, showing fang-like incisors. Behind, in an opening between double doors secured by a chain, was an elderly woman whose lined face was suffused with deep furrows. Behind her, an upturned table and rags on the floor, clearly her sleeping arrangements in this vast and filthy grey space. She was naked. Suddenly the stillness was broken with ferocious intensity as the elderly woman battered the door with a club. Nothing

seemed normal here, where an ordinary-looking elderly woman was not only reduced to living in such demeaning conditions, yet was also capable of reacting with such violent strength. In the next room, a dormitory where light flooded through glass-less barred windows, a stream of urine trickled across the stone floor and a row of battered metal beds did nothing to soften the hardness.

From beyond came the strangest cacophony of chatters and we moved through a door directly into a yard enclosed by a high wall. There, beneath a tree, sat a group of women. They were shaven and sat in the dust, each seemingly in a world of her own. Some rocked themselves, others sat still, legs folded, arms moving randomly. 'They cut and throw their *chadors* up there', the minder indicated tatters of coloured rags hanging from dead branches above like odd Christmas decorations. Omar looked startled but I knew these women's stories told of the brutality of Afghanistan. I wanted to understand what had brought them here. So Omar and I sat down with them on the dusty courtyard floor.

One woman's nose was bloodied and festering with flies. The minder, a black silhouette always hovering somewhere above us, explained how another inmate, a shaven thick-set woman called Nasreen, had sunk her teeth into it days before, tearing off the bulb of the nose. As we spoke, Nasreen sat alone against the yard wall, rocking. When I asked why, the minder explained that Nasreen had lost her family during the mujahidden infighting in Kabul. A rocket attack had occurred as the family ate supper and she had been spared because her father had sent her out to the kitchen to fetch a bowl of rice. All but her had been killed. Initially she had had eating disorders, but this developed into removing her garments, and more recently the aggression that led her to bite off the other woman's nose. Nasreen, it seemed, was just one reject of war and a society unable to deal with her. An old lady in a torn green dress entreated me, 'Write my name and take me out of the mental house to America'. The minder said the woman had been here twenty-five years and was unmarried because she could not walk. There was no wheelchair.

Another made an interjection which Omar translated. Six of her sons had died. After that, she had become 'ill'. The minder murmured absently. She was sixty-five, her husband had been killed by a rocket twenty years ago and she had five children. She told me that the women needed blankets and medication, because winter was coming. With treatment many could improve, but she had worked here fourteen years and now things were worse than ever: 'At least during Najibullah's government⁶¹ we had water and electricity. The windows were broken during the fighting that followed'.

Marastoon, as this forgotten institution on an arid hillside beyond Kabul was called, once had a car that drove through the streets collecting the insane, bringing them here. 'The Taliban gave a bit more help than now', she added.

Walking back inside the shrouded corridor, there was a cell-like room with a small barred window high above the dirt floor. Within it was a 'lump' in the dirt; there followed a movement, and an old lady emerged. She gave a gratified smile, and pulled out a needle and thimble, which she held beneath her sacking cover. When I took her hand, she seemed pitifully grateful for human contact. She had been here twenty years, her name was Zainab and her smallest finger had gone, apparently bitten off by the same woman who had taken the others' nose. The old lady wore a dirty pink dress with a bow and was from Maidan Shah, a Pashtun area to the South of Kabul. She had come to be at Marastoon after her husband took a second, younger woman. When the two fought, this lady was brought to Marastoon, the victim of a society where women are expendable.

The shell necklace girl watched me sideways. She had been here for twenty years, having killed two men. 'Her son and another', said the minder casually. 'Then last year she killed two women here at midnight'. It seemed unbelievable. Here she was, walking around ready to kill again, needing psychiatric treatment which was unavailable. Preparing to leave, I noticed a closed door and, feeling the minder hiding something, opened it. Inside, a pale-faced woman sat on a bunk. Against the black of her *chador*, her face was unexpectedly beautiful, and it seemed that she should not be here.

Despite her obvious shyness, Omar's sensitivity enabled her to talk. She was called Raheela and she was twenty-five. Her parents were dead and she had been taken in by her uncle. But she didn't want to live with his family. For fifteen years, they had beaten and fought with her, even though she cooked them good food. Omar explained that the girl had gone to the Women's Ministry to ask for help. But they had sent her here. So, she had sought help and they had sent her to a dangerous mental asylum? Behind us, the shell necklace murderer stood watching, leaning against the doorway. Raheela commented that from night until morning it was impossible to sleep because everyone was shouting.

Having promised to help Raheela, I returned several days later with an Afghan-American doctor, a squat New Yorker who was a Mohammadzai Pashtun, one of the King's tribe. We were obliged to seek permission to enter from the Director of the Afghan Red Crescent Society who ran Marastoon. Outside his office, soldiers in fatigues mooched. The soldiers were the Directors' bodyguards. The doctor was shocked: 'Dangerous for the women', he remarked, 'a burqa is their only protection'. After a long wait we were shown in, and there sitting behind a large desk, was Qar a bec, the gold frames of his glasses catching shafts of light on the walls. He was a strongman who'd made no secret of his disdain for the election process in the Panjshir.

It seemed odd for him to be here in the Director's seat, as he was a warlord not a medical man. We drank tea and when I questioned him about the set-up, the lack of trained staff and equipment, he waved his arm beyond his head, saying there was no money for such things. He was vain and disinterested, only perking up when he heard of the huge response in the USA to the photographs of my colleague in this job, who worked for Getty Images. As a result of her pictures, American people wanted to send money to Marastoon. We suggested that maybe this could be used to buy the things the women needed. Taking a gold pen from his waistcoat pocket he wrote, presently pushing a scrap of paper towards me. It had his bank numbers on it.

Eventually, we were allowed to visit the women's asylum and as walked into the yard where the women sat together. Here, the doctor said quietly that this was a terribly sad place. We reached Raheela's room and the doctor spoke with Raheela in *dari*. Raheela sobbed that if no one could help, she would commit suicide. Eventually, the doctor said the Women's Ministry had sent her here, and told her, 'There are Panjshiri women there who can look after you'. But her Raheel's reply, as translated by him, was, 'Her mother had a heart problem and her father was an officer in the Communist government, so was killed by the mujahideen'. Later, Raheela told the doctor that if she cleaned herself, the other women would accuse her of trying to make herself beautiful. She would prefer to be in the women's prison where conditions were apparently better. The doctor told me that Raheel had said, 'She says they should change the name from Ministry of Women to Ministry of Injustice to Women'. As we left the building, he said that Raheela had left home because her uncle was raping her. It was the secret shame of the family, something that in Afghanistan could never be acknowledged.

We were obliged to leave the Marastoon compound close to Qar a bec's office. He fixed me with a threatening glare and gripped my shoulder until it hurt. 'You'll be kind to us with your pen won't you?' he said menacingly. The doctor translated, his head hanging low, but as our car bumped down the track minutes later, he growled angrily that the warlord touching me was a transgression of Afghan culture. He added that the warlord and soldiers were bound to be abusing the women. He explained that a warlord was running the Afghan Red Cross⁶² because it was a lucrative post for him. 'Tons of money comes into the Red Crescent from other Muslim countries and if he's overseeing it, then well, you can guess the rest'.

Qar a bec had stood out during our elections in the Panjshir as purposefully disinterested, as though the electoral process threatened to undermine the position he had carved out for himself.

He tried to, three times. Fatima Gailani was appointed to the position but Qar a bec refuses to step down. And because Karzai has no power, he stays.

These were the words of Peter Jouvenal, a cameraman who had covered the anti-Soviet war in the early 1980s and has since stayed. As we drank tea in the garden of the guesthouse he had dubbed 'Gandomack Lodge' in honour of the famous battle of the first Afghan war where British had been soundly defeated by the Ghilzai Pashtun during their retreat from Kabul he told me:

The Panjshiris only accepted Karzai as he has no power base; neither tribe nor political party. So they know they can manipulate him. If I made you president of Afghanistan you'd have a problem. Karzai's the same; he has no power so he has a problem. The Americans chose him as he was involved with pipelines, and so on.

Even so, with all the international community's Apache helicopters and F16s, it seemed odd that Karzai should not be able to get rid of a corrupt warlord at the Afghan Red Crescent.

I set about looking for a women's shelter for Raheela. This journey would enlighten me as to what had already begun to go so badly wrong with the West's intentions for reshaping women's rights in Afghanistan. The Deputy Women's Minister, Tajwar Kakar, who had dealt with Raheela's case personally, was not around. She had been in Australia for two months visiting relatives, her staff said. None were sure when she'd be back. UN staff were complaining that many of the new Ministers had simply taken off abroad on extended vacations, enjoying their new positions; instead of doing the important jobs they'd recently been appointed to at the Loya Jirga.

Our meeting took place upon her return, three weeks later. She was a grey-haired, rather stern-faced woman who disturbingly reminded me of a headmistress. She sat as though perched on a throne, and remembered Raheela's case immediately. 'She is a prostitute, so she is mad. That's why we sent her to the asylum!' I tried a different tack. Surely, even if Raheela were a prostitute, she needed assistance? Didn't the Women's Ministry provide shelters for women? She raised her chin, and said with venomous disdain, 'A women's shelter?' She had seen one in the USA and considered it very dangerous.

We don't want Afghanistan to become like that. In Afghanistan, our culture is different, every problem they [women] have they can discuss with the family.

This woman obviously hadn't come up against the dynamics of power relationships. Could Raheela really open up a conversation with her uncle about his raping her? Kakar was like Queen Victoria and – like the Queen who had denied the possibility of lesbianism – Kakar seemed to believe it unthinkable this girl was being raped by someone within her own family. If the family could resolve everything, why have a Women's Ministry at all? Even if Raheela were a prostitute, did that not still entitle her to some form of protection? From a visit to a prostitutes' day-care centre, a hidden place in the filthy backstreets of Kabul, it was clear the women had no other choice.⁶³

But the attitude of the Women's Ministry reflected part of a trend that had been taking root since the Loya Jirga: the creeping re-establishment of fundamentalist Islam. It had begun with the reinstatement of the mujahideen warlords at the Loya Jirga and their demand that Afghanistan be named an Islamic state. The corollary? A return to Shariat as the basis of Afghanistan's legal system; a retrograde step considering the 1964 constitution had been more progressive, a mixture of Shariat and Western jurisprudence. This was the first nail in the coffin of judicial reform, and how close this would be to the Shariat system used by the Taliban just depended on who was interpreting the law.

The next nail in the coffin of judicial reform was the appointment at the Loya Jirga of the ultra-conservative Chief Justice, Fazel Hadi Shinwari.⁶⁴ Within weeks⁶⁵ he had reinstated the infamous Religious Police,⁶⁶ ironically hitherto associated with the Taliban, but in fact modeled on the Saudi Arabian 'Vice and Virtue' police force.⁶⁷ This move allowed the conservative elements associated with the mujahideen, men like Sayyaf, to crack down on the people, particularly women. They began issuing edicts to ban women from singing on television, to ban the showing of the weekly Bollywood film on Kabul TV, much to the annoyance of most Afghans. And in

the Western city of Herat, the mujahideen Governor Ismael Khan⁶⁸ told women working in UN offices they could not shake the hands of foreign men and must continue wearing the burqa.

The words of the representative of the women's rights NGO, the Revolutionary Afghan Women's Association (RAWA), resonated. As long as the fundamentalists were in power, she said, the position of women would never change: 'They are against women and against human rights'. She was angry. They had warned the West about the fundamentalists during the war against Russia.

Now we warn the West *not* to help the fundamentalists again. These people – Fahim, Abdullah, Qanooni and Rabbani – destroyed the city, raped thousands of women and abducted young girls when in power from 1992 to 1996.⁶⁹

Tense with emotion, she continued, 'These men the West has put in government are common war criminals!' But what about the proof needed to convict such men? For I had heard UN staff, perhaps parroting Brahimi, say the same when challenged about why the West had rehabilitated such men, instead of indicting them. I wanted to know how an Afghan woman would answer such a seemingly callous question. Frustrated, she shouted:

It's like saying we don't have proof of Hitler or Mussolini! Our people have the documents and what does the damage around Kabul say about their crimes? Go and interview women around Kabul: many were raped by these men and Sayyaf sold our women to the Arabs. Because of this people allowed the Taliban to come, to save us from these bloody hands. This *shura nazar*⁷⁰ have no interest but their own power and as long as they have weapons the war won't be finished. The people were hopeful for the Loya Jirga until they saw these bloody criminals sitting in the front row. When the USA supported Hikmatyar we said this is wrong and warned them. Now we warn them not to repeat the same mistake.

Unlike the Nuremburg trials in 1947, or the attempt to capture warlords Milosevic, Mladic and Karadzic in the Balkans, the West clearly had no interest in bringing justice to Afghanistan, or even initiating the 'due process' required to evince that. Instead, those

involved in such abuses were now its principal allies in the fight against the Taliban. She left, slipping the burqa over her clothes, blending in with the others in the white dust of the street.

Karzai's sacking of the former Minister, Dr Sima Samar at the Loya Jirga had set the ball rolling in favour of the fundamentalists. Samar was progressive and brave, and had highlighted the need for conditionality' on aid money spent in Afghanistan. This would have guaranteed the protection of women not just in the form of shelters but also have given them some chance of participating more fully in society. Now she had been replaced with Kakar, a woman the mujahideen establishment believed 'safe'. And the rights of Afghan women were effectively being washed down the drain.

'Khalilzad talked about a trade off between peace and justice at the Loya Jirga. Actually he's lost both', said a French-Iranian photographer I had worked with as an Election Monitor. No 'Johnny-come-lately' to Afghanistan, this journalist had covered the 1980's jihad as well as the Iran-Iraq war. He explained that Brahimi and Khalilzad had bowed to the warlords and now their factions would start fighting again. There was a real culture of fear here. And the recent deaths of those Ministers were not being investigated, he said. The 'Ministers' he spoke of were Haji Qadir but also Abdur Rahman, another Pashtun and former Aviation Minister. Rahman had been the keeper of General Massoud's funds in Moscow, but was stabbed to death on an airplane in an apparent argument with disgruntled Hajis who were supposedly annoyed their plane was late leaving for Mecca. The real story was much murkier and many Afghans suspected it related to Rahman switching his support from Fahim to the former King prior to the Loya Jirga.⁷¹

Samar, now Chair of the new Afghan Human Rights Commission,⁷² had set up a Woman's Shelter. Maybe Raheela could be taken there? Days later, one of her staff reinforced what others were saying when he commented:

The problem with the Loya Jirga was that it legitimised the mujahideen leaders. Prior to it, they'd kept a low profile. Now they have a lot of power and they've been able to change the agenda. Their intimidation

of Sima Samar at the Loya Jirga sent an implicit message of threat to educated Afghan women.⁷³

This intimidation had resulted in Samar having to travel with armed guards, and live in hiding.⁷⁴ 'Something it was never necessary for her to do during all the years of Soviet oppression and war', he added bitterly.⁷⁵ It seemed that a huge opportunity had been lost at the Loya Jirga, an opportunity that, once squandered, could not be easily recovered. For it had set the direction of Afghanistan's fortune on a new dynamic. When I asked what could be done for Raheela, he said:

The problem is that Sima is facing a great deal of pressure from the mujahideen to close her shelter, so it is not possible to take more women.

As Sima Samar had said back in January, in her meeting with the Irish: 'Even Karzai is scared to push women's issues too strongly, because he is concerned other leaders will not tolerate such progress'.

One late autumn afternoon, a member of the Afghan diaspora, who had returned to Afghanistan from Paris to serve on a panel charged with drawing up Afghanistan's new constitution spoke with me. I was doing some research on transitional justice for the International Crisis Group. Understated and with graying hair, Dr Fasili was clearly a man of intellect and had become a junior Minister in France.⁷⁶ But he was already dismayed by what he saw as interference in the democratic process. Referring to the warlords, he said:

Now we'll face the problem of conflict more strongly due to the development of fundamentalism over the past twenty years, and the renewal of it in the last six months. There are the old chiefs, the Tanzims. They're the people holding power, the Islamic groups from the jihad period. All these factional chiefs were against the King during the Loya Jirga, because he is so widely loved here. The Religious Police were reinstated because of pressure from Rabbani and Sayyaf ...⁷⁷

Ironically, Abdurrah Rasoul Sayyaf (Head of Ittehad-e-Islami) and

former Prime Minister Berhanuddin Rabbani, retained power as conservative Islamist mujahideen. As such, both were against the modernising and ‘Westernising’ of Afghanistan. And their ideals were close to those of the Taliban. Fasilli continued, ‘The West must be firm on these issues and ensure that aid is withheld, otherwise Afghanistan will return to fundamentalism’.

The Italian Ambassador was in the garden of his 1970s embassy. It was dusk and I was here because the Italians were leading on justice in the context of Security Sector Reform as mandated by the G8⁷⁸ issues.⁷⁹ He reminded me of a Lampedusa aristocrat when he said:

Brahimi thinks legal reform is not possible in Afghanistan as the country is not ready for modern Western law. But it is one thing to be realistic and another to be so cautious that you don’t *do* things.⁸⁰

‘Do things?’ I asked. He paused, cupping long fingers around a cigarette and said, ‘The real pressure to give the ‘extra’ fifty seats to warlords at the Loya Jirga came at the ninth hour from Khalilzad’.⁸¹

He spoke of the seats which had suddenly and inexplicably been issued to unelected strongmen on the eve of the Loya Jirga, the night the warlords had burst onto the site, which made a mockery of the work the election monitors had done to ensure that those charged with shaping Afghanistan’s future at this key event would be the people chosen by ordinary Afghans. The Ambassador gave a knowing grin and whispered, ‘You know it was Khalilzad who originally advised the Americans to back Hikmatyar during the jihad?’

Hikmatyar⁸² was the renegade warlord the USA had tried – and failed – to assassinate earlier in 2002 with a Hellfire missile. Now Hikmatyar was being blamed for everything from the gathering insurgency in the south to small bombs being set off daily around Kabul. Khalilzad, the Ambassador said, had previous connections with UNOCAL, the US oil company which for years had been inveigling to build a pipeline across Afghanistan. He went on, now holding his cigarette like a dart,

Khalilzad made a *huge* mistake by marginalising the King. The King could have kept the Pashtuns happy and Karzai or the King could have been Head of State and Qanooni⁸³ Prime Minister. But ... US policy is so short-term and has *no* respect for Afghan political evolution. By this I mean, why select Fahim or even Karzai as the men to fight al Qaeda for the war on terror, rather than concentrating on state building? The risk of a reversion to factional fighting within a few months is now very high.

The next day a Senior European diplomat told me;

‘You know you *cannot* have stability without justice, or *at least* accountability’. And added, ‘

It was so cynical of Mr ‘B’ and the USA not to believe that an eighty-seven year-old man could have been a figurehead, one of the only people not seeking a position. It would have been so good for morale. It’s a shame when governments act as cowards.⁸⁴

The eighty-seven year-old he referred to was the former King, Zahir Shah.

A German lady had organised a meal with the Afghan Women Judges’ Association. Even their representative dismissed the idea of protection for women: ‘The situation is too difficult, such places cannot exist publicly because many men would not accept them’. Shelters’ would loosen the ties that still bound women to the household. So shelters were politically impossible as any independence for women was looked upon as a direct threat to society. Particularly a society now returned to the mujahideen. Women who did not fit into the ‘traditional family structure’ remained vulnerable. Clearly the attitude of the new Women’s Ministry was to see girls like Raheela as a threat. The easiest thing to do was thus to castigate her a prostitute, lock her up in Marastoon and throw away the metaphorical key.

I was increasingly concerned about where we could find

protection for Raheela and contacted RAWA in Pakistan to see if she could be taken to one of their shelters. It was a protracted process waiting for their representative to find me in Kabul again, because I could not call her directly for her own protection. The lady on the phone in Pakistan offered to help but it would be difficult for them to get Raheela away from Marastoon, as she was under the eye of Qar a bec and his men. During the days I was waiting for the RAWA lady to arrive, I met Caroline, a feisty British girl from a German Women's NGO, Medica Mondiale. She promised she would visit Marastoon and find Raheela, and two weeks later she arranged for Raheela to move into their house in Kabul. There, she took up a position of responsibility and seemed to gain some self-respect.

A few months after that first visit to Marastoon, US Defence Secretary Paul Wolfowitz visited Kabul in a blaze of publicity. Wolfowitz visited a newly refurbished, shiny women's clinic, hailed a triumph of progress for Afghan women. But maybe it would have been more appropriate if he had been photographed in the women's asylum at Marastoon?

News of Raheela came again in the spring. Raheela had been getting on very well and was helping out at the women's NGO where Caroline worked. But within months her uncle turned up and demanded she be handed over. How did he know where she was? 'The Women's Ministry told him', Caroline replied quietly. It was the last I ever heard of Raheela.

During September 2002, I was invited to visit the Salang Pass, a route constructed by the Russians in the early 1960s, linking Kabul with the north. An invitation had been extended through a fellow journalist from Hayat Muslim, a prominent Panjshiri. Muslim was about to leave for London as Afghanistan's Military Attache and was apparently a close friend of the Defence Minister Mohammad Fahim.

A french radio journalist called Anna, a cameraman and two aid workers came with us. Anna had covered Afghanistan extensively

over the past decade and knew Muslim well, having often entered the country through the Panjshir. As we set out she seemed protective of her access to him, and their friendship, cultivated over several years. We drove through the Shamali Plains, stopped for tea in Jabal Seraj and continued up into the heights of the Hindu Kush, picnicking beneath the Salang pass at around three thousand metres. Behind us, an overhang in the road was held up by menacing concrete columns which shadowed the road for over twenty kilometres as it snaked its way into the Hindu Kush and towards the north. The pass had been built by the Russians in the 1960s, a mammoth feat considering one of the series of columns was over two kilometres long. The building of Salang seemed to foreshadow a long held Russian ambition to invade Afghanistan. It was the Soviet's principal supply and invasion route in; hence Massoud had concentrated his fire on Salang. When one stood below it, the whole Soviet plan seemed so obvious.

'So', I asked Muslim, as we ate a picnic of chicken wrapped in Afghan bread, 'why didn't the King foresee a Russian invasion when they built this?'

'The King?' he said venomously. 'He was just smoking pot and enjoying women!'

UN colleagues had explained why the US Special envoy Khalilzad had intervened to cut out the King before the Loya Jirga: because Fahim had threatened civil war, bringing his tanks to Kabul, if the King were made Head of State. The US response was apparently to say, 'We won't intervene if that happens'. And so the King was cut out, leaving many Afghans disappointed.

It was precisely because so many Afghans saw the King as a unifier, someone able to bring morale to sections of the country disenfranchised by the Panjshiri monopoly on power, that Panjshiri strongmen like Muslim, who were benefitting from the status quo, professed to loathe him. But the jealousy went back centuries, and related to the dominance of the Pashtun majority over the rest of the country.

Muslim appeared to be an easygoing sort of guy, always talking.

But he repeatedly told us how well the Northern Alliance had done to defeat the Taliban, and how the world owed the Northern Alliance a favour for this.

On the way home, he pulled over to intervene in a road accident, having recognised the car of a commander he knew. We were back on the Shamali Plains, north of Kabul, on a link road between the old and new roads. Anna and I got out of the car. It was almost dark and American Chinooks were flying back to Bagram from Special Forces operations in the south, their twin rotors silhouetted elegantly against a full moon. She lit a cigarette and blew out the smoke with a long sigh,

God I've had enough of all his talk about how the Panjshiris deserve to keep all these ministries. It's disgusting and so transparent the way they're gorging on power.

CHAPTER NINE

'FIRST YOU CALL US FREEDOM FIGHTERS, NOW WARLORDS'

In Kabul the rule of Shah Shujah proceeded smoothly against a backdrop of British bayonets.

Afghanistan, Highway of Conquest

Bagram, Herat and Jalalabad, April - May 2003

'Today the "Coalition of the Willing" is at the Gates of Baghdad, bombing Saddam Hussein's Republican Guard', I wrote in my diary on 3 April 2003 on a plane flying back to Kabul, as beneath us Afghanistan's snow-covered mountains sparkled.

I was returning to coproduce a documentary for a British television station, Channel IV.¹⁷⁹ It was to be an update on progress, or the lack of it, in Afghanistan eighteen months after the invasion. My companions were the filmmaker Paul Yule and the presenter, British political journalist Peter Osborne.

The atmosphere at Gandomack Lodge had changed and although the antique Lee Enfield rifles collected by Jouvenal still lined its walls, the journalists had left for Iraq during the Autumn. In their place had come consultants, engineers, 'democracy experts', diplomats, NGO workers and contractors. Over an ample Gandomack breakfast the next morning, we met a British engineer who had come to work on the new US Embassy. 'A fuckin' huge project', he boasted, elbows outward as he cut into a sausage, '\$300 million dollars worth'.

It was more than the US had so far spent on Afghan reconstruction in the eighteen months since the fall of Kabul. Most money committed to Afghanistan was being soaked up by military operations. Paul was keen to make a triangular journey around Afghanistan, driving from Herat via Kandahar to Kabul. Peter and I were not so sure. Since our return I'd learnt that three foreigners had been killed on the

same road only a week before: two US soldiers in Helmand and an International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) delegate in Zabul Province. The ICRC delegate had apparently been dragged from his car. A translator relayed that those who captured the delegate had called to ask their chief, Mullah Dadullah in Pakistan, what to do with him as until now it had been taboo to kill aid workers, particularly those working for the ICRC which was considered a neutral party in the conflict. But today, with the Iraq war having just begun, Dadullah's reply was, 'Kill him'.

The official UN advice was now not to travel by road. But in the Presidential Palace we found a markedly different response. 'So would you say it is okay for us to do this trip?' Peter asked Karzai. Smiling blithely in his elegant silken *chapan*, Karzai told us that it was 'perfectly safe' to make the trip. His preference for spin over safety in what was clearly a rapidly deteriorating security situation unnerved me.

As late as early 2003, the insurgency had still been fairly minor, involving only small pockets of Taliban. However, an event I'd covered for the *The Economist* in January 2003 had surprised me. Coalition forces had brought in AC130 gunships to bomb caves following intelligence that as few as two or three Talibs were hiding out at Spin Boldak, the border crossing where I'd occasionally stopped for tea when making the drive from Quetta to Kandahar for my work with UN Habitat (UNCHS) during the Taliban period in 2000. Bringing in gunships seemed nothing more than an expensive stunt, akin to using a sledgehammer to crack what at that stage was still a very small nut. Yet the effect would be to fan the insurgency. I remembered the sepia-coloured photographs of the young men pasted on the walls of a restaurant I had stopped at once during the Taliban period in Spin Boldak. Their motivation had been to oust the foreign infidel from their land. These photographs dated from the 1980s and my Kandahari colleagues had fingered the faces in those frames lovingly, proud that their brothers had not died in vain. That fight had been to oust the Soviets, the next generation would deal with NATO and the Americans. I wasn't even convinced that the

allegiance of many of these young men would be to the Taliban. It seemed more a commitment to honour their history of ousting every invader from Ghengis Khan to the British.

We visited Bagram airbase, home to the 18,000 or so 'coalition', but mainly American, troops who were arriving in time for the daily eight am 'pick up' of journalists for the coalition press conference. We left our car at the gate and climbed into one driven by an African-American soldier. He would clearly rather have been back home in the US. 'People think the war in Afghanistan is over and look to Iraq', the soldier explained wearily to Peter. 'But this is still a full on combat zone', he added despairingly, driving us into the base. We passed scores of soldiers jogging, M16 rifles slung over their shoulders.

Despite media assertions throughout 2002 to the contrary, it was obvious to many of us based in Afghanistan that the war was far from over. Early in 2003, an American soldier was now affirming this. It would have been a revelation to hear a political officer or diplomat say as much at this stage.¹⁸⁰ Close to where we had to register as press was a vast, sealed aircraft hanger. One of the Afghan journalists pointed to it and said, 'That's where they're detaining people and two men even died there before Christmas'. There was something menacing about the building which was strictly a 'no go' area and the Afghan journalist turned out to have been correct. Two Afghans held in detention by coalition forces, one probably an innocent taxi driver, had indeed been murdered there. Carlotta Gall, of the *New York Times* was already onto the story, but it would be two years before it was fully in the public domain.¹⁸¹

Half-an-hour later, we stood in the glaring sun as coalition spokesman, Colonel King, wearing a peaked camouflage cap, presented his press conference. He paused to assure himself all eyes were on him, before his voice boomed out

Operation Valiant strike ended two days ago. And at Spin Boldak last night eight enemy were killed, fifteen others detained.

An Afghan reporter whispered in my ear, 'Mullah Omar has been distributing papers calling Afghans to react like the Iraqi people and defend their country'. Colonel King went on:

As far as we know they were Taliban. Now eight killed, that's relatively successful as they no longer have positions they can hold or access to supplies.

Each day at the Bagram press conference, figures of 'the dead' were given out in relation to the previous nights' engagement. The higher the toll, the greater the Americans' deemed the operation to have been a 'success'; it was the same routine employed apparently in Vietnam. It seemed a particularly myopic 'metric' of the military campaigns' success, nothing to do with the battle of perception or the winning of peoples' 'hearts and minds' to support the new government. It was also likely to inflame Afghan anger since every insurgent killed had relatives who would mourn him. Often the so-called 'Taliban' cited by the US were simply locals carrying an old rifle¹⁸² for most Afghan households had one tucked away. Coming to the end of his spiel, Colonel King announced confidently, 'We'll be here till we beat the Taliban'.

'When'll that be?' I asked cheekily.

He laughed and said, 'I don't know'. As he turned away, I thought I heard him mutter quietly, 'Somebody else'll be making that decision'.

We drove to Jalalabad to research the poppy story. Hanif Sherzad, our interpreter, was famous in Afghanistan because he read Kabul TV News. He and I drove in his Toyota Corolla while Peter and Paul went in a 4x4 with armed guards. On the edge of Kabul we reached the Pul-I-charkhi checkpoint. The posters of Haji Qadir and Abdul Haq had gone. When I had last passed through here, in the opposite direction, coming by minibus from Jalalabad back in January, some of the Panjshiri guards had confiscated Pashtun newspapers from the other travellers saying sharply, 'It's our city now'. This was only one example of how ill feeling was being incited by the Panjshiris, some of whom now thought they 'ruled' Kabul against the Pashtun majority who now felt completely unrepresented.

Hanif, a Pashtun, was originally from Jalalabad and was now expounding on US policy in the city. 'It's a *big* mistake you know. One day you'll see the pay-back', he said, frantically trying to keep control of the wheel as the Corolla bounced along the rutted road. 'They are a very *small* minority, the Dar-I-noor'. He pinched his thumb and forefinger together to emphasise. 'Really, it's a *tiny* valley on the way to Kunar'. He was talking about Hazerat Ali's tribe, the people who had recently disarmed Haji Zahir's soldiers. Kunar is the valley bordering Pakistan where Hikmatyar's followers were rumoured to be hiding out and where much of the fight against al Qaeda would focus from 2004 onwards.

Hanif had recently been in Gardez working with ABC News.

I saw one of our American journalists ask an ordinary citizen of Gardez, 'What do you think will happen when US forces leave the country?'

Hanif banged his wrist against the wheel.

You know, the man replied. 'If today you leave the country, tomorrow the Taliban will return and I will first and foremost join them!' And when the ABC reporter asked why, the man replied, 'Because I studied in Peshawar and Kabul and what reconstruction have you done? You promised us jobs. *Where are they!?*'

Hanif also had his own opinion on the war in Iraq.

I have no doubt that the America will break up if this is their way. Even our communist PM, Taraqi, said, 'The will of the people is the will of God'. If all these peoples around the world are against this war then the will of the people will prevail.

We were late arriving in Jalalabad. The Panjshiri guards Paul had hired to accompany us broke down and we had to wait for them on the road. So far they'd been more of a liability than an asset, and now we were in a Pashtun area they were nervous. The journey had taken five hours whereas normally it should take three with the new road. By the time we arrived at twelve thirty, Baryalai had tired of waiting and gone to a wedding in Surkh Rud. Spring was more

advanced here than in Kabul; the gardens in Jalalabad were greener and the aroma of orange blossom clung to the air.

Peter and Paul installed themselves at the Spin Ghar hotel, which was dirty and still haunted by the menacing guards of Hazerat Ali. I stayed at Baryalai's place, and later that evening Baryalai told me there had been a small demonstration against the Iraq war at Nangarhar University, but Hazerat Ali had arrested the Deans of various faculties and thrown them in jail. Baryalai shook his head, 'Hazerat Ali is just doing this to show loyalty with the Americans. How can he do such a thing without recourse to court, judge or legal system?' The Shura Baryalai had set up in January and which was gaining significance. I asked what were its main activities and who it represented? He told me it was not supposed to 'represent' any one group. It was more a consultative council of locals interested in participating in decisions on issues ranging from reconstruction to security issues, dispute resolution or even to finding recruits for the new Afghan National Army. Even at this stage in 2003, there was concern that so far the ANA was recruiting a large proportion of its soldiers from Tajik areas. Again, the Pashtuns felt left out and voiceless. This was not surprising though, given that Fahim and the Panjshiri clique occupied the bulk of senior positions. The shura was trying to address this issue. Baryalai emphasised that those who participated in the shura were not people paid to do so. Baryalai rubbed his forehead as he spoke:

They come because they're interested to do something for our region. More and more people come to me now due to this type of problem with Hazerat Ali. And our shura is seen as a challenge to his people. So a report recently came from Kabul through the intelligence. It told them to investigate me.

Flyers or 'Night letters', apparently from Pakistan, had also been distributed throughout Jalalabad city calling him an agent of the US' because he had not publicly condemned the Americans.

So we are being squeezed now by both sides; Pakistan and central government ...

He looked tired, and explained that there were 'invisible forces' in Pakistan orchestrating pressure on him because he had spoken out in the Districts against rockets being sent into Jalalabad city. He had warned this could escalate, leading to the type of chaos that had made fertile ground for the Taliban's arrival. 'He and Zaman even helped the Taliban escape', he said, speaking now of Karzai. When I commented that this must be a bit far fetched he said that Karzai and Zaman had to retain favour with the tribes, as the foreigners would not be there forever. Baryalai continued:

Karzai's problem is that he has no support. Neither from his own tribe nor from the mujahideen either. Because he spent too much time in offices and not enough *fighting* the Russians!

The mujahideen had accepted Karzai as President precisely because with minimal tribal support and no political party, he could never threaten their hegemony. Now he was also losing popularity, not just because rural people were not seeing the promised 'reconstruction', but because Karzai's many promises to tribal leaders from different parts of the country had not been unfulfilled. Now people were openly calling him 'Shah Shujah' after the nineteenth-century Puppet King installed by the British.

I asked about Jalalabad's Buddhist remains at Hadda and the thousand minarets, and he told me sadly that it was all destroyed.

I've not much hope in the war against opium. So much was lost during the past twenty-three years here but especially the culture. We've nothing left, we've destroyed everything. Just as the Iraqis have nothing left.

In Baghdad, the National Museum and Iraq's National Library had been looted the week before. Today, I'd found a message on my satellite phone from Jon Swain in Baghdad saying he was leaving, he'd had enough of it all. The incompetence of the Americans had left the city polluted and burning. I told Baryalai about the message and he said with a tone of defeat,

To rebuild a country you have to work with the system that is compatible. You cannot just *adapt* the USAID system from Bosnia to Afghanistan. You have to work with the system *here*.

Some acquaintances back in London were arguing that the interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq were morally imperative ‘humanitarian interventions’. The implication was that ‘morally imperative’ would equate to a successful outcome, whatever that meant. After all, hadn’t Bosnia been? In the face of the complexities and nuances of Afghan society, however, it was not at all clear that Afghanistan would follow in the steps of the international community’s forays in other places.¹⁸³

Baryalai’s attempts to revive the traditional shura system in Jalalabad had been met positively. The shura would be comprised of men recognised in the community for their wisdom rather than their political allegiance or force of arms. As such, there would be no remuneration attached. They would emulate the traditional system of consensus that had been partly destroyed during the Soviet occupation, by the targeted killing of village elders and intellectuals, and the support by outside powers of factional leaders. In the approach that Baryalai was attempting to re-formulate, local governance decisions were made after hours of tea drinking and debate by village elders. It even took many weeks of discussion with local elders for decisions to be made about the remit and scope of the shura. But the work paid off because eventually this shura was used as a blueprint by the Ministry of Rural Development for other shuras apparently intended to be set up around the country, particularly in relation to counter-narcotics efforts, in which Baryalai’s shura had been so successful.¹⁸⁴ However, I heard that despite giving lip-service, Karzai did very little to promote this concept and was often obstructive, possibly seeing this legitimate, traditional Afghan form of governance as a threat to his autonomy.

The filming of the documentary continued. One of the reasons Peter wanted to visit Herat was to deliver a missive to Ismael Khan, the city’s Governor and self-styled Amir, the mythic figure I had wondered about since hearing of his escape from the Taliban’s clutches and Kandahar jail. So having arrived in Herat by plane, Peter, Paul and I spent one hot dusty day following Khan’s convoys on a trail through villages whose streets were lined with children

singing songs from the Holy Q'ran, with little boys on one side of the road and girls on the other, all wearing bright white chadors. Finally, in the mosque at Ingil District, a place where five hundred had been killed by Soviet bombing, Khan made a long sermon of both memorial and encouragement. 'A *much* greater orator than our politicians', Peter whispered.

When Peter and Paul left for London, I returned to Jalalabad. My interpreter and friend, Omar, offered to drive for he and his mother, who was from the Khoghiani tribe based near Jalalabad, were going there to visit her brothers' family.

To our left, the shining peaks of the Hindu Kush framed the Panjshir valley beyond us as we approached the descent to Sarobi. We were discussing the UN's new scheme aimed at disarming Afghanistan's militias, known as DDR ('disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration'). It had been launched the week before by Lakhdar Brahimi in Kabul and I was telling Omar how an Afghan BBC journalist had asked a seemingly innocent question: 'Isn't it paradoxical the UN is launching this 'disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration' programme while the Americans, just last week, were still arming warlord militias in the north?'

Brahimi had brushed the question off, but today Omar commented passionately:

This is the problem. The US are dealing everywhere with Commanders. It brings the country down. It's good to give dollars but give that to the Finance Ministry, to the government or the ANA, not to warlords. Who will care about the ANA when everyone has guns?

In 2003, the ANA was the still 'new' Afghan National Army. The international community was hoping it would become the main force in the country, enabling foreign troops to leave.

At Haji Zahir's compound the next morning he said of my visit to Ismael Khan: 'He is your new friend and my old friend'. He went on to relate how Karzai had recently called all the Governors together in an attempt to force them publicly to hand over customs money to the central government. But General Dostum and Ismael Khan had apparently come to Zahir's house in Kabul to beg him not to agree to this.

'And what did you say?' I asked.

'I say "in time of mujahideen I am mujahideen bu in time of democracy I am democratic man", and so we must support this government'.

I took a handful of kishmesh, not quite sure of his point.

Dostum is making \$40,000 USD per day from customs duties not handed to the government, while Ismael Khan, with the Iran trade at Herat, gets \$800,000 per day! In Jalalabad we only get \$30,000 per day. But all this we give to central government!

He sounded angry, and flicked ash into a lapis bowl.

The Western powers will soon remove Ismael Khan from his post. You remember my words. First they will remove Khan and then others.

'But isn't it good if they get rid of the warlords?' I asked. He scoffed.

First you call us 'freedom fighters', now 'warlords'. Yet in war against Soviets we were heroes, now we're just villains!

Some members of the family – in particular Zahir and previously his father Qadir and also Haji Din Mohammad - maintained a national network of alliances with other 'ex-mujahideen' and warlords. Such men remained extremely unpopular with the more 'progressive' urban Afghans. It was disappointing to learn that this network of 'friends' included men like Sayyaf who, along with Massoud, had apparently been heard giving orders to his Commanders as the Hazara people at Afshar, a suburb of Kabul, were targeted in a massacre in February 1993. So I asked Zahir why he was so friendly with Sayyaf.¹⁸⁵ Zahir boomed:

He was very good friend of my Father! He and my father was the only

Pashtuns who stayed in Northern Alliance area and continued fight against Taliban and did not relent!

Sayyaf also represented another difference between Abdul Haq and Haji Qadir. For even as Qadir had fought alongside Sayyaf with the Northern Alliance, Haq had urged the West to beware of him, and emphasized his link to the training camps on the Pakistani border and the arrival of foreign fighters.¹⁸⁶ From one camp the self styled 'Sheikh al hadith' (Sayyaf) had peddled fundamentalism among foreign fighters, whom he encouraged to visit the region through his Saudi contacts. Two of the most notorious terrorists, Omar Sheikh and Khaled Sheikh Mohammad, the former accused of killing American journalist Danny Pearl and the latter of being a mastermind behind both attacks on the World Trade Centre had spent time at Sayyaf's vast camp.¹⁸⁷

Zahir called Raz, his wiry and scruffy manservant and babbled something in Pashtun to him. Moments later Raz returned, placing two Polaroid photos in Zahir's hands. 'Look', he said. The pictures showed men placing a golden turban on Zahir's head. 'They're elders from the tribes of Khoghiani, Shinwar and Mohmand'. Perhaps this was a symbolic gesture, the mythical mark of leadership accorded him by ordinary people. So I wondered out loud how he was getting on these days with the Americans. Zahir told me:

I'm more friendly now with one of their commanders. One (of them) came to see me recently and said, 'Why do you never come and visit us?' So I replied, 'I'm not needed anything from you'.

Perhaps the subtext to this was that Hazerat Ali went to see the Americans a lot because they were his paymasters. Zahir continued, still fingering the photographs. 'Now they want me more and more for their work'. They had, apparently, changed their opinion of him after travelling around the region, meeting with commanders in Kunar, Nuristan, Laghman and Nangarhar who said they were allied with Haji Zahir.

Learning this, it was obvious how this place differed to Kabul. The West would never impose its ideal of 'one man, one vote' here in the east and south of Afghanistan where the web of alliances, deals,

paternalism and religion was not just complex but medieval. Where the tribes mostly looked to a leading family for leadership, trust and inspiration. The hopes I had held initially for a Western-style secret ballot democracy in Afghanistan, while I was monitoring elections in the run-up to the Emergency Loya Jirga back in Spring 2002, were now looking quite naïve.

The following week evidence of the existence of Afghanistan's nationalised 'ex-mujahideen' networks became more obvious. It was a late summer's day; Zahir was visiting Kabul and had asked me to travel to Paghman with him for a picnic: 'We're going to see Mullah Izat. He's invited me for lunch at his garden in Paghman'. Paghman was the valley outside Kabul where Sayyaf was based. Reading my thoughts Zahir said with a wry smile, 'It's okay, Izat is not like Sayyaf, more like me'.

We drove out of Kabul with Zahir's soldiers not riding postillion today, but tucked tidily inside two of his red Toyota pick-ups. 'I'm not wanting to make big show here in Kabul', Zahir answered. He still, I knew, saw Kabul as hostile territory after his father's violent death. We headed towards the blue mountains of Paghman. Soon, we were overwhelmed by dust and the roar of a cavalcade of fifteen vehicles, led by four Landcruisers, passing us.

'That's Rabbani', Zahir sighed. 'But where's he going? He can't be going where we're going!'

'But I thought he was a friend of yours?' I said. 'He paid for you to get out of jail didn't he?'

Rabbani had just launched a political party called the National Party (Nowzat e mille) and Zahir told me that the week before he had asked Zahir to join.

He wants support of the eastern region which he knows I can get. He is expecting mujahideen to band together. But if I should join his party, why not make my own? The people don't have trust in him. He's done nothing for them!

With all the uncertainty clouding Qadirs' death, Zahir was steering a line independent of the Northern Alliance and particularly the Shura-e-Nazar. The mujahideen were already manoueuvering, as evidenced by the French Ambassador's talk of Sayyaf and Rabanni kicking off the Presidential election campaign, to be held a year from now, in 2004, in Kandahar.

Two days later I visited the office of an old Loya Jirga colleague, the head of one of Afghanistan's 'pro democracy' Political Parties. I have changed his name and not mentioned that of his party to protect his identity.

I arrived to find Musa reading Mr Brahimi's latest report to the UN Security Council. He was not impressed.

You know Mr Khalilzad and Mr Brahimi, they deal with Fahim. Now Mr Brahimi is saying that ISAF must be extended outside Kabul to deal with the security problems. But it was *him* who gave power to the warlords at the Loya Jirga last year. Yet now *he* is blaming the breakdown in security on the international community's failure to extend ISAF!

He slapped the report down disdainfully. His alert face was clean-shaven, except for a small handlebar moustache.

It's a good excuse for Brahimi to go on about extending ISAF to areas outside Kabul but it was his and Khalilzad's actions that gave the warlords more power in their regions.

He shook his head, before adding prophetically.

Anyway if they extend ISAF to the areas outside Kabul it will make this into a guerrilla war. The Americans should be doing that job.

'But should people like Fahim have been completely excluded from the Loya Jirga?' I asked, playing devil's advocate.

Maybe they should have participated – even though it was against the rules agreed at Bonn – but they should *not* have been given full voting rights and allowed to intimidate democratically elected candidates.

Musa and I had worked together on district level elections for the Loya Jirga in April 2002. With his own political party and dedication to the cause of democracy, he was the type of Afghan many might have assumed the West would work with in bringing its vision of democracy to Afghanistan: a brave man soundly committed to following through on the democratic ideal articulated so loudly after September 11. At thirty-eight, he was also buoyantly youthful. He held steadfastly to the view that Afghanistan could make the transition from war, chaos and brutality, towards a peaceable democracy. As a police officer during the communist regime, he had also risked his life during the Taliban on reporting human rights abuses to the UN. Today was the first time I had seen him looking crumpled.

I asked him about the issue of Ambassador Khalilzad's pronouncement that the Loya Jirga had been a triumph of 'peace versus justice'. He frowned and said:

The effect was to show the people that the warlords were legitimate. This has been bad for the central government.

He said that his own party were doing well, because people had been so disappointed by the fundamentalists' decision at the Loya Jirga to make Afghanistan an Islamic state. Since then, membership of the Republican party had increased sharply. 'If the country becomes an Islamic State, there is no chance for democracy', he said. He was very disappointed though that the bill legalising the formation of political parties had yet to be passed.

So until the party law is agreed we cannot operate freely and open offices across the country. That gives the jihadi parties an automatic lead in preparing for the elections as they are *already* formed. So *all* these new democratic parties *cannot* become legal?

This meant that only the so called 'parties' of the mujahideen, in other words the 'seven' groups fostered by Pakistan as politico-military factions during the jihad period, were presently 'allowed' to operate in Afghanistan. Musa nodded, 'They don't need an election law to begin operating but anyone else who wishes to form

a political party does'. He then reiterated what we both knew:

When the warlords came to the Loya Jirga they had less power and people protested against them. But after Mr Brahimi and Mr Khalilzad allowed them to participate, which was against the rules of the Bonn Agreement, and gave them full voting rights, they left with *more* power. Really, Khalilzad and Brahimi are just thinking of *their* benefits. They made a fundamentalist Loya Jirga for Afghanistan last year in which they shared government posts between the fundamentalists. This is leading to a fundamentalist constitution for Afghanistan and then next year, fundamentalist elections too.

His words reinforced the idea that it just didn't make sense that President Karzai, the US, the UN and the international community, who had publicly legitimised the warlords at the Loya Jirga and effectively reinstated them in their fiefdoms, now stood back wondering what had gone wrong and why security was breaking down in the regions. It was just too simplistic to blame everything on the Taliban. The international community was beginning to wonder why the Afghan National Army was failing to become a unified force, the drugs trade was spiralling out of control and the insurgency in the south was gathering pace. But having effectively put them there, now the international community had no leverage. If the warlords and strongmen didn't *feel* like handing over customs duties, didn't *feel* like disarming their militias (re-armed by the Americans since 2001) and didn't *feel* like renouncing their lucrative and opaque role in the drug trade, who could stop them?

The international community was glossing over what were, after all, rather fundamental problems, focusing instead on the larger imperative: US domestic policy. Hence the objective was to hold swiftly punctuated elections. This would give the American voter the impression that democracy had 'arrived' in Afghanistan. Never mind that there was no rule of law in the country to make such 'democracy' viable.

To illustrate the problem of holding elections in a country with no rule of law, I refer to an incident that occurred on my return from monitoring elections in the Panjshir valley in April 2002. We had left the mouth of the Panjshir, arriving at Jabal Saraj at dusk.

The village comprised ancient wooden houses and was formerly a Northern Alliance stronghold at the top of the Shamali Plains. The driver gesticulated towards his parents' house across a wheat field, so I suggested we stop for tea.

Minutes later, we sat with the drivers' father on the floor of his house. He was unhappy about the elections here a week before. He told us that the people were not able to vote for their chosen Commander, because a neighbouring, more powerful one named Abdur Rahman Maulana, put forward his two candidates. So they were elected. The old man looked dissatisfied, pulling on his beard. But I was wondered impatiently what was the point of having elections if the Afghans weren't even going to vote the way they wanted? It was a secret ballot after all. When I made a remark to this effect, the old man responded in *dari*, talking fast and furious, throwing impatient glances my way. When his response was translated, it was along the lines of what would these people do once the election teams leave? Who would protect them? For his security would be threatened if he did not vote with the powerful commander. The interpreter cast his eyes downward and it was obvious to me that this was not the West. There was no rule of law here. Of course those with power could dictate terms.

Leaving the town at nightfall, our driver pointed out Maulana's compound on the right, a large military base. I had seen Maulana at another election, at Saed Khalil, a few days before. He had lumbered nonchalantly into the mosque at the end of proceedings to claim his prize. He was a dark-haired man in his mid-thirties and I'd been surprised by his red toenails and henna-patterned feet. He looked like a pirate, someone who lived outside the rules. He waited complacently for the announcement of his name and then, making no acceptance speech, turned to leave. A heavy gold watch hung from his wrist. We streamed out behind to find a black Toyota Hilux waiting outside, its engine running, packed with bodyguards and ammunition. I'd been suspicious then, now I understood what had happened. Why there had been no vibrancy or debate in that election? Abdur Rahman Maulana, a man not even of the district, had it tied up with fear from the outset.

Despite the climate of fear and intimidation in many places beyond Kabul, diplomats still talked confidently of strengthening President Karzai's remit in the regions and reconstructing the country. But Musa, like many Afghans and indeed like Abdul Haq, believed that the opportunity to do this had been lost forever once the decision had been taken to re-arm the Northern Alliance (and other mujahideen and militia groups). From then on, any chance for a democratic settlement in Afghanistan was lost. When, in 2001, the Taliban faced defeat, many warlords and their commanders had literally driven back across the border to reclaim former fiefdoms. Now they had reappointed themselves as police and army commanders, provincial governors and even Cabinet ministers.¹⁸⁸ From these positions they could continue their often drug-related or corrupt money-making activities much more easily. Their integration into the Afghan state enabled them to operate with impunity, even though many had a history of war crimes. Outside Afghanistan there was intense international interest in the capture and indictment of Milosovic and Karadzic in the Balkans. Meanwhile inside Afghanistan, similar characters were being rewarded with government positions.¹⁸⁹

Thus it seemed that the British Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw, had things the wrong way around when in 2002 he commented on this flawed strategy:

The more we can get people in who have occupied positions of *force* and *strength* in the past but who now say 'we're committed to a political process' and the more we can close off the options for people who resort to violence, the *better* the future of Afghanistan will be.

In such a context the outlook for brave Afghans like Musa, people attempting to form small democratic parties, was lamentable. The international community had done nothing to protect them. There would only be increasing tension with the warlords and their politico-military factions, which rather oddly were named 'parties'. Ironically, on the other hand, by the time of the 2005 parliamentary elections – on which I worked for the EU Election Observation Mission – the international community and Karzai would have

engineered a ‘single non-transferable vote’ (SNTV) voting system which – by its ‘divide and rule’ nature – would mitigate *against* political parties. Musa finished his phone conversation and said:

The problem *really* began when the Americans allowed the Northern Alliance to take Kabul in November 2001. This broke the Bonn Agreement and signalled that international rules could be broken. Unfortunately we *cannot* cooperate with them [the jihadi parties] as they have not obeyed the laws and just want weapons. Until there are *no* weapons and *no* warlords the people will worry ... Free elections without disarmament are impossible. The heads of [political] parties should *not* be involved in war crimes. Anyway, we are also mujahideen but not like them.

The failure of the West to support people like Musa seemed a lost opportunity. Such people really believed – somewhat naively it now seems – that in the wake of September 11, Afghanistan was facing a rebirth with prospects of a democracy supported by the international community. On the issue of the Constitutional Commission, Musa said:

It is headed by Shahrani, a fundamentalist and a mullah. How can *he* make a democratic constitution! ... The UN has allowed Karzai to fill the Constitutional Commission with representatives of politico-military factions, i.e. the warlords, while excluding the democrats.¹⁹⁰ They have *even* removed the word ‘democracy’ from the Constitution.¹⁹¹ They inserted the word ‘Islamic’ so the country will be an Islamic republic. But it would be better to have a constitutional monarchy for Afghanistan. Basically, the constitution is private and controlled by the mujahideen. For them, Karzai is the perfect leader because, having no power of his own, he is forced to do what they want.

His words echoed the warnings of Dr Fasilli, who had warned six months earlier that the drafting of Afghanistan’s new constitution had effectively been hijacked by the mujahiddeen. He stood up, clearly upset.

The Shura-e-nazar parties have *lots* of money. The difference is those who want *real* democracy, no one gives them money. We pay for our offices and tea from our own pockets.



Top - Abdul Haq with Jalaluddin Haqqani at the Meeting of the Commanders, 1991. Held in Shah Saleem, Badakhshan. The meeting was organised by Abdul Haq. Left to Right - Ibrahim Haqqani, Commander Amin Wardak (wearing black turban), Jagran Said Hamed (who was executed alongside Abdul Haq by the Taliban), Jalaluddin Haqqani, Khairullah (Haq's Secretary), Nasrullah Arsala, Abdul Haq, a Hazara Commander from Ghazni Province, Belal Nairam (a Commander from Kabul Province). © Nasrullah Arsala

Bottom - Looking across Eastern Afghanistan from the top of the Lateband Pass.

KANDAHAR UNDER THE TALIBAN - SUMMER 2000



Top - The road from Quetta to Kandahar crosses the Khojack Pass.

Bottom left - The author with UN Habitat engineers in office compound (hence no headscarf)!

Bottom right - Drilling deeper for water during the drought, close to Mullah Omar's house.

RE-BIRTH OF A NATION? DISTRICT LEVEL ELECTIONS FOR
THE EMERGENCY LOYA JIRGA - SPRING 2002



Top - Breakfast with the
Governor in Kjench, Panjshir.

Middle - The entrance to the
Panjshir valley (from the South)
is a natural garrison.

Bottom - Introductions to the
electoral process.





Top - Peter Jouvenal and 'cook' in our kitchen.

Middle left - Dubbed Gandmack Lodge by Jouvenal, our guesthouse had originally been the house of Osama bin Laden's third wife.

Middle right - A poster of Ahmad Shah Massoud.



Bottom - At the One Year 'Shahid' remembrance held at Kabul Stadium for Commander Massoud, Mujahideen leaders were out in full force including (left to right) Ustad Sayyaf, Professor Rabbani, Sibghatullah Mujadeddi and - on the right - Hedayat Amin Arsala.





Top - The Kabul Pass just beyond the Pul-i-charkhi checkpoint, drops away steeply towards Sarobi and Eastern Afghanistan.

Bottom - Amir Sher Ali, son of Dost Mohammad, sits in the middle and this is his cabinet in 1864 at the Ambullah Conference. Haq's great, great grandfather, Arsala Khan, stands to the right of Amir Sher Ali and was Foreign Minister. © National Army Museum



Top - Haji Zahir Qadir, Chief of the Border Police, sits with his brother, Qader (to the right) at a camp with his soldiers near Dacca.

Bottom left - Hazerat Ali, Corps Commander for Nangarhar Province, in his garden.

Bottom right - Haji Nasrullah 'Baryalai' Arsala in his garden in Jalalabad.

AUTUMN IN NANGARHAR



Top - Author with driver and guards on return from Tora Bora.

Middle - Gardeners at the Kasr Palace, Jalalabad, tending the lawn.

Bottom - House of poppy farmer in Nangarhar Province.

ONE YEAR SHAHID (MEMORIAL) FOR ABDUL HAQ



Top - A girl with bike in her burnt out village following a dispute over land between Mohmand and Kutchi tribes.

Middle - On the podium at the Shahid for Abdul Haq in Jalalabad, October 2002 are (left to right) James Ritchie, Haji Din Mohammad, Mullah Malang, Malem Ghani Hedayat (from the party of Ustad Sayyaf).

Bottom - Din Mohammad gives an emotive speech commemorating the lives of his brother, Abdul Haq, and his son.





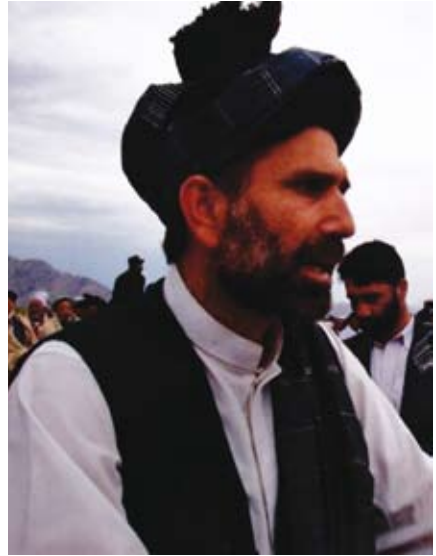
Top - Dubbed "Resistance Royalty" by foreign journalists during the 1980s jihad, the Arsala brothers provided some of the most formidable Commanders of the Afghan war. Here, Haji Qadir wears a white fez and stands on Abdul Haq's right side. Haq wears a blue salwar.

Bottom - Abdul Haq as a young Mujahed.

both © Nasrullah Arsala



JIHAD



Top left - Abdul Haq.

Top right - Nasrullah 'Baryalai' Arsala.

Middle - Abdul Haq recuperating in Wardak Province after the loss of his foot to a landmine.



Bottom - With his mujahideen on an operation. Haq stands on the left side holding a stick.

all © Nasrullah Arsala



KEY FIGURES WERE TO DEFECT UNDER THE 'BANNER' OF THE EX KING

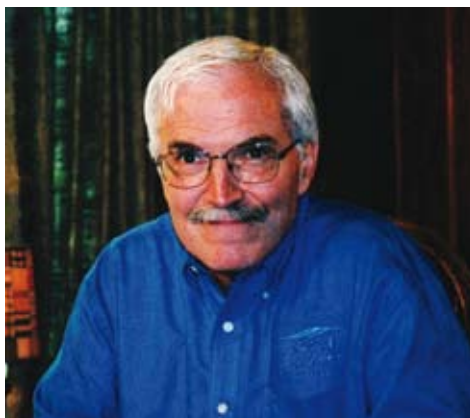


Top left - The ex King, Mohammad Zahir Shah.

Top right - Aga Jan, Haq's famed Commander in the strategically important Sarobi area.

Bottom - The Taliban Deputy Interior Minister, Mullah Khaksar.

HAQ'S US AND BRITISH SUPPORTERS



Top left - 'RAM' Seeger after his period as Officer in Command of the UK's Special Boat Service (1974-76), which ex marines have credited him with having re-shaped in the run-up to the Falkland's War. Seen here with the Sultan of Oman, whose Special Force he Commanded during 1977. © 'RAM' Seeger

Top right - Ken Guest, second from right, with Jalalludin Haqqani's Jadran tribe Mujahidin during attack on hill top base at Taraghry, 7th March Afghanistan 1981. As it is early in the Soviet-Afghan War majority of Haqqani's force were still armed with bolt action rifles from World Wars One and Two and mostly wearing traditional leather bandoliers with .303 ammunition. © Ken Guest

Bottom - Joe Ritchie, who with his brother James tried to get serious support for Abdul Haq's Plan in Washington DC in the run up to - and the aftermath of - September 11. © Touch Productions



Top left - Assadabad, Kunar in December 2002 with the Governor and Central Bank employees as we counted and then burnt old 'afghani' notes.

Middle - Small child on Kabul to Jalalabad road near Sarobi.

Bottom - Arrival in Khost by Soviet era Mi8 helicopter to undertake currency exchange operation - 2003.

ALONG THE DURAND LINE



Top left - On the Durand Line at Yacoby, the Afghan border guard defend themselves against apparent Pakistani incursions.

Top right - The body guards of Haji Zahir.

Bottom - On the way to Dur Baba smuggling district, in the Shinwar region.



Top - Author with Haji Zahir on the Afghan side of Torkham border post.
Bottom left - Haji Zahir and elders in discussion in his garden in Jalalabad.
Bottom right - Dacca, a guardpost of Haji Zahir's border guard, was once a British outpost.



Top left - Haji Zahir at the fortified compound Qadir had begun building during his first tenure as Governor of Jalalabad.

Top right - Afghan soldier with flower and kalashnikov.

Bottom left - Haji Zahir and elders from Loya Paktia and Paktika.

Bottom left - A picture of Haji Qadir looks down on the crowd at a ceremony of Shahid for Abdul Haq.

All photographs unless otherwise marked, are © Author, with the exception of The ex King, Mohammad Zahir Shah.

CHAPTER TEN

PLAYING THE AL QAEDA CARD

Trust a snake before a Harlot
And a Harlot before a Pashtun

TAJIK PROVERB

Jalalabad, Lal Pura, Goste and Fatemena, August 2003

'You have to come back to Afghanistan now', said Zahir down a crackly line. 'I can't say why by phone, but there are problems. You must visit villages along the border, ask the people yourself and write about it'. I did not know it then, but fighting had broken out along the Durand line in summer 2003. Apparently the Pakistani Army were making incursions into Afghan territory, backed by the US who wanted Pakistan to seek out al Qaeda.

Zahir told me that a thousand men had been in his house that day to celebrate the wedding of Abdul Haq's eldest son, Majeed, to Haji din Mohammad's daughter. I thought how sad it was for Haqs' son that as both his parents had been murdered, neither would attend.

London in high summer was unpleasant, even more so in the heat of the row between the BBC and Tony Blair's cabal of officials about the 'sexing up' of the intelligence dossiers on Iraq. Now presided over by Blair's spin doctor – an increasingly maniacal Alastair Campbell at Number 10 – it seemed no depths would be left unplumbed in the struggle to divert attention from the failure to find weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. The previous weeks' casualty had been Dr David Kelly, an honourable-looking weapons expert and civil servant mysteriously found dead on the edge of an Oxfordshire woodland. There was something deeply unpalatable about what was going on.

Relieved to have an excuse to return to Afghanistan, I booked a flight and returned to Kabul where, in the shadows of the 1960s

airport building, one of Zahir's cousins awaited me. During the long drive to Jalalabad he refused to be drawn on the reasons for my visit. But apparently a British junior minister¹⁹² was seeing Zahir that day to discuss drugs.

Today we sat beneath the mulberry trees in the damp, clinging July heat. It was Friday, the day of prayers and rest. Haji Zahir's convoy had driven past the family's village, into the flat land below the black mountains, towards Khoghiani district. 'Visiting neighbours', he had explained, as he parked the white Landcruiser close to some adobe houses, his soldiers trailing out behind us from a clutch of red SUVs. We were shown to *charpoy*s in the shade and I sat opposite him, wilting quietly in the heat.

This was once the house of a big Malek, he was so rich he had over one hundred cows just for milk, and he was a great friend of Zahir Shah who used to come here.

Zahir smiled, clearly relaxed among his own people. Tea was brought by an elderly man. 'Just imagine, King Zahir Shah sat on a charpoy here, thirty five years ago!' he said. Groups of elders arrived, nodding respect silently, before seating themselves on cushions spread on the ground along the sidelines.

They are elders of the village and also soldiers when we need them. Zahir explained as I wondered how long it took news to trickle through the adobe villages of his arrival?

Abdul Haq's remaining sons were there: the three youngest were round-faced boys aged ten, eleven and fifteen with a predilection for Diet Coke. They sat beside Zahir and gazed at him fondly, as though to a father. The oldest was the newly-married eighteen-year-old, Majeed, who sat apart on a *charpoy*. Behind him, a white goat was tethered along the adobe wall of the maleks house. Cattle stood in the shade, flicking their tails and behind the wall was a group of cyprus trees.

A red Toyota SUV arrived and out came bodyguards unloading steaming tin pots. Lunch. After some preparations behind a reed screen, the men filed out like medieval courtiers. They bore pewter

dishes of rice, stew and salad. We ate with the elders from the village on a long mat beneath the trees, some of the villagers looking on, quietly drinking tea. To my right, a row of small birdcages hung from the tree covered with cloths. Inside were nuristani doves.

One of Zahir's men came and whispered into his ear. A map was brought out and examined by the two with gravity. Zahir crossly gave me the latest update on Pakistani movements around the border:

The central government told me to defend, not to fight the Pakistanis. But the people believe the Pakistanis have boats and may cross the Kunar river and make further incursions. They've already done so in Shinwar, Mohmand and Khoghiani [Tora Bora] tribal areas

'So what do the Americans have to do with it? I asked.

They came and told me, 'We're going to carry out an operation in Mohmand in three days', and I offered them my bases. They didn't use them. But when they left, they left the Pakistanis there; now Pakistan is in Kunar and all down the Durand line to Spin Boldak.

He flicked his wrist in annoyance at the crumpled map which lay across his lap. 'But Fazl Akbar, a 'Karzai man', has denied it three times. So I'll have to go up to Kunar and Nuristan soon'. He was talking about the new Governor of Kunar. His pen skated back and forth over the map and its crosshatched border markings.

You know the problem is that the Americans are using British maps. But we're using Russian maps. *That* has correct borders on!

That Zahir was managing this situation with little support from Kabul was evident later that afternoon when we arrived at the kitsch fort Qadir had started building at Surkh Rud. Zahir's bodyguards streamed out of the 4x4s, ran across the compound to the concrete shell and, moments later, returned ferrying boxes of ammunition. This was the ordinance the Taliban had stored in Qadir's property, knowing it would not be bombed by the Northern Alliance. 'They're taking it to my checkpoints in the tribal areas', said Zahir, a thumb in his jacket pocket.

I've spent \$300,000 from my own pocket in these six weeks. The government has offered me one million Afghanis and they keep phoning to check if I've received it. But I tell them, I'll send it back together with another million!

This was my first indication that summer of the Durand issue. The previous week, as news of skirmishes between the Pakistani government and Afghan forces filtered back to Kabul, a mob had ransacked the Pakistani Embassy protesting the violation of Afghan territory by Pakistan. That summer talk of Durand seeped into everything; from the Pakistani press (*The Khyber News*), to the intelligence reports which Zahir had brought by messenger each day from the frontier, to the talk amongst elders, UN staff or Zahir's family. It seeped into our meals, our teas, the interviews I did along the mountainous areas of the Durand line, with the Governor, elders and tribal leaders in Jalalabad. They all believed Pakistan was here due to a tension between the two countries that went back over a hundred years.

The genesis of the problematic 'Durand Line' was the 'Gandamak Agreement' which was signed in May 1879 between British Major Louis Cavagnari and the Afghan Amir Mohammad Ya'qub Khan during the Second Anglo Afghan War of 1879-80. Britain would maintain a diplomatic and military presence in Afghanistan and control its foreign policy, as well as being granted jurisdictional control of the three strategically important frontier districts of Kurram, Sibi and Pichin.

When the Gandamak Plan failed to achieve peace, the British opted to leave Afghanistan, though not before ensuring it remained a buffer between their own Indian empire and that of Russia. To ensure this they decided to annex the unruly Pashtun tribe. Hence, Afghanistan's eastern border would be moved inwards and westwards by about 150 kilometres at the narrowest point. The effect was to enlarge British India's North-West Frontier Province and split the Pashtun tribe which had latterly been concentrated in Afghanistan. 'Durand' – as the 1893 agreement between Amir Abdul Rahman Khan¹⁹³ and Sir Henry Mortimer Durand, Foreign

Secretary of British India, became known – formally adjusted ‘the eastern and southern frontier of His Highness’s dominions, from Wakhan (corridor) to the Persian border’. The problem was that Article 4 of the agreement, as follows, was never undertaken. This stipulated that the:

... frontier line will hereafter be laid down in detail and demarcated, wherever this may be practicable and desirable, by a Joint British and Afghan Commissioners whose object is to arrive by mutual understanding at a boundary which shall adhere with the greatest possible exactness to the agreed map, and have due regard to the existing local rights of villages adjoining the frontier.

So while the limits of Durand were set on paper, the border was not itself demarcated. And this would become the focus of a bleeding sore in relations between Afghanistan and, upon the partition of India in 1947, the country which was created as Pakistan.

Haji Zahir, like many generations of Pathans, never recognised Durand, believing Abdul Rahman had made a personal agreement in return for money. While some Afghans believed it was only to last one hundred years, others believed the conditions so unfavourable that many had never recognised it. Today, although he was still only twenty-eight years old, the tribes along the Durand line were looking to Zahir to resolve the problem along the twelve hundred mile stretch of border which he managed.

The town on the far bank was reminiscent of an Arabic trading post on the East African coast. As our wooden vessel took to the fast waters at a collection of wooden huts in a parched place known as Lal Pura, the soldiers regarded me blankly. They had wild kohl-rimmed eyes and some leant against Russian-era rocket propelled grenades, red hair coiling vertically outwards beneath umbrella-shaped woollen caps. The crazy scene was more ‘The Raft of the Medusa’ than Afghanistan. They were mostly Nuristani and the

boxes of ammunition and supplies they carried would be passed to comrades manning checkpoints in the direction we were headed towards the heights of hostile border areas. I was visiting the mountains with Haji Zahir's 'Barder' Police (Border Guard) and Lal Pura village was within kilometres of the Khyber Pass, one of many gateways to the unruly tribal areas belt of sun-bleached land lying sandwiched between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

The Corps Commander, a solemn-faced man named Mustafa Khan was in charge of thirty-six checkpoints along this fifty kilometre stretch between the Shinwar and Mohmand districts. After a month of keeping the Pakistani government forces at bay I could see that he was tired; his eyes were like saucers.

We descended the boat to sit on *charpoys* near the water's edge while a car was found. A line of men stooped beneath heavy sacks, moving supplies from a rusting truck on the sandy riverbank to a wooden vessel. They moved determinedly beneath their load like an army of ants, white powder spilling from torn sackcloth. Heroin? I sat upright, thinking I had penetrated the smuggling district, but it was urea from Pakistan, shipped via this route to avoid tax.

'Smuggling?' I asked.

'No, not smuggling. Business!' the cousin corrected me. 'Because this is *tribal* area and they are not allied to any government'.

About thirty *barders* (borders) soldiers now clambered on top of the ramshackle Toyota from which the urea had just been unloaded, reminding me of a Guatemalan taxi I'd once taken over the Mexican border in which people hung off every orifice. There were few vehicles this side of the river and this one, they explained, had been brought over by the Soviets and then captured by the tribal people. Now its sole use was to ferry goods across this 'no mans land'. The cousin motioned for me to climb inside and we set off, driving into open desert past the occasional abandoned village, stumps of houses being all that remained after bombing by the Soviets, silent now except for remnants of tree cover. As we headed into the parched hills, I noticed a profusion of buffalo carcasses littering the route. 'They come from India, through Pakistan and to here and die from

the heat crossing the mountains', explained the driver, a merry man named Liqat. After forty minutes of sweltering heat he dropped us where several *charpoy*s were arranged beneath the shade of trees, explaining he was now driving to Pakistan. When he collected us later that day for the trip home, a buffalo was strapped to the truck floor. 'So it won't die of heat', he said, as though this should have been obvious. The buffalo were raised in Pakistan before being smuggled into Afghanistan for eating.

This was Fatemena village, Mustafa Khan's base camp. In fact the 'village' had been abandoned years ago after Russian bombardment. Today Khan's soldiers lounged on *charpoy*s away from the midday sun. Khan pointed solemnly to a parched mountain several kilometres distant from here. 'During six weeks my poorly armed men have through good morale managed to push Pakistani government soldiers back 6 km from here'. As Mustafa Khan spoke, the soldiers clamoured to look through a set of Russian binoculars mounted on a tripod, scanning a peak which Khan said his men captured at three am the night before, having scrambled up it just as Pakistani government soldiers were being dropped by helicopter the other side. 'Now', he said, 'the Pakistani's are trying to cut off my supply route'.

When I understood that the Afghan Border Police were up against Pakistani military spending which included a \$3 billion USD 'reward' from the American government two months ago for its' part in the war on terror, Mustafa Khan's achievements seemed more remarkable. The US contribution to Pakistan was in marked contrast to the paltry \$1.8 billion received by war-decimated Afghanistan for 'reconstruction' during 2002.

We drove up the incline of a ravine towards the frontline, Mustafa Khan behind the wheel of a ramshackle anti-aircraft lorry captured from the Taliban. We descended and scrambled by foot through a cutting towards a checkpoint. Several soldiers, pleased to be diverted from the monotony of awaiting enemy fire, welcomed us. They had laid a row of mortars in a neat line, next to which was a rocket launcher from which they could fire to the end of the escarpment. Some fifteen kilometres away, they pointed out another

Pakistani position, the highest in the area. Under canvas in the dead ground, an elder with henna-coloured side-burns, a grey beard and white fez sat on a charpoy and prodded a knarled finger towards me. 'For a hundred years they are *not* here. This is *our* territory', he said and jutted his chin dismissively towards the Pakistani position.

They had vehicles and heavy artillery and told us to agree for this territory to become Pakistan, in return for electricity, roads and bribes to elders.

The Pakistanis had been here weeks earlier, before Mustafa Khan pushed them back. The old man pushed back his white fez and said:

The local people take weapons against Pakistan, but elders (three maleks and one maulavi) take money plots in Hyattabad to capture Afghan territory. Why, after fifty years?

Hyatabad was the Peshawar suburb where Afghan resistance leaders had built villas. He looked into my face as though somewhere in it some he would find some meaning that might enlighten him, possibly relating to the legacy of British history on the North-West Frontier.

But I am Afghan and we'll *never* sell our soil to Pakistan. If the Afghan government was stable, we should say to Pakistan that our territory goes *all* the way to Attock.

Smacking the lap of his salwar, he added, 'That's part of Afghanistan and they should give it back!'¹⁹⁴

I wondered about Afghanistan stretching all the way beyond Peshawar again, even to Attock where the rushing waters of the River Indus severed the two lands of India and Central Asia: a natural and historical boundary. Attock was also the location of a fort, where Benazir Bhutto's husband, Asif Zadari, was rumoured to be in prison on corruption charges. If the Afghans still believed their border lay 150 kilometres to the East, it was understandable that men like the old man would be angered to see Pakistani government forces pressing westwards over the Durand Line. And simultaneously Pakistan's anxiety was understandable, for if the Afghans desire were met, the territory of Pakistan would effectively

be halved. The old man went on:

There were Americans here, eighty to a hundred of them and twenty vehicles, one week before. They came several times to patrol, coming alongside the Pakistanis, bringing twenty helicopters and fifty tanks. I asked what they were doing and their Commander said, 'the Pakistan Government told us that Mullah Omar is here so we've come to capture him'. But I told them there is no al Qaeda here and after several days they left.

He picked up the fold of his kameez and stretched it neatly across his lap.

The Pakistanis said, 'We are searching for al Qaeda. But al Qaeda is only a good name! Anything you can do using *name* of al Qaeda! When Pakistanis came they said Americans invite us here to capture al Qaeda. I don't know about politics, just that this is my soil and I will protect it! I am Afghan and will never sell my soil in exchange for anything!¹⁹⁵

Before we left, the old man asked if I would like to visit his house for tea so he could show me the skull of a British soldier killed by his grandfather. I declined politely. But wondered if the skull was a last vestige of the third Anglo-Afghan war. It was always a revelation to see how much these simple people were so conscious of their history; certainly far more so than Prime Minister Blair, who was about to commit the British to a major escalation of our post-2001 role in the south, in Helmand.

Back in Jalalabad, others reaffirmed that Pakistan was simply using the excuse of capturing al Qaeda as reason to take more territory from the Afghans. People were also furious that President Karzai didn't react more strongly to such audacity. When Kabuli men had mobbed Pakistan's embassy that summer, Karzai made a public apology to President Musharraf and promised the culprits would be jailed. People questioned whether it was his weak hold over the country and lack of military capacity that had engendered such a limited response? Or, whether as leader only of a 'transitional' administration, without a remit to renegotiate borders, maybe he wasn't in a position to challenge Pakistan's interpretation of where

Durand's fuzzy limits lie. An elder at Jalalabad's Loya Jirga shura office told me:

This is a transitional government which can't decide borders so the USA should keep the integrity of Afghanistan as we don't have an army or government. Pakistan is cheating the US, telling them al Qaeda is on its borders.

Unknown to US generals, the Afghans and Pakistan were fighting an old battle. Days later, a UN officer based in Jalalabad admitted: To be honest I haven't heard of al Qaeda or terrorist activities in that area and they haven't captured a single terrorist.

Pakistan and the US were apparently undertaking a joint operation called 'Combined Resolve', aimed at controlling the tribal areas and hunting down al Qaeda. But during a meeting in the Kasr Palace, Jalalabad's Governor Haji din Mohammad confirmed:

It *is* a problem. Pakistan has crossed the zero line in several places, by several kilometres. But the real issue is the Durand Line. Pakistan wants to use it as a negotiating tool. There is no al Qaeda in Mohmand area. This is a good *excuse* for the Pakistanis to come inside. They want territory. Talk about al Qaeda is just propaganda.

I went up the hill and past a road which CIA staff had blocked off, renamed and signboarded 'Chocolate Alley', because, the Afghans said, the CIA liked to hand out 'chocolate' to local children from there. Today I was visiting the tribal areas chief, a whippet-thin man named Faraydoon Mohmand, head of the Mohmand tribe. 'Pakistan is using the name of al Qaeda for its own benefit; to get control of the land and to have money from the USA', he told me in a room surrounded by sepia photos of him as a young military officer. The people of his area, the Mohmand tribe, had always supported the family of Jalalabad's Governor Haji din Mohammad.

So why should we support al Qaeda or the Taliban? This situation is creating a problem between Afghanistan and the USA, as they are bringing our enemies to this country. This is an issue of sovereignty, a national issue, but if the central government does not react, the tribes will take it into their own hands.

The border dispute illustrated the twisted chicanery of complex relations between Afghanistan and its southern neighbour. Although the Durand issue lay at the root of the problem, following Pakistan's annexation from India in 1947, this had metamorphosed into the 'Pashtunistan issue'. Both mirrored Pakistan's insecurity about her existence. As Haq recognised, both had contributed to the festering sore at the heart of Pakistan's 1980s strategic and regional policy. A sore which continues to emit venom, yet whose existence often seems invisible to those advocating a regional policy to dealing with Afghanistan's problems today. The following paragraphs explain why the issue remains as toxic today as it was during the 1970s and 80s, when Pakistan preferred to back biddable Afghan mujahideen leaders (such as Gulbuddin Hikmatyar) whom they knew they could rely on to support Pakistan's strategic interests.

As Baryalai had explained, Afghanistan's relationship with the Soviet Union really began after the ejection of the British and the 1919 Treaty of Rawalpindi. It deepened following Partition and the emergence of Pakistan. Afghanistan and Pakistani relations were soured from the outset after the Afghans did not immediately 'recognise' Pakistan as a new nation at a meeting of the UN in the early 1950s.

Then came the inevitable disagreements over the independence of the Pashtun belt. For the Pashtun tribal areas of the North-West Frontier Province had enjoyed quasi-independent status in relation to British India since 1901. After Partition, Afghanistan hoped they would gain independence but instead some areas were subsumed into the newly created Pakistan, which then had to deal with tribal uprisings. In 1949, after the Pakistani air force responded to one such uprising with an air strike, the Afghans reneged on all previous treaties creating a frontier with British India, and pushed for the idea of an independent Pashtunistan, on the Pakistan side of the Durand Line.¹⁹⁶ Pakistan responded furiously, cutting off

Afghanistan's access to the Indian Ocean and blockading petroleum. The Afghan government was forced to sign a free trade and barter agreement with Mosco; in exchange for petrol, Afghans would provide wool and raw cotton and the Soviets began oil exploration in Northern Afghanistan. Relations between Afghanistan and the USSR deepened further when diplomatic ties with Pakistan were cut once again and the Pakistan-Afghan border was closed for two years until 1963.¹⁹⁷

During his tenure both as Foreign Secretary in the 1960s and President following the 1973 coup which deposed the former King, Afghanistan's President Daoud had brought Afghanistan closer to the Soviets than to Pakistan. This relationship was the culmination of a long post-WWII balance between the USA and the Soviets, both of which had competed for influence in the country, often by undertaking aid projects.¹⁹⁸

During the early 1970s, Pakistan's generals knew that Daoud, an Afghan nationalist with a devotion to the cause of a 'Pashtunistan' state, hoped the lands taken by the Durand Agreement would revert to Afghanistan. Naturally the generals had no wish to reopen a debate over claims for land potentially reaching the old British fort at Attock.

It was for this strategic reason that Pakistan and the ISI preferred to back Islamist leaders, such as Gulbuddin Hikmatyar, during the jihad. The intention was to make Afghanistan an Islamic state and find a leader to serve their cause in Kabul. This would also assist in creating a bulwark of 'strategic depth' against India, the constant threat to the south. Hence Afghan nationalists like President Daoud and later Abdul Haq, men with an ideological following were a threat to the Generals. The Generals preferred leaders they could control with the pursestrings, men like Hikmatyar and Sayyaf. Hence the Generals used US dollars during the jihad to buy off Hikmatyar - for he could then be counted on to form a pro-Pakistan government in Kabul - and later, Sayyaf.¹⁹⁹ Crucially, this would also obviate any need to renegotiate Durand and risk losing Pakistani territory. It was for this reason that, of all the seven mujahideen leaders, Hikmatyar

received some eighty percent of the overall funding given by the CIA to Pakistan for the purpose of running the Soviet jihad. And probably why Abdul Haq, who could not be 'bought' but spoke out against the policy was ridiculed and dubbed 'Hollywood Haq' by the ISI.

At this point it is important to note that Abdul Haq, although an Afghan 'nationalist' was *not* a 'Pashtun nationalist'. He was not pushing for an independent state of 'Pashtunistan'. This was ironic, given the way he was treated by the ISI, as he was not a threat to Pakistan.

Abdul Haq was one of the few Afghan Resistance leaders who recognised how the twin unresolved issues of 'Pashtunistan' and 'Durand' lay at the heart of Pakistani politicking over Afghanistan. He understood how the two could have devastating consequences for Afghanistan and eventually global security. During the post-September 11 American-backed hunt for bin Laden, both issues were being resurrected. However, President Musharraf also now faced a growth in support for the Islamic fundamentalist coalition Islamist Mutahed-e-majlis-amal (MMA), which won elections in 2003 in the NWFP. So not only was Musharraf's military regime having to balance his position as an ally of the US in its Afghan 'War on Terror' with his pro-Islamist Generals and the ISI, but now he faced a resurgence of radicals in his midst. Some thought this a good reason for Musharraf's crackdown on Pakistan's tribal areas. 'They're not exactly his best friends', said the UN spokeswoman, referring to the MMA.

Still, in the summer of 2003, Pashtuns like Haji Zahir felt Pakistan was not just using al Qaeda as an excuse (at least in Nangarhar Province) to take control over the unruly tribal areas and leveraging off the ignorance of the foreigners. No, Pashtuns like Haji Zahir knew in their blood that Pakistan was using al Qaeda here as an excuse to gain Afghan territory as a bargaining chip to press Kabul to close the debate on Durand. President Musharraf, in a gibe at Karzai over his lack of control over outlying areas, called him 'Governor of Kabul'.²⁰⁰ Yet the irony was that, while fighting Zahir's men over checkpoints in Afghanistan's eastern territory, Pakistan was apparently turning

a blind eye to the regrouping and training of hundreds of Taliban on Afghanistan's southern border in the Baluchistan triangle near Quetta. A regrouping that didn't even have the excuse of being in tribal areas beyond the Pakistan government's writ.²⁰¹

By late 2003, it was apparent that the 'real' war against al Qaeda as well as the search for bin Laden, now almost a mythical character, was happening further south along the border, in a hostile place closer to Quetta called Waziristan. By Spring this was known as a new 'jihadi highway' where Chechens, Arabs and Pakistanis flocked to fight jihad. After almost three years, the US didn't seem to be making any headway in finding Osama, despite indication in spring 2004 from the US military that bin Laden would 'definitely be caught' by that Autumn. US intelligence agencies still seemed so convinced that Pakistan really was their unalloyed ally that they were caught off guard in October 2003. *Time* magazine described an incident where the Pakistani military, supposedly fighting on the border in tandem with American troops, actually opened fire on the Americans.²⁰²

If US Commanders had studied British history in the area they would have seen tremendous parallels between their own attempts post-September 11 to stem an insurgency and find bin Laden and the story of two other Holy Men who had caused trouble: Mullah Powindah in 1894, and then, during the 1930s, the Fakir of Ipi.

Following the Durand Agreement of 1893, the Pashtun tribes east of the Durand became more turbulent in opposition to the British who were then ruling India. Increasingly, a feeling of nationalism began to replace ethnic and tribal loyalties. Waziristan was one of the most problematic areas, along the border, a place where 'people were as unyielding as the rocks that covered the landscape'.²⁰³

The story of 'The Fakir of Ipi' began on a summer day in 1936 when a Waziri tribesman entered the district town of Bannu in the Province of Waziristan. There, he was captivated by the wife of a

Hindu merchant. Taking her with him, he brought her back across the administrative border and married her in a Muslim ceremony. When her original husband brought the case to court on a charge of kidnap, the case of Chand Bibi, as she had chosen to be called, took on the significance of 'a pretty face that moved, not a thousand ships like Helen of Troy, but at least two British divisions'.²⁰⁴

The verdict came down in the Hindu's favour and Muslim tribesmen smouldered over what they saw as an affront to their version of Muslim law.

Several thousand Wazirs ambushed the Indian Army's Bannu brigade, killing and mutilating 130 officers and men and making off with a bumper crop of rifles and ammunition.

The whole episode may have quietened down but for the Fakir of Ipi, a priestly Wazir who for years had gone quietly about his holy duties without attracting much notice. It was only with the Chand Bibi case that the Fakir's unassuming exterior was exposed to show how beneath there 'bubbled a hatred for the unbeliever certifiable in its intensity'. Using the name 'Islam Bibi' as a rallying cry, the Fakir showed himself to 'possess the skills of a Field Marshall and enough rabble rousing charisma to mobilise a tribal army'.²⁰⁵

The Fakir of Ipi, who was named Haji Mirza Ali Khan, headed up a group of Mullahs and managed to stir up rebellion amongst the Madda Khel and Tori Khel section of the Waziris. When British troops arrived they came:

... festooned with automatic weapons, girdled with field guns and howitzers, chaperoned by flotillas of tanks and armoured cars, shaded by the umbrella of the Royal Air Force.²⁰⁶

Nevertheless the British were forced to send three Divisions into action and, by the time an uneasy peace was made in 1937, had suffered over a thousand casualties. The debacle of the Fakir of Ipi had cost the British some £50 million (no small sum in 1937) and led to the deployment of fifty thousand British and Indian troops.

Despite their superior firepower, the British found the tribesmen, who were now armed with long range rifles, more mobile and

tribal fighting very difficult. The Fakir of Ipi was never caught and remained safe near the Afghan border at Shawal. From there he remained a thorn in the side of the British, and later Pakistan, until his death in 1959.²⁰⁷

In his book on the Fakir of Ipi, Warren said; 'The attempt to pacify Waziristan had been the last of several major incursions into tribal territory during the hundred years of Britain's presence in North West India. On each occasion the tribes and the mountains won a strategic victory. The Waziri Campaign was eventually called a 'school for soldiering' by Sir W Barton.

Like the incursions fought by the British in the 1930s, by 2003 it was already apparent that the coalition too were caught up in a similar game in which the Pathans, with their superior knowledge of the mountains, hatred of the infidel and guerrilla skills, would ultimately win. And Pakistan, having already received some \$3 billion USD in military aid from the US, was benefiting too.

There were other similarities between the Fakir of Ipi's insurgency and that which began to put itself on the radar in 2004. As with al Qaeda and bin Laden, part of the strength lying behind the Fakir's motivation was his faith in the ideal of a Muslim society:

The extent to which Islamic fundamentalism lay at the core of the Fakir of Ipi's motivations is only too apparent. He desired a status quo in which Muslims lived beyond the interference of a western style administration directed by non Muslims.²⁰⁸

And as with bin Laden:

It is commonly believed that anyone who gives information about him or about those who go to see him will be instantly struck blind. All illness and misfortune seem to be attributed to his displeasure. Not a single malik, tappa or lambarder has come forward voluntarily, with any information.

This was possibly due to the close-knit nature of Pashtun society, and in particular its emphasis on Pashtunwali, the Pashtun code which values hospitality and looking after one's guest.

The insurgency along the border in Waziristan, as well as by

2004 throughout southern Afghanistan, was clearly a war furnished by a varying concoction of forces. Pakistan's policy of apparently denying support to the Taliban while simultaneously allowing them to regroup on Pakistani territory outside Quetta and giving shelter to their fighters, increasingly caused people to accuse them of 'implausible denial'.²⁰⁹

CHAPTER TWELVE

A PERSPECTIVE ON BRITISH POST-SEPTEMBER 11 STRATEGY AND INTELLIGENCE: THE UK HAQ EFFORT (PART I)

London, September 2003

Back in London that September, I decided to find out about the ethereal Englishman Ritchie had tried to link me with at first: Sir John Wellesley Gunston. The Afghans had often asked me, 'Do you know John Gunston? He was at Tora Bora ...' or 'He's working for MI6'. The irony was that, rather than working for MI6, I would find Gunston to be very critical, not simply of MI6 but of many of the most celebrated figures of the British military, intelligence and political establishment when it came to the post-September 11 'Afghan policy'.

I found him referred to in Kaplan's book:

The two were introduced to each other in the lobby at Greens hotel. Haq listened silently as Gunston related his experiences (with Hikmatyar and Massoud) giving names, dates and descriptions of various weapons and battle formations in the clipped, technical style of an army officer. He talked about how the Soviets used transport aircraft to provide battlefield illumination during night engagements. He went on to describe the actual configurations of the flares. Unlike the other journalists, Gunston was able to judge the fighting ability of the mujahidin as a military professional and was quite direct in his criticisms. 'You have a very good memory', Haq told him somewhat cryptically. 'Get in touch with me if you want to make more trips inside'.²¹⁵

Later Kaplan describes Haq organising a clandestine visit to Kabul for Gunston in 1988.

Something no other western journalist had done with the Mujahidin since 1985. Haq told Gunston not only that he could get him into Kabul but that he could also arrange meetings for him there with the regime's army officers and KHAD agents who were secretly working

for the mujahidin. 'I know you wont crack up and tell everything if you're caught', Haq told him. Gunston swore it was the first time in his life he was humbled.²¹⁶

For someone who had been accused of operating furtively, he wasn't hard to find in the London phone directory. 'Yes, I know who you are, I've been reading you in *The Telegraph*. Good stuff!' a boyish voice said generously.

When I said I was interested in writing about Abdul Haq, he said:

You're onto a good one! He was a *great* guy and the *only* hope for a decent solution post-September 11. He called me and asked me to meet him in Rome in Sept 2001 where he was working with the King. He had *loads* of resistance leaders who paid their own way to join him, from Farah and Hazarajat to Nangarhar. They looked for an Afghan solution and an ethical representation. It is quite exceptional for it to come from a Pashtun. Actually he was more of an Afghan than a Pashtun.

He suggested I meet with him so that he could furnish me with news cuttings and maps. And soon I rang the doorbell of a Victorian house by the River Thames. There was a voice through the intercom, the door was buzzed open and I was alone in a library style room with polished parquet flooring. Each wall was lined with leather-bound, gilt-embellished antiquarian books. At the far end, a TV and stainless steel kitchen area. Presently, the thump of feet could be heard coming down wooden steps. A man with floppy brown hair tumbled into the room. He was dressed in cords and a Viyella checked shirt in the English 'country' style.

'I was leaving for Dubai and then the east', he smiled. 'So you just caught me'. He was off to Kabul to try to 'get the Pashtuns to work together' in a Pashtun jirga initiative. It seemed a good idea, particularly as even now, in late 2003, there was still no Taliban reconciliation initiative. He gestured me towards a leather sofa as he made coffee, talking enthusiastically.

They're a great family but not all knights. Haji Qadir was a playboy. Well, he lived that element. Yet he was the old order, whereas Haq was the new order.

‘Old order?’ I asked. ‘Well, Qadir liked to have his potentate around him. He was a great guy’. His view resembled the picture Kaplan had painted of Qadir: a sort of medieval knight upon whose arrival in a village during the jihad would prompt a huge feast with the local goat being slaughtered. Gunston told me he was Qadir’s advisor at Bonn, that he had advised him how to deal with the Brits and the US. Qadir had asked him to go to Tora Bora with his son Zahir.

Haq was of course dead by the time the Bonn Conference took place. Gunston spoke about Tora Bora:

At one stage we almost went to war with Hazerat Ali. Dear old Zahir is like Abdul in the early days but has his father’s temper. I see him as ‘the Hope’.

As we spoke, he occasionally quoted from Afghan history books, asking if I had read this or that, pulling books from the shelves, fingering their pages. Gunston went on:

A lot of people decried Abdul as they owed allegiance to other Commanders or groups. By this I mean Western journalists who went ‘in’. But it depended who you were with. During the war it was easy to become partisan.

‘So why was he so unpopular with the Americans?’ I asked.

Certainly people like Beardon would call him ‘Hollywood Haq’. It was clear that the guys they [the CIA] liked were the ones who would take orders from *them* or the Pakistanis. But Abdul had difficulties with the Pakistanis who’d ask him to carry out murderous operations.

He waited for me to catch up.

Look, Afghanistan today is teetering on a *knife edge*. The US has inherently destabilised the natural order of power amongst the ethnic races.

His voice was measured and as he spoke I glanced up at his shelves to see, rather auspiciously, a leather volume of Belous’ *The Tribes of Afghanistan* sitting adjacent to Ludwig Adamec’s *History of Afghanistan*. The leather-bound scarlet and gold volumes indicated an appreciation, at least, of books. The historical references he peppered into every anecdote demonstrated not only his voracious

appetite for reading, but also his interest in history. Unlike the British Ambassador I'd met in Kabul, a man who – despite enjoying the grandeur of life in Curzon's Embassy with its huge retinue of staff – did not seem as interested in books about Afghan history as I felt he should have been. Gunston continued at full pelt, as though unburdening himself.

OK, so initially they didn't care. A CIA guy even said to me, 'We're here to kill ragheads and you're trying to sell us a stable Afghanistan. We don't care, we're here for *payback!*' And that was in October 2001!

I recalled how, only months earlier during a late night discussion in Islamabad, an American diplomat who was friendly with a girl I'd known had commented savagely, 'We're not here for nation building. That's bullshit. We're here for revenge'. I repeated this to Gunston, who commented dryly.

So this guy understood. But the British, I'm afraid to say, compounded the error. They supported the US *without* a sense of our history and experience in Afghanistan.

He put down his glass, 'And do you want to know why?' I struggled to pull out another notebook, nodding.

Well, firstly, in September 2001, the guys dealing with Afghanistan – I was asked to brief an anti-terror branch of the MOD who briefed the PM – well these guys, they just quoted from the Ashdown article which, incidentally, was written by a mate of mine.²¹⁷

He broke off laughing. I'd read the article, the only piece of journalism written after September 11 that seemed to understand the nuances inherent to the Afghan problem. Gunston was now relaxed enough to be pretty direct.

So I went in to brief 'Six'. It was amazing. Their knowledge was *zero*. They knew about the Falls Road,²¹⁸ but that was about it!

I leant forward.

From '95 or '96 onwards, MI6 scaled down their interest. Our MI6 people were basically 'let go'. *Just* as the Taliban took power in '96. So they were left with a twenty-three year old running the Islamabad office! And as you know that meant not just Pakistan but Afghanistan

too was run from there. It was outrageous!

I had known many of the embassy staff in Islamabad. Most were in their early twenties, some working as spies but masquerading as diplomats. Often in their first or second job abroad and with a penchant for meeting up with their British chums on Sunday afternoons for group DVD sessions or curries at the Marriott. Gunston continued:

Since September 11, the US has gone in all guns blazing and created a government that has alienated forty-five percent of the Afghan population. It cannot work. Initially the US didn't understand there were 'good' and 'bad' Pashtuns. It was like, they wear turbans so they're all just 'ragheads'!

He shook his head.

The problem is the international community don't understand that the Taliban is a *stratified* group, made of different supporters – hardliners, religious zealots and nutcases – but subordinated by al Qaeda and their money. Many decent Afghan nationalists supported the movement because the Taliban brought back law and order. The majority wanted stability, peace and prosperity. Not the *Arabisation* of the government.

'Is *that* why did Haq opposed the bombing campaign?' I asked.

Haq's fear over the bombing was that they'd alienate forty-five percent – i.e. the single largest entity – of the population. The Brits should have known but were inherently foolish-minded in September 2001. Instead, they and the Americans just identified Afghans they could do business with – Karzai and Zaman – dismissing Abdul as 'Hollywood Haq' who spoke large but didn't deliver. The reason? It's a label that goes back to ISI and the 1980s when ISI considered Haq too 'independent' to give weapons to. They preferred to work only with people who'd do their bidding.

'Did you witness Haq's "independence" yourself?' I asked.

I spent two years 'inside' on twenty-four trips between '83 and '89. And also spent time with Hikmatyar's group, Massoud and NIFA and can tell you that Haq was *the* most significant commander in the Kabul area during the Soviet war. Despite not having the resources he needed

due to problems with the ISI. He was against the big show operations with no material benefit and possible collateral damage. So *not* ISI's favourite. Plus of course they disliked the fact he was eloquent with the press and criticised the CIA's unquestioning support for running the Afghan war through the ISI. That's what came back to haunt him during September '01.

He then suggested we go up to his office where he could copy me some of the news pieces relating to Haq from the time of the jihad and then September 11. He also gave me some photos taken by himself as a young freelancer during the jihad. As he pulled them out of drawers he annotated verbally the operations to which each picture related. There were many of Afghan mujahideen carrying RPGs and machine guns, stalking behind rocks. Also, news cuttings and photos, some of Abdul Haq, dating from the 1980s. When we returned to the ground floor he said:

At time of his death, *Private Eye* published a small piece saying he was a 'murderous terrorist' and responsible for planting bombs in 1984 killing eight or nine people . But I was with him then and no such operation took place.

He pulled it out and I read. The piece began with a sarcastic take on some of the things journalists who had known Haq had written about him, and went on:

In a war where few have emerged in glory, Abdul Haq was one of the good guys'.

And so said every leader writer, too: the death of this decent and civilised chap, they agreed, was a 'severe blow' to the war against terrorism.

But, as we pointed out in the last *Eye*, Abdul Haq was himself a terrorist. He took pride in having planted a bomb at Kabul airport in 1984 which killed 28 people – most of them schoolchildren. In an interview a couple of years later he was asked if he had any qualms about killing civilians and children, "I don't care", he replied, showing the charm which so enraptured hacks like Bruce Anderson.

Like so many erstwhile terrorists, Haq managed to reinvent himself as

a “moderate” and a “peacemaker” – so successfully that his murderous exploits were entirely omitted from every single obituary.

Gunston interjected:

Of course the piece in the *Eye* was conveniently unattributed. A dirty tricks smear. Probably because I had pressure put on the intelligence services in October 2001 to support Abdul so when he died it was in their interest to diminish him.

As I digested the enormity of this, he said:

Look, you see the *manner* of his death spelt out his *value*. And that wasn't all. In December 2001, the *Daily Telegraph* said MI6 were responsible for the fall of Kabul, Jalalabad and Ghazni. Nonsense! They were simply taking credit where it wasn't due. In fact, din Mohammad asked me to get help from 'Six' to pay for buses to get their people to Jalalabad from Peshawar. He also asked for them to stop bombing the villages and killing their people. I told MI6, 'You guys have a window of opportunity to support Haji din Mohammad and be part of it'. But they didn't call him.

Baryalai and Ritchie's assertions about Gunston working for MI6 now looked pretty weak. Even so there was an air of privacy, even secrecy around him. Over the following months I visited him several times and he was always very forthright about Haq, but clearly had 'other projects' going on.

He furnished me with documentation about Abdul Haq's plan for toppling the Taliban. And told me that a former head of the Special Boat Service (SBS), Major 'RAM' Seeger,²¹⁹ had accompanied Gunston to Haq's Peshawar office during October 2001. Seeger's job was to put the plan devised by Abdul Haq into an intelligible format, so that those in the UK²²⁰ with the potential to assist would understand the dynamics.

The documents included situation reports (hereafter 'sitrep') from the period from September to October 2001. Some of these, Gunston told me, had been passed to the SIS. There was also a fax addressed to General Lord Guthrie (see Appendix III) briefing notes on Haq and the various Commanders (Taliban and otherwise) who had pledged

support, various summaries of the plan, notes on the requirements for money, arms, transport and so on, as well as updates.

But it was a neatly typed-up sitrep marked 3 October 2001 (see Appendix IV) that first caught my attention. I later realised this had been typed by RAM Seeger, whom Gunston had been working alongside together with an ex-marine named Ken Guest, in an attempt to secure support for the Haq strategy in the immediate aftermath of September 11. I will come to Seeger and Guest's perspective in a later chapter.

The sitrep dated 3 October was numbered with points one to twenty-four it was an outline of the reasoning for the Haq option strategy. 3 October was of course still four days before the US-led coalition began its bombing campaign of Afghanistan. When the sitrep was typed up, Haq would not have known that the bombing would begin so imminently, hence perhaps the sitrep was more hopeful of success than it would have been had this information been known then. Nevertheless in the introduction, the sitrep said that the plan was dependent on the charisma, reputation and pledges of support from Taliban commanders and could unravel through lack of material support but that the critical effect would be the actions of the US and its allies. By this, I took the point to mean, a bombing campaign.

The second point was about the 'prizes to be gained from a successful outcome' (i.e. of Haq's strategy). This would include a 'relatively bloodless overthrow' of the Taliban, the capture of Kabul by Pashtuns, isolation of al Qaeda, an 'acceptable broad based-government of all ethnic groups', and, as a result of all the above, a 'terrorist-free' Afghanistan.

The sitrep explained how Haq's plan was mostly dependent on large-scale Taliban defections, which they believed were possible, particularly because some 'major players' had apparently pledged support and the regime – as I had seen myself even in Kandahar – was unpopular, not least because the Pashtuns were fed up with hosting al Qaida's Arabs. The fifth point explained the importance of not having a US-backed Northern Alliance capture Kabul and

impose a 'Tajik dominated government on the country' which would of course 'not be acceptable to the Pashtun majority' who were then likely to rally to the Taliban, thus prolonging the civil conflict and strengthening al Qaeda. This of course, is exactly what the US-led coalition had done! In recognition of the difficulty of having the Northern Alliance take Kabul, the sitrep thus proposed a Pashtun counterweight to the Northern Alliance to ensure a better distribution of ethnic power, and to increase the likelihood of the evolution of a more widely acceptable government. This point was underlined with reference to the civilian population's memory of recent Northern Alliance atrocities committed in Kabul during the early 1990s. The sitrep floated the idea that al Qaeda (and by implication, the Taliban) was more likely to lose legitimacy in the longer term if the government was overthrown peacefully.

Under the heading 'Outline Plan', the sitrep went on –in the sixth point – to say that Haq's plan was to cross the border with two small hardcore groups of around two hundred 'lightly armed mujahideen' because:

... any larger initial group would arouse attention and provoke Pakistani interference. Once safely across the border, 'these groups would be quickly increased by groups of volunteers travelling independently from Pakistan or areas inside Afghanistan. The first of Haq's groups would start from the Mohmand tribal territories and after crossing into the Kunar valley converge on Jalalabad. The second group would start from Terrimangul and head for Teezine and Sorobi which are Haq's tribal homelands and from which he is confident he could draw much popular support. Large scale defections would be expected as soon as the Taliban units were approached or confronted. Pledged defections by Jalalabad commanders would ensure the capture of this town and access to heavy weaponry (tanks and artillery) and uniformed soldiers. Areas of arab resistance would be bypassed.

Reading this, I remembered the campaigns Haji Zahir had described, particularly his return to Jalalabad after exile in Iran post-September 11. Then, he had described coming into Afghanistan with a small column of followers. As they had marched they had called up

previously forewarned commanders who had fought with the family during the jihad. These commanders would then mobilise foot soldiers, who would join Zahir and his men. By the time the column reached Jalalabad, it would be many thousands strong. The foot soldiers came from the tribes along the route, from Shinwar, Mohmand, Kunar and as far away as Nuristan, where the men wore pancake shaped *pakhals*.

The seventh point of the sitrep added that simultaneous to the advances from the East would be: 'two uprisings from within Afghanistan – the area north west of Ghazni (Wardak) and the area south of Ghazni but north of Kandahar'. Presumably these would have been orchestrated by commanders who still retained loyalty to Haq due to their history of fighting together during the jihad. Many of these commanders were apparently now embedded with the Taliban.

The eighth point stressed that once begun, Haq estimated his plan could be over within three weeks. He would begin his plan on his home ground, at Tera Mangal/Teezin. Terrimangal lay to the north-west of Jalalabad and was where the family had originally come from, centuries before. The elders there retained loyalty due to this historical link. Haq must have followed this plan, because 'Terrimangal' (also known as Tera Mangal') was where he had been captured by the Arabs.

The next section was titled 'Afghan support for Haq' and the ninth point:

It is not possible to gauge the actual and potential support for Haq with any certainty but the indications are that it is real.

I reflected on my own experience of Jalalabad – with the number of elders and tribesmen I had seen coming to the compounds of the Arsala family, my visits to the Shinwar, the Mohmand and the borders, the weeping school girls at his *shaheed* and the reaction of people to the unpopular US-backed warlords – his support was real.

The sitrep continued and the tenth point ten said:

We have met and talked with two commanders from the areas around

Ghazni: Mullah Malang (renowned ex-DRA former mujahideen and more recently ex-Talib commander) and another commander from Wardak. We have also met and talked with two Talib commanders from Sorobi and Hisarak, the leader of the Mohmand border tribe and several other veteran mujahideen commanders.

These areas mentioned were all critical crossroads and strategically important places in the Taliban/Pashtun heartland of the south.

I knew Mullah Malang from my visits with Baryalai and later, when I worked for the political side of the EU. Then my colleague – who was later expelled from Afghanistan in December 2006 for apparently trying to ‘do deals’ with the Taliban - allegedly on behalf of MI6 – was already using Malang as his point of contact. During the anti-Soviet jihad, Malang had been renowned for his effective anti-Soviet operations around Kandahar.²²¹ Critically to Haq’s plan though, one of Malang’s mujahideen during the jihad had included the young Mullah Omar. And with Malang’s other former commanders now apparently comprised Mullah Omar’s bodyguard. As Malang was a Talib who had recently defected, and was to have played a key role in Haq’s Solution, he was a pretty high value defection!

Another possible ‘defector’ mentioned was a leader of the Mohmand tribe. He was also one of the people I visited whenever I travelled to Jalalabad. He was a true product of the frontier, yet bore an air of sophistication. Whenever I met with him we would discuss issues affecting his people and those in the region at large, e.g. the issue of Pakistani incursions over the Durand line, or whether the stories of the US spraying poppies were myth or fantasy. He always told me of the problems in a most measured and intelligent way.

The tenth point said that Haq was ‘acutely anxious of the need to get things right’.

He realises he has only one chance and as a consequence most of his efforts have gone into building alliances and establishing support. He is confident that he will attract more than enough men and that the problem may in fact lie in attracting too many. He is planning on a basic force of about 5000 volunteers, this being the largest practical

number he can control and supply. Defecting units of course would be additional to this.

The next heading was titled 'Outside Influences' and the four sub-headings beneath it were: ISI, the USA, al Qaeda and the Ex-King. Firstly, it said, Haq had:

... recently been visited by the ISI and is currently meeting with them again in Islamabad. He describes their mood as nervous and uncertain. They have expressed the desire to let bygones be bygones and the view that the Taliban has no future. They have not however (as yet) committed themselves to any sort of concrete support.

As I write this I realise that this is where Haq made his greatest strategic miscalculation. He knew himself that his history with ISI was one of distrust. Many had told me that the ISI were suspected of being behind the murder of Haq's wife and small son in their Peshawar house in 1998. The reason cited for that was Haq's genesis of an anti-Taliban plan. So why, I wondered, had he allowed himself to trust them this time? It was possible that he thought that - with the weight of an angry USA about to bear down on the region - that he and the Pakistanis might have joint strategic interests for Afghanistan? Certainly with the US led bombing campaign about to begin - setting the scene for a Northern Alliance takeover of Afghanistan - this joint strategic interest ought to have been a consideration for Pakistan.

The third 'external influence' mentioned in the sitrep was thus the USA. Since Haq's death the Pakistan's have, as I saw myself when I questioned the Pakistani Ambassador to Geneva,²²² been behind rumours that he was supported by the CIA. Prior to his death, Ritchie told me, the CIA themselves had spread rumours that they were supporting him. The sitrep said:

American Embassy personnel have visited Haq several times but according to him have not come up with anything concrete. Haq is worried that a deployment of American troops would result in increased support for the Taliban as Afghans closed ranks against the foreign invader. From what we have seen and heard we would support this view. At present the main foreign invader is Al Qaida

but this situation could change quickly. On the other hand, the threat of American action against the Taliban and Afghanistan weakens the government and encourages all moderate factions who want a peaceful Afghanistan to oppose them’.

The last heading under ‘outside influences’ was ‘Al Qaida’ and here it said – somewhat presciently given bin Laden’s subsequent escape and disappearance – that al Qaeda had:

Purchased 15,000 camels and a large number of kochi [nomad] tents. This suggests that they are preparing for a long march through inhospitable terrain. Bin Laden has been reported to have visited Jalalabad and has subsequently moved to Kandahar and is now believed to be hiding in the mountainous area north of Kandahar and west of the Ghazni road. The same Taliban source also quoted al Qaida members as saying that they had struck but one of ten planned targets.

As to ‘freezing out’ al Qaeda, the sitrep added that:

Mullah Malang expressed the view that if Haq was successful and the Taliban were overthrown, the arabs in al Qaida (less the obvious terrorists who would be arrested) would be invited to return to their own countries. NB. This would be the easiest course of action for a new Government to adopt but might not suit the USA. A possible *quid pro quo* for material assistance might be an undertaking not to do this.

Why, I wondered, might this not suit the USA? Surely they might still have been able to capture some of these operatives once the tribal people made clear they were no longer welcome in Afghanistan?

Under the last heading of ‘The ex-King’, the report said that although the ex-King was still ‘very acceptable as a figurehead for the creation of a new Afghanistan’, his family and followers, having no experience of the country, were not. I presumed this to mean that Haq wanted the ex-King for the purposes of putting in place his ‘structure’ and the relevance of the ex-King was to secure this as the ‘umbrella’ or glue for a multi-ethnic accord. This was reiterated by the next point which said:

Haq intends to run his operation in the King’s name for the cause of a united and peaceful Afghanistan. He does not wish to adopt a special name or cause specific to his efforts.

A heading entitled 'Difficulties and Dangers' indicated what the weak points might be and said:

Haq's operation will be running on borrowed money and a shoestring and very dependent on the resources he captures and / or are handed over to him by defectors. The uncertainty of this reliance is aggravated by the needs of his plan for speed, momentum and co-ordination. The dangers are that lack of transport and radios will result in poor coordination and delay. His men will also expect to be fed and clothed. To a lesser extent they will also want to be paid and it is possible that much of his potential support will fall away when it is realised that he has no financial backing.

As I re-read this point, I wonder how much coordination of knowledge there was between Gunston, Seeger and James Ritchie, who was, after all, apparently financing the operation. Could it be, I wondered, that the two groups trying to promote Abdul Haq and his plan had not been very coordinated in their commitment? It must be remembered though that both were private initiatives, although there is no indication that the British individuals were giving money themselves, but trying to secure political, and ultimately thus financial support. Time was also short.

The next point recommended that in terms of civil administration in Jalalabad, Haq's brother Haji Qadir would make a suitable provisional governor. As we know, he then was. But the British and Qadir had had their differences. It seems that their differences were so great that one has to wonder whether it was in their interests to have Qadir dead. Certainly the British 'ally' in Jalalabad, Haji Zaman, who was a long-term foe of the family, was thought by many Afghans to have been behind Qadir's assassination. The sitrep finished with the following statement:

Not to provide discrete support to Haq's enterprise would seem to be needlessly risking the huge gains that could result from a successful outcome. The obvious needs are money, vehicles and radios and possibly some discrete specialist support (e.g. FACS and stand off fire support, signallers, advisers etc).

Gunston told me that the Brits had offered to donate a grand total of 'four satellite phones' to the Haq effort.

Gunston invited me for lunch at the Special Forces Club in Knightsbridge. Pictures of SOE agents lined the walls on the staircase. There was a desperately sad photograph of four-year-old Tania Szabo receiving the George Cross from the King on behalf of her dead mother, the renowned Violet Szabo. Some of the women whose pictures I was looking at had achieved extraordinary things during the Second World War, undertaking what was then called 'non-conventional warfare'. Yet an innocent-looking watercolour of a brick kiln had a particularly brutal resonance. Underneath a plaque explained how four SOE female agents had been burnt alive in it after their capture by the Gestapo. In the bar we ordered lunch.

Gunston told me that on a strategic level Haji din Mohammad had been coordinating the movement of people and tribes and dealing with Younus Khalis and his son.²²³ This had been important in ensuring a dissolution of the Taliban and the re-establishment of a new order. He was infuriated by the lack of support for din Mohammad by the British. 'Yet they had the *cheek* to claim they were part of this', he said, shaking his head.

Kabul was a *nonsense!* The problem is that these so-called 'spies' report back to their political masters and therefore people say it *must* be true. It's just like the politicisation of intelligence over the David Kelly affair.

He asked the barman for ketchup and went on, telling me that General Guthrie had been used as emissary of Tony Blair. 'But I told Guthrie to use Abdul, and said, "He has the ability to engineer the collapse of the Taliban"'. Guthrie had responded to Gunston's request for help by saying that he was seeing Dearlove the following day and asking Gunston to send a fax.

Dearlove was then Head of MI6. Gunston had sent him an outline of Haq's plan, indicating who else had been briefed. When Dearlove wrote back to Guthrie he had apparently said, 'I want to assure you that the PM is working hard for the good of Afghanistan

... We're looking into it'. Gunston sighed.

It was a lost opportunity that *should* have been explained. But was *denied* as they'd already chosen Haji Zaman. Oh, and the Americans had chosen Karzai.

I knew that was true. For I'd been staying at the Serena Hotel in Quetta in October 2001, while Karzai was still hiding out in the desert near Kandahar and the *Newsweek* correspondent asked if I wanted to accompany him to interview the Karzai brothers in Quetta. Gunston went on:

Plus of course there was an active element in the US who were *denying* Abdul. As for the British and MI6, well they chose Zaman and ignored Abdul, Haji Qadir and Haji Din Mohammad.

The US 'element' which had ignored Abdul were, he told me, the CIA.

A guy called Milt Beardon, CIA station chief in Islamabad from the mid 80s, leader of the group who ignored Abdul, calling him 'Hollywood Haq'.

I'd seen Beardon being interviewed on the Haq documentary.²²⁴

He's still trying to undermine him. Yet Beardon basically ran his side of the war from Islamabad and a *telephone* connection to the ISI!

Later, when I read parts of Beardon's book,²²⁵ it seemed obvious to me he wanted to undermine Haq's part in the Soviet war and particularly an operation which had turned the war in favour of the Afghans and the West: the blowing up of the Soviet army's seven story underground munitions store at Qarga.

Gunston said that Beardon ran Abdul Haq down 'because of his outspoken criticism of CIA policy of working directly with the ISI'. He illustrated this with reference to 'a very funny bit in *Charlie Wilson's War* which showed ISI's iron grip'. Abdul Haq, he said, had been intending to take Charlie Wilson – who was Chair of the US Government Appropriations Committee and responsible for having massively increased spending on the Soviet war – into Afghanistan. However, General Gul, ISI chief, himself cancelled the

visit, infuriating Wilson, who apparently shouted down the phone to Gul saying, 'This is *my* war, *I'm* paying for it. And if I want to see it I damn well will!'²²⁶

Changing the conversation, I asked Gunston if he knew who had killed Qadir?

Fahim. But now the Panshiris say Zaman. Afghan history begins at the bazaar of the storytellers and then you have to wade through the conspiracy.

I asked how he had become involved in the plan to support Haq and he said:

I briefed MOD and called Haq during the meeting. In August, my son and I had gone to meet Abdul Haq in Dubai and he said he'd be in Rome with his commanders on 19 September and asked me to come. He said, 'I've been approached by Taliban elements and they want to work with me'.

He paused, looking out of the window.

Look, to know why Abdul's plan was significant, one has to understand that the Taliban are not a homogenous force. They're made up of a slim majority of Arabists and hardliners. But most are decent Afghan nationalists. The bulk wanted peace after the mayhem of the Najibullah and Mujahideen time. And although Abdul was a patriot, he wasn't a nationalist who was about to start causing problems for Pakistan over the Durand line. In this respect they were short sighted not to support him.

Abdul had been approached by the [Taliban] Eastern Corps Commander, a man called Rocketti. Now Rocketti had been one of Abdul's commanders during the jihad. He'd earned the name 'Rocketti' for his skill then in launching rockets. Yes, he'd had a chequered past, but now he was earnest in what he wanted. Like other Pashtuns there was concern, after September 11, about the return of Jamiat.

You know, Massoud came as the 'Lion of Panjshir' and left as the 'Lion of Kabul'. These guys took Kabul to the cleaners. With that memory in mind, not just the Taliban but decent Pashtuns wanted a Pashtun who'd bring peace. They wanted to turn their forces over to use *against* the remnants of the Arabs.

So Rocketti was ready to call it a day with the Taliban and move over behind Abdul and what had formerly been the Rome Process. Behind the King. To work for a multi-ethnic new order in Afghanistan. In mid-September 2001, Rocketti and the 'Eastern Command' and 'Three Division' commanders in Kabul, as well as the Divisional Commanders in Hezarak, Gardez and Ghazni, told Abdul they were with him. These were all Taliban commanders who after September 11 went to Peshawar, or sent Abdul word there, that they would turn over their divisions to him at the designated time.

My eyes widened as Gunston went on: 'Do you understand? He'd broken the back of the Taliban. Just look at the map!' It was true. The places he'd mentioned – Ghazni, Gardez and Hezarak – were all former Taliban strongholds, lying in an arc throughout the southern part of the country. If the commanders running the show down there had already met with Haq and promised to come over to his side, then clearly they'd been persuaded by his view of the future. Not just that it was a better alternative to a Tajik-dominated government: these were discussions Haq had already begun years before with the Rome process. Gunston continued;

I went to Peshawar and while I was there a Taliban minister came to meet Abdul and stayed two days. I don't know who it was. Everything was secretive and they came during the night to avoid detection by the ISI. Another commander came from Maiden Shah. I went to Rome and met guys from Farah and Hazarajat. They were all with Haq's plan.

So, as with the Hazaras I'd met at Haq's one year *Shaheed* service, it was obvious to me that other ethnic groups and not just Pashtuns were clearly with Haq's plan. Gunston went on;

Abdul wanted the King to be the unifier to avoid ethnic clashes. Abdul was one of very few Afghans who could achieve this. A national figure, his credibility was intact not just because of his record as an effective commander against the Soviets but because he walked away in 1992. Even though he was Head of the Police then, he didn't want to be involved in the civil war that took place as other commanders divided the spoils of Kabul between themselves.

I knew from talking to Baryalai that Haq had been training the mujahideen gendarmerie. He had trained up his men in the tribal

areas and Pakistan and then waited on the outskirts of Kabul for the communist government of Najibullah to fall. When Kabul finally fell Haq had tried at first to bring order. But when other mujahideen leaders took up ministerial positions for themselves, allowing their soldiers and factions to loot and destroy the city, Haq had withdrawn, going first to Pakistan and then to Dubai where he set up an unsuccessful oil business. At the time he'd said to his family, 'I didn't fight jihad against the Russians in order to do this to my people'. Gunston continued:

I went to Rome then London and spoke to [Paddy] Ashdown who bought into Haq's plan and agreed to push it. I then got in touch with MI6 chums and briefed people. They used names like Havelock and Grenfell and were rather 'grammar school'.

Gunston was moving into his element now.

They [the MI6] didn't understand what the hell was going on and got their information from CNN! I went to the FCO and spoke to the anti-terror and Afghan desks. The former was fascinated but they'd already chosen Zaman. The problem was the US was in the driving seat and the Brits had just handed them the keys.

I knew this to be true from the angered frustration of my diplomat friend in Islamabad. After September 11 she had complained about how everything was being decided by the US. When the British Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw, flew into Islamabad he went straight to the American Embassy for a breakfast meeting, before even being debriefed by his own FCO staff. The Americans made the decisions and the British just 'toed the line', she sniffed. Gunston said:

The CIA had denigrated Abdul. Although the Northern Alliance gave the US direct access to Bagram and were into the Panjshir by September, it got so bad that even though the Brits visited Haji Qadir in Jabl Siraj, by the time Tora Bora happened they'd decided to ignore him completely. It was due to the Zaman issue.

'And the British support for Zaman?' I asked. Gunston sighed.

Yes, Qadir was absolutely despondent. In London, MI6 just said, 'OK, give us his number and we'll call him if we're interested'. They had no idea of the importance of 'face' in Afghanistan. You *can't* talk to a man

like Qadir in such a way. I tried to explain to them that they should tell him, 'Look, we're busy but we'll get to you when we can'. God, these MI6 guys, they were in their mid-20s and knew nothing!

He overbit his lip and shook his head, rolling his eyes.

So I took 'RAM' Seeger with me and we went to see Abdul in Peshawar. He had a plan with the idea of turning the four main vertebrae of the Taliban military axis; Jalalabad, Gardez, Ghazni and Kabul. It would have decapitated the Taliban military command overnight.

I must have looked confused.

Look, Pashtun battles are done with the 'big flag' and a 'loud drum'. But the 'deal' is actually done two nights before over green tea and nuts. Abdul needed to field a force and he had forces. After September 11, his office was full of defectors, former mujahideen commanders he'd known when fighting the Soviets and tribal leaders. And he was in touch daily. There were *lots* of Taliban and former mujahideen in Pakistan.

I imagined Haq seated behind the antique colonial desk in his office in Peshawar receiving these clandestine visitors.

We emailed this initiative to the Brits and they got it. An MI6 man called William turned up in Islamabad from the UK. 'RAM' and I kept out of the way as he didn't want to meet us. Abdul said to him, 'I need to trust you that you are not working with Zaman'. You see Zaman had bought an office and claimed to the Brits he had 200 commanders. It was bullshit, he'd just arrived from France.

So, this was what the diplomat I knew had inferred during our dinner in London after September 11 when he had said that the plan was to use 'Pashtun commanders'. But had no idea who Abdul Haq was. Why had British diplomats (and possibly intelligence operatives) not known who they were dealing with? There was no excuse for them not to know who Haq was. It cannot simply have been that, even as the bombs began falling, the British had already chosen their man: Haji Zaman.

When I put this 'Zaman possibility' to Gunston, he looked at me and said:

Yet Abdul had this whole *string* of Taliban commanders plus senior Taliban ministers ready to defect, to move over to his side with very little fight. In these key Taliban cities of the south.

He'd been trying to say to the West, 'don't bomb, or you'll turn people against you'. What he *really* meant was that a bombing campaign would result in the soldiers he needed – i.e. the Afghan Taliban defectors – running back to their homes leaving al Qaeda manning the guns.²²⁷ Because it wasn't al Qaeda he'd done the deals with, it was the moderate Afghan Talibs, i.e. the very men he'd fought with against the Soviets. Many of whom he'd actually commanded back in those days. He wanted to destroy the Taliban from *within* as he knew they were ready to collapse.

This was the nub of everything; the reason Haq had begged Blair and Bush not to bomb Afghanistan. Because, as a Talib colleague from my days in Kandahar had told me before September 11, even in Kandahar, the Taliban's ideological base, people had begun breaking Taliban edicts like watching their TV sets. Why? Because many of the more fanatical Taliban were not even Afghan, but Pakistani. I myself had witnessed peoples' contempt for the Arabs when, during my work there in Summer 2000, I had made a trip to Kandahar's 'Gen'ral Post Office' to make a phone call to London. My driver, himself a former jihadi commander, had been asked who I was by one of these men. He then told me questions were being asked by 'Arabs' about the fair-haired foreigner (albeit I was wearing a *chador*). When I asked my driver how he knew the man was not Afghan he sneered, 'By the way he spoke'. He added contemptuously, 'We don't want these people here, they're not Afghan'.

For these reasons I had guessed that the movement was brittle, waiting for the final strain that would cause it to snap. Abdul Haq had understood this and was trying to say so. Later on Haq's Paghman based Commander, Khan Mir, who, after September 11, who was 'embedded' with the Taliban's interior Ministry, himself in Command of some eight hundred men would reiterate to me the importance for Haq's strategy of the West 'not' beginning a bombing campaign.²²⁸

Gunston continued, exasperated.

Now, instead of a multi-ethnic democratic government, we have an ethnic imbalance and a return to warlords! Most of us working in Afghanistan knew the Taliban had overrun the country easily during the early 1990s, because people were fed up with the infighting and corruption of the warlords.

It's *crazy* you have this today, yet in Rome²²⁹ there were Pashtuns, Tajiks, Uzbeks and Hazara leaders. They were *all* ready to buy into the process. *All* these guys were ready to work under the King's banner for an ethnically balanced Afghanistan. Now you have the Panjshir nonsense in Kabul.

He sighed.

I saw Guthrie and the Tories but they were *useless*. I met Ancram, Hugo Swire, IDS [Ian Duncan Smith] etc, but the Tories were already giving uncritical support to the government and the US. The Americans had of course 'bought them off' by allowing IDS to meet Bush, which he was so chuffed about. So, when I briefed them, they weren't interested as it would have been seen as being critical. IDS said to me, 'What shall I do?' I said, 'Can you get this info out to the people who matter and can help?'

I briefed Guthrie, Sir Colin McColl, the Tories and Paddy Ashdown (who was dealing with both MI6 and the PM). Lord Cranborne was the first to come back. He said, 'People don't believe he's got the ability and wherewithal'.

Then Gunston said in a low voice:

Cranborne, you have to remember was close to the Labour party as he did the 'deal' with Blair to keep some of the Lords when Blair was disbanding the House of Lords.

Abdul wanted to go in [to Afghanistan] under the King's flag, as the honest broker. Not as a Pashtun nationalist or as a Khalis commander,²³⁰ but as an Afghan for the Afghans. He wrote up a plan; how much it would cost to field a force of 500-1000 men with radios and transport and guns and bullets.²³¹ You could buy those and RPGs on the frontier. The cost was minimal; three to five million USD. That would have been enough to allow his former commander, Rocketti, to bring in the

Eastern Taliban forces and allow the collapse of Kabul and Ghazni. Gardez would have gone too. Because there was a real *fear* in Kabul of Tajik retaliation. Just look at the '95 to '96 Panjshir excess and the killings of Hazaras. There was a real memory of this and a fear. The US finally understood this by October and told the Northern Alliance not to take Kabul. But it was too late.

I remembered US and British Embassy staff complaining at meetings I'd attended in January 2002 how Sayyaff had all his guns pointed on Kabul from Paghman, even months after the City fell. Gunston continued:

In August 2001, Abdul met Commander Massoud in Tajikistan. He wanted to get him on side with his plan and did. Yet later, when the Brits were given a copy of it they chose to ignore it. Ultimately they just offered four satellite phones! But the window of opportunity was closing as the bombing was about to start. *That* was the *real* issue. Afghanistan and the temper of the Taliban and those who'd defected to Abdul and the King's side would change overnight. To understand why, one only has to remember Churchill's quote from the Malakand Campaign, 1898: 'Khan assails Khan, valley against valley, but all will unite against the foreigner'.

So, if you start throwing bombs into a country everything will change overnight. Particularly in a place like Afghanistan, which is only a geographical space, not really a country!

I remembered first reading about Haq in the *London Evening Standard*, when he was begging Blair and Bush not to begin bombing Afghanistan, to give him time first to put his plan in place first. Gunston had set out the reasoning for avoiding bombing in a fax (see Appendice III). He proffered it and I saw that it was addressed to 'General Lord Guthrie' and dated 13 October 2001.

The first page detailed the names and dates of contacts he and Seeger had had with British MOD, SIS and FCO in London and Peshawar. The last contact was 11 October 2001 and Gunston noted, 'call Michael Havelock, SIS, to say that we have returned (from Peshawar). Call as yet unreturned'. This note seemed to sum up the brush offs Gunston and Seeger were met with and in an effort to

make light of this Gunston commented to Guthrie.

This reluctance is probably for good operational reasons unknown to ourselves. Our concern is based on many years of experience working with the Mujahideen when fighting the Soviets, and the civil war that followed. This has led us to believe that there are no other credible Pashtun fighting commanders who can galvanise the many Pashtun tribes to rise up against the Taliban than Abdul Haq. Therefore we believe it is our duty to bring our concerns to your attention and those who may have a need to know.

He then proposed what he called 'The Solution': four major points aimed at 'achieving a terrorist free Afghanistan'. Firstly, the solution must be 'achieved from within by Afghans'.

This would be the quickest, least damaging, least controversial and most long-lasting solution for achieving a terrorist free Afghanistan.

Gunston's note enlarged the reasons why:

In contrast any attempt to impose a solution on Afghanistan from without – especially if by military force, carries a real risk of failure. Instead of widening the divisions amongst the different Afghan factions, it is likely to unite them against the foreigner and prolong the problem.

It is also important to keep Pakistan's role in any solution to the minimum and /or strictly controlled. Her track record is not good. As a result she is distrusted and disliked by the majority of Afghan players.

An inside solution should not be attempted by the mainly Tajik Northern Alliance alone. This would be resisted by the citizens of Kabul, surrounding Pashtun tribes and the Hazaras – all of whom have suffered at the hands of the Northern Alliance. But nor should it be attempted by such dubious Pashtun players as self-proclaimed 'General' Rahim Wardak who can spin a tall tale that sadly has little foundation in reality.

After making these three major points, Gunston's memo proposed what Haq could offer:

'In contrast, if discrete and immediate support was given to Abdul Haq, a fast acceptable inside solution could be obtained. He is known

and accepted as a proven operational leader and a man of principle with a trans-ethnic outlook. He would welcome the return of the King – but not his supporting ‘Gilbert and Sullivan’ cast. He has the support of old Mujahideen commanders from all the 7 old parties, current Taliban commanders both political & military as well as tribal leaders. He has been consolidating this support over the last three weeks and has a workable plan for capturing Taliban key cities of Jalalabad, Kabul, Ghazni & Kandahar. These cities form the main vertebrae of the Taliban’s spinal cord. Their capture would render the Taliban paraplegic and allow the swift rounding up of the al Qaida network.

Because he is his own man, Haq is not a favourite of the Pakistanis and probably for this same reason, of the Americans either. It is precisely because of this that he has widespread trust and pledges of support from within Afghanistan. However he is not a Pashtun nationalist and has never espoused a greater Pushtunistan, which the Pakistanis would have reason to fear. At the cost of a few million dollars Haq could put a Pushtun field force into the area very quickly. This would become a focal point for Taliban defections and a counterweight to the Northern Alliance – both essential prerequisites for a fast, acceptable and lasting solution.

In the fax Gunston had finished off politely by writing: ‘I do hope this has been helpful. The best number to reach me on ...’

Today it is obvious that the British and US intelligence services did not simply cave in on all these points. They pointedly did *everything* they were warned *not* to do by Gunston’s fax. Gunston continued:

The majority wanted law and order, peace and prosperity. Not the *Arabisation* of the government. But what our people *failed* to appreciate was that a lot of Haq and Khalis’s former commanders had joined the Taliban so there was a closeness. For example, Din Mohammad’s relationship with the Taliban was initially well meaning and respectful; unlike the US who wanted to cut deals with them for the oil pipeline. When Abdul died, Haqqani actually phoned Din Mohammad to apologise. Though Din Mohammad would not do deals with the command one has to understand that Nangarhar is in a very difficult position with Kunar and Nuristan so close.

Gunston went on, 'I went to Rome and didn't speak to Abdul after. He went in on the Sunday'. Then, I asked what had been the threat to Western intelligence agencies of Abdul Haq. Gunston sighed heavily,

In contrast to Washington DC, in Kabul Haq was seen as the greatest threat! Why? Because he was Pashtun. Because his vision was the antithesis to the way the Taliban had looked at Afghanistan. Because, despite that, he had a groundswell of support in their ranks. His vision was free of ethnic and religious hang ups. He was a true nationalist.

He also had the ability to pull people together, I reflected. Following Haq's death, Haji Qadir had asked Gunston to accompany him to the Bonn Peace Conference in November 2001 as 'advisor to the Eastern Shura' of elders. But, Gunston said, Qadir had ended up storming out of Bonn. Why? I asked. Gunston responded angrily.

Well, it was *ridiculous*. Qadir was in an *extremely* difficult position. You see, he was there as a representative of the Northern Alliance. Yet when he realised *no* significant Pashtuns had been invited he began to get agitated. What could he do? Apparently the visas promised by Brahimi to Pashtun leaders failed to turn up leaving them unable to attend. So people like Din Mohammad never went and the whole event was dominated by Tajiks and the Northern Alliance. What could Qadir do? He ended up storming out. So Bonn just set Afghanistan on an inherently unstable trajectory.

He had also attended the installation of the new Afghan Government with Qadir in December 2001. Gunston rubbed his face in his hands.

God! The whole thing was just like the second crowning of Shah Shujah. You *even* had men in CIA uniforms taking up the front ten rows. Supported by a Panjshiri chorus!

He shook his head wearily.

Now the problem is you've got an unrepresentative court, a leader installed by the US, a Shah Shujah.²³² There's no *depth* to the present Government but unfortunately it's the only game in town. Forty-five percent of the population are not represented and the only single strong group is now the Taliban. It's the *direct* result of the US ignoring

Abdul and supporting the Northern Alliance as they didn't care what happened. One State Department person even admitted to me, 'The reason we chose Karzai was because he wears a suit and tie and talks like you and I'.

He sighed and stood up.

When Abdul died I was in Rome asking the King to write and in support of Abdul. When he was captured I flew into Peshawar and Din Mohammad told me he thought Abdul had been killed and broke into tears. With his leonine face, it was like a cat hiccupping. I think he's very straight. I was with Haji Qadir in '96 while Haji Din Mohammad was meeting the Taliban. That's why I don't believe he'll cut deal with them.

He paused, eyes downcast, and said slowly.

Listen. This family. This family gave their *lives*, provided the option for a peaceful Afghanistan. Now you have a country teetering on the edge of a resurgent Taliban and al Qaeda.

I went to Kenya to write. While there, I went to Lamu and found myself on a dow trip with an English couple. She a Blairite columnist, her husband an ex-military man and, I later heard, possibly an ex-member of MI6. We were discussing a piece another journalist had written about the willingness of the then head of MI6, John Scarlett, to 'carry the can' for Blair over the 'sexing up' of the dossiers on WMD in Iraq.²³³ I commented that the intelligence services seemed, as the author said, to have allowed themselves to become unduly politicised. As one of the chief cheerleaders in the press for the war in Iraq, she took fiercely against this view. Somehow the conversation got around to my interest in Abdul Haq. Her husband yawned lethargically, saying: 'Well what did it matter; he was dead within a couple of weeks anyway?'

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

‘HE WOULD HAVE BEGUN A REVOLUTION, THAT’S WHY THEY KILLED HIM SO FAST’

In contrast to Washington DC, in Kabul Haq was seen as the greatest threat! Why? Because he was Pashtun. Because his vision was the antithesis to the way the Taliban had looked at Afghanistan. Because, despite that, he had a groundswell of support in their ranks.

SIR JOHN GUNSTON²³⁴

Kabul, January 2004

Towards the end of January 2004, I finally met the Taliban’s Deputy Interior Minister, Mullah Khaksar. It was his boss, the Taliban Interior Minister, Mullah Razzaq, who had apparently given the orders for Haq to be killed.

The family told me that Khaksar had visited Haq in Peshawar after September 11 and helped him with his plan to overthrow the Taliban, intending to work with Haq in forming a broad-based government. The plan was for Khaksar to work with Khan Mir, another of Haq’s jihadi commanders, in Kabul as Haq went into Afghanistan on his mission. The two would work on turning over several divisions of the Interior Ministry. In the event though, Haq had been killed and captured before the fall of Kabul.

I hooked up with Hanif. Khaksar had apparently turned himself over to the Karzai government following the routing of the Taliban and was now hiding out in a ‘safe house’. At this stage there was still no Taliban Reconciliation Programme.

We headed in the direction of Khair Khana on a cold January day, the air thick with a winter freeze. Eventually we arrived at a rundown suburban house, stepped into a concrete hallway and were shown into a curtained room. The Mullah sat there alone. He had a shaggy dark beard, a voluminous dark grey turban and dark,

spaniel-shaped eyes. I could see my breath in the cold air and was relieved when a young man arrived to stoke the *bukhari*²³⁵ and bring us green tea and nuts.

Khaksar's dark looks were utterly incongruous with his quiet, high-pitched voice and the phone which periodically jingled 'happy birthday' from inside his *salwar kameez*. After some explanations of who I was, I asked whether, given the current situation, it might have been better for many members of the Taliban if Haq had not been killed? Khaksar replied, 'At the last days the friends of Haq in the Interior Ministry practically began a war. We were ready to act'. Haq had wanted a broad-based government, he said, even to the extent that he had met with the UN, the Arsala family and Massoud about this objective before September 11. Later, he had stayed at the Arsala house in Peshawar and spoken with Haji din Mohammad and Haji Qadir. He told me that he had known the regime would collapse two years before it did. I asked why Mullah Razzaq had wanted Haq dead and Khaksar said:

He used his competence as it was an emergency situation. But he also said that, at this time, the Taliban still did not believe they would lose their power. They thought, rather naively, that Afghans would rise up against the foreign invaders in their support. They executed him as they thought the USA would rescue him and then he'd stand against the Taliban again. But the act [of killing Haq] was against human rights law and Shariat law. As he was killed without a fight and without a trial.

As to why the Taliban had killed Haq so fast, he said;

If he was alive and his programme had been a success, then from my point of view he would now be President of Afghanistan ... If they had put him in jail the people would have been rising up and pushing for a revolution.

Again, his phone tinkled 'happy birthday' from somewhere deep within his *salwar kameez*. Fixing me with his bottomless dark eyes he added, 'A lot of people supported his plan, even in Khost, Paktia, Gardez and throughout Afghanistan'.

These were the same places Gunston had mentioned as being the backbone of the Taliban's hold over the south: the places which

had fallen due to Haq's commanders and the willingness of the people who were fed up with the regime. Not due to some 'secret deals' made by MI6 who had been nowhere to be seen when help was needed.

His comments echoed Gunston's assessment of the sad irony that, in Kabul, Abdul Haq had been deemed a threat to the Taliban, yet in Washington and London, those charged with knowing better were just blithely unaware. I asked Khaksar if it was too late to include moderate Taliban in the government. 'Yes of course', he snapped. 'But if not 100% fruitful, it could be 20% at least'. It was a short interview. He had people to see, but he agreed to meet again the next day to talk more about the circumstances surrounding Haq's death.

The next day he told me that Razzaq had called him early one morning and told him to prepare to go to Hezarac. Khaksar had replied that he was sick. So Razzaq sent his personal bodyguards to kill Haq. Knowing the stature of Haq, I wondered if Razzaq had been too much of a coward to do it personally and asked why the Taliban inner core, those close to al Qaeda, had not thought it worth negotiating with Haq.

They were not ready to talk then with anyone. They were just thinking of *their* power. Even Hikmatyar and the ex-King and Haq people came but they did not agree with any one.

'So they did not foresee the end? Did they not feel the US had power to get rid of them?' I asked.

'Not until the fall of Kabul did they think the regime would end. They thought people would fight with them', he replied.

Haq had realised it was hopeless trying to negotiate with the 'top flight' of the Taliban: Mullah Omar and those more closely allied with the Pakistani ISI. Instead he was targeting the moderates and, critically, the Afghan tribes and elders who were ready to throw in the towel with the Taliban. He understood that if the locals, and tribal elders, had agreed together to turn against the movement, it would be very difficult for the Taliban to stay. It was for this reason that he had likened the regime to a crystal that would crack finally once a

small fissure had appeared in it. That fissure would be opened by the broad-based support that Haq could supply for an alternative to the Taliban; it was why the ISI, who knew the threat he had posed, had killed his wife and small son. Yet Haq had continued to open up this fissure with his meetings in Rome with tribal leaders, later in Peshawar and then within Afghanistan just prior to his death.

I had witnessed the fissure in support for the Taliban during the months I had worked in Kandahar in 2000. There were several incidents. Not only were Kandahari residents openly breaking Taliban edicts such as watching DVDs bought in Quetta, but kite flying had recently been reintroduced. I also remembered how – upon the capture of Taloqan in the North East – the staff in my office had celebrated. When I had asked them why and were not the Taliban a bad regime, they had said that they were happy the Taliban would soon win the war against the Northern Alliance, because then the Taliban would have to turn their attention to providing health and education services. There would be no excuse not to, once the war was finished. I remember too how my driver in Kandahar, himself an ex-mujahideen commander, had shown contempt for a group of Arabs who had quizzed him about who I was, particularly in terms of my nationality, during a trip to Kandahar's 'Gen'ral Post Office'.²³⁶ I realised that the Arabs were regarded as – by ordinary Kandahari folk – not benefactors to the regime but as arrogant imposters.

After the fall of Kandahar, Mullah Razzaq had apparently escaped to Chaman: a desolate place of abandoned containers and smuggling depots in the midst of dust storms whipped up by the Registan desert. Its position between Kandahar and Quetta – prime Taliban territory – indicated to me the hardline nature of Razzaq's devotion to the Taliban cause. A point confirmed by Khaksar when he said, 'Razzaq was powerful in the Taliban Emirate, very hardline. These Taliban did not like to compromise, because al Qaeda did not want them to. They were not Afghans'.

What Khaksar said married up with what Gunston had stressed: that with the onset of the bombing, moderate Talibs had abandoned the fight, leaving the more fundamentalist al Qaeda²³⁷ strand in charge. The more moderate Afghan commanders of the Talib

battalions in the regions, the men Abdul Haq had once commanded during the jihad, were the fragile coalition he had needed to come over to his and the King's side. It was this fragile coalition which had needed the West *not* to bomb Afghanistan. As Ken Guest, stressed to me later, 'If the bombing hadn't started, Haq would not have felt the need to go back "inside" Afghanistan so prematurely'.

An interview given by Haq to *Newsweek*²³⁸ magazine from Peshawar within a week of his capture illustrates what he meant by this. Of Taliban commanders, he said:

We won't encourage them to defect. We say, 'Just stay there so we can use you. If you defect you're no use'. We plan to move in with our own commanders, with Taliban commanders, with tribal representatives. We'll just take down the Taliban flag and put up our own flag.

Then, Haq explained why the US bombing was so damaging to his plan and that of the Rome Process.

Still soldiers and officials are already defecting to their homes, to their own camps; they're leaving in the thousands.

He had been talking to Taliban commanders by satellite phone and they had come to see him at his home in Peshawar, where many of his relatives lived. Critically, he explained that, 'forty to fifty percent of the Taliban forces were former mujahideen. They will be with us if they don't have to worry about their own survival and security'.

The background to all this, he told *Newsweek*, was that he had left Afghanistan in 1992 saying he didn't want to take part in the destruction wrought on his country by civil war. Although the mujahideen had won the war militarily in 1992, they had lost it politically. Now, after September 11, he had returned to his country to finish a job he had begun when he had fought the Soviets. He argued that, as a military commander, he had a role to play, but he emphasized:

No one can do it alone. We need teamwork. Before September 11, there was a lack of united leadership to bring various tribes together. Now, after the former King has stated he'll return home, that helps us solve this problem. We can begin a national process, not based on ethnic groupings.

In terms of 'defections' he was aiming, he said:

... to the second level, to the division commanders and corps commanders. I'm saying to them, 'okay, the leadership is crazy. Why don't you and us and other tribes come together and work together?'

When asked if he could win over the Taliban leadership, Haq had replied;

More than 50% are willing to accept a new government if they can be part of the process and if the Northern Alliance is not allowed to take power. They want the security to live as normal human beings. Most of the former mujahidin commanders who are with the Taliban, plus many Taliban commanders, are not happy with the leadership but also fear the Northern Alliance. They fear revenge killings if the Northern Alliance takes over. So we'll give them another option.

Today, Khaksar continued:

When they executed Abdul Haq, I was in Kabul with one of Haq's commanders in the guesthouse [he was speaking of Khan Mir, Haq's former Paghman-based commander]. I gave him a gun and then the bodyguards came and told us they had finished Abdul Haq. I said to them, 'That is dreadful as he was a national figure in Afghanistan. And was famous Kabul commander during jihad'.

He looked down and folded a flap of his kameez over a knee.

They told me Haq was killed at Charasyab and that Isatullah was killed where they captured him.²³⁹

I asked, 'Do you think Afghanistan would be better if Haq were still alive?' His reply was matter of fact.

Undoubtedly! If his [Haq's] plan had happened there would be *no* opposition nor an insurgency by the Taliban. It would be a broad-based government with the support of the international community and UN. It would be a strong government with no opposition and the Taliban would be finished now.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

GOVERNANCE AND TRADITIONAL STRUCTURES

In Afghanistan we look for answers inside our forts (largely reliant upon kinetic energy) when the answers actually lie in the hills, reliant upon the tribes. This was the core of Abdul Haq's message. The one we were incapable of listening to.²⁷⁸

Jalalabad & Faizabad, 2004-5

As far back as 1973, the American anthropologist Louis Dupree had identified how, in Afghanistan, tensions were developing between the concept of 'nation state' and that of a traditional society based on 'kinship' (in other words, something more tribal).

In his tome, *Afghanistan*, published in 1973,²⁷⁹ Dupree described the concept of 'nation state' as follows:

In the Western sense ... more a set of attitudes, a reciprocal, functioning set of rights and obligations between the Government and the governed – with emphasis on the individual rather than the group.

By contrast, he said, 'tribalism' tended to come in;

In non-literate societies ... when kinship replaces government and guarantees men and women born into a specific unit a functioning set of social, economic, and political rights and obligations.

In the 1960s and '70s, Dupree recognised that Afghanistan was attempting to create a 'nation state' out of what he called, 'a hodge podge of ethnic and linguistic groups'.

Yet, looking back at what happened from 1973 onwards after the King was ejected, this tension in Afghan society – between 'centre and periphery' and between 'modernisers and traditionalists' – set in motion the series of coups which turned Afghanistan from a monarchy into a republic and ended in the chaos of the jihad and the inter-factional fighting which followed. Since Dupree wrote this, almost thirty years of war has destroyed much of Afghanistan's

former social fabric and undermined traditional governance systems. In particular, the Soviets and the mujahiddeen (particularly Hikmatyar) have systematically murdered many of the elders and intellectuals who provided the 'glue' for jirgas.

The great irony, when one considers this history, is that since 2001, the international community has replicated this same tension by attempting to create a nation state in Afghanistan. Yet, writing in 1998, Amin Saikhail depicts how local governance and political order still functions in Afghanistan:

In Afghanistan, political order and governance have always largely rested on a mixture of personalised, clientalistic politics, and elite alliance and elite settlement, legitimate through traditional mechanisms of consensus building and empowerment, such as the Loya Jirga (Grand Assembly).²⁸⁰

In their excellent paper, 'Integrating Tribal Structures into the State-building Process; lessons from Loya Paktia', Susanne Schmeidl and Massoud Karokhail assert that:

... networks are less orientated around ethnicity (e.g. Pashtun) than along smaller entities such as tribes, sub-tribes or smaller communities or solidarity groups such as quams in Pashtun society.²⁸¹

Tribal structures should best be understood as complex clientalistic networks where the importance of family and kinship overrules interest orientated associations. Such networks tend to be 'non modern' forms of authority (e.g. patriarchal and neo-patrimonial as described by Max Weber) where there is no 'public sphere'.²⁸²

Saikal's quote depicts 'how local governance and political order' functions in Afghanistan; outlining clearly that 'governance was never much centralised but depended heavily on local politics and elites'.²⁸³ In this way, neither the Safavid nor the Moghul empires of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-centuries, nor later the Durrani rulers of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-centuries 'managed to preserve their rule permanently or extend state structures beyond the few urban centres'.²⁸⁴ Schmeidl and Karokhail's paper goes on to explain how the lack of a state, 'or even thinking in state terms', has been further

intensified by the war because during conflict, the 'accountability of local leaders towards the general population declines, focusing only on the needs and desires of very small groups'.²⁸⁵

Among other observations made during the introduction to their paper, Schmeidl and Karokhail emphasise how in a participatory approach to state building, 'security at the district and provincial levels is guaranteed by agreements among tribes, and between the tribes and the government'.

This was the core of what I'd learnt Haq had been working on when he was killed. It was also partly why Baryalai was driven to work on rebuilding traditional structures of consensus. The consultative shura which Baryalai had been working on since I had first known him in late 2002 was called the Council of Nangarhar Communities. In dari, this translates as '*shura e Mashwarati e Nangarhar*' and in Pashtu, '*da Nangarhar Mashwaraty shura*'. The inception and background to this Council is outlined in the endnote.²⁸⁶

I had seen how much care Baryalai had taken – since I had first known him in 2002 – over consulting on the evolution and eventual form of the Council of the Nangarhar Communities. There had been months of discussion as to the objectives for the shura and how best to attract members who wanted to serve their community, to work on the shura for no material gain, as was traditional amongst Afghan leaders. The stated objectives of the shura included discussing issues of unity between the tribes, security, economic development, women's issues and rights, the selection of locals for the Afghan National Army (ANA) and the facilitation of better relations with Pakistan. Another issue that would later gain their – and Baryalai's – attention was reconciliation with the Taliban. Because the issues were discussed in an Afghan forum, American generals increasingly saw the shura as a useful vehicle for bringing about the goals the West wished to pursue in Afghanistan. As Baryalai had said, however, the problem was who, despite the 'cloak of shura', was really making the decisions.

By 2004, it seemed the foreigners were also keen to start shuras across Afghanistan. The National Solidarity Programme (NSP) was

taken up in 2001 by the World Bank, as an extension of Habitat's 'Community Forum' programme, which I had originally worked on in Kandahar during the Taliban. The programme would be rolled out from urban to rural areas and locally elected Community Development Councils (CDCs) would be set up. The PRTs which had extended their original remit – which was to provide security – into reconstruction and were now expanding further into governance.

I visited the US Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Jalalabad in December 2004. Its commander was interested in and responsive to local dynamics but soon a female civilian advisor arrived with the intent of starting a shura. Apparently, she showed little interest in what Baryalai had been doing and when she bypassed his Council of Nangarhar Communities he commented:

The problem is when foreigners come here to start shura – like the PRT starting shura to hand out money 'via the shura' – these shuras are not attracting people who want to do good for the community. They are attracting strongmen and those who want to use the shura to make money. So this is unbalancing the structure of the traditional shura.

A German NGO had recently arrived in Jalalabad with the objective of working on counter-narcotics and shuras, and typified the view of the international community when they said, 'We don't like the traditional shuras as the old men make all the decisions'. So said one of the two grey-haired men who had come to set up the programmes. 'We prefer to use the National Solidarity Programme [NSP] system as it has a secret ballot'.

It seemed that the NSP, which had worked well in urban areas during the Taliban, was to be rolled out into rural areas and become a vehicle for bringing democracy into the villages of Afghanistan, bypassing traditional structures. I had worked on the precursor to the NSP project in Kandahar during the Taliban. Of course, the participatory aspect was very good, but the idea that use of a 'secret ballot' vote would automatically lead to democracy in this complex tribal society was naïve.

When in late 2009, I wrote to Baryalai asking how things were progressing with the 'parallel shuras' being set up by the foreigners,

he said that the Americans wanted to work with shuras but so far did not have the right approach. The foreigners' shuras would not work because they did not accept the *traditional* concept of shura, but wanted to do it in 'so-called modern way, which was not compatible with the traditional way'. He was talking about the NSP which had been rolled out countrywide from 2003 onwards. The NSP shuras, he said, were now 'everywhere' in Afghanistan, but were 'not the traditional shuras; members of these shuras are *not* leaders of their communities'. Indeed, he said, these members were only authorised by their communities to decide about the spending of the money allocated by the government for the projects in their areas and monitor and observe the implementation of these projects. By contrast, the traditional leaders were representatives of their communities in *all* issues related to their communities and were indispensable in interfacing between government and community - important in Afghanistan where rural areas remain so traditional, so distant from the centre. It was also important in solving disputes and conflicts. He added that the 'members of NSP shuras don't have that mandate'. Finally, he said, 'the NSP exists only on the village level, not the district or province level. Our shura operates on all three levels'.

Astri Suhrke,²⁸⁷ writing on the dialectic between 'traditional' and 'modern' government structures, assessed the limitations of the Bonn Agreement, with its focus on 'modern government structures'. It was, she said, an approach which did not allow traditional elements a central role²⁸⁸ and meant that these elements have thus had to compete for space and power. In particular, the promulgation since September 11 of the NSP into rural areas was thus an attempt to replace traditional structures with modern ones (in this case, the village-based 'democratically elected' Community Development Councils or CDCs).²⁸⁹

Baryalai's assertions about the limitations of NSP as compared to other, more traditional structures, were backed up in other studies. In 2008, a nationwide assessment of the NSP project was published.²⁹⁰ It concluded that although the programme functioned very well, it often functioned either alongside traditional structures

or was infiltrated by more traditional elements. It had a limited role to play in dispute resolution, for example, as compared to the role played by traditional leaders. Nixon says:

... mandating a single governance role for CDCs would produce mixed outcomes, due to the observed variation in how CDCs commonly function and in relation to customary structures. While there is evidence of fruitful governance improvements linked to CDCs this is often achieved through the implicit recognition of pre-existing governance patterns, not wholesale attempts to replace them.²⁹¹

Schmeidl and Karokhail indicate:

Even those shuras at the village level that are set up by NGOs or the councils of the government's National Solidarity Programme are generally appointed by the major tribal shuras within a given province.²⁹²

Unfortunately in the post Bonn state-building exercise there has been a fear that, 'collaboration with tribal elites may strengthen a parallel power system that opposes or at minimum is an obstacle to, the creation of a strong modern state'.

Suhrke, Schmeidl and Karokhail assert that such:

... zero-sum game approach to centre-periphery relations (with the centre being modern and desirable and the periphery (Provinces) traditional, backwards and undesirable), is 'unconstructive' in state-building exercises in countries where tradition and traditional structures still matter a great deal to the local population.

Dupree wrote about this tension in 1973:²⁹³

Unfortunately, many of the national leaders in the non western world have been educated in the West and have the individualistic conceptions of nation-state. These leaders look on attempts to perpetuate tribal prerogatives as anarchistic, archaic and anti-unity.

Given the interest since 2004 in local governance, I wondered whether Baryalai's alternative model – the Council for Nangarhar Communités – was now being asked to be a vehicle to assist in the implementation of government policy from the bottom-up. There

had been some initial interest by the Ministry for Reconstruction and Rural Development (MRRD), but he said that the effectiveness of the shuras and traditional structures of leadership in Afghanistan was being 'systematically ignored' by both the government, which felt challenged by what the shuras represented, and by the international community, which saw the NSP as a panacea in bringing democracy. Both, he said, had tried to eliminate or 'go around' the traditional structure, or 'not to involve [it] in the decision making process', or to 'replace the traditional leadership in an artificial way that doesn't work in Afghan society'.

In a direct reference to NSP, with its secret ballot and more democratic emphasis, he went on to say:

When government and international community try to impose new leaders on the communities, it doesn't work. [The] Soviets tried this, [the] mujahideen tried this, [the] Arabs and our neighbours tried it. It didn't bring a [good] result and Karzai and his allies tried it. They all could not see the result.

One of the main problems for the Germans whom I had met in Jalalabad was that they had arrived, like the American PRT, with the goal of organising a parallel structure. They had spent several months doing up their compound and had now started work gathering data in the villages. The first time I had met them – when they had outlined their objectives to me – they had been confident and ebullient. Six months later, I found them frustrated and bitter. They were having implementation problems and were unable to get much of the community in the areas they had selected to participate. I asked if they had contacted the Governor. They sneered, presumably because they assumed that din Mohammad represented a certain limited franchise here. Maybe he did, but the comment about the secret ballot and their subsequent frustrations indicated that the Germans were trying to make a structure more in line with a Western democratic vision – with themselves as moderators – in a predominantly tribal society whose dynamics are necessarily fairly opaque to westerners more used to the concept of 'nation state'.

Since 2001, Afghans complained to me that relationships of trust between tribes had been further fragmented as the coalition had fostered hostility between groups. I had witnessed this myself in Jalalabad, as strongmen like Ali were favoured – with weapons, cash and the legitimacy conferred through working with the US and government – over tribal leaders with more historic legitimacy. Overnight, such actions had changed patterns of power and kinship and caused instability.

The importance of working with the tribal system was something that Abdul Haq had understood and in a letter to Jimmy Carter, dated 6 January 1992, he wrote:

Today elections are impossible so I suggest we try and resuscitate the traditional system once again. Today the elements of power and tradition are Ulema; tribal leaders, resistance commanders; intellectuals and political party leaders and good muslims in Kabul. Each have shuras and committees.

Abdul Haq was talking of the Qawm, which is:

Essentially ... a community of interests, local and traditional, cemented by kinship, tribal or other ties ... a solidarity group (encompassing family lineages, clans, tribes or sectarian, linguistic or ethnic groups) that is politically self governing and economically self sustaining. This traditional mode of community governance has proved remarkably resilient. It has survived despite the efforts of successive rulers and bureaucracies in Kabul to bring it within the strait-jacket of a modern nation state, on the questionable assumption that the European construct of the nation-state was a *summum bonum*, a kind of political form of organisation that is self evident, a 'natural' culmination of all societies.²⁹⁴

Haq described how foreign interference had damaged such structures during the jihad;

In helping create the political parties, America and other foreign nations built up anti-democratic Afghan fundamentalist groups which are now almost out of control. But by building on our own traditions, Afghans may yet be able to overcome these dangerous ideologues and restore peace and security.

In terms of how, in Afghanistan, 'personalities' rather than political parties in the Western sense of the word had more relevance, Baryalai explained that direction comes ultimately from the rural areas, from the people and from the tribes. For the Arsala family, this meant the tribes of Hezarac, Khoghiani and Shinwar, among other tribes of the Eastern Provinces: 'They are the ones whose support we can count on. We can mobilise them as we have spent time with them'.²⁹⁵ The Arsala family had, for the most part, produced the types of 'chief' whom the British General Rawlinson had recognised as those who were able to hold together 'tribes ... of unequal power and divergent habits'.²⁹⁶

I had seen for myself how the people looked to the Arsala family as their representatives in Kabul and how they also came to ask the family for mediation of their problems. They came to discuss land and border disputes, issues with the American occupation or to plan how the tribes would mobilise themselves to ensure the re-election of Karzai, who was still seen as a Pashtun bolster against the Tajik-dominated Northern Alliance power. To ensure that bolster, the family, and its *quam* had supported the concept of a more heavily Presidential, as opposed to a Parliamentary, system when the new Afghan Constitution was debated and agreed in 2003/4.²⁹⁷

When Baryalai explained how the tribes organised themselves for the elections it indicated how little the West understood about Afghan-style democracy. For din Mohammad had discussed the presidential elections and its candidates with the tribespeople who told him that as they did not know the candidates personally they would look to him for advice. The result was hence a tribal 'block vote' for Karzai. In other Pashtu areas, there were reports of a disproportionate number of 'phantom' women being registered to vote. Others would probably never see the ballot, which was decided along tribal lines or by bribery, or in many places intimidation by local commanders who had made deals, possibly with regional strongmen or warlords. Especially for those whose illicit incomes depended upon their maintaining powerful positions in the local hierarchy.²⁹⁸

Sometime in February I visited Faizabad, a traditional Northern Alliance stronghold in the north-east and from where former President Rabbani originated. Other NATO countries were complaining the Germans were not doing enough from their PRT. This was a major poppy growing and trafficking area. I wanted to assess the impact of their PRT on local development efforts.

I flew in with our office interpreter, Najib. The plane headed into the vast confluence of the Hindu Kush and Pamir, finally making a dramatic landing on a tin runway installed by the Russians. We climbed into a scruffy yellow taxi organised by Najib and bumbled along the rutted road into town. The driver was clearly a poor local man. I asked what people thought of the PRT and he shouted: '*Why do the foreigners come here only to support Nazir Mohammad?!*'

All Nazir Mohammad's men are now working for the German PRT, even guarding its perimeter fence. He went on to explain that Nazir Mohammad was the most powerful strongman here, the leading drugs dealer, expropriator of property and even children. 'Everyone', our driver said, was 'scared of him'. So, as we arrived arrival at the outer perimeter of the German PRT, I asked the Afghan guards who they worked for. They chanted, 'Nazir Mohammad'.

Once inside the PRT (which had a set-up cost of around 15 million euros), comprising mainly of plastic cabins and vast steel containers sited on a flank of mud to the back of the airport, we met first with the civilian chief, an earnest German. He was amazed that the EU had allowed me to travel in a local taxi, concerned for my security. Ironically, it was the proximity to the locals conferred by travelling in a taxi – something diplomats, soldiers and intelligence officers who preferring convoys of armoured vehicles avoided – which had armed me with my first question for the PRT's civilian chief. Was it true, I asked, they were using the guards of a warlord to guard their perimeter? He sighed, confirmed it were so and admitted it annoyed him. The decision had been taken by the joint 'military

chief' and had something to do with 'force protection'.

Later, we visited the local head of the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission who affirmed the stories about this same warlord, Nazir Mohammad, kidnapping small children as well as local fears about his possible paedophilia. Not only, he told us, did Nazir Mohammad have the PRT in his pocket, he also controlled the police department. In fact, as we visited the police department the next day, Mohammad's cortege was arriving as we left.

The PRT appeared to be spending far more on its set-up and running costs than it would ever spend on the development of Badakhshan. It brought to mind what Haji Zahir had recently said about the 'running costs' of foreign soldiers: They are importing bottles of mineral water at \$2 a bottle from Dubai for these guys, when Afghan soldiers are only paid 25 cents a day.

Still, the PRT was paying lip service to the idea of consulting with locals. The Danish Commander told me enthusiastically, 'Yesterday we got pictures of local elders'. He showed me the photos. 'Tomorrow we'll go back to dig the wells!' Now, although well meaning, this all seemed absurdly simplistic when compared to the very impressive work already being done in Badakhshan by the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), who had been in region many years and among other detailed anthropological studies, had conducted income studies on the relative attractiveness for locals of working on the poppy harvest.

When I distributed my report on the Faizabad visit to EU Embassies, the German Ambassador denied angrily the PRT had a warlord guarding its perimeter. Yet four months later, in summer 2004, I returned and found Nazir Mohammad's men *still* there. I heard from the Afghans that whenever NATO chiefs, including the then British commander, flew into Faizabad, their first stop was apparently, lunch with Nazir Mohammad!²⁹⁹ Unfortunately, this emphasis on putting the PRT's interests above those of the locals made a mockery of the idea of NATO forces coming to Afghanistan to protect the locals and to manufacture 'security'. In the same way that the 2001/2 Faustian 'bargain' made by the West with Afghan

warlords had allowed them to continue with their illicit and intimidating activities, this state of affairs had also inevitably brought insecurity in its wake. It also seemed contrary to the lofty ideals of 'human security' and the 'right to protect' (R2P) under discussion as a UN objective. Because on the ground and despite their superior firepower, the prime concern of NATO chiefs was 'force protection'. Other PRTs had made similar alliances in the south.³⁰⁰

The same conciliation to strongmen had made the international community unwilling to engage³⁰¹ in disarming illegal militias, most of which were associated with the strongmen who since September 11 had become its allies. Around 1,700 illegally armed groups existed nationally in Afghanistan. They would continue to terrorise the local population, steal their children, their property, run the drugs trade and intimidate people into voting the way they wanted during the parliamentary elections due to be held in Autumn 2005. Yet I witnessed both NATO and coalition representatives squirm in meetings with the Afghan government and other stakeholders when asked about the possibility of disarming them in a programme to be called 'Disarming Illegal Armed Groups' (DIAG).

There had also been the 'Disarm, Demobilise and Reintegration' (DDR) programme, whose meetings I attended each week in Kabul at the MOD. The DDR programme offered remuneration to soldiers in the so-called 'official' Afghan army in return for their handing in their more aged weapons. It was thus effectively a huge subsidy to those militias of the Northern Alliance – mostly General Fahim – who had taken over the Afghan National Army units from the departing Taliban in November 2001. Many of these scruffy, newly demobilised militias were now simply reintegrating into what were now dubbed 'illegal armed groups'³⁰² or, as a wry journalist observed, 'reintegrating into the drug trade'. These groups, led by the strongmen the West had made stronger, would never be taken on by the coalition or NATO. Even as the first DDR programme was initiated in 2003, shipments of Western arms had continued to arrive in the north from the US, to be given to the strongmen who had become our 'allies'.³⁰³

This was the precisely the state of affairs Haq had foreseen and desired to avoid through achieving a more equitable political settlement, avoiding the return of warlords to Afghanistan and not allowing the Northern Alliance to take Kabul. It was also why UN political officers such as my colleague, Nils, and some European ambassadors, had despaired of the 'peace versus justice' deal made with the warlords by Khalilzad and Brahimi on the eve of the 2002 Emergency Loya Jirga.

One of the 'disappointed' UN officers – who had worked in Afghanistan both pre- and post-September 11 – wrote to me in 2008.

Last year [2007] I accepted another assignment [in Afghanistan]. I was so disappointed that I quit the job this July. All the mistakes that we had warned Brahimi³⁰⁴ about have now grown to a fully dysfunctional state. Corruption, poverty, criminality, massive abuse of human rights, I felt very sorry for my Afghan friends, who had such high expectations after 9/11. Now many of them turned away from the international community and just expect them to leave. And frankly they might even be better off - much of the international assistance is barely more than window dressing.³⁰⁵

By 2005, the insurgency had strengthened and it was obvious that the international community was not delivering the building blocks required to stabilise the situation. There was a continued lack of coordination among different international actors and a failure of donors to respond to the requests by Afghans for conditionality on aid receipts (to ensure some delivery of services by this corrupt government to the people). The presumption by the military that – despite their lack of experience in state building, development or reconstruction – they should be the lead actors in the entire operation, often chiefly for the short-term benefit to themselves of 'force protection, seemed counter-productive. In late 2005, there had also been the bizarre decision of the European Union's Chief Election Observer, Emma Bonino to toe the Bush-ite line of dubbing the 2005 parliamentary elections 'free and fair' in contravention to what our team's election observers – and others – were saying from the field about intimidation of candidates, about security in the run

up to the election and vote rigging on the day of the election and about fraud in the counting of ballots.^{306 307}

With the 1,700 armed militia groups still roaming the country intimidating people into voting the way strongmen preferred, many more strongmen – or their proxies, some of whom were women – were thus elected to the parliament in 2005. They quickly pushed through an Amnesty Law against future prosecution for the mass human rights violations many had carried out in the past.³⁰⁸ The anger of Afghan women over this state of affairs was expressed by the brave Malalai Joya, who had risen to fame when she spoke out against the warlords at the Constitutional Loya Jirga. For her forthrightness, she had been expelled from that Loya Jirga and one strongman had recommended that she be raped. Elected during the parliamentary election as MP for her province of Farah, she continued to denounce the presence of the warlords in the new ‘parliament’ and was again expelled by them soon after. Since then, under death threat, she has had to remain in hiding.

The lack of a respected and decent Pashtun leader as an alternative to Karzai was becoming evident already in 2005. There were too many individuals wanting to be ‘King’ but failing to work together to form coalitions to topple Karzai’s deeply corrupt government. By 2004, the international community had burgeoned and Kabul was full of foreigners, aid workers, private security companies and diplomats. Behind them came alcohol, arms dealing, brothels and loud parties. Roads were closed off with concrete barriers and in the streets of the Kabul district of Shar-eh-Naw, where the US private security Dyncorp company had offices, even schoolkids had to put up with the humiliation of being ‘frisked’ on their way home.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

THE UK HAQ EFFORT – PART II

Periodically the British forget that you can annex land but not people. Whilst military strategy is required to occupy territory, a political strategy not reliant upon explicit military force is invariably needed to pacify and appease the population.

WARREN, *The Fakir of Ipi*

London and Geneva, 2009

Back in Europe, I followed up with others who had played a part in Haq's last weeks. My aim was to ascertain the extent of the UK effort to promote Abdul Haq and his strategy in 2001, why it failed and the outcome of that failure. What I discovered has, I believe, major implications for our assessment of the competence of British intelligence agencies in the wake of September 11.

I had met Ken Guest briefly in Jalalabad in 2002, when he was working on the documentary for the BBC about Abdul Haq.³⁰⁹ The next contact I had with Guest was in late 2008, by which time he was living in Kabul and had been involved with Afghanistan for twenty-nine years. He was described to me by Seeger as someone who:

... probably spent more time inside Afghanistan, living and working with the Mujahedin, than any other Western witness to that (Soviet) conflict. A sizable part of this time was with Jalaludin Haqqani, who now runs the Taliban campaign on the South Eastern border. He has also drunk tea and discussed religion with Osama bin Laden. As a result of that past, he has a first hand knowledge of not just how the ordinary Afghans thinks, but how the Taliban and Al Qaeda think and act.³¹⁰

Jere Van Dyk who spent time with Ken Guest in 1981, while the two travelled with Jalaluddin Haqqani's front in Paktia, said of him in his excellent book about that period;

Ken was an Englishman. He had been here for four months, wandering from one guerilla group to another, in the Panjshir valley, in Kunar, Nangarhar, Logar. He was skinny like a marathon runner, with long black hair to his shoulders, a beard, gaunt features; and he wore a Soviet winter army jacket under his blanket. He had three cameras, a small cassette player, a New Testament, and a thousand stories to tell. He had been a British Royal Marine. He had not had a bath in a month.³¹¹

Ken Guest had served with 4 5 Commando Royal Marines, and during the 1980s he went on to make some forty-two trips into Afghanistan. After that he covered other wars in places varying from Liberia to Bosnia, Cambodia and Lebanon.

After 9/11 Guest became quickly disillusioned with what he was reading in the press. He wrote an email about Afghanistan in reply to a question by his older brother, who had served for sixteen years with the UK's Special Boat Service (SBS). Soon after, Guest received a phone call from an old acquaintance, 'RAM' Seeger, who was similarly worried and had been discussing this on the phone with Paddy Ashdown. Guest sent Seeger a copy of the email he'd sent to his brother and Seeger sent it on to Ashdown, also putting him in touch with Ken. Ashdown liked the summary and asked Guest if he could use it as a basis for an article in *The Times*.³¹²

Seeger's interest in and experience of Afghanistan stemmed from the early 1980s when he had made nine trips into occupied Afghanistan in order to give training and support to the mujahideen. Seeger had commanded the SBS in the 1970s, but had since left the corps and was working as a security consultant. It was Seeger, whom Gunston had mentioned to me as having travelled with him to Jalalabad in October 2001.

Paddy Ashdown said to me of Seeger,³¹³ 'there should be a biography written on him'. He described Seeger as follows in his own book:

In my first year as a senior boarder, I had been a fag for a senior boy who asked me to do none of the things normally expected of fags, such as making his bed or cleaning his shoes. Instead, I had to join

him doing PT in the backyard with a pack full of bricks on my back, or running along the banks of the River Ouse in large boots and the heaviest clothes we could find.

His name was "RAM" Seegar and he remains one of the most extraordinary men I have met. He taught me the techniques of endurance and the importance of physical fitness and an active mind.

I followed him into the Royal Marines and ended up, like him, in Borneo during the confrontation with Indonesia in the 1960s. Ram won an MC. I also followed Ram into the SBS, the Special Boat Section (now Service).³¹⁴

Having aroused Ashdown's interest, Guest and Seeger decided to widen their lobbying.

Initially our lobbying aim was to make available our considerable knowledge of the country and its peoples, warn against the consequences of a blunt and over heavy approach and point out the complexities of Afghanistan. Then as soon as we became aware of Abdul Haq's intention³¹⁵ and the opportunity that this offered for a quick and effective solution, we focussed on trying to obtain support for his cause.³¹⁶

Ashdown assisted them with meetings and the first people they met with were at an MOD central staffs intelligence cell on 21 September 2001. On the way into the first meeting, Guest says they passed a room in which there was a large wall map of Afghanistan and adjacent to it, a man standing on a ladder 'sticking red arrows' onto it. At this stage, Guest was concerned that a bombing campaign had already been decided upon. The meeting was with two staff officers, one of whom was a Marine. They had a file with some intelligence on Afghanistan. Guest nervously asked if he could know what that intelligence was. 'Of course', replied the officer and reached behind him to get it.

Writing to me in 2009, some eight years later, Guest told me:

When that file was opened and I was looking at what I was being told was the best intelligence they had at that point in time, the best insight from the furthest scout ... it still shocks me.³¹⁷

For the ‘intelligence’ on Afghanistan produced at this meeting was little more than *The Times* article written by Guest himself! He added:

We were planning to go to war and people with nothing against us [who] would die in large numbers and our youth would follow commands given in our name and die there too. And the best we had was from some former General Duties³¹⁸ Marine, who bought a camera and a one-way air ticket and went to Afghanistan and simply walked a lot and paid attention, and chance and fate led him to Haq, Haqqani, Massoud and bin Laden, and did it on invisible freelance budgets because he thought it mattered. And that source hadn’t been back since 1989 and there I was being told, 12 years since I was last in Afghanistan and lacking any resources but what I recalled off the cuff ... I was being told (although they comfortably assumed it was Ashdown [who wrote the piece] as they appear to believe what they read in the press!) ... [that] I was the best they had!

Guest added:

It was in that meeting I first proposed Abdul Haq’s name ... and proposed to RAM I bring in someone I knew who had all the right credentials in social entry to ensure a very wide and senior network of contacts.³¹⁹

That person was Sir John Wellesley Gunston and after a phone call from Guest, he came immediately to meet them in a Whitehall pub. Gunston then called Abdul Haq on his mobile, and they learnt that Haq was in Rome. And that he *already* had a plan.

A further meeting was arranged that evening in Knightsbrige, at the Special Forces club where Seeger, Guest and Gunston met with MOD staff officers to pass over the news about Haq’s plan with the King. The following day, 22 September, Gunston travelled to Rome to meet with Haq. Other meetings fielded by the three, and described already to me by Gunston, were with various Tory grandees, Ming Campbell and Paddy Ashdown. Gunston’s report from Rome was summarised by Seeger and sent to Ashdown, who passed it to No 10 Downing Street on 26 September, but to no avail.

Ashdown informed them that the PM had said that ‘this is exactly the sort of thing that we are looking at’, but that British intelligence has ‘other resources’.

Guest reacted to this with disdain:

For any well informed source it was *not* a multiple choice puzzle. *Nobody* was close to Haq in value to West and Afghanistan. If we were seriously looking at the situation this was obvious.

He added that either the PM was partially to blame: 'I strongly suspect from his determination to back the US unconditionally'.³²⁰ A few days later the news was worse. Guest recalls:

Paddy Ashdown called me and said, 'Ken, you must accept there has to be a fireworks display, a significant fireworks display, the Americans are demanding it and not until after the firework display can we continue the debate'.

Guest replied to Ashdown:

Paddy, if that is to be the strategy we are to set ourselves upon, there can only be one certain casualty of this path, the death of rational debate. No good can come out of it. After the bombing begins we will not be able to have debate in any rational sense.

This was a certain fact to me, not based on hindsight but understanding the dynamics.³²¹

Our intelligence services were totally blind. En mass decamping to [the] USA [and] in the process ... infected with the spirit ... within the US intelligence services ... through these channels we heard such things as the 'Haq has baggage' comment which was to me a haunting call from the past ... as I knew who was speaking to me, Hamid Gul³²² For his voice to have carried through all the doors ... in order to reach me meant that the corridors of our intelligence services were empty, leaving the voice of ISI free passage to echo through from the 1980s. Christ, enemy were in our camps and welcomed there. It was chilling to know this.³²³

Having seen the wall map in DIRA before the DIS meeting and the later one in the pub with DIRA I knew the absolute probability was we were going to war in Afghanistan, [with] at the very least a serious bombing campaign.

I left the meeting in a ... state of shock ... it clearly marked the path we were edging towards, kinetic force, the trap of the secondary arena

... I knew if we went to war [in Afghanistan] in a kinetic manner we would bury people we had no need to lose, barring the results of a marriage between ignorance and arrogance and the bastard child sired by those afflictions. That child is now eight years old.³²⁴

At this stage, Seeger was still a little more hopeful;

After the initial MOD meeting (which was only a start) we were still hopeful - excited even, that Abdul Haq offered the way ahead and that it would be quickly picked up. It was only after Paddy came back with the comments about 'other resources' and 'Haq baggage' and no one bothered to make contact with Abdul in Rome, that we realised there was going to be an uphill battle.

Days later, Gunston returned from Rome. Guest was already committed to filming part of a series from the trenches in northern France. So Gunston and Seeger visited Peshawar from 1 to 9 October 2001. Seeger wrote:

Where we assessed Abdul Haq's plan for overthrowing the Taliban with a Pashtun field force. Before leaving (and the start of the bombing on 7 October) we submitted a modest list of requirements to the British Embassy (at their request).³²⁵

In further summaries of their collective thinking, Seeger explained to Ashdown et al, what Haq was attempting to do:

AQ, estimated then to be a 10,000 man private army of Arabs and Pakistanis, of which 3-4000 of which were known to be the most aggressive troops in Afghanistan and had been used as the Taliban's shock troops in their war against the northern alliance. Even if the Taliban had wanted to give up OBL, it is highly unlikely they could have done so whilst at the same time fighting the NA.³²⁶

It would be better, they said, for the Afghans to be the ones to defeat AQ, and if:

... Afghans were not involved at all (or only one faction used eg the Northern Alliance), an already difficult problem would be compounded as the Pashtuns (or worse still the Afghans as a whole) might close ranks against the western invader and fight with al Qaeda instead of against them.³²⁷

It would be a mistake, they stressed, to use the Northern Alliance to defeat the Taliban as:

... this would be resisted badly by the citizens of Kabul, surrounding Pashtun tribes and the Hazaras – all of whom have suffered badly at the hands of the NA. The leaders of an inside solution must be pashtuns (the largest ethnic group – approx 44% of the population in contrast to the tajiks, the next largest group who are about 25%). While the Taliban could easily fragment (for reasons given earlier) they would be most unwilling to surrender or defect to the NA or western invaders. An adequately backed Pashtun field force would be a different matter. This could trigger large scale defections, build an alliance with the Northern tribes and facilitate the building of a widely accepted broad based government.³²⁸

Sadly this did not happen. In the report he made of that visit to Peshawar³²⁹ before Haq's last entry to Afghanistan, he said of the bombing campaign:

We have probably lost our best chance of achieving a peaceful, lasting and relatively bloodless solution. This would have been for Abdul Haq to have marched on Kabul, destroyed (mainly through defections) the Taliban and then possibly in conjunction with the Northern Alliance defeated the al Qaida Arab army.

Seeger and John Gunston left Peshawar on the 9 October, hoping to push this message in London. Seeger later wrote:

Meanwhile no support had been given to Haq although a derisory offer of four satellite telephones had been made by the British (Haq had already bought a large number of these in Dubai and what he really needed - and as was made clear by us in our submission³³⁰ - was proper secure military radios). Realising that no serious help was forthcoming, Haq opted for a quixotic gesture and entered Afghanistan on October 21st from Parachinar to work with the tribal leaders and village headmen in the Azrow/Hisarak area³³¹... when challenged by the Taliban border guards at Terimangul he told them who he was. The Taliban then put in large forces led by Arabs to converge on Azrow. Haq ran into these on the night of Thursday 25 October. There was some confused firing and then Haq tried talking

to a small deputation. This was joined by an arab who on hearing who Haq was, cocked his rifle and arrested him. Haq and his chief of staff Sayed Hamid were led away and shot the next day Friday 26 October in Rischoor barracks Kabul by arabs and Pakistanis. His nephew Isatullah, a bright young man of 23 who had been a great help to us in Peshawar and who had recently married into the Chitral Royal Family, was captured and shot the following Tuesday in Azrow and had his body thrown into a well.³³²

Guest, like Ritchie who had told me, 'No one can hold a candle to him', said of Haq's death:

And then ... the impossible blow that Haq was dead and with his passing went out the last flaming hope for a good result. The scale of the needless tragedy was clear and yet so far hidden from common understanding it was not appreciated then and is little understood now. For me it was a moment such as I have never heard so eloquently expressed elsewhere about the coming storm of war as Sir Edward Grey on 3 August 1914. The lamps are going out all over Europe; we shall not see them lit again in our lifetime.

Seeger later summarised what had happened between September and December 2001.³³³ Under the title, 'Why no attention given to Haq?', he writes,

Despite his offering of a possible early solution, Haq never received any serious western attention. We lobbied hard on his behalf but to no avail. It seemed that Haq was distrusted or thought incapable of the task and / or other Pashtun leaders were preferred. Rumours were spread about his business interests, his involvement with Russian tarts and his penchant for insubstantial showmanship (Hollywood Haq). To anyone who knew him or had operated with him, these were absurd.³³⁴

Guest, commenting on these allegations and what Ashdown had said about Haq 'having baggage' said;

ISI do not indulge [in] idle gossip. We did. Anything ISI said had an agenda ... So what exactly was the 'baggage' in the views expressed by ISI chief Hamid Gul in the '80s and echoing back in 2001? Haq's independence of spirit and word? When Haq's 'baggage' was put to

me by Ashdown as a hurdle to advancing Haq, I did not hesitate in my response. I asked him to return to source and find out what this 'baggage' was and he would then find the charge would vanish like mist on a windy day ... He called me back a couple of days later and said, 'You were right, there is nothing specific attached to the baggage allegation'. I suggested 'nothing specific' meant 'nothing at all' as if there had been a shred of support, rest assured, there would have been no hesitation in presenting it. Nobody could as it didn't exist.³³⁵

Such allegations were intended to promote the view that Haq should not be supported because, as Seeger concluded:

He was his own man. As a consequence he was never a favourite of the Pakistanis and perhaps for the same reason therefore of the Americans also. Yet it is precisely because of this that he had such widespread trust and pledges of support from Afghans.³³⁶

Seeger says somewhat ironically,

His one real failing was that he did not like to ask for anything that he thought might be refused.³³⁷ Even worse than this disparaging of and reluctance to work with Haq was the possibility that an inside Pashtun solution was not wanted at all or thought to be unnecessary (i.e. a solution could/should be obtained by American arms and the Northern Alliance alone).³³⁸ Or perhaps it was just a failure of the Coalition leaders to understand the complexities of the situation and the need for speed. Early backing of Haq and/or a Pushtun field force could have overthrown the Taliban without recourse to bombing. Once the bombing started it became a race against time. A strong convincing anti-Taliban Pushtun field force had to be in place before Pushtun feelings inside Afghanistan had hardened irrevocably against the coalition and/or the arrival of Northern Alliance troops at Kabul and the inevitable hardening of tensions that this would bring.³³⁹

As to the 'other resources' mentioned to them by Ashdown it became clear:

... that the American and British favourite was Hamid Karzai, chief of the Popalzai tribe ... Although essentially a good man (who Haq might also have wanted/backed as a Premier) he was not a proven field commander with the potential to act as a counterweight to the

Northern Alliance. This was subsequently shown by his failure to capture Kandahar (despite US SF support).

Seeger's note continued:

But even if he had been able to capture Kandahar, this was hardly enough to balance the Northern Alliance. The key was Kabul and a Pashtun leader had to take this. In this respect Karzai never stood a chance, while Haq of course did.

When I asked Seeger why in his opinion so little attention had been shown to Haq, he said that he thought it was because British Intelligence just wasn't interested.

Some attempt was made to talk to Abdul, but those tasked to do so always seemed to arrive too late: just after Abdul had moved on, from Rome to Dubai, then Dubai to Peshawer. Abdul was finally seen in Peshawer by someone from the British Embassy but nothing of note came of this, apart from the derisory offer of 4 satcom telephones.

Yet significant amounts of money and support had been offered to other players whose names they seemed to have received very quickly.

Guest was more direct:

The truth is our systems were inadequate and utterly failed on intelligence. Why? How could they miss a colossus like Haq? What happened?³⁴⁰

I asked Guest, who explained to me that the problem in the West's battle against the Taliban was one of perception, to clarify what he meant when he spoke of the various 'generations' of warfare. For this was the bedrock of why this war was one of perception. He wrote back:³⁴¹

1st Generation – we grapple hand to hand and batter each other with rocks.

2nd Generation – we wise up, use spears and bows to batter each other from a distance using some force delivery system.

3rd Generation – we complicate the whole thing by adding manoeuvre. Manoeuvre warfare can mean cavalry, tanks, aircraft and the mobility compounds all the problems

4th Generation is where conventional force mass (mostly 'state v state' but inclusive of civil wars and guerrilla warfare) is not confronted by an opposing state or force of a similar nature and where conventional strategy is confounded by the abstract nature of the resistance.

In 4th Generation the prime arena is psychological and the application of conventional force mass out of sync with the combat arena. Where you attempt to resolve a physiological frontline with conventional force the more force you use the worse the result can be.

This made sense, particularly when he added:

Taliban is a concept not a conventional force mass ... Where we attempt to strike it with conventional means we flounder. Can this be proved? Yes. Look at the other side and reason how they achieve a better result with considerably less mass and resources. They primarily fight in [the] prime arena, mastery of the physiological front. It is a war of perception. This means our best weapon is being smart. Do you think we have been smart so far? Dis-regarding the distasteful nature of the opposing side, do you think they have fought a smart campaign? Based on results (they tend to lose tactically but win strategically, which is what matters) I would say they are very smart.

To win against an idea and a battle for perception you must have a smarter idea and the capacity to implant that as the best option. To do this effectively you must understand the local dynamics and the nature of the oppsing side. I would argue, based on how the West approaches the problem, the West do not understand the dynamics or the other side.

We ... [have fallen] into [the kinetic arena] as we had that capacity and it was our 'comfort zone of understanding'. However the prime arena was not kinetic, it was psychological.³⁴²

As Guest, Ritchie and Abdul Haq had understood only too well, the key of Abdul Haq's message was the need to avoid resorting to kinetic warfare from the outset. For Haq knew that anything kinetic would immediately change the dynamics.

So what was the outcome of those decisions taken in September and October 2001? Guest remarked:

We have been warring in Afghanistan two years longer than it took to win world war two and we are nowhere near that point Churchill described after the 'Victory at El Alamein in 1942 as 'the end of the beginning' where costly but marked achievements had been attained, the path was still rough but it was defined. [Today] we are still searching for our path and doing it without scouts.

What does this have to do with Intelligence warfare and Afghanistan? Ponderous corporate mentality in a fast moving environment where your best arm is not kinetic, it is intelligence and flexibility. Probably because of that significant post cold war re-shuffling, where jealous bureaucrats, always the majority, ousted the field veterans. Result, slowly moving, safety seeking career seeking, career minded bureaucrats seize total control. Where the bureaucrats win we get spin ... it can be hard realising ... we've lost because of all the smoke and mirrors involved. Does it begin to sound like where we are now?

So back tracking, British Intelligence were unable to take things on board as they were poorly informed, inflexible in motion, resistant to alternative views and comfortably corporate in mentality. Not at all the dashing image we like James Bond to be.

If our leaders advise ... that we bomb our way through rather than think our way through we must question the wisdom and the value of such leaders and suffer the pains ... of their mistakes. Thucydides wrote, 'The state that separates its scholars from its warriors will have its thinking done by cowards and its fighting by fools'.

In 2001 there was a far better option on the table that offered an honest and strong Afghan leader, the use of the tribes, sealing the border to prevent escapes and virtually no US footprint, other than discreet use of Special Forces as observers for report back needs. In effect an Islamic rejection of terrorism as un-islamic, exactly what we, in the West, should have been looking for and supporting.³⁴³

In 2001 the West advanced without proper contextual understanding ... We favoured wide bombing, often wide of the mark, ever expanding US / Allies ground force deployment, installing a weak leader, resulting in no government capacity and massive corruption. What we got, is what you see now. It isn't pretty but it was all perfectly predictable, and it is the sort of thing that happens when we fail to properly consider all the options. Not ensuring we have sound strategy and full tactical support is a betrayal of trust our youth will pay for in blood.³⁴⁴

... Tactically it may have felt like victory, with things being bombed and blown up. This was the fire works display demanded at the time and as such it worked fine, merely lacking any capacity to deliver the strategic objective.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

ABDUL HAQ AND CIA STRATEGY IN AFGHANISTAN

The State that separates its scholars from its Warriors
will have its thinking done by cowards, and its fighting by fools.

THUCYDIDES

Abdul Haq's story is important because it is symptomatic of a wider – and in many ways more important – story. This was hinted at in Whitney Azoy's tribute piece in November 2001:

Back to 'maybe he was, maybe he wasn't'. If Abdul Haq wasn't actively supported by the United States, why wasn't he? Because he was too independent? Because our Pakistani 'allies' didn't trust him – as, with excellent reason, he didn't trust them? Or perhaps because our own planners didn't think of it first? Our Afghanistan planners haven't been too good at their task for quite some time...³⁵³

The USA's 'Afghanistan planners' were, of course, the CIA. Although there are numerous intelligence outfits that make up the US government – so many in fact that 'they operate in an anarchy of chaos, competition and disunity'³⁵⁴ – it was primarily the CIA who were responsible for the failure to recognise the value of what Abdul Haq's 'Afghan Solution' represented.

In many ways the squandering of the opportunity that Haq could have provided, and the suppression of the warnings he had made reflects a continuation of the CIA's policy in the region since the 1980s.

For example when I had asked Guest to clarify whether Kaplan had been correct in asserting that Haq's performance with Reagan had been instrumental in the procurement for the mujahiddeen of stinger missiles, his reply said much about what was wrong with CIA policy during the anti-Soviet jihad. Initially he referred to

Charlie Wilson's War, which had recently enjoyed huge success as a book and film in the US.

I really enjoyed *Charlie Wilson's War* as entertainment, the relationship depicted between Wilson and the CIA was priceless. Is it history? No ...

In the film, Charlie Wilson was pushing for Stingers for Massoud. And yet, at the time Massoud was not favoured by US/CIA and remained in that sad state of neglect by them through to the end of 1989. The same barrier to understanding his value applied to Haq and the barrier was a two bar gate, ISI agendas and CIA lack of understanding; a result of their bunkered down Fort Apache approach, in the rear with the beer and wholly reliant on secondary sources, the prime part of which was ISI.

Abdul certainly wanted Stingers, but not being favoured by CIA, he was not recognised as an outstanding commander and so not supplied with them.... as far as Milton 'Milt' Beardon, CIA Head of Station 1986–91, was concerned, Abdul Haq was not the finest Pashtun guerilla commander of the war, the *only* Pashtun commander to evolve into the secondary phase of guerilla warfare (mobility), the *only* one to have strategic reach to his planning, the commander of the most *spectacular* operations: destruction of the 40th Army Ammunition Dump at Karga, blowing up of the power lines to Kabul, attack on the Sarobi dam – every bit as daring as the Hollywood WWII film *The Guns of Navarone*. To Milt, Abdul Haq was nothing more than a simple, minor Commander. Less in fact; to Milt he was 'Hollywood Haq'. It was long Milt's proud boast that he coined that ignorant view, one he delighted in repeating *ad nauseam* to journalists. Having a grassroot view rather than a gin glass view of what was really going on inside Afghanistan, I have always felt the view expressed by Milt was not only inaccurate, it was profoundly distasteful and damaging to mujahideen needs.

Milt and his like were so blind, they did not take what Haq had to say seriously. Abdul certainly wanted Stingers and had a good idea how best to use them as well. He argued he would not waste them in ones and twos all over the mountains, he wanted to deploy them where they could do the most harm, in and around Kabul airport, making every hit not only painful but highly visible. He was right.³⁵⁵

Guest was not the only journalist to have noticed that the CIA seemed to rely almost exclusively on the ISI for their intelligence. Robert Kaplan recalls a visit to Kandahar in 1988, when he discusses seeing Soviet aircraft – at that stage supposed to have taken hits from the mujahideen and departed – still flying in and out. He was confused because US intelligence reports from Islamabad continued to put out reports that, ‘heavy mujahideen presence’ had deterred all enemy aircraft from landing or taking off from Kandahar airport during the entire period of my visit’.³⁵⁶ Kaplan asked whom the Americans were relying on for their information, and said, ‘I was stunned to learn it was their liaison in ISI’.

Possibly Kaplan was ‘stunned’ because he knew that the ISI’s strategic objectives for Afghanistan were not the same as those of the US. ISI was, he says:

... intent on creating a fundamentalist Afghanistan in Zia’s image, wanted Kandahar to fall only if the credit and the spoils could go to commanders like Hekmatayar and Rasul Sayyaf (the leader of another fundamentalist mujahideen party that, like Hekmatayars, depended on outside support and was thus easily manipulated by ISI).³⁵⁷

Kaplan concludes:

The awful truth seemed to be that the only sources of information the United States had about the fighting in Kandahar, and anywhere else in Afghanistan during the later stage of the war, were their own satellite photographs and what ISI chose to tell them.³⁵⁸

Other journalists covering Afghanistan during the 1980s were also critical. Peter Jovenal told me:

The Americans did and still do favour Hikmatyar . Even as recently as last year [2008], the CIA tried to weedle Hikmatyar into the present government. During the 1980s, and until the election of Benazir’s widower, Asif Ali Zadari, the US listened too much to Pakistan. It was this blind obedience by the Americans to the ISI and support for Hizb-i-islami [Hikmatyar] which in my view contributed to 9/11. The attitude [of the Americans] was very short-term in the 1980s, very much ‘let’s get even for Vietnam’. Because the US didn’t really care long-term, [they] encouraged the Arabs to come as though it would give more legitimacy to the jihad.

In a book which has been as under-recognised as it was prescient, John Cooley³⁵⁹ discusses the 'devastating consequences for world peace' of CIA support for radical Islam. Cooley notes that by 1988, Sayyaf had built a huge Arab-funded development near Peshawar to house forty thousand³⁶⁰ people. He adds that this opulent lifestyle depended on the largesse of ISI and President Zia al-Haq (and ultimately the CIA, which, he says was unable to control the flow of its funds until after the death in a plane crash of ISI Chief General Akhtar and President Zia in 1988, in other words, as the jihad was ending and the Russians leaving.³⁶¹

So, given that the CIA had apparently ignored, undermined and even interfered with Abdul Haq's plan, the question remains what *was* the strategy used by the CIA in Afghanistan after September 11? Afghan analyst Barnett Rubin throws some light on this when he says that in National Security Council (NSC) deliberations between Bush and the NSC on how to respond to September 11, the single focus was:

... the type of intelligence and military operations that would destroy al Qaeda and the Taliban regime. When the talk dealt with Afghan actors, the only questions were whether they would fight the Taliban and al Qaeda.³⁶²

As with Iraq, Rubin says there was no mention of post-war scenarios.³⁶³

Ironically, while Abdul Haq was meeting defecting Taliban commanders in Peshawar, the CIA were planning their own assault on Afghanistan. Rubin relates how on Saturday September 15, President Bush met with his war cabinet at Camp David. There, the CIA Director George Tenet presented the CIA's plan for striking terrorist bases and overthrowing the Taliban with a combination of air power and Special Operations. A week later Tenet was: 'planning the alliance of Afghan forces that would make this a US-assisted Afghan operation against foreign occupiers'.³⁶⁴ Within three days of September 11, the CIA were already planning a bombing campaign. This was still ten days before Guest would see the wall map with its red arrows at the MOD in London.

Further tactics – such as ‘buying off’ Northern Alliance warlords – are revealed in published accounts by veteran CIA operatives. For example, Gary Shroen³⁶⁵ recounts how in late September 2001, he carried \$3 million USD in cash into the Panjshir valley, meeting with Engineer Arif, Massoud’s intelligence chief. Shroen informed Arif of the US intention to overthrow the Taliban, although ‘officially’ President Bush was awaiting a response to his ultimatum that they give up bin Laden. Shroen then explained to Arif that, in order to act as:

... an honest broker in a post-Taliban Afghanistan ... the US would disburse money directly to commanders ... The CIA would control funding and arming [of] commanders separately through small CIA teams to assure that Afghans followed a strategy made in Washington.³⁶⁶

Yet CIA operatives like Shroen failed to foresee how their initial empowerment of these strongmen would soon become a runaway horse. For, as Rubin adds, ‘these were only a few of the figures whom these funds and arms empowered more effectively than any election’.

Shroen gave Arif \$500,000 USD cash and told him to stress to Fahim that much more money was available for purely military purposes. The following day Shroen met General Fahim and gave him \$1 million. Shroen then travelled to Charikar where he gave \$100,000 to Sayyaf. A few days later, the CIA’s Counter Terrorist Centre delivered a further \$10 million. Shroen says he left the four cardboard boxes containing the cash in a corner of the office that Arif gave him and he and Arif later had a ‘good laugh’ when Shroen gave Arif \$22,000 for two trucks of helicopter fuel that somehow never materialised.³⁶⁷

Rubin says, ‘The amount of cash given to commanders by the CIA in this manner ultimately amounted to several hundred million dollars’. The commanders, Rubin adds, changed the dollars quickly into local currency because the value of the US dollar sank as the local Afghani currency was flooded with CIA cash. The dollars’ deflation became an incentive for these

commanders to turn it into profitable investment. With the price of opium so high after the Taliban's recent ban, these Northern Alliance commanders quickly recycled the money into loans to farmers to finance the next spring's poppy crop.³⁶⁸ Arif then built a four story house which looked like the kitsch marble mansion of a Pakistani drug dealer and which I had seen when undertaking election monitoring in the Panjshir. But this was small fry when compared to General Fahim's investment in numerous properties and a \$30 million gold market in Kabul.

James Ritchie said to me of Fahim, 'by 2004 the IRI³⁶⁹ told an Afghan friend of mine that he had accumulated \$1 billion in wealth. \$500 million in cash and another \$500 million in business interests. Now he looks to be the next Vice President. I have personally seen him confiscate millions in real estate from our foundation.'³⁷⁰

Meanwhile Sayyaf was in a large villa in Paghman, just west of Kabul where he ruled the district with his private militia, seized land and sent raiders into western Kabul, as he had during the early 1990s when he had apparently played a key role in the Afshar massacre. Today, he was still terrorising both locals and rivals alike. He had also, I learnt from British Embassy staff in January 2001, broken through Taliban front lines against the wishes of the coalition in order to storm into Kabul. Later, he continued to have his rocket launchers aimed on the city.

Ironically, back in September 2001 in Washington DC, the day before Schroen's arrival in Afghanistan, the State Department were demanding receipts from the King's group for a few thousand dollars. Yet, in the Panjshir, as described by Shroen himself, Afghanistan's future was playing out on a very different and utterly unaccountable trajectory. The interesting thing though about Schroen's account is how consistent the book is with previous accounts written by ex-CIA operatives, such as those of Beardon. This consistent misinformation – as Guest told me³⁷¹ – indicates why the past thirty years of CIA policy in the region have ultimately failed. For example, Schroen recounts that Abdullah Abdullah was aware that Abdul Haq was in contact with people in Washington. Shroen says:

Abdul Haq had always opposed Massood and the Tajiks. His popularity with key officials at the State Department and within the NSC was troubling, because he would certainly be pressing the same negative line about holding the Tajiks back from Kabul and focusing on the Pashtun south.³⁷²

Either ignorance or plain mischief must account for what Shroen says next:

Abdullah was convinced that if he could visit Washington to meet with senior policy makers, he would be able to clearly articulate the political policies of the Northern Alliance and, he hoped, reduce the distrust and fears of those who did not understand Afghanistan and its tortured history of these last twenty-plus years. I agreed that his visit to Washington was important.

Here the CIA infer – rather bizarrely – that Abdul Haq ‘already’ had support in DC and that they had to ‘fight’ to get support for the Northern Alliance route. He also thoroughly discounts the unpopularity of the Northern Alliance given their role in the inter-factional fighting of the early 1990s that laid waste to Kabul and made the countryside as insecure as it is today. His assertion that Haq already had support also conflicts with the many accounts given of US policy: from National Security Council reports, to the accounts of the Ritchies, to that of the former Reagan National Security Advisor, Bud McFarlane, who had been lobbying for Haq in Washington DC since well before September 11.

Critically, Shroen unwittingly shows that the CIA had failed to appreciate the need for a genuine Pashtun response to September 11. Instead he parrots the taunts of his colleague, Milton Beardon, when describing Haq and the Ritchie effort:

Within the CIA he became known as ‘Hollywood Haq’ and from then on, he did all his fighting with his mouth. He played no role in the mujahideen interim government of 1992 to 1996, so I thought that the effort to try to build him into a political figure who could challenge the Taliban was a waste of time. Haq had no tribal base of support to which he could attach himself (unlike Hamid Karzai, whose roots in the Tarin Kowt area north of Kandahar were strong and deep).

I predicted that if Abdul Haq moved into the Jalalabad area without an established base, he would be killed by the Taliban. Now that scenario was being played out in deadly earnest.

Here Schroen not only discounts Haq's leadership as 'the' foremost Pashtun commander,³⁷³ he also twists the reason why Haq had honourably quit Kabul in 1992, as well as thoroughly discounting the role Haq had played in the Rome Process in the years leading up to September 11. It is bizarre that he makes so much of Hamid Karzai's roots in Tirin Kot because – although Hamid Karzai's father, Ahad, was well thought of – Hamid was not a well known figure during the jihad or nationally.

Guest had this to say of CIA management of the Soviet-Afghan War:

The CIA was trusted with monitoring the Soviet Afghan War at close quarter, but was happy to ... do nothing even marginally beyond the norm, accepting as gospel all that ISI told them. This betrayed the trust of the true heroes of the Afghan-Soviet War, among whom Abdul Haq, that they would rise to the needs of the hour, and do everything in their power to ensure the men doing the fighting and the dying were fully and properly supported ... In my view, having spent time where the dying was done, that was a betrayal of trust not only to the men doing the dying, the Afghans, but also of the essential needs of the US to watch and learn, in order to increase their understanding of regional dynamics on the ground. This failure is where the root of all our present troubles are embedded. It mattered then and it matters now that we understand the dynamics. Incredibly, CIA contributed nothing to that understanding. In my view, that was a failure that set the path towards the future we now endure. If the lesson is not learned nothing changes.

... [Yet] the cure was so simple. Do not rely on single source intelligence, and the US did, they relied on ISI, fundamentalists with political agendas.³⁷⁴

One of the prime examples of the CIA's failure to accurately report the actuality of key events occurring inside Afghanistan at the height of the anti-Soviet war was the issue – which I have already recalled – of the Qarga operation. In the documentary on Haq, *Afghan Warrior*,

Malcolm Brinkworth, the presenter, asked Beardon about the attack on Qarga dam. Who was the commander? Guest, who was behind the camera filming, recalls:

Milt had no idea at all. He blustered that it was important, that lots of people claimed credit, that it did not matter. Actually it did matter. He had described this event as the most important thing in his career, it had occurred soon after his arrival as CIA head of station in Islamabad and he said he was showered with congratulatory messages and lorded as the hero of the hour. He said it 'made me'. And as the head of CIA station, charged with understanding the war and accurately reporting it and advising upon it, with all the funds and resources at his disposal (the largest ever American 'covert' operation) surely, who was the brilliant young Mujahed Commander in charge of the operation was worth knowing. A man to mark as one to support. People inside Afghanistan knew the name of the Commander, every Pashtun boasted about it as the Commander was Pashtun. That man was Abdul Haq. The man Milt beastly claimed credit for dubbing 'Hollywood Haq'. The man so denigrated, repeatedly by Beardon. The man ISI did not like.³⁷⁵

Guest had written a book in 1996 naming Abdul as the commander³⁷⁶ and told me: 'Yet in 2002, Milt *still* had no idea'.³⁷⁷ This assertion is supported by Beardon's own book,³⁷⁸ where he says dismissively of the Qarga operation:

I never did find out who launched the attack – a dozen commanders insisted they were responsible – so I just decided to believe all or all or none of their claims. Kharga was smoking, and the mujahideen had a hundred new heroes. That was enough for me".

Guest added;

Later, the interview done and as the camera kit was being packed away, I casually asked Beardon, if he might have the telephone number of a man named Hamid Gul. Beardon rattled out the number off the top of his head. It confirmed to me what I expected it to, for there was nothing chance about the asking. It betrayed, that Beardon was, apparently, still in steady communication with Hamid Gul. It was exactly what I expected to hear and was useful to know.³⁷⁹

On this fact, Guest noted:

Of interest to me was the suggestion that in 2001, with panic the order of the day ... [the] CIA turned to their former 'experts' of the region, like Beardon, for advice. And having not paid much attention when they had the opportunity they had very little to contribute other than seeking the views of their prime source before: ISI. The could be cause enough to have Beardon calling Hamid Gul often enough between Sept 2001 and 2002 to be able to rattle out his phone number off the top of his head in 2002 despite not having been deployed to the region since early 1989.

Guest, like most journalists covering the jihad, knew that Hamid Gul, despite no longer being ISI chief, in reality remained very influential on 'policy'.

Guest had met Gul during the course of filming the Haq documentary. He said of him:

Now, although I do not agree with his political view (dressed up as Islamic ideals), there was no doubt that Hamid was a very intelligent man. More than able to run rings around Milt whilst standing on one leg blindfolded and juggling hand grenades, and, of course he did that during the Soviet-Afghan War.

During the Soviet-Afghan War, and repeated now, we allowed reliance on systems that lacked practical understandings to work through the Afghan puzzle. As a result, lacking sure foundations to set a viable strategy upon, we now largely rely on kinetic force to bomb our way out. That this is a strategy of desperation is not lost to the opposing force and affords them outstanding propaganda value. Result: where once there were clear paths through the maze, the way out is now far more complicated. To escape, we need less kinetic force and more scouts.

It was possibly this type of gullibility by the CIA which had led to the border problems I had witnessed at the Durand Line, when in 2003 Pakistan began making incursions onto Afghan territory, supported by the Americans.³⁸⁰

Moreover, despite the assertions of Schroen and the CIA about the worthlessness of Haq, their opinion failed to appreciate the

wider dynamics of the USA's post-September 11 engagement in Afghanistan. Yet others – not just the Ritchies, Guest, Seeger and Gunston – had foreseen the problems. In the November 2001 tribute to Haq, veteran US diplomat and writer, Whitney Azoy had declared, and some might now admit, with tremendous prescience

Only by such efforts as Abdul Haq's – this much is increasingly, glaringly clear – can US objectives be achieved in the nexus of Afghan national power south of the Hindu Kush. Bombing can't. US troops can't. Northern Alliance troops (non-Pashtuns) can't. Turkish troops (ethnically more akin to the hated Northern Alliance Uzbeks) can't. Only the Pashtuns themselves – the groups from which the Taliban sprang and which now harbour Osama bin Laden – can get this job done.³⁸¹

Joe Ritchie was also interviewed for the documentary, *Afghan Warrior*, in 2003 and in this he says more about the Rome group, and what the Ritchies and Abdul Haq had been doing, as regards formulating an alternative plan to finish the Taliban, in the run up to September 11. It also shows Joe Ritchie's view of the CIA and their role.

Joe began by saying that he and his brother had wanted to do something to help Afghans get out of 'the twenty-five years of hell' they had suffered. The key was, as far as they were concerned, to find an alternative to the both the Taliban and the Northern Alliance warlords.

The Taliban was bad but not necessarily worse than warlords. The Afghan people were capable of kicking the Taliban out given an alternative which hadn't been given to them. The former King, because his name was gilt-edged, and because he was associated with a much better time, and was known to be a guy who was not power hungry and that actually kept the tribal balance ... was the potential ... alternative if he could be gotten into play.³⁸²

So the Ritchies worked on the King and on the concept of Loya Jirga. During the process Joe also got to know Haq and soon appreciated the need for a military component to the plan. Haq was, he said, 'The key guy there who was capable of ... putting together the commanders that were needed to make this militarily playable'. He had 'instantly connected' with Haq.

As I got to know him I realised the dimensions of this guy that he was extremely brilliant, sophisticated, liberal in a good kind of way ... gentle, sensitive ... and he had a leadership ability that he could bring Afghans together ... Afghans are extremely fractious people, this was a man that could bring Afghan commanders together ... because commanders are even more fractious and he just led by virtue of the fact that he was the man with the vision and everybody realised this, he never pushed himself forward, he just ... was present and ... would wind up leading whatever group he was in by virtue of ... of his merits.

Even before they had the King in play, Haq had taken a trip in early 2001 to Peshawar and realised that the Taliban had only weak support then in Afghanistan. He said to Joe, 'This fruit is ready to be picked, the Taliban can be taken out now'.

At this stage Joe said that because of Haq's assets (in terms of commanders who knew and trusted him), there was the potential to go in with or without the King's help.

This was a man who – in a situation where it was virtually impossible not to have baggage – this was the man whose hands were clean. He said to me at one time, 'I would favour a trial at the Hague of all the people involved in this, and I'll be the first one to go stand trial.'

Joe talked of Haq's integrity and how this had led to the murder of his wife and son in Peshawar 'after it became known he was involved in the Loya Jirga concept'.

In the years and months prior to September 11, the Ritchie brothers had – with Bud McFarlane – brought Haq's plan to the attention of The White House, the State Department, the CIA and the Defence Department.

To lay out who Abdul Haq was, well they knew that pretty well already, but what his plan was, who the people, what the network was that he had available both inside and outside the Taliban, inside and outside Afghanistan, a lot of these people were in Peshawar, a lot were in Europe, a lot were in the US, a lot were inside Afghanistan ... Thinking that ... when they saw a network like this that they would be pretty eager to find a way to help out. ... prior to 9/11 they just couldn't seem to focus on that enough to actually want to do anything and then post 9/11, they wanted to do it another way.

Jo Ritchie said of Haq's ability:

... this guy was a master at slipping into a place and setting up, er, contacts, sources, ah plants ... at totally demoralising an enemy ... he'd rather have a hundred guys up against ten thousand, but where the ten thousand knew that among them, there were some guys who were on the other side but they didn't know who they were ... he had a sense for that kind of warfare and ... he would create a sense of momentum and inevitability that ... would make an enemy feel defeated. Long before it was technically defeated ...

But sadly:

There were some people who would, we're talking pre 9/11 now, who recognised this to be a wonderful thing ... but ... it wasn't their job to make it happen. The group that was in charge of making it happen, the CIA, had this problem with Abdul Haq ... [they said] 'This wasn't a man you could count on to stay on message' ... There were times when he'd stood up and told the truth in spite of the fact that they didn't want him to say those things. [So] they accused him of being 'Hollywood Haq'. I mean, this was the least Hollywood guy you ever met, I mean when he did get in the press incidentally, he did it at my insistence, for our people in Washington had finally said, I mean, he went to Peshawar and no press knew he was there, everything was totally under cover until finally the people in Washington said, 'Your're never going to get any help from them unless he goes public', and I called him and said, 'Abdul you gotta go public'. Basically the problem was, he wasn't a totally reliable puppet.

Joe explained how he had persuaded Haq to come to Rome in order

to persuade the King's group to sign onto the Haq Plan.

The King and the folks around him, his executive committee, recognised that nothing was happening, nothing had happened for years, there was nothing on the horizon that was going to happen, with one exception. Abdul Haq had a plan.

Haq went to Rome and went through his plans with the King's Executive Committee, at the end of which, after they had grilled him with questions, he asked them whether 'they' had an alternative. They did not.

So they unanimously voted to back what he was doing and ... that's when the King, after twenty, almost thirty years in exile, signed onto something that ... were maybe some people were going to get hurt which I think he didn't like at all, but, he recognised it was the only hope for his country, and so he, and the executive committee signed onto Abdul Haq's plan.

With this two-pronged strategy – Haq and the King – now in hand, the Ritchie brothers assumed people in Washington would take an interest.

But it just didn't happen, I mean there was still the same lack of willingness to actually step in and help out ... and so by late July [2001] or early August, Abdul was saying to me, 'Joe, save your time, save your energy, it's not going to work ... we're just going to have to do it on our own'.

Within weeks the terrible thing, the 'cataclysmic event for the West' predicted by Haq back in 1991, happened. On the morning of September 11, Joe Ritchie and Bud McFarlane were due to meet the Secretary of State for South Asia. The meeting was cancelled and Joe Ritchie went to Rome, 'to encourage the King to get into play, which he did'. Joe then returned to DC:

... thinking that now we were in essence at war, it shouldn't be a problem to get people to focus, on this [problem] of knocking off the Taliban ... The problem then was that ... they wanted to do it in their own way, without help from Abdul Haq.

At this point, Joe Ritchie said, he felt like a guy walking down the street seeing some men trying to break into a safe:

... and I happen to have the key ... and say, 'here's the key' ... how could you have a more golden opportunity to take something that's been prepared for years and served up on a platter ... people can't possibly ignore it ... But apparently the obvious fact is that the CIA didn't work with the man who couldn't be relied on to say exactly what they wanted, I mean ... this guy was too courageous, this was a man who would stand up and, if things were being done too wrong ... there's a risk he would say it publicly ... that one risk was just too great for them to deal with ...

Brinkworth asked Joe Ritchie just who in the US had recognised Haq's potential.

I think people in the White House did recognise it ... I think people at Central Command recognised it ... but ... It's not their job to pick, I mean, it's the CIA's job to pick who we're going to work with.

But after Haq's death, the Ritchies had contact with Central Command.

Because we explained that there were still a huge number of extremely courageous competent capable men in the field that weren't being talked to at all, they ... talked to us. And we found the uniform men terrific patriots, the right attitude, the right will, I thought they had it all correct, but again, they don't make those choices, those choices are made somewhere else and ... its basically CIA people making those choices and they're the ones who, I think, stopped the train from going down that track ... because the partners down that track weren't necessarily totally buyable.

Like James, Joe Ritchie explained how the commanders had been due to gather in Rome for a meeting that had been scheduled prior to September 11. The call had gone out in August but many had visa problems getting there and so proceeded in dribs and drabs.

They were overtaken by events and, so instead of being able to do this on a schedule that they had worked out, Haq felt he had to get back quickly, and he went to Peshawar in late September by himself. They couldn't all follow because they had visa problems so they followed

piecemeal later on, and he headed to Peshawar and began collecting the ... local folks there to go ahead with the ... so he had to go ahead on a hurried basis. He didn't really have the time to get everybody in place because he felt he needed to get there fairly quickly to prevent the Northern Alliance taking over Kabul and leaving Afghanistan with a long-term problem.

Joe continued trying to get help from Washington: 'but we kind of ran out of luck there'. Haq told Joe to give up saying they weren't going to get help from there:

... but I thought if we could get something so small as a helicopter ride across the border ... we don't need any weapons, don't give us any money, no material supplies but if you can give Haq and a few guys a helicopter ride across the border, if you can take weapons that he has purchased in Peshawar and just drop them ... at a given point ... [That would] increase his chances of pulling this off, but it didn't work out.

At this stage Abdul Haq was in Peshawar and meeting with key members of the Taliban.

His compound was 'Grand Central Station' in Peshawar. There were Afghan commanders from Peshawar, from Pakistan and from Afghanistan, but there were also these Taliban commanders who would sneak out of the country, come in and work out the arrangements and the understandings and ... be given a satellite phone and they'd go back in and so they were in pace ready to defect at the appropriate moment ... that's one of the reasons the East fell easily ... I think without a shot being fired, when his network started barking the signals ... after like the day the Northern Alliance moved in Kabul.

He had to get in, with almost no one with him and virtually no arms, and first get a foothold, its like, you know, a beachhead, he had to get that done before he got snuffed out.

Joe said that it was he who had encouraged Haq to do the interviews in Peshawar on his strategy.

The strategy was simply that, it finally encouraged him to do that on the grounds that my advice ... in Washington was ... it was the only way we were going to get the Americans to focus on him ...

Jo added that a couple of 'agency' guys in Peshawar were:

... amazed at ... what he had built up as far as a following and a network and ... they were totally bewildered at why he, why someone in Washington wasn't reaching out a hand to help him.

When Brinkworth asked if there was a real level of ignorance in the CIA about who the players were, Joe said.

You know, let me distinguish between inside and outside the CIA. Within the CIA its hard to imagine that they, they couldn't have known who the players were ... But I think it was that knowledge that kept them going the way they were going. They knew who could ... who the ... who the whores were and who ... who the men of stature were and didn't want the men of stature. Outside the CIA, I think there was the problem of not knowing enough about the players, because if they had known more, the ... folks in the White House for example, and in some other places, I think they would have put some pressure on the CIA to use these guys. That was my sense of it, that when you got to the CIA guys, they ... knew who the players were and they didn't, and they wanted the guys they could buy, when you got outside the CIA they were less knowledgeable and then they would say, well the CIA guy tells us that Abdul Haq's got baggage. Ah. And they, they didn't want to pick a fight, you know, they didn't want to go twist the arm of the CIA ... whose responsibility it was to make these calls.

Regarding the final chat with ISI:

We weren't expecting any help from them ... we figured that they were likely to try to betray him when he went in ... we knew that they had been continuing to supply the Taliban with weapons.

At the end of the day the Brits 'offered' Abdul Haq four satellite phones. The Ritchies had given him sixty, which were being spread to Taliban commanders. He was offered four by the Americans, which Joe Ritchie said:

... he respectfully declined, that was one thing he didn't need, and he assumed that was probably offered so that they could track him more easily ...

Abdul Haq is the symbol of giving Afghanistan back to the people. Massoud is the symbol of giving it back to the Tadjiks ... to the Panjshiris.

He [Haq] said the bombing rallied people to supporting the Taliban, it meant people came in from outside [mostly Pakistanis] to fight on side of Taliban who had not been there. But once it was viewed as an American action it made it a lot tougher from the standpoint of real Afghans that wanted their country back ... as now there was this split feeling about who were the good guys and the bad guys

He thought it was a mistake ... because the country could have been taken back by the Afghans and that was the real problem. Had they been allowed to do it, and it wouldn't have taken long to find out whether they could or not, if they couldn't, then then go back to the bombing plan but ... if it could have been taken by this indigenous movement, then you had an Afghanistan in the hands of real Afghan patriots who believed in a broad-based multi-ethnic government. And if you weren't willing to let that happen then you would up with, well, what we wound up with. And that's why it was terribly important and that's why he was in such a hurry to get in there and, ah, give the men a chance to do this.

After Haq's death, with his guys already inside Afghanistan armed with satellite phones, Ritchie reiterated what I had heard from Gunston and Guest about Haq's commanders in the South (which again demonstrated as 'false' the claims made in the British press that MI6 had somehow engineered the fall of the south).

They were in place, ready to go ... he unfortunately got killed before the whole thing got rolling but they were still there, and they proceeded to take huge chunks of land, this wasn't widely reported but it's all there on the record ... the whole east, which was his, the kind of core of his home territory, fell without a shot being fired ... as far as I know, all the way from Sirobi clear to the border, which blocked the NA from coming further east, and then the first major town to the south, Ghazni, was taken by one of the men in his network, Ahrif Shah Jehan, a guy armed with a satellite phone and ten thousand dollars cash total to get the job done, but this was the guy that was the leader of the Hazaras ... in Ghazni province, and so ... these men, it was like he had said would happen. They stood up and took huge swathes of territory with very little fighting after his death.

APPENDIX V

LETTER FROM ABDUL HAQ TO FORMER AMBASSADOR PETER TOMSEN (JANUARY 1993)

Jeeli Abdul Haq

BEGIN TEXT:

DEAR AMBASSADOR TOMSEN:

I HAVE NOT SEEN YOU IN A LONG TIME, AND THOUGHT YOU MIGHT HAVE COME TO SEE US IN KABUL. HOWEVER, YOU HAVE REMAINED A GOOD FRIEND OF AFGHANISTAN, AND I WANT TO WRITE ABOUT TOPICS I COULD NOT EASILY DISCUSS BEFORE WHICH MIGHT HAVE BEEN MISCONSTRUED AS PETTY COMPLAINTS: ONE COMMANDER CRITICIZING ANOTHER OUT OF JEALOUSY. NOW IT IS EASIER TO SPEAK MY MIND. ALSO IT IS NOW CLEARER, TO THE OUTSIDE OBSERVER, WHICH ARE THE RADICALS AND WHO BELIEVES IN SELF-DETERMINATION.

WHEN THE MUJAHIDIN PARTIES WERE SOMEWHAT ARBITRARILY FORMED IN THE EARLY DAYS OF THE WAR, NO ONE MINDED THEIR FLAWS: WE NEVER THOUGHT THE SOVIETS WOULD LEAVE AFGHANISTAN, SO THE STRUCTURE OF THE RESISTANCE PARTIES WAS OF SMALL CONCERN. AFTER THE SOVIETS WITHDREW IN DEFEAT, AFGHANS BEGAN THINKING OF POLITICS. WE WATCHED THE PARTIES FORM INNUMERABLE FAILED ALLIANCES AND REALIZED THAT THEY HAD NO FUTURE APART FROM THE FRAGMENTATION OF OUR SOCIETY. THAT IS WHY WE FORMED THE NATIONWIDE UNITY OF MUJAHIDIN COMMANDERS: TO BUILD COOPERATION AND TRY AND TRANSCEND PARTY POLITICS.

IN THE EARLY DAYS OF THE COMMANDERS' SHURA, AHMAD SHAH MASSOOD AND HIS PEOPLE TOOK THE SIDE OF THE PARTIES AND OPPOSED THE SHURA. WHEN PUSHED TO JOIN US, MASSOOD DEMANDED CONTROL OF THE SHURAS' POLITICAL DEPARTMENT. WE HAD NO POLITICAL DEPARTMENT

BECAUSE WE WANTED NO POLITICS: ONLY COMMITTEES FOR MILITARY COOPERATION, AND FOR PLANNING PEACE AND SECURITY. WE RELUCTANTLY AGREED TO MASSOOD'S REQUEST, AND THEY IMMEDIATELY STARTED HIRING, EXPANDING, AND BUILDING AN INTERNAL EMPIRE.

WE AIM WE ARGUED WITH MASSOOD AND HIS PEOPLE OVER OUR SUPPORT FOR THE UN PEACE PROGRAM WHICH AMERICAN AND OTHER DIPLOMATS RAISED SO STRONGLY. TO US, THE UN PLAN EXPANDED THE NATIONWIDE (SICI) BEYOND PARTIES AND EVEN COMMANDERS.

BOTHERED US THAT MASSOOD FORMED HIS SHURA OF THE NORTH AS A STRICTLY REGIONAL AND ETHNIC UNITY. WE FEARED IT WOULD BE ETHNICALLY AND GEOGRAPHICALLY DIVISIVE. WE MADE CERTAIN THAT A NATIONWIDE COMMANDER'S SHURA CONTAINED MORE HAZARAS AND MORE NORTHERN MINORITIES THAN PUKHTOONS BECAUSE WE WANTED EVERYBODY TO FEEL SECURE IN A NATIONAL ORGANIZATION. ALTHOUGH MASSOOD FINALLY AGREED TO SUPPORT THE UN PEACE PLAN, OUR CONCERNS PROVED REAL. HE BROKE PROMISES AND PURPOSELY DROPPED THE UN PEACE PLAN AFTER ALLYING HIMSELF WITH DOSTALIM, THE PASHTANIS, SAYYAF AND KHALIS.

WHEN WE CAPTURED SAROBI AND ALL THE POWER STATIONS, MY TROOPS TOOK UP POSITIONS AT THE EASTERN EDGE OF KABUL ABOUT SIX KILOMETERS FROM THE PRESIDENTIAL PALACE. MASSOOD AND HIS MEN WERE MUCH FURTHER AWAY IN BAGRAN, BUSY FIGHTING HEKMATIYAR'S FORCES. IT WOULD HAVE BEEN EASY FOR MY TROOPS TO MOVE INTO KABUL, BUT I WANTED COOPERATION AMONG THE MUJAHIDIN. I CONTACTED MASSOOD AND ASKED IF HE HAD A SECURITY PLAN FOR KABUL. HE HAD NONE. I PROMISED TO SEND AN ENVOY TO LOOK AT MY PLAN, AND IN THE MEANTIME PLEDGED NOT TO INVADE THE CITY UNTIL SECURITY COULD BE MAINTAINED. THUS I DID NOT BELIEVE REPORTS THAT HIS MEN WERE MOVING INTO KABUL THREE DAYS LATER. BY THE FOURTH DAY,

MASSOOD'S TROOPS WERE SPREAD OUT AND THE LOOTING BEGAN.

MY TROOPS WERE ALSO EAGER TO ENTER KABUL BUT I FORBODE THEM SO THAT THEY WOULD NOT CONTRIBUTE TO THE PROBLEM. AS YOU KNOW, MUCH OF THE CITY WAS DESTROYED AND MORE WAS LOOTED. MASSOOD'S OFFICIALS GAVE VOUCHERS TO SMALLER COMMANDERS, AUTHORIZING THEM TO SEIZE VEHICLES FROM ONE GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT AFTER ANOTHER. ONE OF THESE VOUCHERS IS ATTACHED TO THIS LETTER (POST COMMENT: VOUCHER NOT ATTACHED TO ORIGINAL LETTER). WITHIN A WEEK, MOST GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS HAD NO CARS AND THE COMMANDERS HAD SOLD THE CARS THEY CONFISCATED. LITERALLY, SEVERAL TONS OF GOLD AND MILLIONS OF DOLLARS IN FOREIGN CURRENCY WERE TAKEN FROM THE CENTRAL BANK. EMBASSIES WERE LOOTED AS WAS THE MONEY EXCHANGE AND PARTS OF THE MUSEUM. HOMES WERE ROBBED AND HOMEOWNERS WERE SLAIN. BECAUSE OF A LACK OF COOPERATION, THESE MEN WERE LOOTING INSTEAD OF MAINTAINING SECURITY.

WE HOPE THAT BEFORE MUJAHIDIN ENTERED THE CITY WE COULD SUSTAIN ELECTRICAL POWER, MAINTAIN SECURITY AND THEN BRING SUPPLIES OF FOOD INTO KABUL WITH THE MUJAHIDIN. I WAS WORKING CLOSELY WITH AN ENVOY BENOUM SEVAN, ATTEMPTING TO SHIP IN FOOD INTO KABUL TO DISTRIBUTE TO THE CITIZENS AND RESTORE CONFIDENCE. THAT PLAN WAS THWARTED AS FIGHTING BROKE OUT BETWEEN HEKMATIYAR'S AND MASSOOD'S TROOPS. SHORTLY THEREAFTER MASSOOD'S ORDERS (NOT PROFESSOR MOJADIDI'S) BANNED WOMEN FROM THE TELEVISION AND ISSUED EDICTS ON A FUNDAMENTALIST DRESS CODE AND HIRING PRACTICES.

TODAY IN KABUL, INFLATION RUNS RAMPANT. JUST PRIOR TO THE SHURA MEETING THAT ELECTED PROFESSOR RABBANI, A SHIPMENT OF NEWLY PRINTED BANKNOTES WAS FLOWN FROM THE FORMER SOVIET UNION

TO KABUL AND TAKEN STRAIGHT TO THE PRESIDENTIAL PALACE, BYPASSING THE CENTRAL BANK. THAT MONEY, BILLIONS OF AFGHANIS WORTH MORE THAN TEN MILLION DOLLARS, WENT TO BUY VOTES, AS THE PRINTING PRESSES CRANK OUT AFGHANIS, PEOPLES' MEADRE SAVINGS ARE DEPLETED. FOR SEVERAL MONTHS, GOVERNMENT WORKERS HAVE RECEIVED NO SALARIES: AS AVAILABLE FUNDS WERE USED BY THE GOVERNMENT TO BUY VOTES. THROUGHOUT THE PAST TWO MONTHS, CROWDS OF GOVERNMENT WORKERS AND OTHERS GATHER EVERY SEVERAL DAYS, HOPING TO WITHDRAW SAVINGS FROM THE BANK. THEY ARE DRIVEN AWAY BY TROOPS AND TAXIS BECAUSE NO MONEY REMAINS IN THE

BANKS, NOT EVEN PERSONAL SAVINGS, AND NO NEW MONEY ARRIVED

TODAY MASSOOD, ONCE PRAISED AS THE CHAMPION OF ETHNIC MINORITIES, IS ALLIED WITH SAYYAF'S FUNDAMENTALISTS AGAINST THE SHIA MINORITIES. YET AVERAGE AFGHANS ARE COMING TO REALIZE THAT WHEN RABBANI AND MASSOOD PREACHED MINORITY RIGHTS, WHEN HEKMATIYAR PREACHED MAJORITY RIGHTS, WHEN SAYYAF AND KHALIS WARNED AGAINST THE SHIA AND MOJADIDI ARGUED FOR THE SHIA -- IT WAS NOTHING MORE THAN SELF-SERVING RHETORIC.

THIS GOVERNMENT IS NOT BROAD-BASED. IT USES MEN AND MATERIAL TO EXPAND ITS TERRITORY WHILE MAKING NO ATTEMPT TO BRING LAW AND ORDER TO THE PLACES IT ALREADY SUPPOSEDLY CONTROLS. AND IT CAN HARDLY BE DEMOCRATIC WHEN, AT THE SHURA, RABBANI STOOD AS THE SOLE CANDIDATE AND THE GOVERNMENT BRANDISHED MACHINE GUNS INSIDE THE SHURA TO SILENCE DELEGATES WHO TRIED TO COMPLAIN. MOREOVER, WHILE THE GOVERNMENT IS NOT BROAD-BASED, IT WILL NOT BECOME SO BY FORMING AN ALLIANCE WITH HEKMATIYAR OR ANY OTHER POLITICAL FACTION PRIMARILY INTERESTED IN SHORT-TERM POWER AND LOOT. AS IN THE DAYS OF THE MISSEGGOTTEN RESISTANCE PARTIES, ALLIANCES FORM AND BREAK UP AGAIN, RETAINING POWER FOR THE

LEADERS AND IGNORING BASIC RIGHTS OF SELF-DETERMINATION. FOREIGN BACKERS SUPPORT THEIR FAVORITE FACTIONS, AND EACH FACTION NEEDS ITS ENEMY BECAUSE NOTHING BUT AN ENEMY JUSTIFIES ITS EXISTENCE.

DO NOT GET ME WRONG: I DO NOT OBJECT TO MASSOOD AND JAMIAI AS THE ONLY PEOPLE CREATING PROBLEMS, BUT THEY CHOSE TO FORN THIS GOVERNMENT AND ARE THUS IN POSITIONS OF RESPONSIBILITY.

TODAY THERE IS LITTLE CONTACT BETWEEN PROVINCIAL CAPITOLS AND KABUL. EVEN LITTLE BETWEEN DISTRICTS AND PROVINCIAL CAPITOLS. ON ITS CURRENT PATH, AFGHANISTAN RUNS THE RISK OF BECOMING FIFTY OR MORE SEPARATE KINGDOMS. FOREIGN EXTREMISTS HAVE BEGUN TO MOVE IN: BUYING HOUSES AND WEAPONS. AFGHANISTAN MAY BECOME UNIQUE IN BEING BOTH A TRAINING GROUND AND MUNITIONS DUMP FOR FOREIGN TERRORISTS AND AT THE SAME TIME THE WORLD'S LARGEST POPPY FIELD.

Lucy,
This letter was converted to a cable by the consulate in Peshawar; the consulate, I would surmise, received the letter from Abdul. The consulate cabled it to the State Department. The South Asia Bureau sent this ^{over in the East Bureau} copy to me about January, 82. As noted in my letter, I was in the East Asia Bureau. I assume the consulate appended

4/14/04

SOME US OFFICIALS HAVE ASKED JOURNALISTS I KNOW TO DOWNPLAY THE PROBLEMS OF THIS GOVERNMENT. IT IS NOT AN ISSUE TO HIDE. AFGHANISTAN'S POTENTIAL FOR POVERTY, DRUG PRODUCTION AND TERRORISM IS A PROBLEM NOW. BUT IF IGNORED IT IS A CERTAIN RECIPE FOR EMBARRASSING REGIONAL DISASTER. WE HAVE A PROVERB ABOUT CAPPING THE CHIMNEY ON A STOVE: NOBODY SEES THE SMOKE OR THE FIRE, BUT IT BURNS BELOW AND EVENTUALLY EXPLODES.

SIMILARLY, I DO NOT KNOW IF MASSOOD'S BEHAVIOR COMES AS A SURPRISE TO DIPLOMATS WHO THOUGHT HIM A RESPONSIBLE MODERATE, BUT THERE HAD LONG BEEN A DOUBLE STANDARD. WHEN, FOR EXAMPLE, PIR CAILANI WENT TO MEET NAJIB, AMERICAN DIPLOMATS DENOUNCED HIM SOUNDLY AND REFUSED TO SEE HIM. YET FOR YEARS MASSOOD'S

PEOPLE HELD TALKS WITH NAJIB AND THE SOVIETS AND THEIR DISCUSSIONS WERE TERMED GOOD STRATEGY BY THE SAME DIPLOMATS. THE FACT REMAINS THAT THE FOREIGN SUPPORTERS OF THE MUJAHIDIN, IN CHOOSING WHOM TO GIVE WEAPONS AND SUPPORT, CREATED SEVERAL MONSTERS. IT WOULD BE UNFAIR AND PERHAPS DISREPUTABLE OF THOSE FOREIGN SUPPORTERS TO WALK AWAY AND LEAVE ORDINARY AFGHANS TO COPE WITH THESE HEAVILY ARMED OPPONENTS OF SELF-DETERMINATION.

TODAY AFGHANISTAN'S POLITICIANS FOSTER MUTUAL HATRED TO STAY IN POWER. YET THE COUNTRY'S PROBLEMS ARE NOT ABOUT SHIAS AND SUNNIS, TAJIKS AND PUKHTOONS. THEY ARE ABOUT FOOD, SECURITY, FUEL, EDUCATION AND HEALTH; THINGS DAMAGED BY THE WAR AND STILL BEING STOLEN OR DENIED BY A SMALL CADRE OF POLITICIANS. I STILL BELIEVE THAT THE UN PEACE PLAN MAY WORK WITH MINOR ALTERATIONS, FOR THE UN PROGRAM FOCUSES ITS ATTENTION ON THE LASTING AND TRADITIONAL CENTERS OF POWER: THE TRIBES AND

FAMILIES, THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS, THE INTELLECTUALS, AND THE COMMANDERS. AS YOU CAN SEE FROM AN ATTACHED COPY OF AN OLDER LETTER I SENT YOU, MY PREDICTIONS WERE UNHAPPILY ACCURATE (POST COMMENT: COPY OF EARLIER LETTER BEING FORWARDED BY POUCH). IT WAS DISHEARTENING TO VISIT KABUL AND WATCH PEOPLE SHOOTING ONE ANOTHER LIKE WILD DOGS. IT SEEMED CLEAR THAT THOSE CURRENTLY GRASPING FOR POWER ARE WILLING TO DO ANYTHING FOR THEMSELVES. WE WERE WILLING TO ACCEPT THIS GOVERNMENT BUT THEY REFUSED TO DO A GOVERNMENT'S JOB AND PROVIDE PUBLIC SERVICE. MOREOVER THEY APPEAR TO FEEL THEY CAN ONLY TRUST THEMSELVES AND SEEM UNWILLING TO SHARE AUTHORITY WITH OTHERS. I FINALLY REFUSED OFFERS TO WORK WITH THE SO CALLED GOVERNMENT BECAUSE, WHILE I WILL DO ANYTHING POSITIVE, I WILL NOT BECOME PART OF THE PROBLEM.

SPEAKING POSITIVELY THEN, THE FIRST STEP TOWARD POLITICAL RECONSTRUCTION IS BUILDING PUBLIC TRUST, AND THE KNOWLEDGE THAT THE CURRENT AFGHAN WAR IS NOT AN ETHNIC WAR, BUT RATHER A WAR OF POLITICIANS AND OPPORTUNISTS WHO ARE BLAMING THE PEOPLE FOR PROBLEMS THE PEOPLE NEVER MADE. SEVERAL MILLION AFGHANS WORKED TOGETHER IN EXILE, PEACEFULLY IGNORING SECT OR ETHNICITY. MANY FORMED BUSINESS PARTNERSHIPS, OTHERS INTER-MARRIED. THE LOGICAL OUTCOME SHOULD BE INCREASED UNDERSTANDING, NOT HOSTILITY.

SLOWLY SOME OF US, FROM MANY GROUPS AND AREAS, ARE ESTABLISHING CONTACTS AND DIALOGUE, FINDING WE AGREE ON MOST OF THESE POINTS. AVERAGE AFGHANS ARE UNDER TERRIFIC PRESSURE WITH FAMILY AND SECURITY CONCERNS; WITH WORRIES ABOUT DRUGS AND ABOUT THE UNFAMILIAR FOREIGN EXTREMISTS COMING IN INCREASING NUMBERS TO CITIES AND TOWNS. SLOWLY, THE WORD SPREADS THAT AFGHANS CANNOT HAVE A STRONG AFGHANISTAN WITHOUT EACH OTHER, AND THE AVERAGE MAN OR WOMAN IS NOT PART OF THE PROBLEM.

A NUMBER OF US ARE THUS TRYING TO DO SOMETHING, AND WHILE WE HAVE NO COMPLETE PLAN YET THERE IS CAUSE FOR OPTIMISM IN AN EMERGING CONSENSUS. ONE ACTIVITY YOU MIGHT CONSIDER IS MEETING A WIDE VARIETY OF AFGHANS INSIDE AND OUTSIDE AFGHANISTAN, ALSO IN CITIES APART FROM KABUL AND AWAY FROM GOVERNMENT AS SUCH. IT WOULD GIVE YOU FRESH PERSPECTIVES AND ALLOW YOU TO MAKE UP YOUR MIND BETTER THAN ANY LETTER. REGARDLESS, YOU ARE SOMEONE WHO CARES DEEPLY ABOUT OUR COUNTRY, AND YOU'VE PROVED YOUR SINCERITY MANY TIMES OVER MANY YEARS. WE WOULD APPRECIATE ANY IDEAS OR SUGGESTIONS THAT YOU WISH TO SHARE.

SINCERELY YOURS, ABDUL HAQ.

ENDNOTES

- 1 There were three non fighting groups of Afghan exiles by 2000. The Rome group comprised the supporters of the ex King, Zahir Shah; the Bonn group was a splinter of the Rome group and the Cyprus group was made up of mostly Hazara and Pashtun Afghans who were against the re-instatement of the ex King and backed by Iran. Karzai was a member of the Rome Group (also known as the 'Rome Process').
- 2 For example in his book *Descent into Chaos*, (2008) Rashid says that – unlike his peers he argued in favour of an external military intervention in Afghanistan, seeing this as the 'only' way to 'save' the Afghan people from the Taliban and prevent the spread of al Qaeda ideology; he also says that he was 'intimately involved' with events - both 'as a reporter' but also as 'an adviser' and member of a what sounds to be a tight knit team of 'outside experts' which included Barnett Rubin (and a handful of other writers) and which had regular brainstorming sessions with UN officials (both pre and post 9/11) and which promoted their ideas to international organizations and western governments. Eg on p 55 Rashid discusses an initiative promoted by the then head of the UN Special Mission to Afghanistan, Francesc Vendrell. This was a concept paper produced in Spring 2001. Rashid notes: "*The paper called for the rearming of the Northern Alliance in order to deny the Taliban total victory. Along with Vendrell's initiative, the experts group began to promote a new thesis. Led by Barnett Rubin, we wrote a joint paper that was circulated widely ...*". See pages XL1, XL11, 55, 405. And footnote 2 in Chapter Ten in '*Descent into Chaos*'. He also adds (p54) that this group 'brainstormed with Brahimi and other UN official several times a year' at the UN in New York but also in Berlin and Oslo. He adds 'all of us in the group had been good friends for a long time', all admired one another's work and had enormous respect for Brahimi. In his acknowledgements (p405) he says that he and Rubin had become so close that he is not able to say whether the ideas in his book came first from Rubin or from himself. He also owes a great deal to Lakhdar Brahimi and Francesc Vendrell, who, as he says were, 'the architects' of the Bonn agreement (p 405).
- 3 See page 103 of Rashid's book, *Descent into Chaos*, (2008) where he explains that Barnett Rubin, who attended the Bonn Conference in November 2001, was given diplomatic status by the UN.
- 4 The other main branch of the Pashtun is the Durrani, associated with the former King and with Hamid Karzai.
- 5 As documented in, for example; Patricia Gossman, *Casting Shadows: War Crimes and Crimes against Humanity: 1978-2001*, Afghan Justice Project, 2005. Also reported variously by Human Rights Watch and by Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission in Kabul, *A Call for Justice: A National Consultation on past Human Rights Violations in Afghanistan*, Kabul, 2005.
- 6 For a period of eighteen months until the first presidential elections.
- 7 Dovkants, K. *The Evening Standard* 5 October, 2001

ENDNOTES

- 8 Gordon, M. and Weiner, T. 'A Nation Challenged: The Mission: A frantic call for US help that came too late'. *The New York Times*, 27 October 2001.
- 9 *ibid*
- 10 *Private Eye*, Issue 1040, 2 November 2001
- 11 Whitney Azoy, who also wrote an important work on Afghan Buzkashi.
- 12 W. Azoy, *The Bangor Daily News*, November 2001.
- 13 *ibid*
- 14 After the crucial battle of Taloqan in October 2000.
- 15 French MOD report.
- 16 Estimated at \$236 billion so far by Eric Margolis in the *Toronto Sun*, 11 October 2009.
- 17 Cowell, 'US General Says'
- 18 From an unclassified memo quoted by Seth Jones, *Foreign Affairs*, May–June 2010 issue
- 19 D. Davis MP, *The Times*, July 2009.
- 20 on this point I differ with Ahmed Rashid, who argues in *Descent into Chaos*, "At the time of the invasion I broke with many of my colleagues by arguing that the war in Afghanistan was a just war and not an imperialist intervention, because only external intervention could save the Afghan people from the Taliban and al Qaeda and prevent the spread of al Qaeda ideology". PP XLIII
- 21 Public talk held on 26 May 2010 at the Geneva Centre for Security Policy.
- 22 Coll, Steve, *Ghost Wars*; pp 445
- 23 Rashid, Ahmed, *Descent into Chaos*, pp 87 'Haq's aim was to avoid the bloodshed that was sure to follow an American invasion'. Haq's apparent 'objective' for his mission as quoted to Rashid differs from what he tells other interlocutors and journalists as discussed in my book. Eg that it was important to put in place a 'structure' that could go on without him.
- 24 Barfield, Thomas. *Afghanistan; a Cultural and Political History*. pp288 and Rashid. A. *Descent into Chaos*; pp. 87
- 25 Liu, M, *Newsweek*, 29 October 2001.
- 26 Conversation between Abdul Haq and Joe Ritchie (email from James Ritchie to author).
- 27 Email to author from Ken Guest, April 2009.
- 28 *ibid*
- 29 He and Massoud had made a pact to work together at Kulyab in July 2001, cited by former US Ambassador to the Mujahideen, Peter Tomsen (email to author, 2009) and by James Ritchie (telephone conversation, July 2009) both of whom were present. James Ritchie has video footage of the meeting.
- 30 W. Azoy, *The Bangor Daily News*, November 2001.
- 31 phone conversation between Peter Jouvenal and author, June 2009
- 32 A. Rashid, 'In Afghanistan, Let's Keep It Simple', *The Washington Post*, 6 September 2009.
- 33 Quoted by G. Arney, *Afghanistan*, Mandarin paperbacks, 1990, p.7
- 34 W. Azoy, *The Bangor Daily News*, November 2001
- 35 The projects were overseen by UNCHS but eventually became known as the National Solidarity Programme (NSP) when taken over by the IBRD in 2002.
- 36 Many of these relate to the reasons why the West should support Haq, and detail his 'peace plan', including its costings and its merits vis-a-vis the alternatives for stabilising Afghanistan and neutralising the Taliban.

- 37 Letter from Abdul Haq to Saudi Ambassador in Islamabad, 1991.
- 38 From a population of around 30 million.
- 39 In line with the military and political policy adopted by the international community in Afghanistan, the Under Secretary General to the UN, Mr Lakhdar Brahimi had insisted that a 'light footprint' would be the best way for the UN to operate here. As such, we were only twenty- seven international election monitors led by an Afghan Loya Jirga Commission.
- 40 In fact many Pashtun leaders were also excluded. I expand upon this later in the book.
- 41 Prior to their election, each Loya Jirga candidate was required to read an *afadavit* stating that they had not been involved in human rights abuses.
- 42 Zulmay Khalilzad, an Afghan by birth, was at this stage the USA's Special Envoy to Afghanistan.
- 43 Post-Loya Jirga discussion convened by The Asia Foundation at the Kabul Intercontinental hotel, July 2002.
- 44 'Amniyat' is the dari translation of 'security'. The other name for the Intelligence Police is National Security Directorate (NSD).
- 45 KHAD was the 'Khadimat-e-Atal'at-e-Dowlati', the state intelligence service set up by the Soviets following their 1979 invasion and built on the Kremlin model, which used the tools of Stalin's terror: secret denunciations, anonymous spies and confessions extracted by torture. It grew to 25,000 personnel by 1989.
- 46 *First In* by ex-CIA operative Gary Schroen recounts how General Arif and Fahim were given sackloads of cash dollars when the CIA entered the Panjshir valley in September 2001.
- 47 Another colleague had been fired when she had queried Brahimi as to which of the three warlords in Mazar-i-sharif, was the 'government' that the UN was supposed to support.
- 48 In the post-September 11 intervention in Afghanistan, the international community failed to make aid receipts conditional upon the incorporation of womens' rights, or human rights or indeed the 'output' of services the money was meant to be funding.
- 49 The mujahideen had rounded on Dr. Sima Samar at the Loya Jirga after she'd been elected as one of three Deputy Chairs. Partly this was because all three Deputy Chairs had been elected fairly by the delegates. As such, all three were from progressive, pro-democracy parties.
- 50 See Footnote 2.
- 51 Y. Fouda and N. Fielding, *Masterminds of Terror; the truth behind the most devastating terrorist attack the world has ever seen*, Mainstream, 2003.
- 52 The terror group in the Philippines allied to al Qaeda and responsible for many atrocities.
- 53 Although not in the Taliban leadership, a UN colleague described Mohseni as 'a well known extremist/fundamentalist from Kandahar'. He was also a subsequent force behind the infamous Shia female status law in 2009.
- 54 Eurasia.net
- 55 Reuters, 17 June 2002.
- 56 The Interior Ministry would be run by a Pashtun named Taj Mohammad Wardak, a weak 81-year old US-based exile, recently married to the teenage daughter of Dr Abdullah, a Panjshiri cabinet member. His appointment was symbolic, he would have no control over a ministry full of Panjshiris. Fahim remained Defence

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- Minister and also Vice President. Dr Abdullah remained Foreign Minister. Dostum was made a Vice President. Sima Samar, the progressive and lively Women's Minister was replaced, a surprise to many. The Pashtun community, who despite comprising somewhere between forty to sixty percent of the population, had effectively been cut out of government from the moment the Northern Alliance took Kabul. The Cabinet list decided by Karzai – the warlords, the UN and US at the ELJ – essentially entrenched the Northern Alliance hold on power.
- 57 Near Taimanee, in late May 2001.
- 58 K. Dovkants (Islamabad), *Evening Standard*, 5 October 2001
- 59 *ibid*
- 60 *ibid*
- 61 Najibullah was the last Afghan Communist President of Afghanistan. He was removed in 1992 when the mujahideen entered Kabul. For four years he took shelter in a UN compound, until he was killed by the Taliban, who castrated him and suspended his and his brothers bodies from a tank when they took Kabul in 1996.
- 62 The Afghan Red Cross is known as the Red Crescent, as in other Muslim countries.
- 63 One had four daughters and her husband, disappointed his wife had given him no sons, simply left for Pakistan. Another's husband, depressed by continual war, became a heroin addict. Others, having lost men to the ongoing war and disallowed from working during the Taliban had no option but prostitution.
- 64 As a *Sheikh ul Hadis*, he is deemed to know thousands of verses of the Holy Qaran by heart. Such credentials are more akin to a religious man than to they type of modernising legal expert able to able to reform Afghanistan's decimated judiciary to bring it in line with modern values. Dr Shinwari's training was solely in Shariat law and not Western jurisprudence. This would not have been adequate for a Chief Justice under the King's 1964 Afghan Constitution.
- 65 During August 2002.
- 66 Under the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court.
- 67 They began issuing edicts to ban women from singing on television and to ban the showing of the weekly Bollywood film on Kabul TV, much to the annoyance of most Afghans.
- 68 Ismael Khan is a member of the Northern Alliance.
- 69 Meeting with RAWA representative, Kabul October 2002.
- 70 Northern Alliance faction based in the Panjshir.
- 71 James Ritchie, in discussing this with the author in October 2009 said of Rahman's killing, 'it was an unbelievable display of brazen lawlessness'. A senior officer and Fahim ally in the Interior Ministry was reputed to be behind this most public act of violence.
- 72 The Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission was established as one of four commissions (the others being a Constitutional Commission and an Electoral Commission and a Loya Jirga Commission) as part of the Bonn Agreement.
- 73 Author interview in Kabul, 5 September 2002.
- 74 Following threats to her by the mujahideen after an article published in Dr Rabanni's newspaper *Payam-e-Mujahid*.
- 75 Dr Rabanni's newspaper, *Payam-e-Mujahid*, which represents the viewpoint of the Shura-e-Nazar, accused Sima Samar of blasphemy on the basis that she had said, during an interview with a Canadian magazine, apparently said that Shariat law

could be used in a modified format in some instances.

- 76 Author interview with Dr Kasim Fasili, concerning both Judicial and Constitutional Commissions, 29 August 2002.
- 77 *ibid*
- 78 In the context of security sector reform, different G8 nations took on different roles. Hence the Germans trained the Afghan Police, the US and UK the Afghan National Army, the British covered drugs policy and the Italians did reform of the Justice Sector
- 79 International Crisis Group.
- 80 Author interview in Kabul, 1 September 2002.
- 81 For the 32 Governors.
- 82 Gulbuddin Hikmatyar was an Islamicist warlord who the Americans now seemed intent on finding dead or alive, despite the fact that the bulk of US dollars directed at funding the Afghan anti-Soviet war during the 1980s had been directed to him, despite the warnings of, amongst others, Abdul Haq. Earlier that spring, the USA had sent a Hellfire missile into a convoy of vehicles thought to be carrying Hikmatyar in the Kunar Valley, but the assassination attempt had failed. Several Afghans had died but Gulbuddin had not been among them.
- 83 Younus Qanooni was subsequently made Minister of Education.
- 84 Author interview, September 2002
- 85 Despite this, Wazir Akbar Khan is still considered Kabul's 'embassy' district and, inhabited mainly by foreign NGOs and US military, has rents which at around \$10,000 to 15,000 USD per month, would certainly match those of the more splendid suburbs of Washington DC.
- 86 From Jalalabad onto the Pakistan border at Torkham, Haji Qadir's picture adorned many checkpoints along the way.
- 87 The Eastern Shura comprised representatives of the four eastern provinces of Nangahar, Nuristan, Laghman and Kunar.
- 88 Peter Hopkirk, *The Great Game*, Oxford University Press, 1990.
- 89 One of those killed had been an Italian woman. The bandits had tried to force her to come with them, alone behind a rock. She had refused and maybe at this stage there had been a panic followed by the deaths of all. It's likely the bandits escaped up the adjoining side-valley.
- 90 N. H. Dupree, *A Historical Guide to Afghanistan*, Afghan Air Authority, 1977.
- 91 Dupree, now in her eighties and living in Peshawar, and her American archeologist husband Louis, were Kabul's most well known international couple in the 1970s. She wrote several books on Afghanistan and he documented the treasures of the Kabul Museum, before it's looting by mujahideen factions after the USSR's 1989 withdrawal. Reams of Dupree's guidebooks were printed in 1977 when Afghanistan was still a favoured tourist destination. Two years later, the Russian invasion, which began the twenty-three year war, ensured that Dupree's books remain the uncontested guide of Afghanistan. Piles of her unread blue hardbacks were put away. They reappeared in January 2002, somewhat damp after years of storage away from the Taliban's edicts in some deep, dank cellar. Now they were being sold by small boys to journalists, aid workers and ISAF soldiers on Kabul's Chicken street, named after the birds once traded here.
- 92 Acquired during years as a refugee in Germany, where he had run a hotel during the 1980s when his brothers were fighting the jihad in Afghanistan.

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- 93 'Remnants of an Army' by Lady Butler, Tate Gallery, London
- 94 The event was documented by Sir John Kaye in his *History of the War in Afghanistan*. (Bentley, 1857):
*A sentry on the ramparts looking towards the Cabul road,
Saw a solitary white-faced horseman struggling towards the fort.
The word was passed; the tidings spread. Presently the ramparts
Were lined with officers looking out with throbbing hearts,
Through unsteady telescopes, or with straining eyes tracing the
Road. Slowly and painfully, as though horse and rider were in an
Extremity of mortal weakness, the solitary mounted man came
Reeling, tottering on. They saw that he was an Englishman. On
A wretched weary pony, clinging, as one sick or wounded, to its
Neck, he sat, or rather leant forward; and there were those who,
as they watched his progress, thought he would never reach,
unaided, the walls of Jellalabad. A shudder ran through the garrison.
That solitary horseman looked like the messenger of death.....The messenger was Dr
Brydon, and he now reported his belief that he was the sole survivor of an army of some
sixteen thousand men.*
- 95 In Islamic tradition, prayers are said each Friday for five weeks after the death
- 96 Malalai had compared their behaviour to women 'playing with bracelets in their homes', instead of fighting to oust the foreign presence
- 97 APC means Armoured Personnel Carrier
- 98 R. Kaplan, *Soldiers of God*, Vintage, 2001.
- 99 *ibid*
- 100 Even Afghan refugees (there were two million in camps around Peshawar) had to join one of the six 'parties' in order to be eligible for aid handouts.
- 101 Hizb-e-Khalis (as it became known) was distinct from that of Hikmatyar, Hizb-e-Islami. The two had split in 1979 when Khalis wanted to engage in more active combat against the regime.
- 102 Mullah Khalis was one of the oldest of the seven 'party' leaders, and had been educated at a private madrassah in the NWFP of British India prior to the establishment of a nationwide Afghan education system. Later, he taught in the Friday mosque of the Jabbarkhel (i.e. the Arsala family clan).
- 103 for descriptions of accompanying Jalaluddin Haqqani's Hizb-i-Islami front during the early 1980s, Jere Van Dyk's 'In Afghanistan; an American Odyssey' is a superb account.
- 104 Another leading commander of the party was Jalaluddin Haqqani, who became more radicalised and joined the Taliban. Haqqani is thought to have invited bin Laden to return to Afghanistan in 1996, upon his expulsion from Sudan. Qadir, as Governor of Jalalabad, greeted him upon his arrival.
- 105 B Ruben, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*, Yale, 1990.
- 106 Generally the kuchi have found their traditional livelihoods eroded and so begun to settle on common pasture land. This plus the environmental pressures associated with a growing population and returnees coming from Pakistan after the war, has led to a proliferation of land and property conflicts throughout Afghanistan since 2001. The question is who resolves such conflicts: government, local tribal leaders or, increasingly, Taliban courts?
- 107 Qadir and Afridi had struck up a friendship over an incident involving Zardat, Hikmatyar's notorious highwayman commander up at Sarobi. Afridi had bought

a fleet of six Pajero jeeps. Zardat's men impounded them at Sarobi and so Afridi turned to Qadir, then Governor of Jalalabad for help. After Qadir's intervention the cars were returned and a friendship was formed between the two men.

- 108 An Afghan who Qadir made intelligence chief in Jalalabad when he returned as Governor.
- 109 Torkham is the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan, at the Khyber Pass.
- 110 These were Qadir's bases for the Eastern Zone. They were not held by the Taliban but the Northern Alliance (under the auspices of Qadir). Also some bases in Laghman Province.
- 111 Dacca lies at the edge of the foothills on the Afghan side of the Khyber Pass. During much of the nineteenth century the British army occupied it as a forward base between the then India and Jalalabad.
- 112 A small valley between Jalalabad and the Kunar valley.
- 113 The MI6-backed warlord.
- 114 Qadir had also been Governor until 1996, when the Taliban had driven him out.
- 115 President Najibullah was the last Afghan Communist President of Afghanistan
- 116 Events subsequent to Massoud's move into Kabul are detailed in a letter Haq wrote to Peter Tomsen, the USA's former Ambassador to the Mujahiddeen (see Appendix V)
- 117 Six months after he made this comment, Hikmatyar joined forces with resurgent Taliban and Pakistani fundamentalists, and they called themselves 'Sword of Islam'.
- 118 Ambassador Yusuf M. Motabbakani of Saudi Arabia, based in Islamabad.
- 119 Kabul had not yet fallen to the mujahideen. It fell in 1991 and President Najibullah took sanctuary in the UN compound as the mujahideen factions began the fight for control of the city that was to last until 1996 when the Taliban came.
- 120 To Peter Tomsen, the USA's former envoy to the Mujahiddeen in Peshawar during the jihad
- 121 From the time of the 1973 coup which deposed King Zahir Shah, until the 1979 Soviet Invasion, Soviet-inspired reforms were introduced under several regimes.
- 122 R. Kaplan, *Soldiers of God*, Vintage, 1994.
- 123 Shaheed means Martyrdom. Haq is deemed Shaheed because he sacrificed himself for the cause of his country.
- 124 The Moghul Palace of King Akbar in India.
- 125 *Abdul Haq, Portrait of a Mujahid*, cultural committee of Kabul Mujahiddin Office, Peshawar.
- 126 Yet the circumstances leading to the fragmentation of Afghanistan's peace had their roots in previous decades.
- The background to General Daoud's 1973 coup d'etat lay in the ascendancy of the Durrani dynasty. This part of the Pashtun tribe, from which came Afghanistan's Kings, had been ascendent over state and society since the end of the eighteenth century, but it had been weakening since King Zahir Shah's (1933-1973) father, Nader Shah came to power. Instead of making democratic reforms the two Kings continued to rely on Pashtun tribal and landed power.
- By the late 1960s, several movements were emerging among the student population in Kabul. In parallel to the development of nationalist and communist parties, the Islamic movement had begun to emerge in the Sharia faculty of Kabul University. The Islamic opposition which fled to Pakistan at the time of Daoud's coup later took the shape of the Jamiat-i Islami, headed by Burhanuddin Rabbani,

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- the Ittihad-i Islami, headed by Abd al-Rabb al-Rasul Sayyaf and the Hizb-i Islami, headed by Gullbuddin Hikmatyar. From Pakistan, they were able to launch an insurgency against Daoud's regime in Kabul. Interestingly, Peter Marsden gives some insight into how even then, the early resistance movement was ethnically divided. In his book *Taliban* he says the movement was initially comprised of Islamicist parties from the North, Uzbeks and Tajiks who had been forced to flee the Central Asian states at the time of the Bolshevik Revolution. The Pashtuns only joined en masse after the invasion of the Soviet Union. Marsden concludes that 'the early resistance was therefore, to a degree, a rising up of the element within Afghan society that had been marginalized by the ruling Pashtun establishment, with its tribal foundations'.
- 127 Although it was only later that Pashtuns joined the cause of the Islamicist parties, most having supported the Daoud friendly wing of the PDPA.
- 128 One effect of the Soviet invasion was to end the dominance over state and society enjoyed by the Durrani branch of the Pashtun tribe since the late eighteenth century. The resistance that followed the Soviet invasion of 1979 as well as the subsequent civil war allowed non-Pashtun ethnic groups to assert political and economic autonomy both from the state and from Pashtun dominance. From 1992 to 1996, the mainly Tajik Jamiat-i Islami party under President Burhanuddin Rabbani controlled the central government
- 129 The PDPA had two wings, Khalq and Parcham. Khalq was urban-based and Parcham more rural-based.
- 130 Haqqani went over to the Taliban early on and has remained with them.
- 131 Author conversations with Afghans in Jalalabad 2002-5
- 132 according to Antonio Giustozzi's paper 'Negotiating with the Taliban; issues and Prospects' a Century Foundation Report (2010), unlike other Taliban fronts – such as the Pakistani Taliban – the Haqqani's have not pitted themselves against the Pakistani government or army but have remained focused on anti government activities within Afghanistan (in line with Pakistani strategic interests).
- 133 R. Kaplan, *Soldiers of God*, Vintage, 1994
- 134 With his brothers and their mujahiddin fighters, Haq and his men began to shape the caves at Tora Bora as a retreat from which to fight the Soviets. Later on, in the early 1990s, Osama bin Laden would base himself here, setting up training camps for extremists. It was from here that he slipped the noose of coalition forces in December 2001, most likely escaping across the border and into Pakistan.
- 135 which documents the covert operation of the CIA in Afghanistan during the 1980s
- 136 R. Kaplan, *Soldiers of God*, Vintage, 1994.
- 137 ibid
- 138 ibid
- 139 Even so, Haq realised the communist regime was not threatened by rural insurgencies and believed the fight must be taken to Kabul to hit the regime at its centre. He asked Khalis for arms and supplies but the old man refused, saying it was too dangerous and he too young and emotional. But Haq, determined, went anyway, transporting guns ahead, in the taxi of a friend. The guns never made it as the driver was caught and killed by the regime. So with three friends, Haq set out for Kabul by foot, journeying through the mountains to reach Tezin, on the city outskirts. They paused in the foothills to look at the city lights and once within the city contacted old friends and began building a network, being provided with

food, shelter and information about government activities.

From here Haq moved to Paghman, a valley to the North West of Kabul; an ideal base close to the city and Government installations and close to the refuge of the mountains. Haq's men cleared the area of agents suspected of working for government.

In Peshawar, the mujahideen headquarters continued to refuse Haq the arms and money needed to conduct operations. Finally though, during a trip to Peshawar to receive medical treatment and visit his family, Khalis recognised his resistance activities and agreed to support him.

Among his fighters, Haq enforced the principle that weapons belonged to the front, not to individual fighters. He even imprisoned some mujahideen for selling arms. Inside Kabul, he built a powerful guerrilla movement and an underground network, creating different cells of covert members under his command. The cells began with relatives and friends and people known to be anti-regime and grew to include trusted acquaintances. The network began to infiltrate the bureaucracy, the army and the Defence Ministry.

Kabul radio and TV, controlled by the communist regime, aimed to make Haq and the Kabul mujahideen a target of their propaganda. But Haq's network was so successful that the regime's frustration with it began to backfire. One day in 1988 Haq's Kabul front distributed resistance leaflets via a cell in the Defence Ministry. A leaflet was on each desk when personnel reported for work in the morning. But the Defence Minister was so angry that he chose three trusted officers to investigate. The officers were members of Haq's cell. So they identified several hardline Communists to the Defence officials and the men were severely punished. In this way, Haq's cells successfully formented problems between Khalq and Parcham, the two opposing factions of the Communist People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA). They also distributed fake Red Star Soviet newspapers to the army, encouraging defection and disobedience.

Haq's tactical guerrilla fighting units around Kabul city operated in their own areas but united when necessary. From only four men Haq's command grew to over 5000, with units completely surrounding the city. In the longer term, Haq's military success was due more to foresight and the loyalty of his men than to a good supply of weapons.

140 P. Mishra, *What we think of America*, Granta 77, Spring 2002.

141 *ibid*

142 G. Crile, *Charlie Wilson's War: the extraordinary story of the largest covert operation in history*, Atlantic, 2003

143 Such was the US desire to defeat communism that the CIA even countenanced Pakistan's broader objective: to bring the borders of the Islamic world north of the Amu Darya (the river which forms Afghanistan's northern border with Russia). In an interview with the ISI chief, Pankaj Mishra says, 'Hamid Gul claimed his paper (on this strategy) went on to be read by high-placed officials in the CIA'. In fact, William Casey wanted the ISI to involve the Muslims of the Soviet Union in the jihad; he wasn't satisfied with the ISI-arranged smuggling of thousands of Qarans into what is now Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, or with the distribution of heroin among Soviet troops. An officer of the ISI I spoke to said the ISI received plenty of unofficial encouragement from Casey to attempt more damaging stuff, but nothing that could be traced back to the CIA or the government of the United States'.

ENDNOTES

- 144 A. Borovik, *The Hidden War: A Russian Journalist's Account of the War in Afghanistan*, 1990.
- 145 *ibid*
- 146 Pankaj Mishra, 2002.
- 147 A British journalist who was present, Jon Swain, witnessed what happened and told me of this incident.
- 148 I will describe more about what happened at Tora Bora later in the book.
- 149 This was the password.
- 150 The US coalition employed peshayee guards from Ali's tribe to guard their compounds in Jalalabad. To consider Hazerat Ali an ally of the Karzai government was short-sighted. On 4 October 2003 the shura-e-nazar party, led by Fahim and Rabbani, laid their cards firmly on the table, saying that they would run against Karzai in the June 2004 presidential elections. The irony of all this was that Haji Qadir, who the US and British distrusted, had been responsible for mobilising both Pashtun and Northern Alliance support for Karzai during the 2002 Loya Jirga, only weeks before his assassination.
- 151 Hizb-e-Islami, the Party of Younus Khalis, was the Resistance Party the Arsala family were associated with during the Jihad. It later split when Hikmatyar formed his own, more radical Hizb-e-Islami.
- 152 After the murder of their mother and another brother, Abdul Haq still had three sons and a daughter.
- 153 Author interview with Governor of Jalalabad, Haji din Mohammad, October 2002
- 154 At that time, very little of the reconstruction money promised for Afghanistan in January 2002 had arrived. Only \$1 billion USD had been spent, and most of this on resettling returning refugees.
- 155 Professor Hasan Kakar
- 156 Much of the Arsala fortune has been made by importing spare parts for Landcruisers to Dubai.
- 157 The border areas around the Khyber Pass
- 158 Water catchment ditch.
- 159 A wise man.
- 160 In spring 2003, the issue of customs revenue being collected by Ismael Khan at the border, but not passed to central government, reached the press.
- 161 I could not be sure about this claim. For one day I had seen piles of cash pulled from beneath a bed by one of Zahir's staff. He claimed it was 'taxes' levied on the importation of buffalo from Pakistan at the Torkham border post. He also told me that using the cash to give to elders – presumably to buy their support – was 'Afghan rules'. Furthermore there was the issue of illegal logging and trucks carrying vast timbers which I guessed must have passed through the border post at Torkham which Zahir – as chief of the border guard – was controlling at the time. The timbers apparently mostly came from Kunar and Nuristan and were taken to Pakistan for processing.
- 162 Laying a price on the head of British and American nationals.
- 163 An edict banning the growing transportation and trafficking of poppy was issued by the Afghan Interim Government on 17 January 2002.
- 164 A UNODCCP report on Afghan poppy production (October 2002) showed a dramatic rise for the year. Production had surged from 185 metric tonnes (in 2001) to 3,400 metric tonnes (in 2002).

- 165 In September 2002.
- 166 Within the EU, farmers cannot receive area payments, for the amount of land area they owned, unless it was verified they actually owned or farmed the land claimed upon.
- 167 P. Hensher, *The Mulberry Empire*, 2002.
- 168 Like Afghan warlords, except blacked out windows were banned in Afghanistan in early 2002.
- 169 Incredibly, even by 2009, none of the FCO staff operating in Afghanistan spoke Pashtu (according to a House of Commons Foreign Affairs Select Committee Report on Afghanistan and Pakistan, July 2009)
- 170 WRC: Welfare and Relief Committee, a Pakistan-based NGO.
- 171 The eastern provinces which bordered Nangarhar.
- 172 The 'Eastern Shura' of which Qadir was nominally leader during his days as Governor of Jalalabad before the arrival of the Taliban, comprised the Provinces of Kunar, Nuristan, Nangarhar and Laghman.
- 173 During the Emergency Loya Jirga of June 2002.
- 174 Haji Zahir had taken 1000 soldiers and closed the bazaar and seized poppy paste at the time of President Karzai's April 2002 edict banning the growing and trafficking of poppy.
- 175 As documented by the UN and others and reported in the *Afghan Justice Project* report (Kabul, 2005) collated by Patricia Gossman.
- 176 Others in Jalalabad thought it possible Haji Zaman had taken money from Osama bin Laden in return for providing him safe passage over the mountains to Pakistan. They felt the British had 'chosen him' as Zaman was a man of the ISI despite the obvious flaws with relying upon Pakistani intelligence. Many believed Osama and key al Qaeda leaders simply used the route out through Parachinar, a town on the border with Pakistan. Unfortunately, Pakistan, the USA's key ally in the war on terror, was guarding that exit!
- 177 Haji Rohullah, a leader of the Salafi sect was arrested by the Coalition in August 2002, accused of being al Qaeda, and taken to Guantanamo Bay. His cousin, Wuli Wullah was the man Haji Zaman (and indirectly the British) selected to run the poppy scheme.
- 178 Had the British FCO consulted with our own Ministry of Agriculture in London, they surely would have informed that to run an area-based compensation payment scheme, such as is common throughout the EU, whereby the Integrated Arable Area Control system (IACS) underlies all area-based payments, You have to have a mapping of the land area first to prevent fraud.
- 179 Shown on Channel IV on the 25 May 2003 entitled: 'Here's One We Invaded Earlier'. Juniper Productions.
- 180 Part of the 'false narrative' as to when the Afghan insurgency resurrected itself must surely relate to the fact that so much attention was focused on Iraq from late 2002 onwards. It is for this reason, rather than the lack of cash spent on Afghanistan as has been cited, that people failed to notice the early strength of the insurgency. Instead many military commentators have estimated (wrongly in my view) that the insurgency only reasserted itself in 2004.
- 181 Gall, C. 'US Military investigates death of Afghan in custody' *New York Times* 4 March 2003 and Golden, T. 'In US Report, Brutal details of 2 Afghan inmates deaths' *New York Times*, 20 May 2005

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- 182 Author conversation with two British war correspondents after they had reported on operations by British Marines in Afghanistan, June 2002
- 183 In *The Thin Blue Line: How Humanitarianism went to War* (Verso, 2009), Conor Foley argues that neither Afghanistan nor Iraq followed the blueprint of the humanitarian interventions of the 1990s.
- 184 While poppy production increased exponentially around Afghanistan 2003–2008, in Nangarhar it decreased.
- 185 *Afghan Justice Project* ‘Candidates and the Past: The Legacy of War Crimes and the Political Transition in Afghanistan’ (2005)
- 186 In the letters by Abdul Haq written to foreign ambassadors.
- 187 See among others; Fouada, Y., and N. Fielding, *Masterminds of Terror; the truth behind the most devastating terrorist attack the world has ever seen*, Mainstream, 2003.
- 188 Kate Clark, 2004.
- 189 In 2005, when many of them were elected to the parliament, they very soon passed a law giving themselves impunity for past rights abuses.
- 190 The International Crisis Group echoed these concerns about the Constitutional Commission when it said: ‘the transitional authority (TA) and the UN have created a process lacking in transparency that accommodates the factions now in power in Kabul ... because the groups that dominate the TA, like the ethnic Panjshiri-Tajik shura-e-nazar heavily influenced the selections, few Afghans are likely to accept the Commissions as representative or neutral bodies’.
- 191 Even though the word democracy appeared in the 1964 Constitution.
- 192 Bill Rammell.
- 193 King of Afghanistan between 1880–1901.
- 194 I visited another place where incursions had been made in the Mohmand area. There the people told me the following: And so the next day I set out, accompanied by Majeed and Haji din Mohammad’s second son, Khalil. We headed in the direction of the parched gullies and mountains skirting the Khyber pass. Eventually we arrived at a place called Goste in the Mohmand tribal area. Later, at a village called Anar Gai, men wearing an array of turbans crowded round us as we stepped from the vehicle. They were already stammering nine to the dozen, in an effort to get their concerns across. Above us, they pointed out three new Pakistani checkpoints in the hills above. ‘The Pakistanis have come across the Durand line into our territory’ was the essence of their concerns. ‘This land is autonomous and though we will not be ruled by Kabul; the land is Afghan we as Afghans will fight to the death not to be part of Pakistan’.
- An elder named Mangal pointed out rocks close by.
- ‘The Americans arrived and stayed there. They came in twenty four Chinooks full of six hundred soldiers and fifty tanks/humvees. I went into their camp and asked why there were here? Their commander said, ‘The Pakistani government told us that al Qaeda is operating in this area’.
- The elder snorted, dismissively, ‘But I told them, No they’re not. Go into the villages and see how friendly the people are and drink tea’. The Americans had done so, distributing sweets to the children and after four days they left, one soldier having broken his leg and another being bitten by a snake.
- 195 He added that the local Mohmand people (this is the Mohmand tribal district) are taking up arms against the Pakistanis, attacking their checkpoints with small arms fire at night. ‘We’ll fight to the death’, they said.

- 196 The Durand Line was a creation of the British who negotiated a treaty with Amir Abdur Rahman in 1893, ceding a large swathe of formerly Afghan Pashtun territory to British India. The agreement was supposed to last hundred years but the conditions were so unfavourable that many Afghans have never recognised it. The British were keen to acquire this territory in order to split the unruly Pashtun people, with the hope of exerting some control over them. However, negotiations over the Durand Line have been a source of unceasing conflict between Afghanistan and Pakistan, particularly since the Partition of India in 1947. The squabbles were partly why Pakistan persisted in supporting brutal Pashtun warlord Gulbuddin Hikmatyar, in the hope that he would form a friendly pro-Pakistan Pashtun government in Kabul, hence obviating the need to renegotiate the Durand Agreement.
- 197 P. Marsden, *The Taliban: War, Religion and the New Order in Afghanistan*, Oxford University Press, 1998.
- 198 After the US had refused to sell arms to Kabul or provide loans with good terms, Moscow had equipped and trained the Afghan army and air force. Then the Soviets began to build large infra-structural projects such as the highway between Tajikistan to Kabul, linking the north with the capital and the Soviet empire with the ancient monarchy. It was clear to me when I visited the Salang pass in summer 2002, that such a vast engineering project must have been built with the strategic objectives of an invasion in mind. When I remarked on this to Baryalai as we drove to Peshawar in October 2002, he said 'the problem was that the Americans weren't helping us at the time, against Pakistan and so we had to look north'. The Soviets developed gas pipelines in the north of the country and built the huge military base at Bagram, now occupied by US coalition forces, to the north of Kabul.
- 199 See, for example, Kaplan, R. *Soldiers of God*. Vintage books, (p. 216) and Burke, J. *Al Qaeda; Casting a Shadow of Terror*. IB Tauris, 2003. (p. 76).
- 200 In June 2003
- 201 Ahmed Rashid, August 2004
- 202 McGirk, T, (Shkin) 'Battle in "the Evilest Place"'. *Time*, 3 November 2003
- 203 A. Warren, *Waziristan, the Faqir of Ipi, and the Indian Army: The North West Frontier Revolt of 1936–37*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- 204 *ibid*
- 205 *ibid*
- 206 C. Miller, *Khyber*, Macdonald and James, 1977.
- 207 Fletcher, *Afghanistan, Highway of Conquest*, 1965.
- 208 *ibid*
- 209 Isambard Wilkinson, *Daily Telegraph*.
- 210 Years later, I realised how this very factor underpinned the soundness of his personality. That Ritchie was here to do what he genuinely could for Afghanistan and had a deep and abiding love for this place and for its people and despite having his own family (who came with him to Jalalabad each year until security got so bad) he would be here for months at a time, nurturing his nursery saplings and agricultural projects. These projects were undertaken through the International Foundation of Hope, which Ritchie had founded and which by 2009 had planted over a million fruit and nut trees (in the eastern region) for more than six thousand farmers. It had also set up over fifty women's nurseries.
- 211 al Haq, President of Pakistan
- 212 He told Ritchie this in July 2002 when they met in Dushanbe.

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- 213 General Franks was Chief of US Central Command, CENTCOM, when he retired from active service in May 2003.
- 214 It is to my regret that I did not speak with Benazir Bhutto about this before her death.
- 215 R. Kaplan, *Soldiers of God*, Vintage
- 216 *ibid*
- 217 P. Ashdown, *The Times*, September 2001. 'RAM' Seeger later says that he had shown Ashdown an email written by Ken Guest and that Ashdown had liked it and asked if he could use it as the basis for an article.
- 218 In Northern Ireland
- 219 Chairman of the Special Forces Club
- 220 Such as MI6, MOD, SIS, political players with leverage
- 221 There has even been a book written specifically on Malang's operations around Kandahar.
- 222 Ambassador Akram, GCSP, June 2010
- 223 Younus Khalis's son has since become part of the 'new' Taliban and this has been a problem for din Mohammad.
- 224 *Afghan Warrior*, Touch Productions, 2003 (made by cameraman and Afghan analyst Ken Guest and film-maker Malcolm Brinkworth).
- 225 M. Beardon and J. Risen, *The Main Enemy*, Ballantine Books/ Presidio Press, 2003.
- 226 G. Crile, *Charlie Wilson's War*, 2004.
- 227 This idea was later backed up by Haq's Kabul/Paghman-based commander Khan Mir who had been waiting for instructions. Mir had been 'embedded' with the Taliban Deputy Interior Minister who had several battallions ready to turn over to Haq's side.
- 228 Author interview with Khan Mir, 2004
- 229 He was speaking of the Rome Process, in which Haq had played such an active part in the six months prior to his death.
- 230 For most of the jihad, Haq and his family were associated with the 'party' of Younis Khalis, and the Arsala family were *khan khel* or the 'top' family of the clan.
- 231 As far as the 'plan' went, Seeger had written up a list of potential costings for weaponry, transport and equipment but stressed that the requirements would depend on how the enemy reacted and who joined the invading columns. Initial figures totalling 5,078,770.00 USD were based on the first 5000 men. ie. 45 groups of 100 men grouped into 9 larger groups of 500. If the force were doubled to a 10,000 man force this was estimated at around \$10,441,490.
- 232 Shah Shujah, known by Afghans as the 'Puppet King', was installed by the British in 1837 and died in 1841.
- 233 S. Kiley, *The Spectator*, February 2004.
- 234 Interview with author, September 2003.
- 235 Stove heater.
- 236 Even during the Taliban regime it was possible to make an international phone call from the Post Office in Kandahar.
- 237 Also, Pakistani.
- 238 Interview of Abdul Haq by Melinda Liu of *Newsweek*, 29 October 2001.
- 239 Near Tera Mangal in Hezarac.
- 240 Pp. 58 by Paul Torday. Phoenix, London (2007)
- 241 He was technically elected for the 'first' time in September 2004 as since 2002 he had been President of Afghanistan's Interim Authority.

- 242 Author's diary, 2004.
- 243 Kaplan, R. D. *Soldiers of God: with Islamic Warriors in Afghanistan and Pakistan*. Vintage Departures Edition November 2001. New York. Pp 190 and 181
- 244 Coalition Forces Commander (2003–5), General Dan McNeil, felt that each regional PRT, rather than just being a vehicle to bring security, should also be the central focus point for 'governance' in the regions, instead of the provincial Governor being the central focus for 'governance'.
- 245 Author conversation with Haji Zahir in 2005, and also in report by the Senlis Council in 2006.
- 246 Zulmay Khalilzad, previously US Special Envoy, a former UNOCOL employee, a protégée of Condoleeza Rice and a member of the Rand corporation.
- 247 Such as the IOM who hired the office of the EU Election Mission on land at Sher Pur.
- 248 Contrary, therefore, to OECD guidelines.
- 249 Human Rights Watch report on Afghan police corruption.
- 250 C. Gall, *New York Times*, November 2004.
- 251 For example, in March 2005, at a meeting with donors and Afghan groups which had been organised by the Danish who were doing a report on aid delivery.
- 252 Paddy Ashdown, 'International Humanitarian Law, Justice and Reconciliation in a Changing World', The Eighth Hauser Lecture on Humanitarian Law, New York, 3 March 2004.
- 253 Ken Guest in email to author, September 2009
- 254 This issue, and an explanation its significance, is expanded upon later in the book in a conversation with James Ritchie.
- 255 To Hoja Baudin, also described in *Ghost Wars* by Steve Coll. But Coll only relates the story from the Massoud viewpoint, when it was Abdul Haq who orchestrated the alliance-led by the former King as a 'banner' to oust the Taliban.
- 256 Email from Peter Tomsen to author, 28 May 2009.
- 257 *Time*, August 2003
- 258 US Ambassador to the Mujahideen, 1988–92
- 259 Haq letter to Peter Tomsen dated January 1994.
- 260 The colleague worked for the UN Special Mission to Afghanistan (UNSMIA)
- 261 Paghman is a mountainous area to the north of Kabul.
- 262 It was also Mullah Malang whom my colleague at EUSR was using as his main conduit into the Taliban in attempting to persuade moderates to defect. For this, President Karzai accused Semple of working with MI6 and had him thrown out of the country in December 2007.
- 263 Taliban Foreign Minister.
- 264 Zardad was the first person to be prosecuted under the Torture Convention in 2005
- 265 Babrak Karmal was the Kremlin's choice for President of Afghanistan from the time of the Soviet invasion, December 1979 to November 1986
- 266 Email to author, from John Gunston, February 2004
- 267 *ibid*
- 268 the piece in the Times by Michael Smith on 8 December 2001 stated "Britain's spies were heavily involved in the complex negotiations that led to the collapse of the Taliban across northern Afghanistan, Government officials said yesterday. The Secret Intelligence Service, MI6, reactivated old agents who had been in place during the Soviet occupation in the 1980s to take part in the operation. They also

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- used new agents developed before the September 11 attacks as part of operations against Osama bin Laden's al Qaeda terrorist network. One official said, 'They were used in highly imaginative ways to bring about the collapse of the Taliban in the North'. The piece – which sounded like PR for British intelligence agencies did not say which cities MI6 agents had apparently helped to fall. It went on fulsomely, 'But officials claim that MI6 played a key role in the negotiations which led to the handover of many of the cities. 'MI6 officers waited until precisely the right moment and then used all their agents to press all the appropriate buttons', one said. The officials refused to give more details for fear of compromising the MI6 agents involved.
- 269 M. Beardon, *The Main Enemy*, Random House, 2003.
- 270 Although my contract was made by an NGO, ACTED, in order to circumvent UN rules which, at that stage, prevented British or Americans working in Afghanistan due to the threat from Osama bin Laden's 1998 fatwa against them.
- 271 J. Leslie and C. Johnson, *Afghanistan: The Mirage of Peace*, Zed books, 2004.
- 272 Eg the Italian politician Emma Bonino whose arrest by the Taliban alongside Christina Amanpour after apparently failing to heed warnings to stop filming in a women's hospital in Kandahar during the Taliban is described in Jolyon Leslie's book *Afghanistan: The Mirage of Peace*.
- 273 Following the intervention, the IBRD funded it and it became known as the National Solidarity Programme (NSP).
- 274 A. Rasanayagam, *Afghanistan: A Modern History*, London: IB Tauris, 2003.
- 275 Alfredo Witschi-Cestari, 'Coordinating aid in Afghanistan', Afghanistan info, October 1997, as quoted in Rasanayagam, A (2003)
- 276 B.J. Stapleton, 'A Means to what end? Why PRIs are peripheral to the bigger political challenges in Afghanistan', *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies*, Fall 2007, Vol 10, Issue 1.
- 277 Who then worked for UNAMA.
- 278 Email to author from Ken Guest, February 2009.
- 279 L. Dupree, Louis, New Delhi: Rama Press, 1973.
- 280 A. Saikhal, 1998, cited in Moshref 2002, 29.
- 281 S. Schmeidl and M. Karokhail, 'Integration of Traditional Structures into the State building Process: Lessons from the Tribal Liaison Office in Loya Paktia'.
- 282 *ibid*
- 283 *ibid*
- 284 Wimmer and Schetter, 2002, from S. Schmeidl, and M. Karokhail, 'Integration of Traditional Structures into the State building Process: Lessons from the Tribal Liaison Office in Loya Paktia'.
- 285 Rotberg, 2003, Goodson, 2001, Schlagintweit, 2002) in S. Schmeidl and M. Karokhail, 'Integration of Traditional Structures into the State building Process: Lessons from the Tribal Liaison Office in Loya Paktia.
- 286 The following note outlines its inception and background:
'The Nangarhar Community Empowerment Initiative was a process of democratic institution building that was expanded upon the traditional Afghan institution of the tribal council (Jirga) in order to provide a broadened democratic foundation for community empowerment and civic education in Afghanistan.
In late 2002, the traditional system, that was previously in place was non-existent. It was evident, at this sensitive juncture of time that the government was not in a position to establish Councils capable of empowering the community.

The Community Empowerment Initiative has effected the grassroots establishment of thirty-six democratically elected Community Councils throughout Nangarhar Province. The councils represent the people of each of Nangarhar's twenty-two administrative districts, the five precincts of the provincial capital city, Jalalabad, and nine other minority special-interest communities.

Since its inception in 2003, the stated purpose of the Council of Nangarhar Communities (CNC) has been to provide an interface between the people, the government, and the NGO community. Till now the CNC and its constituent councils have acted as advisory bodies only, serving as an experiment in local democracy-building and civic affairs management. The councils have had no formal authority to propose or enact governmental or developmental policy'.

- 287 Astri Suhrke, 'The Limits of State-building: The role of international assistance in Afghanistan', paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Studies Association, 2006.
- 288 As Schmeidl and Karokhail also assert.
- 289 S. Schmeidl and M. Karokhail, 'Integration of Traditional Structures into the State building Process: Lessons from the Tribal Liaison Office in Loya Paktia'.
- 290 H. Nixon, 'The Changing Face of Local Governance; Community Development Councils in Afghanistan', a report for the Afghan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU), February 2008.
- 291 *ibid*
- 292 S. Schmeidl M. Karokhail, 'Integration of Traditional Structures into the State building Process: Lessons from the Tribal Liaison Office in Loya Paktia'. Schetter also makes this point.
- 293 L. Dupree, *Tribalism*, New Delhi: Rama Publishers, 1973.
- 294 N. Sharani, 'The State and Community Governance in Afghanistan', in Maley (ed) *'Fundamentalism Reborn?'*
- 295 Conversation with author, March 2005
- 296 Quoted by George Arney in *Afghanistan* (Mandarin paperbacks, 1990).
- 297 Author conversation with Haji Zahir Arsala, January 2004
- 298 Note that illicit activities which depend upon local positions of influence does not equate to 'tribal'.
- 299 Author conversation with British soldier, May 2005.
- 300 Author conversation with Carlotta Gall, 2005. Kate Clark also provides examples of NATO and Coalition troops working with local strongmen in her paper, *'Snakes and Scorpions: Justice and Stability in Afghanistan'* by Stephen Carter and Kate Clark (Kabul May 2010), an independent report produced for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (unpublished)
- 301 Or even be associated with the Afghan government undertaking.
- 302 The EUSR estimated there were around 1,700 of these illegal armed groups in 2005.
- 303 Anecdotal evidence from Afghan BBC journalists, amongst other sources.
- 304 At the time that Lakhdar-I-Brahimi and US Ambassador Khalilzad made the 'deal' with the strongmen to allow them not just to participate but effectively to negotiate the settlement of the 2002 ELJ in 2002, without the participation of the democratically elected delegates, (for this negotiation took place outside the main tent) some of the UNAMA officers had advised against this course of action, saying it would enable the strongmen to return to their fiefdoms stronger and to continue intimidation and illicit activity.
- 305 Email to author from former UNAMA political officer, Autumn 2008.

ENDNOTES

- 306 *A House Divided – Analysing the 2005 Afghan Elections* Andrew Wilder/AREU (December 2005)
- 307 As her Political Advisor, I challenged Emma Bonino on this when it came to writing up our official report on the 2005 Parliamentary elections. However in reality, as the EU's 'Chief Observer' on the Parliamentary Elections she was not independent and thus unable to pit herself against the steamroller of 'agreed' western policy. Among other things, the maintainance of a façade of 'democracy' in Afghanistan was necessary in order to persuade NATO countries to continue to send troops to Afghanistan.
- 308 Amnesty Law was gazetted in 2008 but did not come to Public Notice until end of 2009.
- 309 *Afghan Warrior*, Touch Productions, 2003.
- 310 Email from RAM Seegar to author, November 2008.
- 311 *In Afghanistan; an American Odyssey*. New York (Author's Choice). 1983 (pp 98)
- 312 Email to author from RAM Seegar, 26 September 2009.
- 313 Phone conversation with author, November 2008.
- 314 Paddy Ashdown's Autobiography (2009)
- 315 Note that according to a 'Dateline' sitrep prepared by RAM Seegar, they actually found out about Abdul Haq's initiative on 21 September 2001, when Sir John Gunston called Haq by phone.
- 316 'Afghanistan Summary' 16 January 2002, Sitrep prepared by RAM Seeger
- 317 Email from Ken Guest to author, March 2009
- 318 'General Duties' is the same rank as Private.
- 319 ibid
- 320 Email to author from Ken Guest, April 2009.
- 321 Email from Ken Guest to author, March 2009.
- 322 ISI chief during much of the jihad and blamed by many Afghans (to author) for the rise of the Taliban and the continuing insecurity in Afghanistan after September 11
- 323 ibid
- 324 ibid
- 325 'RAM' Seeger, Sit Rep 'Afghanistan summary' 16.01.02
- 326 ibid
- 327 ibid
- 328 ibid
- 329 See Annex – 'End of Summary Visit', Sitrep, 9 October 2001.
- 330 To the British Embassy in Islamabad on 6 October.
- 331 His family were originally from Hisarak so he would have a good reception there
- 332 RAM Seeger, Sitrep, 'Afghanistan summary', 16 January 2002.
- 333 ibid
- 334 ibid
- 335 Email to author from Ken Guest, March 2009
- 336 ibid
- 337 ibid
- 338 A, Rashid, *Daily Telegraph*, 19 October 2001.
- 339 RAM Seeger, Sitrep, 'Afghanistan summary', 16 January 2002.
- 340 email to author from Ken Guest, April 2009.
- 341 email to author from Ken Guest, August 2009
- 342 Email to author from Ken Guest, April 2009.

- 343 Email to author from Ken Guest February 2009.
- 344 Email to author from Ken Guest February 2009.
- 345 Ken Guest, in email to author, June 2009.
- 346 Ahmed Rashid discusses the meddling of ISI in the 'Pashtun equation' saying ISI wooed all sides in an attempt to manipulate the King's group and also the Peshawar group, which was led by Pir Syed Gailani and paid for by ISI (none of whose participants, Rashid says, wanted to fight the Taliban). Rashid adds that the New York Times and the Washington Post were manipulated by ISI into believing that ISI were trying to 'create moderates among the Taliban'. See 'Decent into Chaos' pp 72-3
- 347 Email to author from a former US diplomat to Afghanistan, June 2009.
- 348 Transcript of interview between Malcolm Brinkworth of Touch Productions and Joe Ritchie, in 2003
- 349 Note this is not to be confused with the post-September 11 'Bonn Conference' held in December 2001.
- 350 Daughter of 'Pir' Gailani, head of the NIFA party for which Wardak had previously been a commander. Also, Head of the Afghan Red Crescent Society, 2002 – present
- 351 This contradicts with what Steve Coll asserts in his book, *Ghost Wars: the secret history of the CIA, Afghanistan and bin Laden, from the Soviet invasion to September 11, 2001* (New York: Penguin Press, 2004). In other words, that Karzai and Tomsen had organised the meeting. It also differs from what Ahmed Rashid claims in his book 'Descent into Chaos', that Hamid Karzai had, in fact, attended a meeting with Massoud in summer 2001.
- 352 The Karzai brothers have a restaurant in Baltimore.
- 353 W. Azoy, *Bangor Daily News*, November 2001.
- 354 American citizen in Switzerland, September 2009
- 355 In this exchange, Ken Guest goes on to relate how he had seen what he believed to have been the first surface to air missiles (SAMs) that came into Afghanistan, delivered in 1982 to Malawi Jalaludin Haqqani's *markaz* (base) at Shahi Kot in Paktia.
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- 382 Transcript of interview with Joe Ritchie for the documentary, *Afghan Warrior*, Touch Productions, 2003.
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- 386 Leaked Code Cable from Ambassador Karl Eikenberry, November 2009
- 387 As described in a report for the Institute of War by Carl Forster.
- 388 An exploration of 'Ways Forward' for the West in Afghanistan, in relation to the need to reconceptualise thinking more towards alternative governance mechanisms and concepts of traditional legitimacy are explored in the the author's paper titled; '*State-building in Afghanistan, a case showing the limits?*' published in the International Review of the Red Cross, Vol 92, Number 880, December 2010
- 389 As in the case of Mark Sedwill, NATO's Senior Civilian Representative, talking to Stephen Sackur on BBC World's *Hardtalk* on 18 May 2010.
- 390 D. Filkins, 'With US help, warlord builds empire', *New York Times*, 7 June 2010. This is a piece describing how warlord Matiullah Khan heads up a private army (his own) earning millions of dollars for guarding NATO supply convoys that fight Taliban insurgents alongside US Special forces. The road runs between Kandahar and Tirin Kot. Khan reportedly now extorts from locals who attempt to use the road. "His militia has been adopted by US Special Forces officers to gather intelligence and fight insurgents. Mr Matiullah's compound sits about 100 metres from the US Special forces compound in Tirin Kot. A Special Forces officer, willing to speak only on condition of anonymity, said his unit had an extensive relationship with Mr. Matiullah. "Matiullah is the best there is here," the officer said. This has irritated some local leaders who say that the line between Mr Matiullah's business interest and the government has disappeared". "Mr Matiullah's operation, the officials said, is one of at least 23 private security companies working in the area without any governance license or oversight....." General Carter said that while he had no direct proof in Mr Matiullah's case, he harboured more general worries that the legions of unregulated Afghan security companies had a financial interest in prolonging chaos". (i.e in partaking in drug smuggling or enlisting Taliban or insurgents to attack those who did not use his security service). Mr Matiullah was enlisted within a US intelligence report last spring as an associate of Ahmed Wali Karzai.

- 391 For such structures remain axiomatic to dispute resolution, as the Taliban understand so well.
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- 394 email from Nasrullah Arsala to author, August 2010
- 395 Email to author in April 2004, from Peter Tomson, former US Special Envoy to the Mujahideen,
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- 410 Ibid. Also, Stephen Grey, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/may/16/afghan-prosecutor-arrest-warrant-us-officer>, *Guardian*, 17 May 2010.
- 411 ibid
- 412 Carl Forsberg '*Politics and Power in Kandahar*'. Institute for the Study of War, Washington DC, April 2010, page 60.
- 413 ibid
- 414 ibid
- 415 Wimmer and Schetter, 2002, page 8.
- 416 A. Rasanayam, *Afghanistan, a Modern History : Monarchy, Despotism or Democracy? The problems of Governance in the Muslim Tradition*, IB Tauris, 2003.

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- 417 The prospect of large numbers of innocent civilians being killed has driven support lower, but still the majority in favor of military force has been quite strong. Asking four times since the attacks, CBS/*New York Times* consistently found two-thirds saying that military action 'against whoever is responsible for the attacks' should go forward 'even if it means that innocent people are killed'. Likewise, ABC/*Washington Post* found on 27 September that seventy percent supported military action even 'if it meant innocent civilians in other countries might be hurt or killed'. Sixty-five percent favored 'attacking terrorist bases and the countries that allow or support them even if there is a high likelihood of civilian casualties' on September 27-28 according to *Newsweek*. CBS/*New York Times* used the phrase: 'What if ... many thousands of innocent civilians may be killed?' and still found sixty-eight percent support. On October 7th (while the US bombing was underway) NBC News found seventy-eight percent saying that 'combating terrorism is worth risking civilian casualties in Afghanistan'. On October 17-18, Fox used strong language in a follow-on question ('even if it cost the lives of thousands of civilians in the countries we attack?') and still found sixty-two percent of the full sample in support.
- 418 *Armed Forces Journal*, April 2009
- 419 *ibid*
- 420 Written evidence passed to me by email from James Ritchie, July 2009.
- 421 al Shabab is thought to be hosting extremists from Pakistan and Afghanistan.
- 422 'Tora Bora Revisited: How We Failed to Get Bin Laden and Why It Matters Today', a report to members of the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, John F. Kerry Chairman, 111th Congress, first session 30 November 2009.
- 423 In 'The New American Foundation' (December 2008), F. Berrigan and W.D. Hartung, write: 'A new policy should not seek to reduce arms transfers as a goal in and of itself, but rather to strike a balance between short-term political and military considerations and long-term US interests in peace and stability. In many cases, seeking to enhance the role of human rights and conflict prevention in U.S. arms transfer policy will involve complex trade-offs, as in Iraq and Afghanistan, where massive 'train and equip' programs are central to the goal of reducing the direct U.S. military presence in those nations, although the new military and police forces in those nations have far to go in meeting basic human rights standards'.
- 424 Report by French MOD.
- 425 The problem of politicians who 'fix' the idea of going to war militarily yet who are subsequently offered Board seats with groups such as the Carlisle Group.
- 426 <http://www.fromthewilderness.com/free/ww3/zbig.html>
- 427 www.warresisters.org/pages/piechart.htm (last checked March 2011)
- 428 eg *The Times*,

ACRONYMS

- AIHRC – Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission
ANA – Afghan National Army
ANP – Afghan National Police
CFC- ALPHA – Coalition Forces Command – ALPHA
CENTCOM – US military’s Central Command
DDR – Disarmament, Demobilisation and Re-Integration
DEA – US Drug Enforcement Agency
DIAG – Disarmament of Illegal Armed Groups
DIS – Defence Intelligence Service
DFID – Britain’s Department for International Development
DOD – US Department of Defense
ELJ – Emergency Loya Jirga
EU – European Union
FATA – Federally Administered Tribal Areas
G-8 – Group of Countries with largest economies
GCHQ – General Central Head Quarters (Britain’s Intelligence Centre)
ICRC – International Committee of the Red Cross
IOM - International Organisation for Migration
ISAF – International Security Assistance Force
ISI – Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate (of Pakistan)
MI6 – British Secret Service (International)
MMA – Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal
MOD – Britain’s Ministry of Defence
NA – Northern Alliance
NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NIFA – National Islamic Front for Afghanistan
NGO – Non Governmental Organisation

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NSD – National Directorate of Security (of Afghanistan). Also known as “Amniat”

NSP – National Solidarity Programme

NWFP – North West Frontier Province

PDPA – People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan

PRT – Provincial Reconstruction Team

RAWA – Revolutionary Afghan Women’s Association

R2P - Right to Protect

RPG – Rocket Propelled Grenade

SIS – Secret Intelligence Service

UNAMA – United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan

UNCHS - United Nations Centre for Human Settlements

UNODCCP – United Nations Office on Drug Control and Crime

USAID – US Agency for International Development

GLOSSARY *

Fez - Prayer cap worn beneath turban

Kishmesh – Nut and fruit mixture

Pashtunwali (qaumi narkh) – the code of custom and honour governing pashtun tribes. This also functions as a body of laws for dispute resolution and a code of behaviour. The Pashtunwali may vary from tribe to tribe, each of which may retain distinct characteristics. Local elites and notables within and among tribes might use Pashtunwali as a means of providing a system of local governance. Pashtunwali is also a means to foster cohesions among major tribes.

Pashtun – The largest tribal society in the world which is around 15 to 25 million people who straddle the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Most Pashtuns are Sunnite Muslims and their language is Pashtu. Some Pashtuns now speak dari (a dialect of farsi) meaning there are less Pashtu speakers than the number of Pashtu ethnic group members. The reference for all Pashtuns is the Pashtunwali code of honour and custom, as well as the belief in a common ancestor, Qais Abdur Rashid. As such, Pashtuns believe in the idea of a social structure segmented by lines of descent from this common ancestor. The two major lines are the Durrani and the Ghilzai and these two groups account for over two thirds of all Afghan Pathans. These groups are then further divided into tribes, sub tribes (as demonstrated by the use of suffixes ‘khel’ or ‘khail’, or ‘zai’), clans and extended families.

Patou – Large scarf or rug worn around the shoulders

Qaum – The word ‘qaum’ relates to the solidarity group that an individual feels they belong to. In pashtun society the word ‘qaum’ can be used to name tribal branches and sub-branches. Hence the word can be mixed up with the meaning of ‘tribe’ when in fact it relates more to a communal group, village, clan, extended family or professional network.

Spin Giri – The word spin giri means ‘white beard’. Hence these are the most respected members of a community or within a tribe. A jirga is normally composed of spin giri and the influence of tribal elders is maintained by keeping the support of their constituency. Spin Giri can enhance their influence by having links with influential figures whether in government, or with important elders, khans or maliks of the region.

Ulema – Religious Leaders

Wakeel – a title which can be achieved by an influential khan or malik, eg by becoming a member of a Loya Jirga.

INSTITUTIONS

Jirga – This is the traditional decision making body in Pashtun Afghanistan. Jirgas are temporary bodies created for a special task, normally to solve disputes among tribes, sub tribes, clans, families, or individuals, as well as between government and tribes. The jirga is a means for negotiation and dialogue to take place so that stakeholders from different tribes and networks can engage with each other to solve disputes, gain resources, influence political processes or reach consensus on important issues. On a tribal level the jirga expresses the egalitarian ideals of Pashtun society.

Loya Jirga – A Loya Jirga (or Greater Jirga) is an extremely rare occurrence, is countrywide and is initiated by the central authority. It normally includes representatives of all ethnic and tribal groups, and regions. Previously, the Loya Jirgas were initiated by Afghan Kings. However in the wake of September 11 the Emergency Loya Jirga, held in June 2002, decided upon the Transitional Administration while the Constitutional Loya Jirga held in December 2003 / 2004 approved the new Afghan Constitution.

Shura – This term was once used for the gathering of Islamic dignitaries such as mullahs and ulema. But after the Soviet war the term began to be used for many types of gatherings, including those associated with the mujahideen. Hence the term began to compete with traditional Pashtun terms such as jirga. Today the term shura is used for all kinds of official gatherings and every tribe (both Pashtun and non Pashtun) has its own shura. Outside assistance is only then accepted when the tribal shura is unable to solve a dispute. Shuras are fairly stable structures which usually exist long term; more like a Council that has leadership and is comprised of influential people. More recently, shuras have adapted to government structures and can exist on village, district and province level. Often shuras are also set up externally (eg by NGOs) to assist in reconstruction projects. Like jirgas, shuras tend to be all male. Female shuras are newer and tend to be set up externally. Recently, groups we might in the west consider to be social or cultural organizations have also used the term shura. Eg Youth shura or Handicap shura.

* with apologies to Conrad Schetter and Susanne Schmeidl

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