

White Paper

LISD



LIECHTENSTEIN INSTITUTE  
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# THE AFGHAN TALIBAN'S RELATIONSHIP WITH PAKISTAN

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Translated and edited by  
Joseph Mohr

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# Abstract

This paper seeks to reflect the views of those fighting the Afghan government, which includes the movement of the Afghan Taliban. The movement of the Afghan Taliban grew out of multiple sources, but came mainly from primarily local bands of religious students who joined the anti-Communist uprising of Afghan religious scholars. These bands of religious students captured branches in some of the Pakistan-based religious resistance parties, and were frequently integrated in provincial organizations as separate “fronts” inside Afghanistan. The religious students did not appropriate the modernizing Islamist discourse of Hezb-i Islami and other parties, but demanded the creation of an Islamic system of governance, the ‘Islamic Emirate’, headed by the commander of the faithful (amir al-muminin), and not a President. This vision was realized in 1998, two years after the fall of Kabul. Pakistani support had been used up to this point by all parties in order to capture power in Afghanistan as a tactic. With the fall of the Islamic Emirate, this tactic changed to become the strategy for their survival, come-back and counter-offensive.

Every time the Taliban used Pakistan in order to secure their leadership, establishing command centers, recruitment, or any other activity, the increasing reliance colored their whole activity. In the matter of recruitment, this meant that Pakistani youth would be admitted into the Afghan Taliban ranks as full members. Ultimately, this reliance also opened up the Afghan Taliban to Pakistani penetration and influence.

Mullah Omar, the “amir al-muminin” tried to counter this trend by relocating into hiding inside Afghanistan, where he also died. In the process, he had ceded much actual control to his messengers, who could operate in Pakistan and the world in his name. The article provides an overview of Mullah Omar’s movements between Afghanistan and Pakistan after the fall of the Taliban Emirate up to his death.

In light of President Trump speech on 21 August 2017, and subsequent briefings by Secretary of Defense Mattis and General Dunford to the Senate on 3 October, a stronger focus of the United States on Pakistan’s role in supporting the Taliban is evident. The views of the Taliban and Al-Qaida operatives on the role played by Pakistan appear to support this shift in American focus from President Obama’s approach.

# Zusammenfassung

Der vorliegende Artikel spiegelt die Ansichten derjenigen wieder, die in bewaffnetem Kampf gegen die afghanische Regierung stehen. Dies schließt die afghanischen Taliban mit ein. Die afghanische Taliban-Bewegung ist aus vielen verschiedenen Wurzelsträngen erwachsen, entstand jedoch in der Hauptsache aus den Kampfgruppen der Religionschüler, die sich dem gegen den Kommunismus gerichteten Aufstand afghanischer Religionsgelehrter angeschlossen hatten. Diese Gruppen der Religionsschüler dominierten manche Abteilungen der in Pakistan beheimateten Widerstandspartien. Innerhalb Afghanistans waren sie oft auf Provinzebene als unabhängige Kampfgruppen in die Parteien integriert. Die Religionsschüler eigneten sich den modernisierenden islamistischen Diskurs der Islam-Partei (Hezb-i Islami) oder anderer Parteien nicht an. Sie forderten ein islamisches Regierungssystem, geführt von einem „Befehlshaber der Gläubigen“ (amir al-muminin) und nicht regiert von einem Präsidenten. Diese Vision wurde 1998 verwirklicht, zwei Jahre nach der Übernahme Kabuls. Pakistanische Unterstützung was bis zu diesem Punkt von allen Kräften als Taktik benutzt worden, um die Macht in Afghanistan zu erringen. Mit dem Sturz des „Islamischen Emirates“ wurde diese Taktik zu einer Strategie für ihr Überleben, Rückkehr und die Rückeroberung.

Mit jeder Inanspruchnahme Pakistans durch die Taliban, sei es um die Sicherheit ihrer Führungskader zu gewährleisten, Kommandostrukturen zu schaffen, Kämpfer anzuwerben, oder um irgend ein anderes Projekt voranzutreiben, färbte die zunehmende Abhängigkeit auf alle ihre Aktivitäten ab. Bei der Anwerbung bedeutete dies zum Beispiel, dass pakistanische junge Männer als Vollmitglieder bei den afghanischen Taliban aufgenommen wurden. Letztendlich öffnete dies die afghanischen Taliban für Durchdringung und Einfluss durch Pakistan.

Mullah Omar, der „amir al-muminin“ versuchte, dieser Entwicklung entgegenzuwirken. So tauchte er zum Beispiel in Afghanistan unter, wo er auch starb. Dabei gab er viel tatsächliche Kontrolle an seine Mittelsleute ab, die in Pakistan und der Welt in seinem Namen auftreten konnten. Der Artikel liefert eine Übersicht der Bewegungen Mullah Omars zwischen Afghanistan und Pakistan nach dem Kollaps des Taliban-Emirates bis zu seinem Tod.

Nach der Rede Präsident Trumps vom 21. August 2017, und nachfolgenden Berichten von Verteidigungsminister Mattis und General Dunford an den amerikanischen Senat am 3. Oktober, ist eine stärkere Konzentration der Vereinigten Staaten auf Pakistans Rolle in der Unterstützung der Taliban klar erkennbar. Die Äußerungen der Taliban und Al-Qaida Funktionäre zur von Pakistan gespielten Rolle scheinen diese Veränderung im Hauptaugenmerk der Amerikaner von der Politik Präsident Obamas weg zu bestätigen.

# ناتسكاپ هب ینا غفا نابلاط طابترا

هصالح:

اب هك دوش سكه نم مدرم مدع نا تايرظن ینا غفا نابلاط كيرحت لومش هب هك مدم لمعب ششوك هلاقم نيا رد. دنا گنج رد ناتسنا غفا تموكح  
ماظن هيلع هك يبهزم ياه هورگ زا صوصخب كيرحت نيا ،دما دوجوب فلتخم عبانم زا ینا غفا نابلاط كيرحت  
دش ليكشت دنوب مدم درگ مهاب اجك يي نيدءاملع تمواقم عمجم يتسنومك  
و ،دنوب ناتسكاپ رد هك دندش نارگ تمواقم يبهزم ياه ميظنت زا يضرعب نيزگياج ينيدي نازوما شناد هورگ نيا  
دنديدرگ اجباج تامبج تروصب ناتسنا غفا لخاد رد فلتخم تايلو حطس رد اه هورگ نيا تيرثكا  
يرصع ماظن مريغو يمالس! بزح نوچ بازح! دننام ناتسنا غفا رد هك دنتساوخ يمن ينيدي نازوما شناد نيا  
زا ماظن نيا هك دندش ( يمالس! تارام!) رورپ مالس! متسيس كي ناهاوخ ناشيا هكلب دننك قيبطت ار يمالس!  
رد نابلاط تسدب لباك طوقس زادعب لاس ود هاگديدي نيا هك ،روهجم سير فرط زا من دوش مرادا نينمؤملا ريماً فرط  
تفرگ دوخ ار يلمع تلاح يدالي م١٩٩٨ لاس  
دنديدرگ هدفستسا تردق هب نديسر يارب كيتكات كي شيح هب تمواقم ياه هورگ مامت ار ناتسكاپ تيامح  
تايح ياقبا يارب ( عافدو ينيشن بقع ، مچامت) يژيتارتسا كي شيح هب كيتكات نيا يمالس! تارام! طوقس اب  
دش ليدبت  
ناتسكاپ زا اه تيلاعف يقب ام و بدج و بلج ،يهدنمرف زكارم سيسيأت ،يربهر ظفح يارب نابلاط هكي نامز  
تحت تعرسب ار نابلاط ياه تيلاعف همه ناتسكاپ هب رتشيپ ءاكتا و يريگ رانك نيا هك دنديدرگ هدفستسا  
داد رارق شيوخ ريثات  
لمك تيوضع و ینا غفا نابلاط فوفص رد ناتسكاپ ناناوج يريگ رانك ينعني مادختسا : مادختسا لاشم روطب  
دنديدرگ زاب نابلاط ياه تيلاعف رب ار ناتسكاپ يريذپ ريثات و ذوفن هار هجيتن رد ،كيرحت نيرد اهن  
لقن مدرک ناهنپ اردوخ فده نيا اب مزاربم ردو دباي ريغت تيعضرو نيا ات ديزرو شالت ( نينمؤملا ريماً) رمعالم  
درك توف اجنيمه رد هكنيا ات دش ناتسنا غفا دراو مرابود و دومن ناكم  
وامان زا هدفستسا اب دنناوتب هك ات دومن شيوخ نينواعم هب لك تروصب تيحالص ضيوفت نايرج نيمهرد  
دنيامن تيلاعف ماجنا كلالم رگيدي رد و ناتسكاپ رد ( رمعالم)  
ديامنيم رورم نا تافو زور يلا نابلاط كيرحت طوقس زا ناتسكاپ و ناتسنا غفا نايم ار رمعالم كيرحت هلاقم نيا  
سفيتام عافد ريزو ياه تبحص ياوتحم و ٢٠١٧ لاس تسگا ٢١ رد پمارت روهجم سير ينيارنخس نتم ييانشور رد  
ناتسكاپ نابلاط يماح نبرتيوق هك دناسريم تحاضوب ربوتكاً موس خيراتب انس سلجم رد دروفند لارنج و  
تسا هدوب  
مدعاقلا و نابلاط ياه تيلاعف زا ار ناتسكاپ تيامح امابوا يسيالاب فالخرب ( ديدج يژيتارتسا) دنور نيا  
دنديدرگ تبات

# هرس ناتسکاپ هل پیکي پرا و نابلاط ی ناغفا د

زیدینل:

ییش یارک سکعزم تایرظن وکلخ هغه د لومش هپ تنبغوخ د و نابلاط ی ناغفا د پچ هدیوش هخه پیک هلاقم ید هپ یوکه مرگج هرس تموکح ناغفا هل یچ موک

هدز یبهدم هغه د لوید پیرگناغ هپ تنبغوخ اد وخ، هرکو همدو ونیچرس ولیب، الیب هل تنبغوخ و نابلاط ی ناغفا د ی اغ وی هرس تمواقم هل واملع ی نید د فالخرپ ماظن ی تسی نومک د یچ موک، وش هتخنمار هن ونویناب هل وکنوک وو یوش

هوینو ی اغ ونودنوگ وکنوک تمواقم یبهدم ی نیغ د هتشییم ییک ناتسکاپ هپ ونویناب هغه وکنوک هدز ی نید د هدز ی نید هغه. لوش ی اخرپ ی اغ لوید هپ وهبج ولیب، الیب د هچک هپ ونوتیالو د ییک ناتسناغفا هپ یی ریپ و ماظن یمالسا رصاعم ریچ هپ ونودنوگ هترو ورون وایمالسا بزح د ییک ناتسناغفا هپ یچ لتنبوغ هن وکنوک وی د یچ یپرک پوج (تاراما یمالسا) متسیس هلاپمالسا وی یلوتموکح د یچ لتنبوغ یود یکلپ، یپرک یلپ هود طوقس هل لباک د سال هپ و نابلاط د یروول دیل ید. یروول هل رشمس لو وی د هن، ییش مرادا اوخل نینمؤملاریم. هرک هروغ هنب یلمع ییک لاک زیدیز ۱۹۹۸ هپ هتسورو هلاک

هگوت هپ کی تکتات وی د هراپل ولوک هسالر د لاد د ییک ناتسناغفا هپ اوخل ونودنوگ ولوت د رتالم ناتسکاپ د (د) وش لدب یژی تارتس هپ هراپل تنبی اپ د دنوژ د کی تکتات اد، هرس ویدیخرپار د تراما یمالسا د. هدیک لوراک (یژی تارتس لمع لباقتم و گتاش، دیرب

ای (ینراموگ) بذج و بلج، ولوروج ونوزکرم د ییدن اموق د، ولتاس ییدنوخ د هباترشم لپخ د و نابلاط یچ هلکره و نابلاط د هرس یکتیچ هپ اکتا یکنودی تایی ییدناب ناتسکاپ هپ، هوراکو ناتسکاپ هراپل ونوتیالوغ ورون یچ هو انام یپ اد، غوضوم (مدختسا) یینراموگ د هگوت هپ یگیل یب د. تسوار ییدنال یزیغ رت تیالوغ لوت یی ییک هلی اپ هپ یچ، ییش لنمو هگوت هپ ورغ وپرپش ب د ییک وکیل هپ و نابلاط ی ناغفا د هپ نان اوغ ییناتسکاپ. هتسی نارپ رال هت یزیغ او ذوفن ناتسکاپ د و نابلاط ی ناغفا

لپخ، ورک تپ ناغ یی هخوم هپ یزرابم یدمه د، یپرکرو ریغت هت تلاح ید یچ هرکو هخه "نینمؤملاریم" رمع الم هغه ییک نایرج هغه هپ. پرمو هتلمه یچ یغ رت، وش نوتسار هت ناتسناغفا هترب و ورک لدب یی یغنگوتسه هپ یوغه یینتسیخا هتگ هپ هن مون د هغه د و خ رت ورک لاقتنا هت ونالای تسرم ولپخ هنب یینیتنبر هپ کاو لپخ. یپرک هرسرت هتوتیالوغ لپخ ییک یپن هرون و ناتسکاپ

رت ناتسکاپ و ناتسناغفا د یروپ یغرو رت گرم د رمع الم د هتسورو ویدیخرپار هل تراما د و نابلاط د هلاقم اد. یوکه ییدنارو هنتک هو ووتکرح هپ هغه د خنم

انس هتین همیرد هپ ربوتکا د و، ییک اپر هپ انیو د پم رت رشمس لو د هم ۲۱ هپ تسگا د لاک زیدیز ۲۰۱۷ د. هرا هپ رتالم د و نابلاط د، یخم هل ونودنوگرخ وی تسورو د اوخل پروفنپ لارنج و سرفی تتام ری زوغ افد د هت سلجم. ییزیک وگرتس رت زکرمت گنی توتالای امدحتم د ییدناب لور هپ ناتسکاپ. هداقلا و نابلاط د، (یخم هل یسی لاپ یون د و تالای امدحتم د) ری هب هغه فالخ رپ یسی لاپ د امابوا رشمس لو د. یوتوج رتالم ناتسکاپ د هرا هپ ونوتیالوغ د

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## List of Places

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Abbottabad city & district, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KPK – former North-West Frontier Province NWFP), Pakistan  
Aino Mina, sub-urban development project in eastern Kandahar city, Kandahar Province, Afghanistan  
Alisher District, Khost Province, Afghanistan  
Andar District, Ghazni Province, Afghanistan  
Angur Ada, South Waziristan Agency, Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA), Pakistan  
Arghandab District, Kandahar Province, Afghanistan  
Azad Kashmir, Pakistan  
Badaber fortress, Peshawar District, KPK, Pakistan  
Baghar China, South Waziristan Agency, FATA, Pakistan  
Bagram airport & District, Parwan Province, Afghanistan  
Balakot, Mansehra District, KPK, Pakistan  
Balochistan Province, Pakistan  
Bamyan city & province, Afghanistan  
Board area, Peshawar city, KPK, Pakistan  
Chah-i-Himmat village, Khakrez District, Kandahar Province, Afghanistan  
Cherat city, Nowshera District, KPK, Pakistan  
Deh Rawood District, Uruzfan Province, Afghanistan  
Deoband, Saharanpur district, Uttar Pradesh, India  
Durand Line, present-day border between Afghanistan and Pakistan  
Ghazni city & Province, Afghanistan  
Gilgit District, Gilgit-Baltistan (former Northern Areas), Pakistan  
Girdi Jangal city, Chagai District, Balochistan Province, Pakistan  
Gul Kach bazaar on the road to Zhob, South Waziristan, FATA, Pakistan  
Hangu, city & district, KPK, Pakistan  
Hattar city, Haripur District, KPK, Pakistan  
Herat city & province, Afghanistan  
Jalalabad city, Nangarhar Province, Afghanistan  
Kabul city & province, Afghanistan  
Kandahar city & province, Afghanistan  
Kapisa Province, Afghanistan  
Karachi city, Sindh Province, Pakistan  
Khakrez District, Kandahar Province, Afghanistan  
Khalbesat military base (aka Forward Operating Base Chapman), Khost Province, Afghanistan  
Khwaja Bahauddin District, Takhar Province, Afghanistan  
Killa Saifullah city & district, Balochistan Province, Pakistan  
Kuchlak Bazar, Chiltan town, Quetta city, Balochistan Province  
Kunar Province, Afghanistan  
Kunduz city & province, Afghanistan  
Laghman city & province, Afghanistan  
Lahore city, Punjab Province, Pakistan  
Logar Province, Afghanistan  
Maiwand District, Kandahar Province, Afghanistan



Mazar-i Sharif city, Balkh Province, Afghanistan  
Mir Ali city, North Waziristan Agency, FATA, Pakistan  
Miranshah city, North Waziristan Agency, Pakistan  
Mirjaveh city, Sistan and Baluchistan Province, Iran  
Murree city, KPK, Pakistan  
Nangarhar Province, Afghanistan  
Nika District, Paktika Province, Afghanistan  
Paktya Province, Afghanistan  
Panjsher Province, Afghanistan  
Panjwayi District, Kandahar Province  
Peiwar Pass, connecting Paktya Province, Afghanistan with Kurram Agency, FATA, Pakistan  
Peshawar city, KPK, Pakistan  
Pishin (Peshin) District, Balochistan Province, Pakistan  
Quetta city, Balochistan Province, Pakistan  
Ribat Qila, location at meeting point of Iranian, Pakistani and Afghan border  
Raebareli city & district, Uttar Pradesh State, India  
Sangisar (Sang-i Hisar) village, Panjwai District, Kandahar Province, Afghanistan  
Sara Bagh military base (aka Forward Operating Base Salerno), Khost Province, Afghanistan  
Sara Kandaw area, Angur Adda District, South Waziristan Agency, FATA, Pakistan  
Sarpoza prison, on western outskirts of Kandahar city, Afghanistan  
Shahi Kot (Shakur Gar) mountain, Paktya Province, Afghanistan  
Shahjoy District, Zabul Province, Afghanistan  
Shahwalikot District, Kandahar Province, Afghanistan  
Shawal, North Waziristan Agency, FATA, Pakistan  
Sohrab Goth, suburb of Gadap town, Karachi city, Sindh Province, Pakistan  
Swat city & district, KPK, Pakistan  
Taftan mountain, Sistan and Baluchistan Province, Iran  
Takhar Province, Afghanistan  
Thall city, Hangu District, KPK, Pakistan  
Toba Kakar mountain range, Pishin District, Balochistan Province, Pakistan  
Uruzgan Province, Afghanistan  
Wana city, South Waziristan Agency, FATA, Pakistan  
Zabul city & province, Afghanistan  
Zangawat (Zangabad) village, Panjwayi District, Kandahar Province  
Zherayi District, Panjwayi District, Kandahar Province, Afghanistan  
Zhob city & district, Balochistan Province, Pakistan  
Zurmat District, Paktya Province



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# Introduction

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This paper seeks to reflect the views of those fighting the Afghan government, which includes the movement of the Afghan Taliban. The movement of the Afghan Taliban grew out of multiple sources, but came mainly from primarily local bands of religious students who joined the anti-Communist uprising of Afghan religious scholars. These bands of religious students captured branches in some of the Pakistan-based religious resistance parties, and were frequently integrated in provincial organizations as separate “fronts” inside Afghanistan. The religious students did not appropriate the modernizing Islamist discourse of *Hizb-i Islami* and other parties, but demanded the creation of an Islamic system of governance, the “Islamic Emirate,” headed by the commander of the faithful (*amir al-muminin*), and not a President. This vision was realized in 1998, two years after the fall of Kabul. Pakistani support had been used up to this point by all parties in order to capture power in Afghanistan as a tactic. With the fall of the Islamic Emirate, this tactic changed to become the strategy for their survival, comeback and counter-offensive.

Every time the Taliban used Pakistan in order to secure their leadership, establishing command centers, recruitment, or any other activity, the increasing reliance coloured their whole activity. In the matter of recruitment, this meant that Pakistani youth would be admitted into the Afghan Taliban ranks as full members. Ultimately, this reliance also opened up the Afghan Taliban to Pakistani penetration and influence.

Mullah Omar, the “amir al-muminin” tried to counter this trend by relocating into hiding inside Afghanistan, where he also died. In the process, he had ceded much actual control to his messengers, who could operate in Pakistan and the world in his name. The article provides an overview of Mullah Omar’s movements between Afghanistan and Pakistan after the fall of the Taliban Emirate up to his death.

In light of President Trump speech on 21 August 2017, and subsequent briefings by Secretary of Defense Mat-

tis and General Dunford to the Senate on 3 October, a stronger focus of the United States on Pakistan’s role in supporting the Taliban is evident. The views of the Taliban and Al-Qaida operatives on the role played by Pakistan appear to support this shift in American focus from President Obama’s approach.

Many in Afghanistan argue that the Taliban would be imposed on the people by outside powers - notably Pakistan and the United States - in order to deny self-determination to the Afghan people, keeping them settled and separated across the artificial border drawn by the colonial power of Great Britain - the Durand Line.<sup>1</sup> In this explanation, people are forced to join the Taliban. The Taliban presence in this conspiracy theory allows a war without end against the Afghan people, which is characterised as being prone to violence by the colonial outsiders.<sup>2</sup> Today, this reference to colonial outsiders means Pakistan. In the eyes of many Afghans General Musharraf’s speech of April 2001 was seen to betray his ambition to annex Afghanistan as it’s fifth province.<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand, the Taliban and the Islamic Emirate are portrayed as a vehicle for people to determine their own fate. In this reading, the idea of the universal Islamic Emirate helps to dissolve the artificial colonial borders and governments that do not represent the people.<sup>4</sup> This

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1. A recent publication from this point of view is: Abubakar Siddique, *The Pashtun Question*, London 2014. He quotes the words of Mawlawi Yunus Khalis that “*we [the Taliban] are are like orphans, anybody who is kind uses us for his benefit*” (ibid. p. 155) to demonstrate that outside influence was the decisive factor.

2. Shah Mahmoud Hanifi, “Shah Shuja’s ‘Hidden History’ and its Implications for the Historiography of Afghanistan”, *South Asia Multidisciplinary Academic Journal* [Online], Free-Standing Articles, Online since 14 May 2012, retrieved on 1 February 2017.

3. Naseem Ahmad, General Musharraf’s Taliban Policy 1999-2008, *The Dialogue* 5 (April-June 2010), p. 96-124, here p. 98f. Jamal Shah & Nasir Riaz, “September 11, 2001 and Change in Pakistan’s Foreign Policy”, *American International Journal of Contemporary Research* 3 (January 2010), p. 97-108, the ‘fifth province’ is mentioned on p. 101.

4. Mufti Rasheed Ludhviani (ed. Michael Semple, trans. Yameema Mitha), *Obedience to the Amir: An early text on the Afghan Taliban*

logic of the Taliban jihad establishing an Islamic Emirate would ultimately also destroy the nation states neighbouring Afghanistan, including Pakistan.

In other words, the Taliban are seen to be either a product of Pakistan, or the tool for its destruction. I will try to examine the question of the relationship between the Taliban and Pakistan as seen by my interlocutors among the Taliban.

With respect to the relationship between the Movement of the Afghan Taliban with both the state and the society of Pakistan, establishing facts is a daunting task. My approach is based on first-hand experience by members of the Taliban, or their relatives. In order to protect my sources, I have anonymised some names of my interlocutors. I am also aware that the complexity of the question is not limited to the area where I was able to gather information myself. I also formed my opinion based on interviews with my friends, and have to take into account their own opinions. A lot of the information I gathered from my friends was not always provided in order to give an exact description of an event, but was also meant to communicate to me their moral, political or religious value judgment. Therefore even accounts presented to me by eyewitnesses might not be an accurate reflection of the event.

Beyond personal information, historians' accounts have covered the activities of political Islamists based in Pakistan against the Afghan Muhammadzay monarchy in the 1970s. Historians have described the sabotage activities against the government of President Muhammad Daoud Khan (1973-1978) started by Pakistani Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, and culminating in the failed armed revolt of 1975. I believe it is fair to say that this revolt laid the basis for a later insurgency in Panjsher, Logar and Kunar under the leadership of Mawlawi Jamilurrahman<sup>5</sup>, Burhanuddin Rabbani, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and Ahmadshah Massoud.<sup>6</sup> Pakistan had recruited these characters from among the 'Jawan-i Musulman' (Muslim Youth), a political Islamist group founded by Abdurrahim Niyazi<sup>7</sup> and later led by Eng. Habiburrahman. This group later became *Hezb-i Islami* (The Islamic Party), from which several factions developed, including one using the same name led by Eng. Hekmatyar, and the *Jamiat-i Islami* (The Islamic Society) of Prof. Burhanuddin Rabbani.<sup>8</sup>

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Movement, Berlin 2015.

5. Mawlawi Jamilurrahman from Kunar is considered the founder of Salafi Wahabi ideology branch in Afghanistan. He started out together, with Islamic fundamentalists influenced by the Muslim Brotherhood, mobilizing against the monarchy in Afghanistan. He led the revolt of Kunar in 1975. Prior to that the Pakistani military secret service agency had promised him assistance during the period of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in Pakistan 1973-1975. At approximately the same time as Burhanuddin Rabbani, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and Ahmadshah Massoud, he fled to Pakistan. There he met with Pakistani authorities. He introduced his companions to them. His companions - some of whom I was fortunate to interview - received military

training in Cherat, Hattar, Abbottabad, Badaber, Gilgit and Azad Kashmir, and were sent in 1975 with hundreds of weapons to the other side of Durand Line.

6. Ahmadshah Massoud was the head of the paramilitary and political group "Council of Supervision of the North" (*shura-yi nizar-i shamal*). He was affiliated with *Jamiat-i Islami* under the leadership of Burhanuddin Rabbani and was appointed as his minister of defense. He played an important role in inter-factions war in Kabul. He led severe fighting against *Hizb-i Islami*, *Hizb-i Wahdat-i Islami* and *Junbish-i Mili* in Kabul from 1992 onwards, leading to the destruction of a larger part of the city and reportedly to the death of more than sixty thousand inhabitants of Kabul. In the subsequent years, he assumed a mythical character of resistance against Taliban. On 9 September 2001 he was killed in his office in Khwaja Bahaud-din District in Takhar Province in a suicide attack by two Arabs who introduced themselves as journalists from Belgium.

7. David B. Edwards, *Caravan of Martyrs - Sacrifice and Suicide Bombing in Afghanistan*, Parkland, CA 2017, p. 63 shows a rare picture of Abruurrahim Niyazi in the background of a photograph of a *Hizb-i Islami* meeting.

8. David B. Edwards, *Before Taliban - Genealogies of the Afghan Jihad*, Berkeley Los Angeles & London 2002 provides a very detailed account of the formation of the political parties on one side, and the traditional Taliban networks on the other, based on field work in Peshawar in the 1980s.

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# Traditional Society and the Role of Mullas

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Since Afghanistan is a traditional, religious society, religious scholars (*ulema*) of the Hanafi school enjoy enormous social influence. In accordance with unofficial statistics, I would estimate as of 2015, that there are 150,000 mosques active in the almost 45,000 villages of Afghanistan. Every mosque had in its vicinity one or several guesthouses (*hujra*) for Islamic studies students (*taliban*). Every mosque has one leading cleric (*imam*) and in every *hujra* there exists an average of five to fifteen, sometimes even 20 *taliban* busy with Islamic studies. From this group, a number of talented young *taliban* is regularly selected to go to Pakistan in order to achieve higher education and become in their turn a cleric (*mulla*), who after further studies might find a position as an *imam* in a village. Higher education was provided by training facilities (*madrasa*, plural *madaris*) comparable to universities. Many of these were outside of Afghanistan.<sup>9</sup>

In addition to conveying the religious tenets to the masses of people in line with Hanafi jurisprudence, these *imams* arrange daily religious ceremonies including prayers, funerals, praying ceremonies for the deceased, draw up marriage contracts and inheritance documents. Most of them were also engaged in promoting the teachings of four schools of Sufism as well. The majority of *mullas* were for most of the last hundred years affiliated with the Naqshbandiya school of Sufism, which was led by the descendants of Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi (died 1624 AD). He was famous as the “innovator of the religion for the second millennium of the hijra” (*mujaddid-i alf-i thani*). His descendants were named after him as the innovators (*mujaddidi*). These people enjoyed greater respect within the society and were called *hazarat*, plural of *hazrat*, a title of respect. They had built and maintained in Kabul mosques and monasteries in Shor Bazar (a neighborhood in the old city) and later in Qala-yi Jawad.

The leading figures of these *hazarat* in Afghanistan dur-

ing the 20<sup>th</sup> century AD were Fazl Omar Mujaddidi and his brothers Fazl Ahmad and Gul Agha Mujaddidi. This family and their predecessors such as Mir Hajji, the imam of the Pul-i Khishti Mosque in Kabul, played a critical role in the resistance movement of Afghans against the British. The founder of the Mujaddadi Hadda’i line, Najmuddin Akhundzada, was born in Ghazni, studied in Swat and set up his spiritual base in the area of Hadda near present-day Jalalabad city in Nangarhar Province.<sup>10</sup> Fazl Omar Mujaddidi was a *khalifa* (deputy) of Najmuddin Akhundzada. The Akhundzada, also known as the Hadda’i Saheb, was the leader of Afghan resistance movement against the British colonial administration of India in Hangu, Thall, Peiwar and Wana. These areas compose today Pakistan’s Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA). Hazrat Fazl Omar served as Minister of Justice until 1932 under King Nader Shah, then withdrew to devote his time to religious study, and died in 1960 in Kabul. He was buried in Qala-yi Jawad of Kabul.

In addition to being a leading member of this family, Gul Agha Mujaddidi was known as respected and important spiritual and religious personality, who served as ambassador of Afghanistan in many countries and represented Afghanistan in many international conferences. He was one of the founding members of the International Association of Islamic Scholars.

The *hazarat* of the Mujaddidi family exercised great influence over society through their representatives (*khalifa*), most of whom were *mulla-imams* serving in mosques. During the “decade of democracy” 1964-1973, when a variety of political elements had been granted by His Majesty the King Muhammad Zahir Shah the freedom to engage freely, the *hazarat* of Kabul also seized this opportunity. The *hazarat* wanted to bring about changes to the official policy toward religion in accordance with their perception of the rapid westernization of Afghanistan in the 1960s. They established a political party of

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9. In the course of this article I use the spelling “Mulla” – simplified from the transliterated mullâ –instead of the more common ‘Mullah’.

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10. Asta Olesen, Religion and Politics in Afghanistan, Milton Park e.a. 1996, p. 84.

“*Khuddam al-Furqan*” (servants of the Holy Quran), in which numerous *mullas* of mosques and religious scholars gained membership. They also issued a weekly magazine, “*Nida-yi Haq*” (the voice of truth/God), which was edited by Mawlawi Abdussatar Siddiqi and Mawlawi Rahimullah Zurmati until it was banned by the government of President Daoud Khan in 1973. They also established in accordance with their perception a higher training facility (*madrasa*) “*Nur al-Madaris al-Faruqi*” in Andar district of Ghazni Province. This school was planned to be similar to the Deoband School in India and was headed by Muhammad Ismail Mujaddidi.<sup>11</sup> In reaction to the *madaris* established by the government, Ibrahim Mujaddidi, from the 1970s onwards, also added science, sport and English language classes to the curriculum of “*Nur al-Madaris al-Faruqi*”.<sup>12</sup>

With a view to implement reforms, roll back the increasing westernization and the political and strategic influence of Communists, and in order to enforce Islamic laws in the country, the *hazarat* of Qala-yi Jawad pressured the Afghan government. They organized a series of great demonstrations of religious scholars that continued for about forty days in 1969. This “*Pul-i Khishti*” demonstration – named after the main bridge in the Shor Bazaar neighbourhood in central Kabul – was ultimately crushed by the Government. Some members of the Mujaddidi family (*hazarat*) fled to Pakistan. This included Sibghatullah Mujaddidi, aged around 35 years at the time. He then sought political asylum in Denmark. Others stayed behind. Mawlawi Faizani, a Sufi leader originally from Herat, who participated in the 1969 “*Pul-i Khishti*” demonstration, founded *Hizb-i Tawhid* (Party of Oneness with God) after his release in 1970 and centered his activities in his library in central Kabul. The founders of *Jawanan-i Musulman* claimed inspiration from Mawlawi Faizani, though there is little evidence of this claim. The political refugees found in Pakistan a different model of well-funded *madaris* and self-assertive *ulema* independent of the government and without a marital connection to the monarchy.

One branch of political Islam declared war on the Afghan government soon after the establishment of the Republic on 17 July 1973. Mawlawi Jalaluddin Haqqani reportedly made the proclamation in the main village of Nika

District of Paktika Province (which then still belonged to Paktya Province). Some *ulema* and *taliban* were said to have joined him and then left for exile in Pakistan.<sup>13</sup> They seem not to have been involved however in the uprising of 1975.

In September 1978, after the communist coup d'état, the revolutionary regime first of all began to clear the country from religious elements with a view to eliminate the influence of religion. In addition to tens of thousands among their secular opponents, they also arrested about 140 family members of *hazarat* of Qala-yi Jawad from their homes at night. This arrest wave included their leaders, Muhammad Ibrahim Mujaddidi and Muhammad Ismail Mujaddidi. To date, nothing has been known about their fate, but it is likely that they were executed like the secular opposition. This also put an end to the school “*Nur al-Madaris al-Faruqi*” in Ghazni, which had been founded by the Mujaddidis.<sup>14</sup> It is also likely that in the same wave of executions, Mawlawi Faizani, who had been jailed already in 1974, was also killed.

I was told many times by older interlocutors, that arresting the *hazarat* had a great role in provoking the mass of people to revolt against the communists. This development provided Mullas and religious leaders a great opportunity to promote their propaganda against the regime amongst the people. The arrest of *hazarat* who enjoyed greatest respect, even to the extent of holiness and sanctity throughout Afghan society, was a reason strong enough to prove the enormity of the communists' design against the religion. *Ulema* encouraged people to revolt or to emigrate. Together with mass revolt, Afghans began to immigrate to neighboring countries, in particular to Pakistan to seek refuge. Among these refugees, thousands of Mullas and *taliban* immigrated also to Pakistan and focused there on religious affairs in refugee camps. *Ulema* – with the assistance of people – built mosques, *madaris* and began with teaching *taliban* and conveying religious principles and concepts to the people and also sent newly

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13. Don Rassler and Vahid Brown, *Fountainhead of Jihad: The Haqqani Nexus*, New York 2013, p. 45 cites an early companion of Mawlawi Jalaluddin Haqqani, Mawlawi Aziz Khan, who might be claiming that this act took place in Afghanistan in order to legitimize the Haqqani Network. Other sources have claimed that it took place in North Waziristan.

14. Inayatullah Kakar, *Taliban face theological collapse*, Blog 23 February 2015 (<https://kalamnigar.wordpress.com/2015/02/23/are-taliban-on-brink-of-theological-collapse/>), retrieved on 16 February 2017.

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11. Olesen 2013, p. 188.

12. Gilles Dorronsoro, *Revolution unending: Afghanistan 1979 to Present*, London 2005, p. 53.

graduated *taliban* as fighters on various occasions to the battlefronts in Afghanistan. These *taliban* were distinct from the insurgents fighting with the political Islamists, who had usually an urban background and high school or even university education. The political Islamists also aimed to conquer and exercise power in a republican (if not democratic) system. Members of the *taliban* did not aspire to an 'Islamic Republic' but worked for consensus among the various factions, and if pressed, stated a preference for a return to monarchy as to an idealized past.<sup>15</sup>

At this time, religious scholars affiliated with *hazarat* led various fronts of the holy war (*jihad*) within Afghanistan. Outside the borders of Afghanistan, several groups were created under the umbrella of the "*Harakat-i Inqilab-i Islami*" (Islamic Revolution Movement). The leaders of these groups were Mawlawi Muhammad Nabi Muhammadi, Mawlawi Nasrullah Mansour, Mawlawi Rafiullah Muazen respectively. In addition to this, various Islamic scholars were engaged in other political parties like Jamiat or Hezb-i Islami, leading the call for *jihad* and engaged in preaching. In many of these organizations this developed into a separate department. The *taliban* and *ulema* did not have leading role on the level of the party but dominated these departments for preaching and recruitment.

In particular Mawlawi Nabi Muhammadi and thinkers in his movement early on came to the conclusion that political parties were driven by self-interest of their leaders, and therefore unable to form an effective coalition against the Soviet occupation and the Afghan Communist Government. In particular the group of Mawlawi Nasrullah Mansour, based on members of the Sahak tribe from Loya Paktya, promoted the idea of empowering *Taliban* straight into management roles and abolish the party structures. Mawlawi Abdulhakim Mujahid, Pir Muhammad Rohani, Habibullah Fawzi, Qalamuddin were the main advisors to Saifurrahman and Abdullatif Mansour who took over leadership of this group after Nasrullah Mansour was killed – allegedly by *Hezb-i Islami* – by a car bomb in 1993 while driving around his home province.

Some fronts within Afghanistan during the 1980s were led only by *taliban* and membership was only composed by *taliban*. The groups of *taliban* were separate from other groups or fronts in the areas of resistance; the *taliban*'s approach towards people was relatively better. They were

more disciplined and had also paid attention to the Islamic principles and morale in their daily work. This resulted in sympathy for them among the common people. Noteworthy fronts were the *taliban* in Zabul Province under the leadership of Mulla Musa Kalim and Mulla Madad, the *taliban* fronts in Kandahar under the leadership of Mulla Naqibullah, Mulla Muhammad Rabbani, Mulla Noorudin Turabi, and Mulla Muhammad Omar. The *taliban* of Zabul had control over Kabul-Kandahar highway and posed the greatest challenges to the Soviet and pro-soviet Afghan forces, while the *taliban* of Kandahar were the strongest resistance groups against the Soviet troops and pro-soviet regime in Shahwalikot, Zangawat (also spelt Zangabad) in Panjwayi, Zherayi and other areas of the province. Each of these *taliban* fronts was a member of a political party, often of Jamiat.<sup>16</sup>

The *taliban* commanders of these fronts had established relations with Pakistani authorities during the *jihad*. Pakistan was aware of the role of Mullas and *taliban* in Afghan society and of the influence these elements had on the resistance movement of Afghans against the Soviets. That is why Pakistani authorities as well as Pakistani *ulema* kept good relations with this factor in Afghanistan.

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15. Dorronsoror 2005, p. 106f.

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16. S. Fida Yunas, Afghanistan, Organization of the Peoples Democratic Party of Afghanistan (Watan Party, Governments and Biographical Sketches (1982-1998), p. 575 gives a overview of some *mujahidin* commanders in the 1980s in Kandahar belonging to Jamiat-i Islami.

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# Mulla Muhammad Omar's Origins

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It was not evident at the beginning of the Taliban movement, that Mulla Omar would be the leader.<sup>17</sup> Mulla Omar was born into a conservative rural poor landless family of the Hotak tribe, which is part of the larger Ghilzai branch. According to a biography of Mulla Muhammad Omar published online by the Taliban<sup>18</sup> in April 2015, he was born in 1960 in the village of Chah-i-Himmat, in Khakrez District, Kandahar Province. He spent his childhood in Deh Rawood District, Uruzgan Province, where he moved with his uncle Aka Mulla Noor Muhammad Akhund after the death of his father Ghulam Nabi. His uncle had married Omar's mother fairly quickly (some months and not three years as frequently claimed) after Ghulam Nabi's death and worked as a religious teacher near Deh Rawood. During the time of the Taliban Emirate, Mulla Noor Muhammad participated in the meetings of *ulema* in Kandahar, but never assumed any official responsibility. He passed away in Quetta in 2008.

After the 1978 Saur Revolution in Afghanistan, Omar went to Pakistan to study, and from 1982 onwards fought as a member of the Hezb-i Islami branch of Yunus Khalis. He later joined Harakat-i-Inqilab-i-Islami of Mawlawi Muhammad Nabi Muhammadi. Mulla Abdul Salam Zaef claims to have been present when exploding shrapnel destroyed one of Omar's eyes during a battle in Sangisar shortly before the 1987 Battle of Arghandab. Some sources claim that Mulla Omar spoke Arabic, but no one close to him has confirmed this to me. It is however important to note that he spent a long time during the *jihad* in Pakistan and also studied there.

All Taliban founders and leaders had like Mulla Omar been members in the Pakistan-based *mujahidin* parties. Mulla Gul Agha Ishaqzay, Hafiz Majid, Mulla Ahmadullah Moti Nanai and Mulla Abdulghani Baradar - the

deputy of Mulla Omar - fought in the same 'front' led by Fazlullah Akhundzada with Mulla Omar against the Communist Order and the Soviet Forces. Mawlawi Jalaluddin Haqqani was a commander of Mawlawi Khalis. Mulla Muhammad Rabbani, Mulla Hasan Babar, Mawlawi Ehsanullah, Mulla Burjan, Mulla Mishr, Mawlawi Abdulkabir, Mulla Akhtar Muhammad Osmani, Mulla Hasan Akhund, Mawlawi Nurullah Nuri, Mulla Fazil, Mulla Dadullah Akhund, Mulla Akhtar Muhammad Mansour and up to the current leader of the Taliban Shaikh Hibatullah Akhund were previously under the command of the *mujahidin* parties. Moreover, two parties of the seven parties of the Afghan mujahidin based in Pakistan, namely Malwawi Khalis' Hizb-i Islami and the Harakat-i Inqilab-i Islami led by Mawlawi Nabi Muhammadi openly backed the Taliban movement. Two more parties led by Prof. Mujaddidi and Pir Gilani covertly supported the Taliban, believing they would bring a return to the pre-war order. The majority of the commanders and fighters of these two parties integrated themselves into the ranks of the Taliban. Also Prof. Burhanuddin Rabbani, the leader of the Jamiat-i Islami party and President during the mujahidin period, and Ahmadshah Massoud backed the Taliban for some time. In particular during the early phase of the movement, regular cash transfers from Kabul were arranged to benefit the Taliban through Mulla Naqib. The early expansion of the Taliban to Helmand was encouraged by Prof. Rabbani as it was weakening Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's Hizb-i Islami and seen as empowering his own party.<sup>19</sup> Specifically until the Taliban had reached the gates of Kabul, and conquered Maidan Shahr and Chahar Asyab (the main command center and staging post of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, the leader of Hizb-i Islami), and Hekmatyar had fled to Jalalabad.

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17. Abdul Salam Zaef, My life with the Taliban, London e.a. 2011, p. 63ff.

18. Published on copy at: <https://kalamnigar.wordpress.com/2015/04/06/biography-of-Mulla-muhammad-omar-mujahid/>.

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19. Mohammad Zahir Azimy, Taliban chiguna amadand [How the Taliban arrived], Peshawar 1377 (1998), p. 25,



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# The Beginning of the Movement of the Afghan Taliban (1994) and Pakistan

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Many books have been written about the formation of the Taliban movement, and a close evaluation of all aspects is beyond the scope of this article, which is attempting to ascertain the Taliban relationship with Pakistan. Rumors exist that the Movement of the Afghan Taliban (as established in 1994 – in the following referred to as “the Taliban”) was backed by Pakistani authorities – while certainly not founded by them as frequently alleged.<sup>20</sup> In this respect, the role of retired General Nasirullah Babar, at that time the Minister of Interior of Pakistan is mentioned. Nasirullah Babar had from the time prior to Soviet invasion close relations with the leadership of these groups. Reportedly, he also oversaw the military training of Afghan opposition in the Cherat Commando Division. In answering this question, Babar had used ambiguous language in several interviews that generated the impression that he admitted his role in creating and organizing the movement of Taliban. Pakistani authorities had referred on several occasions to the existence of warlords and general anarchy at that time in Afghanistan as the main reason for the creation of the movement of Taliban and deny that they had played whatsoever role in this respect. However, in the subsequent years, the former Prime Minister of Pakistan, Benazir Bhutto also alleged in some of her statements and interviews, that Pakistani military authorities had supported the Taliban in Afghanistan.<sup>21</sup> The report of a United Nations commission of inquiry into the death of Ms. Bhutto also stated that the “Pakistani military organized and supported

the Taliban to take control of Afghanistan in 1996”.<sup>22</sup>

In a similar vein, the Taliban during their time in power also acknowledged initial support by Pakistan after their movement had formed itself. The support from Pakistan was quite openly declared as a shift of support by the ISI from Hekmatyar and Dostum to the Taliban Movement with the aim to fight against President Rabbani and Ahmadshah Massoud.<sup>23</sup>

As far as the formal position of Taliban is concerned in this respect, they have constantly rejected the accusation that Pakistani authorities provided support for them and named the movement as a pure Afghan movement. They stated that they began their movement from Kandahar and reached the borders of Panjsher in order to eliminate the prevailing insecurity in the country at that time and to establish a capable central system across the country.<sup>24</sup>

When I contacted “Azmat”<sup>25</sup> a close friend of Mulla Muhammad Omar, I asked him what he thought about the allegation that the movement of Taliban in 1994 was supported by Pakistan, and whether Pakistan intended to reach the Central Asian markets with the support of the Taliban. He said: “As far as the official status of Pakistan is concerned in this respect, it is not true that Pakistan had a role in the creation of the Taliban Movement. We initiated our movement following the consultations between ourselves, given the situation in Kandahar and other

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20. Robert Grenier, *88 Days to Kandahar: A CIA Diary*, New York e.a. 2015, p. 47.

21. Benazir Bhutto, *Reconciliation: Islam, Democracy and the West*, New York 2008, p. 14 alleges the Taliban were “created by the ISI in the 1980s” and later (p. 115) goes on to explain that the movement was at first guided towards peace and a comprehensive broad-based government by her Pakistan’s People’s Party government until its overthrow on 4 November 1996 – two days before the signing of the Afghan agreement. This implies control over the movement’s outward dealing with the United Nations and other Afghan political groups. In the English language, this question has received a lot of attention, and numerous books and articles have been written on this topic. The most recent description of direct and continuing support by Pakistan during the 1990s is found in Carlotta Gall, *The Wrong Enemy, America in Afghanistan 2001-2014*, p. 46.

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22. United Nations, Report of the United Nations Commission of Inquiry into the facts and circumstances of the assassination of the former Prime Minister of Pakistan, Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto (S/2010/191), 19 April 2010, para. 201.

23. Mawlawi Hafizullah Haqqani, *Taliban – min dalam al-Mulla ila imara al-muminin [Taliban – from the Mulla’s dream to the Emirate of the Believers]*, Islamabad October 1997, p. 78f.

24. For an apologetic version of the Taliban view, see Zaeef (2011), p. 67 who sidesteps the question of Pakistani support entirely.

25. Azmat” fought together with Mulla Omar against the Soviet invasion troops, and supported him during the initial phase of the movement and later functioned as a minister of the Taliban’s Islamic Emirate cabinet. He was released recently (2015) from detention by Pakistan, and lives in isolation with his family.

parts of the country. Security in Afghanistan in general was in the interests of Pakistan, because Pakistan wanted to reach the Central Asian market through Afghanistan. It is therefore, obvious that every other movement like ours, no matter who had initiated it, might have had the support of Pakistan. The assistance provided by Pakistan to us was that Pakistani authorities did not prevent the Taliban in the refugee camps who wanted to join us in Afghanistan and did not prevent our fighters to cross the border to Pakistan.”

Of course, the matter was not that simple as “Azmat” put it. Parallel to the beginning of Taliban’s movement in Afghanistan, an office was opened in the Satellite Town of Quetta in Pakistan for the Taliban. Another friend – let’s call him “Abdulkhaliq” – remembered that this office was established inside the magnificent house of an Afghan businessman, Haji Lalak, and it had two other buildings beside it that also belonged to the same businessman. One of the three buildings was used to recruit new fighters into the movement, another house was a place where injured Taliban were treated medically. A third house functioned as storage facility for shoes, blankets and cloths.

For medical treatment of injured Taliban and for the purpose of establishing contacts with local religious scholars and *madaris*, an office was opened in the same year (1994) in Sohrab Ghoth of Karachi, where many Pashtuns lived. Sayyid Mahmudullah Akhundzada was appointed as its first supervisor. He is originally from Shahjoy District of Zabul Province and studied Islamic sciences in the “*Jamiyat al-Faruqiya*” *madrassa* in Karachi led by noted scholar Sheikh Salimullah Khan at that time. Later, he was transferred to Kabul and he assumed the status of Deputy Governor of the Central Bank (*Da Afghanistan Bank*) until the end of the Taliban regime. Mulla Abdussatar Zahedi was appointed as the second head of this office in 1997. Mulla Abdussatar hailed from Kunduz province and was a student of Islamic studies at this time in Karachi. Upon completing his studies, he was appointed as the mayor of Mazar-i Sharif, a position, which he held also until the end of the Taliban regime. After the transfer of Mulla Abdussatar, Mulla Muhammad Daud from Kapisa Province functioned as third head of this office from 1998 onwards. He currently serves in the Doha office of the Taliban as a protocol officer.

A member of the Taliban who worked with this office before 2000 – let’s call him “Ahmad” – told me that Paki-

stani authorities did not interfere directly with the affairs of the office. He stated however that in case of urgent matters, for example when local authorities of Quetta could not resolve the problem, he could then contact a “Major Rashid” and “Colonel Athar” via phone, who were assigned by military authorities for further help.

Likewise, in the Board area of Peshawar a liaison office of this kind was established in 1994. Its first head was Abdulhamid Akhundzada, who later became the head of office for the Taliban’s counter-narcotics campaign in Kabul. Abdulhamid Akhundzada later became the head of the Taliban Committee for Freeing Prisoners after 2002 under the leadership of Mulla Abdulghani Baradar. After his term, Mawlawi Ahmad Jan was appointed as the head of the Peshawar office. He worked later as the Editor-in-Chief of the newspaper “Shariat” of the Taliban in Peshawar. In the subsequent years, he assumed the status of Minister for Mining and Industries in Kabul and even visited the United States of America in December 1997 as part of a Taliban delegation.<sup>26</sup>

The office of Peshawar had much importance for Taliban, as they could access from this city all of Eastern Afghanistan. Another senior official at that time who served in this office said that he did not think a formal understanding existed between Pakistan and the Taliban. He thought that everything happened with a view of objective realities and on the basis of mutual cooperation and loyalty. For Pakistan the existence of the Taliban was a reality and they needed to maintain a good working relationship with them. Beyond this requirement there was also a stronger bond coming from a successful working relationship. The Taliban were reliable partners, and Pakistan reciprocated in kind.

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26. This delegation also included the Minister for Culture and Information Amir Muttaqi, the Minister for Planning Qari Din Muhammad, and Abdul Hakim Mujahid, recently appointed as the Taliban representative to the United Nations in New York. A return visit by members of the CENTGAS consortium to Afghanistan took place in February 1998. At that time, Mawlawi Ahmad Jan announced the start of work on the trans-Afghanistan pipeline by end-1998. However, international pressure and the inability of the Taliban to clarify land property titles along the planned pipeline led CENTGAS to announce its withdrawal from the project in October 1998.

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# Pakistani *Jihadi* Groups and the Taliban

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Pakistan and the Taliban always rejected in their statements having any kind of strategic partnership. It will be difficult for researchers to find out documents of such relations before the Taliban entered Kabul in September 1996. Unofficial support for Taliban from Pakistan and the provision of logistic assistance and resources to Taliban through non-governmental elements is something that even Taliban and Pakistani *jihadi*<sup>27</sup> groups and former Pakistani authorities and politicians do not deny.

With the beginning of the Taliban Movement in Afghanistan, Pakistani jihadists joined this movement at first individually. Pakistani authorities known to me personally in Karachi, Quetta and Peshawar told me that at first Pakistani jihadists joined individually to the Afghan Taliban on voluntary basis. They claimed to have regularly received them in their offices, registered their names, father names and address. They agreed that there was no procedure in place to maintain their profile updated, or to register their references and obtain valid addresses. My interlocutors told me that many Pakistani parents came to them, seeking their lost sons. Once they consulted their details on file, it was found almost always that these were incomplete. In some cases Pakistanis fighting in Afghanistan were killed and their names were communicated via phone, but then did not match those registered with the Pakistani competent authorities. So it had become apparent that most Pakistanis participating in fighting on the side of the *taliban* in their fronts during the 1980s and 1990s were not registered with their real names in Afghanistan. For example, a prominent Pakistani commander of Harakat-ul-Mujahidin Mawlana Muhammad Arshad was called in Afghanistan Abu Dujana, without his original name being known to anyone but a select few.

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27. I use the word “jihadi” as the report by the United Nations’ commission of inquiry into Ms. Bhutto’s assassination: “The term jihadi is understood in Pakistan to denote those groups that fought against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan, and later carried out actions in Kashmir. Several of these groups and their splinters have established links with Al-Qaida and the Afghan and Pakistani Taliban.” (S/2010/191), p. 44 footnote 9

A person working for Pakistani security agencies in Karachi – let’s call him “Iqbal” – told me that they faced many problems after they communicated with these boys’ parents. Later in the 1990s the Taliban decided that only those Pakistani or other individuals would be sent to Afghanistan who were introduced to them officially through the offices of Pakistani militant Islamist parties, and who had a copy of their file was submitted to the Taliban. The agencies therefore sent Pakistani parents to offices of Pakistani militant Islamist parties. This resolved in the eyes of the former official their problems, as the parents now would directly speak to the parties’ offices. Regarding the number of Pakistani citizens fighting within the ranks of Afghan Taliban against the government of President Rabbani in Kabul, another former official in Karachi told me: “At this time, the number of Afghan Taliban was huge. We did not have enough means to provide them with logistic support. That is why we practiced caution in sending Pakistani *mujahidin* to Afghanistan.”<sup>28</sup>

As far as the number of Pakistani elements within the ranks of Afghan Taliban after they captured Kabul is concerned, a former commander of Pakistani *mujahedin*, “Rahim”<sup>29</sup>, who has lost one of his legs in the fight against the Soviet troops in Urgun, Paktika Province Afghanistan, noted that “after the capture of Kabul by the Taliban, Pakistani *mujahidin* came closer to Taliban. They realized that Taliban was a power affiliated with

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28. My interlocutor was working in the Karachi office of the Taliban 1994-97. At that time he was in charge of transport. The interlocutor currently is busy with his private business in Pakistan.

29. My interlocutor, the 56 years-old “Rahim” was born in Khairpur of Sindh Province of Pakistan. He studied in various religious madrasas of Pakistan. Under the auspice of Harakat-ul-Mujahideen he initiated armed struggle against the soviet occupation in Afghanistan together with his friend, late Maulana Ershad Ahmad in the 1980s. In 1986 he lost his leg in an armed conflict in Urgun under the leadership of later minister of the *Taliban* Mawlana Arsalah Rahmani. He participated also in various conflicts in Kashmir and enjoys wider influence among *jihadi* organizations in Pakistan, maintains a relation with the leadership of Afghan Taliban. At present, he is busy with academic activities and leads an Islamic university and a center of religious studies for women in the vicinity of Karachi.

Deobandi school of thought and their agenda in Afghanistan was the establishment of an Islamic caliphate, consistent with the dreams of the Martyr Syed Ahmad Barelvi<sup>30</sup> and Mawlana Mahmudulhassan Deobandi<sup>31</sup>. That is why they joined the front lines of jihad to support the foundation of Islamic Emirate.”

He added: “There were several other reasons that encouraged Pakistani *mujahidin* to support the Taliban in Afghanistan: after capturing Kabul and Eastern Afghanistan in 1996, Taliban became suddenly involved in fighting against the Northern Alliance on a wider front. The fighting belt was extended from Nuristan to Laghman and from there to Wardak and Ghazni, which required organized forces and equipment. Pakistani *mujahidin* were present at this time in huge numbers within the ranks of the Afghan Taliban. Given the shift in policy of Pakistan regarding the Kashmir issue, there was little interest for *mujahidin* to remain there.<sup>32</sup> The result was

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30. Sayyid Ahmad Barelvi (1786–1831), from Raebareli in India, was affiliated with famous Saidihindi family whose leader was Mirshah Alamullah Roy Bareli. He came to Peshawar, at that time Afghanistan’s winter capital, in the year 1826. He fought with his disciples against the Sikhs and was killed in the battle of Balakot in 1831. His followers gave him the title *amir al-muminin* (“Commander of the Believers”). Among his deputies (*khalifa*) was the prominent religious scholar and the nephew of Shah Abdul Aziz Mohaddis, Shah Ismail *shahid*, who pledged *baya* to him. Battles with the Sikhs were fought in Peshawar, Nawshera, Akora Khattak, Jahangira, Sama, Swabi, Mardan, Attock, Hazro, Bagha and Hazara. He enforced Islamic Sharia law in the region in line with his own interpretation of Sharia. In Peshawar, he came in conflict with the dominant Barakzai rulers, notably the governor Sultan Muhammad. In many instances, the Peshawar Barakzais sided with the Sikhs. He was killed during a battle with the Sikhs under Ranjit Singh in 1831 in Balakot of the Hazara region (today’s Mansehra District, Pakistan). Shah Ismail *shahid* is also buried in Balakot, his grave is a pilgrimage site (*ziyarat*), on his and on Sayyid Ahmad’s gravestones the date of the battle is written as 6 May 1831.

31. Sheik al-Hind Mawlana Mahmudulhassan Deobandi was born in 1851 in Raebareli, India (Uttar Pradesh). He was a prominent religious scholar and had completed his studies with famous scholars of the time. He was the first teacher of the Deoband *madrasa* in India and spent his life in teaching and campaigning against the English colonial regime. During his struggle he was arrested by English forces and sent in exile to Malta. He spent several years in exile; his disciple, Sheikh al-Islam Hasan Ahmad Madani and the famous Pashtun scholar Mawlana Aziz Gul were imprisoned together with him. Madani wrote his memories from detention. Mawlana Mahmudulhassan translated the Holy Quran into Urdu during his prison term in Malta. For Islamists of the sub-continent, Mahmudulhassan represents a symbol of thought and struggle and every *jihad* movement in the region chooses his thoughts as inspiration for their approaches. He died in 1930 in India.

32. Ashley Tellis, Christine Fair & Jamison Medby, Limited Con-

that a huge number of them were accepted in Afghanistan. An important fact in this regard is that Pakistani *mujahidin* were in need of a rear front in case of Kashmir. It is obvious that Afghanistan was for us an effective ally, because our brothers in *jihad* were in power there.”

They were not alone in adopting this stance once they were firmly based in Pakistan. The Taliban also developed in Pakistan the idea of a return to an Islamic Emirate headed by Mullah Omar, a Ghilzay Pashtun, rather than a return to an Afghan Monarchy headed by a Durrani Pashtun. While there had been earlier revolts in Afghanistan promoting the establishment of a state through jihad, such as the 1945 Safi rebellion<sup>33</sup> in Kunar, the Taliban project at its early stages promised the return to monarchy and the reinstatement of King Zahir Shah. It turned out that this was a minority position advocated by military leaders within the Taliban such as Mulla Burjan. It was tolerated by the Taliban leadership to receive the backing of the two ‘royalist’ *jihadi* parties led by Prof. Mujaddidi and Pir Gailani. This vision of recreating the pre-war monarchy lasted up to the capture of Kabul and the death of Mulla Burjan in September 1996. The last senior representative among the Taliban to uphold this vision had been Mulla Ghaus, who served as Minister of Foreign Affairs until 1998. The return of the king or his representatives was blocked through the refusal by Pakistan to allow the transfer from Rome of loyal staff members.<sup>34</sup> It became evident, that the project of the Taliban would be the rule of Mullah Omar, legitimized through *jihad* and not genealogy or approval by the people.

Pakistan was the first country that recognized the Taliban government officially after they captured Kabul in September 1996. The strategic relations between them, which had previously been regulated through unofficial channels were now covered by official channels. When the Taliban rejected the return to the monarchy and blocked the return of His Majesty Zahir Shah to Afghanistan, Pakistan went along, and recognized the “Islamic Emirate” in 1998 a new system of government, which centralized power in the person of Mulla Omar.

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licts under the Nuclear Umbrella, Santa Monica 2001, p. 30. The perception of Kargil as a tactical military success widely held in Pakistan is contrary to the evidence of successful redeployment by India and recapture of almost all positions held by the “*mujahidin*” prior to the cease-fire agreement. See also Mohinder Puri, Kargil: Turning the Tide, 2015 New Delhi.

33. Edwards 2016, p. 33ff.

34. Ahmed Rashid, Taliban, London 2000, p. 14.

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# Taliban and Pakistan after 9/11

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Although Pakistan was the first country that recognized the Taliban's regime officially and had later encouraged her regional partners, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates to recognize this regime officially, in reality Pakistan was also the first country that supported the so-called war against terrorism that was launched by the US President George W. Bush and stood beside him in the struggle against Taliban. The military dictator, the so-called "Chief Executive" of Pakistan, General Musharraf decided after a three day long consultation with the principal army leaders to stay with the United States in this war. It is a question whether this signified a change in the strategic interests of Pakistan or was a tactical decision. A recent analysis by an American writer states that "Musharraf would help the United States get what it wanted in Afghanistan, and Pakistan would be paid handsomely."<sup>35</sup>

The first victim of this shift in the policy of Pakistan was the Afghan Ambassador to Islamabad Abdussalam Zaeef (also spelt Abdul Salam Zaeef, or Mulla Da'if).<sup>36</sup> Although Zaeef believed he would enjoy protection in accordance with the Vienna convention on immunities for diplomats, Pakistani authorities arrested him and transferred him to Bagram, from where the United States brought him to Guantanamo. This development had a major impact on the relationship between the Taliban and Pakistan.

Whether these fundamental shifts in the approach of Pakistan were the product of unpredictable regional changes or not, Pakistan has predicted all this. A senior

diplomat of the era of Taliban<sup>37</sup> noted in this respect: "As a sensitive strategic partner, Pakistan could not ignore the changes in 1992, in the period after the overthrow of the Soviet Union. She monitored closely the adversarial approach of US and Western countries against *jihadi* groups and considered the geopolitical changes at regional level. From geostrategic perspectives, central Asia faced a vacuum. Pakistan realized that this vacuum must be filled. *Jihadi* groups, with which Pakistan had long experiences of interaction, could be a better alternative to compulsory soviet order. Afghanistan should have been changed to a buffer zone and served as a solid rear base in order to expand Islamic ideology. Osama Bin Laden, who was at this time suspected by Western countries, was a reliable partner for *jihad* against the Soviet occupation. Taliban were also slipper elements of this period, constituting a de facto power. Together with Arab *jihadi* elements, Taliban could play a significant role as a de facto strategic power in the region. The geostrategic plan that was devised at the time of Pakistani dictator, General Ziaul Haq, and recognized the need to fill the vacuum and manage Afghanistan. Pakistan had a considerable role in designing the scenario that was created after 1994 in the region." He added: "In the subsequent years, the immediate recognition of the regime of Taliban by Pakistan reflects the mentality that Pakistan was consent with devising this type of scenario in Afghanistan and region. But as far the shift in the attitude of Pakistan towards Taliban after 9/11 is concerned, it is obvious that this scenario was not predictable with all its consequences. A part of these results was predicted. On the basis of this predicted scenario, Pakistan has changed its attitude in the very critical moment of the life of Taliban's government".

For some Taliban, the Pakistan government had become an enemy. In this time, parts of Pakistani jihadiparties' and Al-Qaida's ideology about sacrifice was adopted by the Taliban. Abdullah Azzam in Peshawar had developed

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35. Mark Mazzetti, *The Way of the Knife - The CIA, a Secret Army, and a War at the Ends of the Earth*, New York e.a. 2013, p. 34.

36. Ahmad Hasan Abul al-Khayr (real name probably Abdallah Mohamed Ragab Abdel Rahman), Letter to Professor Mustafa Hamid, 22 August 2009, in: Director of National Intelligence (Ed.), *Bin Laden's Bookshelf documents declassified on 1 March 2016*, retrieved on 20 February 2017. (<https://www.dni.gov/files/documents/ubl2016/english/Letter%20to%20Professor%20Mustafa%20Hamid.pdf>)

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37. My interlocutor used to be an active diplomat of the Taliban era, lives at present outside the country and is busy together with other Taliban leaders to reconcile and bring together the various groups of Taliban.

and promoted the idea of suicide attacks being legitimate in Islam.<sup>38</sup> The Taliban in exile, fleeing together with Al-Qaida operatives, and under pressure from the Pakistani government made this ideology their own. With the Taliban leaders for the first time thrown together as equals with Al-Qaida and following the developments in Iraq, this ideological transfer quickly changed the Taliban ideology.<sup>39</sup>

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38. Edwards 2016, p. 96.

39. Anand Gopal & Alex Strick Van Lindschoten “Ideology in the Afghan Taliban” Afghanistan Analysts Network June 2017, p. 34.

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## The Fall of Taliban’s Emirate and the Great Escape

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In October 2001, the United States and a coalition of countries attacked Afghanistan and after one and half month severe fighting, the Taliban administration in Kabul was destroyed. First, the Government of Prof. Rabbani took control, but it was replaced by an interim administration under Hamid Karzai, as was agreed upon in Bonn conference. At this juncture, on the one hand Americans were attempting to clear the areas from the remaining Taliban forces in various parts of the country with the assistance of local warlords and on the other hand, thousands of Taliban leaders and fighters were escaping to Pakistan through informal borders and other crossings along the borders. Although Pakistan had prevented the infiltration of Taliban and Al-Qaeda elements through formal borders, many Taliban and Arab fighters have revealed that during crossing the informal borders the paramilitary forces (Frontier Corps) based there created no problems for them, and in many instances low-ranking officers helped them cross the borders.

There are discussions whether Mulla Omar wanted to transfer power and surrender to Hamid Karzai. This story is based mostly on the recollection of President Karzai and his close associates. I have not seen any letter of surrender, which is often claimed to have been sent through Mulla Naqibullah, the former Jamiat leader of Kandahar

to Hamid Karzai in November 2001.<sup>40</sup> The negotiated surrender of Kandahar city on 6 December was a local deal, which likely was no longer made by Mulla Omar himself.<sup>41</sup> His later actions also speak against his intention to have surrendered in order to achieve a peaceful settlement of the conflict.<sup>42</sup>

When Mulla Omar left Kandahar at the end of November 2001, he signed a letter on paper with the official letterhead and appointed Mulla Obaidullah<sup>43</sup> and Mulla

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40. Hamid Karzai is mentioned to have claimed that he received such offers through Naqibullah on 12 November 2001 and later. See Eric Blehm, *The Only Thing Worth Dying For: How Eleven Green Berets fought for Afghanistan*, New York e.a. 2010, p. 91f. The offer is dated into the first days of December 2001 by Bette Dam, *A man and a motorcycle – How Hamid Karzai came to Power*, Utrecht 2014, p. 182.

41. Richard W. Stewart, *The United States Army in Afghanistan: Operation Enduring Freedom*, Washington DC 2004, p. 23.

42. Grenier (2015), p. 360f is of the opinion that while a number of senior Taliban were looking for an arrangement with Hamid Karzai, this was not the case for Mulla Omar.

43. Born ca. 1968-9 in the Panjwai district of Kandahar Province in southern Afghanistan, belonging to the Alokozai tribe, a branch of big Durrani group of the Pashtuns. Became Defense Minister of the Taliban Islamic Emirate Afghanistan from 1996 onwards and was widely seen as the “number two”. Abdullatif Hakimi, the former spokesman of Taliban who was captured by Pakistan in 2005, said that he was one of two people with direct access to Mulla Omar,

Abdulghani Baradar<sup>44</sup> as his first and second deputies.<sup>45</sup> He transferred all his official powers to both of them, as both were his closest and oldest friends. From the time of the fight against the Soviets he knew them, both were direct founders of the Taliban Movement. He also wanted to empower two old and prestigious tribes, as Obaidullah belonged to the Alokozay and Baradar to the Popalzay tribe. This was a reaction to the emergence of Hamid Karzai, who contested the Taliban in their heartland of Kandahar, and aimed to undercut the Karzai's appeal to the Durrani Pashtuns of the South. The decision to appoint de facto leaders from the dominant tribal group in the South paid off and prevented the full take-over of the South by the incoming leaders Hamid Karzai (Popalzay), Gul Agha Sherzay (Barakzay), Jan Muhammad (Popalzay) and Sher Muhammad Akhundzada (Alizay).<sup>46</sup>

Mulla Omar is frequently reported to have fled on a motorcycle from Kandahar together with Mulla Baradar towards Uruzgan. This version seems not substantiated, as Baradar at that time went directly to Pakistan and started preparing the re-launch of the Taliban. An interlocutor told me during a meeting in 2002 in Karachi that "Mulla Saheb [Mulla Omar Akhund was called by this nickname

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and that he had personally ordered attacks. Obaidullah was arrested by Pakistani security forces in February 2007. He died on 5 March 2010 in prison in Karachi, Pakistan.

44. Born 1969 in Yatimak / Weetamak village in Deh Rawood District of Uruzgan Province, belongs to Popalzai tribe of the Durrani Pashtuns. Opened a *madrassa* in Maywand District Kandahar Province, and co-founded the Taliban together with Mulla Omar in 1994. He was governor of Herat and Nimroz, Deputy Chief of Army Staff and held various other commands. He was rumored to have been behind negotiation attempts with the Government of Afghanistan. On 8 February 2010 he was arrested near Karachi in what probably was a joint Pakistani-US operation, though this was denied by the Pakistani Minister of Interior. Some commentators claimed that this arrest was in response to Baradar trying to negotiate with the Government of Afghanistan. One of my interlocutors who knew Baradar personally prior to his capture contended that there was no attempt to start negotiations for peace with Afghanistan, but that Baradar – after checking with Mulla Omar – had entered negotiations with the United States and the United Kingdom through Sher Muhammad Abbas Stanikzai, and later through Mawlawi Abdullatif Mansour and Sayyid Muhammad Tayyib Agha and the mediation of the United Nations and Germany. Mulla Baradar continues to be under house arrest in Pakistan.

45. It is frequently claimed – also by the biography published by the Taliban – that Mulla Omar left only in the beginning of December. My interlocutors are unanimous about Mulla Omar leaving the city and power already before the fight over Shahwalikot 3-5 December 2001.

46. Grenier (2015), p. 254 quotes Pakistani Army General Suhail that "Omar had ... strategic vision".

"Sir Mulla" - Mulla Saheb] left the city together with one of his friends on motor bike in the direction of Sangisar [also spelt Sang-i Hisarsar, location of Mulla Omar's *madrassa* in the early 1990s]. As they reached the check post of Sarpoza, it was the morning's prayer time. He prayed in the morning here together with the security guards of Karzai standing there. Without being noticed by any person, he went on to Uruzgan. It was not clear to any person, as to where he has gone from Uruzgan onwards. His brother-in-law, Mulla Azizullah<sup>47</sup> was responsible for arranging the correspondence between him and the leadership of Taliban."

According to my interlocutors, *amir al-muminin* Mulla Omar had shared the motorcycle with Mulla Abduljabbar Omari (also known as Na'imi) and went together with him to Uruzgan, where he stayed for a year and a half. In the middle of the year 2003 the movement was again organized through the efforts of Mulla Obaidullah, Mulla Baradar, Mulla Dadullah, Mulla Akhtar Muhammad Usmani, Mulla Mutasim Agha Jan and Rahmatullah Kakazada. At this point Mulla Omar came to Quetta.<sup>48</sup>

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47. Mulla Azizullah stems from Kandahar province, Panjway District, and belongs to the Ishaqzay tribe. He was the brother-in-law of Mulla Omar in the sense that his wife and Mulla Omar's third wife are sisters to each other, who both belong to the Nurzai tribe from Deh Rawud in Uruzgan. Mulla Akhtar Mansour, the deceased former successor to Mulla Omar, appointed Mulla Azizullah in February 2010 as the messenger between him and Mulla Omar. Mulla Azizullah bore this title as principal messenger until August 2015, when the Taliban officially acknowledged that Mulla Omar had died in early 2013. The Pakistani security authorities arrested him towards the end of 2012 for the first time and detained him until February 2013. He was freed a couple of days after the death of Mulla Omar. After the Taliban announced officially the death of Mulla Omar, and nominated Akhtar Mansour as his successor, Mulla Azizullah's special messenger role had come to an end. In the middle of 2016, after the death of Akhtar Mansour, he was again arrested by Pakistani authorities and spent several months in detention. Towards the end of 2016 he was again freed, and joined the Taliban Leadership Council.

48. The location of Mulla Omar in Pakistan is hotly debated. Three opinions are frequently found: A former Taliban minister stated that Karachi was "Omar's natural destination because he had lived there for quite some time and was as familiar with the city as any other resident" around 2006. The Afghan Government repeatedly stated publicly that Mulla Omar was in Karachi, too. A senior Norwegian diplomat also claimed to have met Mulla Omar near Karachi in 2009. This latest report published in early 2017 was denied by the Taliban, as were all previous sightings of Mulla Omar in Karachi. A third group of interlocutors within the Taliban agrees that he was first in Quetta, living in the Muslimbagh neighbourhood between 2003 and 2007. Only after the death of Akhtar Usmani at the end of 2006 and the arrest of Obaidullah in 2007 he shifted away from Quetta, and took up residence in Karachi. These interlocutors claim

The above version of events is disputed in the official Taliban biography of Mulla Omar and the most recent

book published by former Taliban spokesperson Abdulhai Motmaen.<sup>49</sup>

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that from there he went to Afghanistan in 2010. From these three positions, it seems to me clear that the one of the Taliban denying that he was ever in Karachi is unlikely to be true. It seems most likely to me that he might have visited Karachi, but that he remained in Quetta, where the majority of interlocutors placed him for the years 2003-2010 regularly, and I think it is likely that between 200 and 2010 he spent more time in Karachi.

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49. Abdulhayy Mutmain (more common English spelling is Motmaen), Mulla Muhammad Umar, Taliban aw Afghanistan [*Mulla Muhammad Umar, the Taliban and Afghanistan*], Kabul 2017, p. 76.

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## Successful Tactics for the Escape

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One of my interlocutors, “Abdul Ibrahim,” took part alongside Taliban and Al-Qaida in fighting against US forces in Shahi Kot (also known as Battle of Takur Ghar or Operation Anaconda) in March 2002, led by the Mansour Network.<sup>50</sup> He was also responsible for transferring the families of Afghan and Arab fighters to Pakistan and for providing logistic support to fighters Afghanistan, told me in an interview in this respect: “Although the US forces had concluded the operation “Operation Anaconda” at this time and we could to greater extent move freely in the mountainous area of Shahi Kot, we were under severe blockade by Afghan forces and local warlords. Several Arab families were with us and we were much concerned about their security. We had received reports that in Paktya, the armed elements of Bacha Khan Zadran had killed brutally the wives of Arab mujahedeen and submitted some of these women to US forces.<sup>51</sup> We faced here also a severe shortage of food items, because

the way to Zurmat and Wana was blocked by Afghan security forces on many places and all highways were under strict oversight of local warlords.”

He stated that “against the backdrop of all this, at the end of March, the commander Saifurrahman Mansour<sup>52</sup>

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52. Saifurrahman was the son of the famous jihadi leader of Afghanistan in fighting against Soviets, Mawlawi Nasrullah Mansour of the Sahak tribe, who took active part in fighting against Soviets and originally was in Zurmat of Paktya. In 2001 he was 42 years old. Saifurrahman Mansour completed religious studies. He remained active in several fronts against Soviets and got several times injured. After establishment of the *mujahidin* government, he engaged himself in supporting Tajik *mujahidin*, who were trained in a camp in order to fight later against the Tajikistan government. In 1994 he took part in the campaign against warlords in Afghanistan under the leadership of Mulla Omar and sent over 1,500 trained militia fighters to the fronts to join the ranks of the Afghan Taliban Movement on the battlefield. He was engaged in severe fighting against Northern Alliance forces in Char-Asyab, Logar, Maidan-Wardak and Kabul city. After capturing of Kabul, he was appointed by Taliban as Deputy Commander of army Division of Qargha. In the fronts of the North he got several times injured and as a result of these injuries his fingers were paralyzed that resulted in weak hands. After Taliban were ousted from power, he returned with thousands of his combat troops and under his command Arab fighters to Shahi Kot, his original fortification. They built there trenches and he told media that “they will begin their holy war against the United States from this place and will continue it until the last moment of his life”. American forces initiated on 2 March 2002 a large public military operation (Anaconda) to clear the area. This 16-day long armed conflict resulted in heavy human and material losses for both sides. Due to his critical role in this battle, Saifurrahman gained the title of a hero among the Taliban. After Sirajuddin Haqqani, he became the second-most

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50. Kousary 2016, p. 250.

51. Pacha Khan Zadran is the tribal leader of Zadrans in Paktia and the former jihadi commander. He played a critical role in expelling Taliban from Paktia. Hamed Karzai appointed him as the governor of Paktia and later he stood as candidate for seat in the lower house of the Afghan parliament and functioned for some time as Minister for Tribal Affairs as well. The media turned its attention to Pacha Khan Zadran as he cooperated with US forces to search for the remaining elements of Taliban and Al-Qaida in the region. During this period, he was accused of having committed human rights violations and many reports say that his armed men had taken hostages the wives of refuge seeking Arabs in the region and killed their men. This allegation has however not been certified by independent sources, but sources close to Pacha Khan Zadran do not deny it either.



consulted with Mawlawi Muhammad Yusuf, and some other Arabs such as Sheikh Abu Laith al-Libi,<sup>53</sup> Sheikh Musa and Sheikh Abdurrahim. He later assigned me to go to Wana and to seek secure ways for transferring the families of Arab and Afghan fighters. I came to Wana. Here I met with Nek Muhammad,<sup>54</sup> Juma Gul,<sup>55</sup> Abbas

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powerful commander of Taliban in South-Eastern Afghanistan. He was killed in an US drone attack in Sharana, the center of Paktika province in 2008. Still, some media in Pakistan have published the news, referring to Pakistani authorities that Saifurrahman would still be alive. It is however likely that they did not distinguish between Pakistani Kashmiri commander Saifullah Mansour and Afghani Saifurrahman Mansour. The resistance shown by Saifurrahman and his companions in Shahi Kot led to a loss of fear from the American forces, which previously had held through the Taliban ranks.

53. Ali Ammar Ashur al-Rufayi usually known as Abu Laith Al-Libi (1967-2008) was a military officer of the Libyan army under the leadership of Colonel Ghaddhafi. He spent time in Pakistan and Afghanistan during the 1980s fighting the Soviets and the Afghan Communists. After his return to Libya, was arrested in 1994 on charges of plotting a coup-d'etat and was sentenced to death. However, he escaped prison and went first to Chad. He used a Chadian passport to go to Saudi Arabia and then to Afghanistan. In assistance of Sheikh Abu Manzoor Al-Saidi he established the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG). In the subsequent years, he initiated many efforts to overthrow Colonel Ghaddhafi, but remained unsuccessful. He had disputes with Al-Qaida over the implementation of world agenda and had therefore rejected every offer to unite. However, he joined Al-Qaida on the basis of an "emergency situation" after he received a letter from Osama Bin Laden in 2007. In the subsequent years, the Libyans (mostly members of the LIFG) formed primarily the structure of Al-Qaida. He served as leader of this organization until he was killed in an US drone attack in Mir Ali (North Waziristan) on 29 January 2008.

54. Nek Muhammad Wazir was a Talib, inhabitant of Wana and a member of Waziri tribe. He took part with dozens of his companions in camp in Afghanistan alongside the Afghan Taliban. After Taliban were ousted from power in Afghanistan, Nek Muhammad came to Wana and began to build secure regions for Taliban and Al-Qaeda warriors. The army of Pakistan has carried out several times operations against him, but these operations have failed, because of the complex geographical and tribal structure of the region. The government of Pakistan signed a peace agreement with him in 2003. Together with few of his companions, he was killed in a drone attack in Kaza Panga area of Wana in 2003. Nek Muhammad was the first victim of drone attacks. After his killing, Arab and other warriors left South Wazirestan and went to the area of Masuds and from there to North Wazirestan.

55. He hails from Jawzjan Province. After the fall of Taliban, he was engaged in armed activities in Wana and the surrounding areas, but no information is available as to his whereabouts in recent years.

Waziri,<sup>56</sup> Nazir<sup>57</sup> and other leaders and talked to them about transferring the families of mujahedeen and identified secured ways for transferring them." My interlocutor "Abdul Ibrahim" stated that: "regions adjacent with Paktya and Paktika have many passages and ways where security forces have no access due to their complicated situation. Pakistani forces have built several times check posts alongside these passages, but we found out other ways in rear valleys and avoided for months to use the first passages until these forces were tired and left the region. Angur Ada and Baghar China (South Waziristan), Sara Kandaw and Shawal (North Waziristan) were regions, where multiple ways and passages were available. We went through these ways to Wana and Gul Kach. From Gul Kach some of the families were sent to Killa Saifullah and Zhob and those families that reached Wana were settled there."

The program was not limited only to bringing the families to Wana, Gul Kach and Zhob, rather these families were sent to other areas of Pakistan and outside Pakistan as well. According to "Abdul Ibrahim," local *mujahedin* (Pakistani Taliban) had their own networks in Pakistan and the Arabs had theirs in Iran. From there they sent people to these networks and these networks helped them reach the desired addresses through smaller networks. A local Taliban, let's call him "Nurullah," who had worked and cooperated with Mulla Abbas Waziri and was one of his companions stated in an interview:<sup>58</sup>

"We sent at this time Arabs to Karachi, Quetta, Lahore and other areas of Punjab. We had our friends from the *madaris* in the ranks of Islamist parties; some of our teachers had greater influence on these political parties. We used their influence and talked to the security posts established along the way; in many check posts no one checked

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56. Mulla Abbas Wazir was the armed commander of Waziri Taliban. He was appointed during the time of Taliban to head the airport security regiment in Kabul. He had close relations with Uzbek fighters, escaped in 2007 to Miranshah and was killed in an armed conflict in 2011 in Wana.

57. Mulla Nazir was a famous Taliban commander affiliated with Waziri tribe. He was selected after the killing of Nek Muhammad as the leader of the local Taliban. He remained loyal to the peace agreement with the government until the end and was killed in 2012.

58. My interlocutor, the 39-years old "Nurullah" (pseudonym), was prior to him joining the Taliban engaged in arms smuggling. He had allegedly relations with local band of thieves, but during the emirate of the Afghan Taliban, he was assigned to a duty with Mulla Abbas in an army regiment in Kabul.

us; even if they did, it was very superficial or we had introduced them our guests in prior; security personnel checked other passengers and had not touched our friends. In different parts of Punjab, the followers of *jihadi* parties supported us widely. This cooperation was, however based on personal friendship and relation than on official party policy.

We sent Arabs from Wana to three different places: The border between Pakistan and Iran, Lahore and Karachi. We sent those friends to Zhob, who wanted to go to Iran. From Zhob we sent them further to Quetta, and from there on to Taftan, Mirjaveh, Girdi Jangal or to Ribat Qila [at the crossing of Iranian, Pakistani and Afghan borders]. Our duty was to send them only to Quetta. Another group was assigned to send them from Quetta to the Iranian borders. One or two persons of this group were in touch with us. We did not know other members of the group, nor were they informed about us. We introduced us and our places to each other using nicknames; this helped us a lot; many Arabs, whom I had transferred, were captured in various parts, but since they did not know my identity, I could remain safe during the search period conducted by authorities.

Those friends, who wanted to go to Lahore, were sent through Zhob and Dera Ismail Khan. From Zhob onwards, we sent them to Punjab and from Dera Ismail Khan, they were transferred sometimes by us and sometimes by another group. Friends, who wanted to go to Karachi, were sent from Dera Ismail Khan to Karachi via train or sometimes by special buses to Karachi.”

“Nurullah”, who had a tribal affiliation with Mulla Abbas Waziri, had also been engaged in war within Afghanistan. He was acquainted with Saifurrahman Mansour. During the Taliban period, he served as soldier at the airport in Kabul and was sent several times to Bamyan and to the North of Afghanistan to fight against the opposition.

“Nurullah” has at present a petroleum station and a good restaurant at his disposal, located on the highway and sits now on the counter and receives the bills from hotel guests. He sometimes ponders deeply as he gives accounts of some of the events from the past and on many occasions becomes so emotional that tears flow from his eyes. Answering a question, he once thought deeply and stared at a single point as his eyes were full of tears and said in a crying voice: “I will never forget an event. Whenever I

am alone, that sorrowful scene comes into my mind. One day we were busy sending a group of Arab mujahedeen from Wana to Karachi. In those days, the highways were not secure. They stayed with me at my house. An Egyptian scholar, Sheikh Abdurrahim was also among them. He was a great scholar. The mujahidin sought always his advice in matters of Islamic Law and were learning from him lessons regarding Sharia and religion. His family was lost on the way from Kabul to Wana. Different news was spread about his family. Some said that Pacha Khan Zadran killed them; some others said that they were killed during bombardments by American planes. Different news was heard. Among his family members, the four year old daughter of Sheikh Abdurrahim, Mariam, was also included, whom the Sheikh loved very much. Accidentally, my four year old daughter’s name was also Mariam. As they came to our house on the first day, I brought my daughter, Mariam to meet the Arab mujahidin. As Sheikh Abdurrahim saw Mariam, he jumped from joy and called on her from distance, Mariam, Mariam, despite that he did not know the name of my daughter. I asked him, how did you know her name, Sheikh? The Sheikh looked at her closely and then his eyes were full of tears and wept. He told me then: Glory is with God. My four-year old daughter’s name was also Mariam. As I saw this girl, I thought she was my daughter. She is totally similar to her. Later, Mariam was always in his arms. As they were to leave our house, Sheikh told me to bring that girl to him so that he would satisfy his thirst for her own daughter. He said, I do not know which catastrophe came over my daughter and do not know either which disaster awaits me. I brought him Mariam. He kissed her on each side of her face, while his beard was wet from tears and was crying for a few moments. As I heard this news from Sheikh Abdurrahim, I could not keep silent and wept. Whenever I am alone now or see Mariam, it reminds me of what Sheikh Abdurrahim told me. I do not know what happened to the Sheikh, whether he is alive or dead, free or imprisoned. I always pray for God and wish that he shall join his family.”

“Nurullah” and his friends also told very interesting stories regarding the transfer of the Arabs. I asked him that since at that time in late 2001, the transfer of Arabs through public transport on highways was a difficult task, which tactics were used so that Pakistani state security organs would not be able to detect it? “Nurullah” who let the rosary (*tasbeeh*) glide through his hands, looked at the ground, and then said smiling:

“We had adopted in this respect very interesting tactics. Once, Sheikh Abu Laith Al-Libi wanted to go to Karachi. Friends were waiting upon him for very important work. We needed much time to arrange for the trip, but he insisted to go very soon. We had to make him acquainted with the driver of truck. The driver gave him his own oily clothes and made him cleaner of the truck. We advised him to act like a cleaner when a search would take place on the highway. He should immediately then get off the truck, tip on tires to check the air, or should try to expel air pressure from the booster of the breaks”. This tactic was successful. From Wana to Karachi it is a distance of 1,500 km. Throughout the whole distance nobody asked him who he was, from where he came, and where wanted to go.”

He added: “Our second successful tactic was, that we let Arabs wear yellow turbans like those of Waziris. We let them wear yellows turbans and some of our friends were

also accompanying them as if they were from Waziristan. We let some of old ladies take seats in buses and they had drums in their hands. We gave little girls long handkerchiefs in their hands. Whenever we reached search posts, little girls began to play drums and played with their handkerchiefs and old ladies sang wedding songs to show as if we were going to a wedding party. At search posts, some young military officers looked inside the bus and said congratulation; police and militia also wished to receive something for example sweets in return of congratulation and so we reached our destination.”

The Afghan Taliban leaders and ordinary soldiers also began to use the soil of Pakistan mainly for following two great objectives: First: they intended to seek refuge from US and Afghan forces. Second: To organize here their activities against Americans and the Afghan government and to carry out the activities inside Afghanistan. I will explain the mentioned two points in the light of what some powerful Taliban leaders said to me in interviews. Pakistani defence minister Khawaja Asif in his official

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## Sanctuary for Taliban Leaders

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Parallel to the overthrow of Taliban’s regime in November 2001, dozens of thousands of their fighters and some of their important military commanders were captured by various groups in the North. This was widely publicized over mass media. There was, however not much knowledge about the whereabouts of Taliban leaders after the fall of Kandahar. A few days later news were received sporadically about their escape, arrest or killing. As described above in detail, the spiritual leader of Taliban, the *amir al-muminin* (commander of the faithful) Muhammad Omar, escaped inside Afghanistan. He went first to Uruzgan and only later in 2003 came to Pakistan. Mulla “Ezzatullah,” who was assigned to transfer the families of the high ranking Taliban leaders, added in this respect: “After the fall of Taliban’s regime Mulla Muhammad Omar was separated from his family. His family came at first to Quetta and from there to Karachi. The family was sent back from Karachi to Quetta in 2005. In 2008 Aka Mulla Nur Muhammad (he married Mulla Omar’s

mother after the death of his father) died in Quetta.”

As not much information has been relayed about what this reference to Mulla Omar’s family means, I think it necessary to refer my understanding of this matter. Mulla Omar had four wives. His first wife – daughter of Bismillah Khan from Deh Rawood - was from the Hotak tribe of Uruzgan, she is the mother of Mawlawi Muhammad Yaqub (born around 1989) and eight other sons. This shows that Mulla Omar only married after the Soviet Union forces had started their withdrawal. His second wife was from the Ghilzai Khogyani tribe from Sangisar village in Maiwand District of Kandahar, and he married her during the period of the mujahidin government, some sources estimate that this was about 1995.<sup>1</sup> Her fa-

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1. Suzanne Goldenberg “Heart of Darkness – Place where the Taliban began and certainty ends” The Guardian 13 October 1998 states that the name of his second wife from Sangisar was

ther's name is Akhtar Muhammad. At that time he was the preacher of the mosque in Sangisar village, and this marriage shows that he was very respected by the local population. Two more marriages occurred during the rule of the Taliban. His third wife is from the Noorzai tribe, but also from Deh Rawood of Uruzgan and he had two sons from this wife. I do not know her father's name but many sources speak of his high esteem for her. His fourth wife was from Arghandab of Kandahar province, whose uncle and step-father Sayyid Amir Muhammad Agha spent several times in detention of the Americans. Her father was Sayyid Akhtar Muhammad Agha. She was an orphan and grew up in the house of her uncle, Sayyid Amir Muhammad Agha, and it is reported that she has two sons from Mulla Omar. From all his four wives Mulla Omar has thirteen sons and few daughters. Mulla Omar's family also did not grow after 2001, leading me

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Guljana, and names her uncle as Mulla Nida Muhammad. She writes that some months before her visit of Sangisar, his third wife had born him his youngest son.

to suspect that he kept himself away from his family for much of the time he was in Pakistan.

It was during early 2002 that the former defense minister of the Taliban Mulla Obaidullah Akhund, the former minister of interior of Taliban, Mulla Abdurrazzaq Akhund, the close friend and advisor of Mulla Omar, Mulla Gul Agha Ishaqzai, his private driver Mulla Ehsanullah and other high ranking individuals came also to Pakistan. Mulla Obaidullah Akhund stayed at first in Karachi and later went to Quetta. According to reports, he was arrested by Pakistani authorities in 2007 in Karachi and died in detention in 2010.

Dozens of other high-ranking officials of Taliban, hundreds of their second rank leaders and thousands of ordinary members and fighters immigrated to various parts of Pakistan. A great number of them however remained and were settled in Quetta and in surrounding areas, as they had tribal relations with people of the area.

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## Where Did Mullah Omar Die?

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statement stated that "Mulla Omar neither died nor was buried in Pakistan and his sons' statements are on record to support this. Whether he died now or two years ago is another controversy, which we do not wish to be a part of. He was neither in Karachi nor in Quetta." Initially, some Taliban members denied that he had died; other sources considered the report to be speculative, designed to destabilise peace negotiations in Pakistan between the Afghan government and the Taliban. Abdulhasib Seddiqi, the spokesman for Afghanistan's National Directorate of Security (NDS), had announced on 29 July 2015 that according to reports, Mullah Omar had expired in a hospital in the Pakistani city of Karachi in April 2013.<sup>59</sup> On the following day, the Taliban also confirmed the death of Omar, despite having maintained one day be-

fore that he was still alive, and having published an official biography in April 2015, in which they claimed that he still "follows closely and supervises the *jihadi* activities against the brutal infidel foreign invaders."

The Taliban splinter group Fidai Mahaz claimed Omar did not die of natural causes but was instead assassinated in a coup led by Mulla Akhtar Mansour and Mulla Gul. The leader of Fidai Mahaz, Mulla Najibullah Zabuli, revealed that due to Omar's kidney disease, he needed medicine. According to Najibullah, Mansour poisoned the medicine, damaging Omar's liver and causing him to grow weaker. When Omar summoned Mansour and other members of Omar's inner circle to hear his will, they discovered that Mansour was not to assume leadership of the Taliban. In this version, Omar was against this succession due to Mansour allegedly orchestrating "dishonourable deals". When Mansour pressed Omar to name him as his successor, Omar refused. Mansour then

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59. BBC News 29 July 2015, see also: David Nordland & Joseph Goldstein "Taliban Leader Mullah Omar Died in 2013, Afghans Declare" New York Times 29 July 2015.

shot and killed Omar. Najibullah claimed Omar died in his hide-out in southern Afghanistan in Zabul Province during the afternoon on 23 April 2013.

According to what I heard from trustworthy sources, he died of natural causes inside Afghanistan in a village in Zabul province on 22 January in 2013.<sup>60</sup>

For instance, Mulla Muhammad Yaqoub, Mulla Omar's elder son denied that his father had been killed, insisting that he died of natural causes. It was not only Mulla Akhtar Muhammad Mansour and Mulla Gul Agha who kept hidden the death of Mulla Omar, but many members of the Taliban supreme council. These included Mulla Akhtar Muhammad Mansour, Mulla Abdulqayyum Zakir, Shaikh Hibbatullah Akhundzada, Shaikh Abdulhakim, Sirajuddin Haqqani, Mulla Hedayatullah or Gul Agha Ishakzay, Mulla Ahmadullah Moti or Nainai, Mulla Abdussamad Sani, Mulla Amir Khan Haqqani, Mulla Amir Khan Motaqqi, Mulla Muhammad Hassan Babar and other supreme council members of Taliban. Within the family of Mulla Omar the ones who knew about his death were his step brother Mulla Abdulmanan, his son Mawlawi Muhammad Yaqoub, his son in-law Mawlawi Sidiqullah, his brothers in laws Mulla Abdurrahman and Mulla Azizullah and his first wife (the mother of Mawlawi Muhammad Yaqoub, member of the Hotak tribe). These family members and Taliban leaders knew about the death of Mulla Omar since 25 January 2013. On that date Akhtar Muhammad Mansour invited the supreme council members of Taliban, Mulla Omar's son Yaqoub and Abdulmanan, the step-brother of Mulla Omar and informed them about the death of the *amir al-muminin* and stated that it was the fourth day of his passing. On that day the participants of the meeting agreed that among themselves (e.g. the top leadership of the Taliban and the family of Mulla Omar) the death of Mulla Omar would be kept as a secret. This was deemed necessary because for the unity of the Taliban movement and morale of the Taliban fighters. The prospect of Mulla Omar alive would be decisive in order to motivate the fighters to hold out beyond the announced departure of

the foreign troops.

Mawlawi Muhammad Yaqoub went to Zabul and saw his father's grave on 27 January 2013, he opened the grave and saw the death body of his father (Mulla Omar) because he insisted to see and confirm that this is his father's grave. Mawlawi Muhammad Yaqoub stayed at that village for a week to investigate his father's death. He found two people in that village who met with Mulla Omar there on 12 January 2013. This was just ten days before his death. Both confirmed to Yaqoub that Mulla Omar was sick and was suffering from tuberculosis. He was very weak because of his sickness. They also stated that they conducted proper funeral and attended his death prayer on 23 January 2013.

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60. The Taliban biography claims that the date of death was 23 April 2013. This relies on the Taliban announcement made on 29 July 2015. However, it is cast into doubt by my interlocutors. Mulla Omar's brother Abdul Manan attended the Taliban supreme council for the first time on 15 February 2013 based on the invitation through Mulla Akhtar Mansour. He never had been a member of the supreme council, and it is unlikely that he would have done so before his brother's death.

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## Base of Operations

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After their settlement in Pakistan, the Taliban began to organize their ranks. An insider stated in this respect: “At first, all of us were concerned about security for us and our families. In very difficult situation, we began to find secure places for us and our children. After this, we started to organize the ranks of resistance within Afghanistan. In this respect, we had received the oral and decisive advice of Mulla Muhammad Omar. This decision ordered us to immediately organize resistance movement and to not give the enemy the opportunity to take foot. Among the leaders of Taliban, I was familiar with the environment and had experience of living there and knew how to deal with local people and authorities. At this juncture, I went to Karachi and became settled there. From there we sought at first to provide security arrangements for other leaders and their families and then began to strengthen our own ranks.”

According to him, their first activity was to find out their lost companions and brought them together. They held several meetings one after another in the home of a Taliban diplomat in Karachi. Mulla Gul Agha Ishaqzai, Mulla Sanaullah, Mulla Akhtar Muhammad Osmani, Mulla Baradar, Mulla Agha Jan Mutasim, Mulla Nurdin Turabi and others took part in these meetings. He added that at this time, in Afghanistan no anti-America activities were seen and in the meetings in Karachi the participants insisted upon gaining foreign friends, emphasized the need for fund raising and also the provision of guerilla training for fighters.

My interlocutor added: “What we needed most was to build the structure of our movement at first. We felt the need that unless we have organized systematic guerilla structures, we may not be able to initiate effective activities. I was assigned to provide preliminary proposals regarding such structures. A working group of active friends joined me and we were able to provide a concise, but strong and systematic structure consistent with the spirit of guerrilla wars. We proposed it to the Leadership

Council.<sup>61</sup> We divided Afghanistan to four zones and from every zone two persons were proposed. Two persons were selected by Mulla Omar himself. This council was assigned to prepare proposals and plans to the Leadership Council for the improvement of work. Judicial, military, cultural, political, financial and faith-based commissions were active under the leadership of this Council. Each commission had sub-committees in its structure. It looked like a powerful, effective and mobile government system. At this time, the Leadership Council held once in a week its session and discussed issues in accordance with the agenda. With the provision of this structure the activities were improving. Each commission was busy with its own mandate. Military commission was assigned to reactivate the committees and the resistance fronts. Cultural commission had to collect news and to present them to international community in various languages and to prepare interesting and effective audio-visual materials; the financial commission took the responsibility to maintain relations with people to collect donations; and the political commission began to contact various political circles outside the country to present its case.”

The reason for Mulla Omar to leave the actual running of the movement in the hands of trusted followers was likely concern for his own safety. He had escaped several assassination attempts, the first in August 25, 1999, when a large truck bomb exploded in front of his house in Kandahar. Two of his brothers were killed, and one of Mullah Omar’s son was injured through toppling furniture. This attack worried Mulla Omar until his last days.<sup>62</sup> Following the confrontation with Iran over the killing of its diplomats in August 1998 in Mazar-i Sharif, the firing of United States cruise missiles on *jihadi* training camps, and an attempt by a Pakistani military officer and a dissident cleric to topple him (the “Mulla Shariati” affair), Mulla Omar must have thought it possible that either Iran, Pakistan or the United States might have

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61. This council was later called in international political forums and media as Quetta Shura.

62. Personal communication with Mulla Omar family member.

been behind this attack. He publicly absolved the United States from having had a role in this attack, and arrests were made of local Shiites.<sup>63</sup>

Mulla Omar had come to Pakistan in 2003, and stayed until 2007. His suspicion towards his Pakistani hosts was awakened after the arrest of Mulla Obaidullah in February 2007. Omar secretly left from Muslimbagh Camp to Afghanistan. His last voice recorded message was issued after British forces had killed Mullah Dadullah in May 2007 in Helmand. He had reacted to the potential

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63. Rahimullah Yusufzai “Taleban arrests over bomb attack” BBC 7 September 1999

treason by Pakistan with complete reclusion into a small village inside his home country.

The commissions interacted with the *amir al-muminin* from 2010 onwards through the messenger Mulla Azizullah. This was interrupted in late 2012 after Azizullah’s arrest by Pakistani authorities. After Mulla Omar’s death in January 2013, Mulla Abdulmanan – his stepbrother – was assigned a special role, and Pakistan released Mulla Azizullah from detention in February 2013. Between them and a circle of Taliban leaders they likely agreed to maintain the fiction of Mulla Omar remaining alive.

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## Support in Pakistan

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In this manner, Taliban began to take advantage of the opportunity in Pakistan to become active. In general, Taliban gained many advantages from using these opportunities in Pakistan. Some of them were explained in interviews with Taliban as follows:

- Providing Security for the leadership
- Establishing a center for command and control
- Recruiting personnel for fighting
- Access to secure areas to provide Taliban with military training
- Collecting relief fund
- Providing logistic materials
- Carrying out propaganda and cultural activities
- Encouraging and gaining political support among people
- Medical treatment of injured persons

### Providing Security for the Leadership

As we heard earlier from some of Taliban leaders that in escaping to Pakistan they pursued two main purposes.

Their first objective was to ensure a secure life for their leadership and fighters and their families. Their second objective was to begin their activities within Afghanistan again. It is obvious that securing their leadership was the priority for them. Someone who took part in the meeting of Afghan *ulema* in 1995 in Kandahar, in which they nominated Mulla Omar as the *amir al-muminin*, cites the importance of securing the leadership: “You know that the movement of Taliban was a spiritual movement and did not have, in comparison with other Islamic political movements an organized structure or framework. The chaotic and anarchic situation in Afghanistan caused this movement to suddenly take shape under the leadership of Mulla Muhammad Omar. Mulla Muhammad Omar Akhund emerged as a spiritual leader to whose personality the activities and achievements of the movements were indebted. If Mulla Muhammad Omar is taken away from the movement, it may be very difficult to find another leader who can bring together thousands of Taliban around him. But Mulla Muhammad Omar was the only person around whom Taliban could come together. That is why his security was a priority for us all.”

Another interlocutor “Ezzatullah,” who had transferred

the families of many Taliban leaders, including Mulla Muhammad Omar's, said that "some of the leaders had places for living in Pakistan prior to the fall of the Taliban Emirate. They did not face many challenges after the overthrow of the regime and came after crossing the border from Afghanistan to Pakistan to their own homes. But Mulla Omar's case was different. He had never left his village; his brothers and close relatives were also living within Afghanistan. He enjoyed a higher profile. It was therefore difficult for him to move freely. But we resolved this problem through a much simple and normal process. Immediately after the fall, his family was brought first to Chaman and later they came to Quetta. They remained here for sometimes in a village to the Northeast of the city Quetta. From here I brought them to Karachi. At this time, his family consisted of two wives, a mother, one six-year old daughter and nine sons. Haji Bashir<sup>64</sup> had reserved for them a house in an expensive area of Karachi. The family remained there for two years. Later a private house was bought for the family in another area of the city. However, the Taliban decided after some time, that for security reasons it was not appropriate for the family of Mulla Muhammad Omar to live in a private house. Therefore, the family returned to Quetta in 2005 and was settled there. The third wife of Mulla Muhammad Omar remained with him." My interlocutor "Ezzatullah" might have tried here to construct a proximity concerning the third wife, as she was connected through marriage to the messenger Mulla Azizullah. His credibility as messenger rested on the link established through his sister-in-law being with Mulla Omar. The fact that Mulla Omar did not have additional offspring speaks against her accompanying Mulla Omar.

After 2006, as the game of cat and mouse between Pakistani authorities and Taliban came to an end, the families of Mulla Muhammad Omar and other Taliban leaders had more opportunities at their disposal to live in security and prosperity. They bought castle-like huge houses in Quetta and in touristic places of Pakistan such as Murree and Abbottabad.

In addition to Omar, other Taliban leaders also immigrated to various parts of Pakistan. The defense minister

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64. On Hajji Bashir Noorzai (also referred to as Hajji Bashir), see United Nations, Report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team on specific cases of cooperation between organized crime syndicates and individuals, groups, undertakings and entities eligible for listing under paragraph 1 of Security Council resolution 2160 (2014) (S/2015/79), 2 February 2015, para. 8

of Taliban, Mulla Obaidullah Akhund came first to Karachi and moved later to Quetta. He came for the second time to Karachi and was arrested here. The famous Taliban commander and the deputy of Mulla Omar, Mulla Abdulghani Baradar came also to Karachi and was settled here, until he was arrested in Baldia town of Karachi by Pakistani authorities in 2010 and remains still in detention.

The minister of finance of Taliban's regime, Mulla Agha Jan Mutasim came also together with his family to Karachi. He settled in a prosperous area outside the city. He came under armed attack by unknown persons in front of his house and got injured in August 2010. Later, he went to Turkey for treatment and settled there. Mulla Agha Jan Mutasim is at present busy to reconcile the warring parties.

The minister for justice of Taliban's regime, Mulla Nooruddin Turabi was another high ranking official of the regime, who came to Karachi. Beside his private business, he was engaged in anti-American activities and was arrested by security authorities of Pakistan in 2005 and was released in 2013.

The deputy acting council of Taliban, the executive director (*ra'is-i tanzima*) of the Eastern zone and at present member of the Leadership Council Mawlawi Abdulkabir and dozens of other civilian and military high ranking officials of Taliban's regime came to Pakistan to seek protection for themselves and their families.

Taliban in Qatar, representing their fellows in talks with international stakeholders were settled in Pakistan and went from here to Doha with the assistance of Pakistani authorities. It is perceived that many Taliban leaders and their great leader Muhammad Omar live in Pakistan. However, neither Taliban nor the government of Pakistan, have made any official statement about it. Even Zabihullah Mujahed, the spokesperson of Taliban has repeatedly expressed, in response to the questions of journalists that their leaders live inside Afghanistan and arrange the affairs of movement and resistance from within. However, unofficially some of the Taliban leaders not only confirm that their leaders live in Pakistan, but stated even that Mulla Omar had been seen in Karachi. He says: "Around 2006, the news was spread that Mulla Omar lives with his family in Karachi. [I heard that] he has visited his close friends, Gul Agha Ishaqzai and Akhtar Muhammad Mansour once there." This visit took



place at a time where disputes among leadership of the movement on some issues emerged. The former minister for interior, Mulla Abdurrazaq insisted upon reforms and had gained the support of some other members as well. The support was almost strong enough to influence the majority of the council. At this time, this dispute was not possible to be resolved without the interference of Mulla Muhammad Omar. Therefore, the council unanimously decided to send two persons to him. It was later said that Mulla Omar had granted these two persons full authority in his absence.

Although, no written or public verbal order of Mulla Muhammad Omar in this respect existed – in contrast to him appointing his deputies in October 2001 – with the release of Gul Agha Ishaqzai from detention by Pakistani authorities, news were spread that he initiated efforts to reconstitute his influence within the council and that he had received a briefing from Mulla Omar in this regard.

In the meeting of the Leadership Council on 15 February 2013 in Karachi, the younger stepbrother of Mulla Omar, Mulla Abdulmanan took also part on behalf of Omar. Mulla Omar had appointed Mulla Abdulmanan as Deputy Head of the Council and his representative prior to that.

In summary, Taliban took advantage of their stay in Pakistan to provide security for their leadership and were successful in this respect, even more so after Mulla Omar had passed away. This was a decision by Mulla Akhtar Mansour, who tried through this move to cement his authority as speaking in the name of Mulla Omar.

Mulla Akhtar Mansour's claim rested therefore on three pillars: (1) that Mulla Omar was alive and living with his third wife, and that (2) through her brother-in-law Mulla Azizullah regular messages were delivered to Akhtar Mansour, and finally he was (3) also supported by Mulla Omar's half-brother Mulla Abdulmanan, who it was widely believed also kept in direct contact with the *amir al-muminin*. These three pillars held well, both Azizullah and Abdulmanan being rewarded by Akhtar Mansour for their cooperation. However, after the declaration of another *amir al-muminin* by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi – as Caliph Ibrahim – in June 2014 ever more Taliban asked to be shown living proof of the real *amir al-muminin*.

### Establishing the Center for Command and Control

In the aftermath of their overthrow, Taliban remained

strictly under the persecution of coalition forces and the local warlords in every corner of Afghanistan. They were forced to escape to Pakistan to ensure their security and life. The authorities here treated them well and the system tolerated them to a greater extent. Thus, Taliban perceived the situation as ideal to reactivate their structure. Therefore, they initiated consultations among themselves to rehabilitate the structure of their movement in the middle of the 2003. Commissions and sub-military committees began their work inside Afghanistan under the supervision of Leadership Council in the middle of 2004 and in this manner they began their armed resistance against US forces and the Afghan state. Taliban began to install its command and control structure by establishing the Leadership Council (the Quetta Council), which had following various commissions under its supervision.

### *Leadership Council*

Even from 1994 onwards, members of Taliban's movement had developed a notion of their leadership. As they began with their rebellion for the first time in Kandahar, they had a Leadership Council of 10 persons. This council was led by Mulla Omar and Mulla Muhammad Rabbani worked as his deputy. After the overthrow of their government, as Taliban leaders met each other in various parts of Pakistan, they held meeting unofficially in a council-like manner, but the Leadership Council of Islamic Emirate emerged for the first time officially at the beginning of 2004. Karachi was the first center of the Council. As the armed activities of Taliban were intensified and expanded over the territory of Afghanistan, they needed to maintain close and continuous contact with their Leadership Council to confer over their affairs and take its advice. Since armed members could not come to Karachi, they decided to transfer the center of the Leadership Council from Karachi to Quetta after 2006. The regular meetings, activities and the free movements of some of the members of the Leadership Council in Quetta strengthened the notion among journalists, researchers and diplomatic circles that the Leadership Council of Taliban has its center in Quetta and that is why they call it "Quetta Shura". This Council had at the beginning a limited number of members: Mulla Akhtar Muhammad Osmani, Mulla Abdulghani Baradar, Mulla Agha Jan Mutasim, Mulla Gul Agha Ishaqzai, Mulla Abdurrazaq Akhund, Mawlawi Rahmatullah Kakazada, Mulla Dadullah Akhund (or 'Lang' – lame) were among them. Later, the structure of the Council was expanded. Mawlawi Rahmatullah Kakazada left the Council, Mulla

Dadullah was killed and new members entered it. As of 2016, the Leadership Council of the Taliban has 18 members. Its center is in Quetta, but they held also regular meetings in Peshawar and Karachi.

### *Political Commission*

The first director was Mawlawi Abdulkabir, after him Mulla Abdulwasi Mutasim Agha Jan was appointed. He was succeeded by Mawlawi Abdullatif Mansoor in 2008, who met the UN's Special Representative Mr. Kai Eide in Dubai twice. After him in 2009, Sayyid Tayyib Agha was assigned as director, who started negotiations with the Americans in November 2009 in Germany. He resigned in 2015. Since then Sher Muhammad Abbas Stanikzai has been the director based in Doha city in Qatar.

### *Military Commission*

The military commission was also created in 2003, its first chief was Qari Fayz Muhammad Sajjad, who has targeted and killed by Coalition forces in 2007 in Khas Uruzgan District in Uruzgan. After him Mulla Abdulqayyum Zakir was appointed. Mulla Nasir Akhund was appointed as the deputy head of the commission, who was at the same time the governor of Ghazni, but he was deposed in 2012 after a scandal broke over money payments from contracts of the United States forces. Zakir resigned in mid-2014 and after him Sadr Ibrahim took over. As of 2017 he is director of the military commission for south and south-west provinces. For the eastern, central and northern provinces Mulla Muhammad Yunus<sup>65</sup> is currently the director. He also is chairing the council in Peshawar since his predecessor in that function Mulla Shirin was appointed director of the intelligence department of the Taliban in 2016.

### *Cultural Commission*

The former minister for culture and information Qudratullah Jamal was appointed as the head of this commission. After his removal, Mulla Abdulhai Motmaen took over the responsibility for a short time and then Amir Khan Motaqi became the head of the commission who is still leading the commission.

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65. Mulla Muhammad Yunus Akhund was provincial police chief of Kabul during the Taliban regime.

### *Judicial Commission*

The head of this commission was the former Chief Justice, Noor Muhammad Saqeb. Later Sheikh Mawlawi Abdul Hakim was the head of the commission, who is still functioning in this authority.

### *Financial Commission*

The leadership of this commission was given to various individuals at different times. Mulla Agha Jan Mutasim remained also for some time in this position.

In the subsequent years, education, health and some other commissions were also established. At present 13 commissions are working under the auspice of the Leadership Council. In 2013 the commission for Secret Services was also established that functions directly under the supervision of Mulla Akhtar Muhammad Mansour.

### *Recruitment*

It is obvious that Taliban needed to recruit new fighters to strengthen their ranks in campaign against the coalition forces and the afghan state. Since it is not possible for Taliban to recruit new members for their armed opposition within Afghanistan, as coalition forces and the security forces together with militia forces have dominant presence, therefore they have chosen an alternative strategy in this respect. Taliban began to encourage young students in the afghan refugee camps and religious schools in Pakistan to join them in campaign against the afghan government. Taliban resorted to this strategy even at the beginning of their movement in 1994. After their overthrow from the power in 2001, they returned to Pakistan and began again this process. I talked to Taliban active in this field and to those who have joined Taliban as a result of the recruitment process about these activities. My interlocutor "Maiwand" is 42 years old and served as commander of a military regiment (*ghund*) of the Taliban before their defeat in 2001, and was engaged in armed struggle in Northern Afghanistan. After the fall of Taliban, he escaped together with other companions to Pakistan. There he joined the local Taliban from Ghazni and after a while he was assigned to recruit armed elements. He told me the following about his assignment: "The situation immediately after the defeat was intolerable for every single Taliban in Afghanistan. We had no or very few places for our security. We spent time in different places of Pakistan with people whom we knew. But later

on, as the resistance found new dimensions, the recruitment process was correspondingly expanded.”

He added that, from 2001 until 2003, they lost contact to each other. Every one cared for himself and his family. But as the issue of organizing their strength was raised in 2004, they started to find each other, said Maiwand. They found out, however is that at this time most of their senior companions were busy with private business and many others were psychologically not prepared to remain within the movement. It was difficult to encourage them to go to front lines, he said further.

When I asked him, what these psychological effects could be, as a result of which senior Taliban or those Taliban, who were assigned to different battlefronts during the Emirate, were not able to join the resistance movement, he added: “The reality is that the majority of our friends admitted psychologically their defeat. Hundreds of thousands of our brave fighters supported by an organized system could not resist the attacks by USA even for a month, so we thought that our ability to resist may not even continue for a day.”

Mulla Muhammad Hassan Akhund Babari,<sup>66</sup> a former minister of Taliban and a close ally of Mulla Omar has also admitted the psychological frustration of Taliban. He expressed himself in an interview with me that even Mulla Omar had also lost his courage. He said: “As we informed him about restoring the resistance, his response was that it was silly to confront US forces. Do whatever you want to, I have nothing to do with it. I began my prayers and will pray for God to defeat USA by His own might.”

It is possible that, this deeper psychological frustration did not allow Taliban to resort to resistance. Some of the prominent Taliban leaders had also a disposition similar to that of their leader. Another former minister of Taliban told me in this regard of another incident: “Mulla

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66. Mulla Muhammad Hassan Akhund is an inhabitant of Kandahar affiliated with Babar tribe. In fight against Soviets, he took part in different battlefronts of Taliban. At the beginning of Taliban's movement in 1994, he was considered as a close friend of Mulla Muhammad Omar. After the capture of Kabul in 1996, he worked as deputy head of acting council and later as minister for foreign affairs. After the overthrow of Taliban's regime, he was busy with agricultural work at his land in Pishin of Balochistan. At present, he is a member of the Leadership Council of Taliban in Quetta and a prominent element of the resistance center of Taliban.

Muhammad Hassan Akhund Babari stated with a feeling of pride in a meeting of Leadership Council in 2010 that he had remained for the last eight years concealed inside the house he built on his agricultural land in Pishin. He said further, that during this entire period, he did not even come to the local mosque for prayer.”

My other interlocutor “Maiwand” says that they decided in 2004 to send new young people to the fronts. According to him many people sent during Taliban's regime their children to religious schools that were functioning under the supervision of Taliban, because modern schools either did not exist or were available in very small number. Religious schools also promised a career in the Taliban emirate system. With the overthrow of the regime, all these religious schools were closed and those students, who reached at this time their graduation period, remained without access to education. These students provided to be a fertile recruiting ground. On the one hand, they were from the beginning pro-Taliban and were familiar with the social psychology of Taliban and on the other hand, these students were extremely excited after the fall of Taliban's regime. The attacks of US on Afghanistan were in their eyes an obvious aggression and these attacks evoked them to take revenge. A large number of these young people, who were prosecuted, intimidated and irritated by pro-American warlords escaped to Quetta, Peshawar and other areas. “Maiwand” says further: “We immediately contacted them and reached them the message of the leadership and requested them to prepare themselves for resistance against US forces. Many of them were not allowed by their families to join, but many others joined us. Those, whose families were not consent with their departure, left their homes secretly and reached our camps in known places.” As “Maiwand” said, these people were sent in groups of two, three or four persons to various camps in different parts to take guerrilla trainings. Answering the question as to how many young people might have joined at this time the ranks of Taliban, he said: “At the beginning, we did not need many people. On the one hand, our objective was to begin absolute resistance, and on the other hand, it was not appropriate to settle these people in civilian populated areas, as the presence of US forces and the pro-US local warlords in these areas did not allow it. Most important was that, our armed groups had to stay in civilian houses at night and the presence of a large number of people was intolerable for civilians.”

With the acceleration of resistance movement and expansion of armed activities of Taliban, the need for new

armed forces in battle fronts was also increased. Based on this necessity, Taliban accelerated the recruitment of new forces in 2006. In accordance with the expressions of “Maiwand” the Taliban were at this time attempting to create organized battle fronts against their enemy in some areas of the provinces of Helmand, Farah, Badghis and Ghor. These battle fronts did cost the lives of many Taliban, but they were able to keep the fronts intact by sending newly recruited fighters.

To recruit new forces, Taliban did not only choose religious schools, but also encouraged students of modern schools through different tactics to join them in battles. However, according to “Maiwand” precedence was given to those young and depressed students who had been trained in *madaris* under the supervision of Taliban.

Another interlocutor, “Ataulhaq,” was a student in a religious school in the Southeast of Ghazni and left together with his family Afghanistan to Quetta after the overthrow of Taliban. Here he restarted his study in local religious school. At this time, the staff of the Recruitment Commission of Taliban reached him and encouraged him to prepare himself for joining the battle front. The 27-years old now has graduated with a turban-binding ceremony from a larger *madrasa* at Karachi<sup>67</sup> and told me the story of his experience in 2004: “I was busy with my studying in a religious school in Pashtunabad area of Quetta. One day the Manager of the school called on me to come to his office. As I entered the office, I saw four other people sitting there on the ground talking to each other. I welcomed all of them. As I sat down, one of them asked my name. I told him my name. They asked me again whether I had been a student of a *jihadi madrasa* in Ghazni, I answered them, yes. At first, they talked about the attack of USA on Afghanistan, later explained the obligation of jihad. Then they referred to the role of Taliban in advancing this resistance and requested me to join the jihad and enter into the ranks of Mujahedeen of Islamic Emirate. At first, I requested then to give me time of some days, but in reality I was waiting for jihad to start in Afghanistan and wanted to join them. A few days later, I went to their local center and introduced myself. At the beginning, they sent me to a guerilla training center. I got in

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67. After graduating religious courses of wight years, students of these religious schools receive a turban in white or green color and a certificate from elder scholars in a ceremony authorizing them to practice as Mullas. This document is equivalent to Master degree in Islamic studies of universities.

Chitral and in Wana my first training sessions and later, as the weather became warm, I was sent to battle front.”

“Baheer” is another Taliban, who was busy with his studying at *jihadi madrasa* in Kandahar before the ousting of Taliban from power. Later, he was encouraged by this group of Taliban to go to the battle front. In 2008, he was arrested during an armed conflict in Zabul and remained until 2011 in Pul-i Charkhi prison near Kabul. Immediately after his release from prison, he joined again the Taliban and today he has been appointed by the Taliban as the shadow governor of a central province in Afghanistan.

In addition to students of religious schools, Taliban encouraged also the students of modern schools for armed activities. “Doctor Hasan” was a student of a the medical institute in Kabul during the Taliban emirate. After the fall of Taliban, he joined Taliban and became active in propaganda due to his advanced education.

Another fighter, “Bilal,” Afghan refugee settled in Sohrab Ghot of Karachi, relates the story of his son who was recruited by Taliban in their ranks: “My son was enrolled in a very prominent school in Karachi. He was a very able student of class eight. In 2010, however we noticed a change in behavior of our son. Prior to this, our son was a very active, smiling and cheerful boy. He was very interested in football and cricket games. He had also good skills in computer programming. Suddenly, he brought CDs home that were about war in Iraq and Afghanistan. These CDs showed the atrocities committed by American soldiers against civilians and explained the activities of those who were fighting the US forces. At the end, young people were provoked with very charming words to fight the Americans. My son devoted his entire attention to jihad. He said always to his sisters at home that he would go to take revenge of the imprisoned sisters in Bagram and Abu Ghuraib prisons and would fight in Kabul just like a certain *mujahed* in a certain place shown in one of the videos. According to “Bilal,” this change perturbed the whole family. He continued: “But before we could prepare ourselves and do anything, the boy escaped from home. We began to search him, but nobody showed us his address and place. Here in Karachi, we visited the local Taliban, but they denied the contact absolutely. After some time - about six weeks - the boy telephoned from Miranshah and said only that he was well and that we should not be worried, he is with Mujahedeen.” “Bilal” said that he immediately went to Miranshah. He searched

in all places there, but did not find the boy nor did anybody show him his address. He visited all the camps of Mujahedeen, but did not find his son. He had to return to Karachi. After less than a month, the boy returned home. “Bilal” added: “We were happy that the boy returned and this time he will not go anywhere. But after a month, the boy disappeared again. This time, I went together with a person, who had close contact with Taliban. With the assistance of this person, everything became clear to me. My son was encouraged by the Taliban. The boy told me that one day as he was standing before a shop of CDs, an old man came to talk to him. He welcomed him and asked his name and requested some other information. The old man talked to my son about the atrocities committed by American infidels against Muslims in Iraq and Afghanistan. Later, he gave my son a DVD to look at. After sometime, he agreed to go to jihad. He brought my son to Waziristan bus stop. He assigned a friend to accompany him, and bought them tickets, gave my son 5,000 Pakistani rupees (approximately US \$ 80) and sent him off to Waziristan.”

Meanwhile, another Afghan father, let’s call him “Habib Khan,” also told me a story about recruitment. His son was recruited in 2007 by Taliban. His son escaped several times from home without saying anything to anybody. Finally, he died in an attack on a US military base in Khost in the middle of 2010. There are dozens of Pashtun families in Karachi and surrounding areas whose sons have been killed in fighting Americans alongside the Taliban forces. Most of these killed young persons have had committed there suicide attacks. In summary, recruitment of fresh young warriors is still ongoing and Taliban have increased their efforts in this respect and have arranged interesting audio and visual materials to encourage young souls for fighting. In addition to that, Taliban have established special teams for recruitment that visit from time to time the Pashtun populated areas, hold regular meetings with people and request them to allow their sons to join Taliban in fighting.

It is important to note that most fighters recruited made their way to Afghanistan as civilians, without any weapons. According to news reports every day “at least six to eight new, unarmed recruits leave Kuchlak Bazar, located near Quetta, on brand new 75CC motorbikes every morning” and they had with them each approximately PK Rpees 5,000 to cover for expenses. They were allegedly also recruited among Pakistanis through Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI), led by the member of the Pakistan

National Assembly Maulana Esmatullah.<sup>68</sup>

### Access to Secure Areas for Military Training for Taliban

One other vital and very important advantage that Taliban took from the territory of Pakistan was that they had access to secure areas to provide their members military training. You have read in previous pages that interviews with some prominent leaders of Taliban pointed that Taliban have immediately crossed the border to Pakistan after the fall of their regime. Here, they began very soon to organize their ranks. With the recruitment of new members, they considered the provision of guerilla training for them. In fact, they were thinking about this issue from the beginning of 2002 as they newly came to Pakistan and were not yet settled fully. “Mawlawi Hikmat,” who was commander of an operational regiment in Kabul during the period of Taliban, was captured and spent three years in the detention of Ahmadshah Massoud’s fighters.<sup>69</sup> “Mawlawi Hikmat” relates the following about access military training in the territory of Pakistan after the fall of Taliban’s regime: “The issues of recruitment of and guerilla training for new members rose immediately after the overthrow of the regime as we entered Pakistan. In February of 2002 we opened several training centers in Wana of Waziristan. These centers were very simple and poorly equipped. Twenty or twenty-five Taliban were placed in one house. They did not go out. At night we brought them an Arab trainer. The trainer taught them classes concerning tactics and electronic items. In tactics, they were taught how to conceal oneself in emergency situations and in electronics training they were taught the different kinds of remote control devices and how to use them. After few days, we encountered Sheikh Ahmad from Algeria. He was an expert in making various explosive materials. He was former Major of the Algerian army and had gained much experience. He made us many bombs that were used later successfully in different areas. Some were detected and disarmed. In recent times, the enemy’s attempts of detecting and disarming bombs were intensified. We considered other ways and strategies that helped resolve this problem. Numerous times fighters could defeat the mine detecting machines of the enemy.”

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68. Qaiser Butt and Shehzad Baluch “Kharotabad: A Taliban safe haven” Express Tribune 17 October 2011

69. He became later an important leader of Taliban and has led one of the important commissions. He was arrested by Pakistani authorities twice and reprimanded by Taliban as well. At present, he lives in isolation.

He adds that as peace talks started between the Taliban affiliated with the Ahmadzais Wazirs and the Pakistani government began in 2002 and 2004, the region became less secure for foreign fighters. Therefore, many of Afghan Taliban moved to the region of the Massuds and constructed there centers in various mountainous areas.

Meanwhile, some of Pakistani *jihadi* organizations proposed to the armed Taliban to provide them guerrilla trainings. Harakat-ul-Mujahedeen was one of these parties. But since the activities of Pakistani *jihadi* organizations were severely controlled by Pakistani authorities, in many instances these camps were sabotaged by them.

“Mulla Munir”, an inhabitant of Ghazni province, is one of those persons who were introduced to Pakistani *jihadi* groups for military trainings. He told me about his experience: “The guerrilla training was provided for us by our leaders. They had talked to Hakim Saheb.<sup>70</sup> We were brought from Quetta to Karachi. We spent some days here with the friends of Hakim Saheb. From here we were sent to Gilgit. We were fifty people. In Gilgit, we were brought to a former *jihadi* training camp. We needed training in the field of electronics and ammunitions, but they introduced us to physical training. The camp was, however, encircled after six days by Pakistani military. The camp became under severe small arms fire. We escaped in the forest around there; some of our friends were captured. Some others, including myself, could return with enormous difficulties to Quetta.”

In 2006, the activities of Pakistani Taliban were extended to North Waziristan. Here they built training camps together with Hafez Gul Bahadur’s Taliban from Utmanzai Wazirs. The sons of Mawlawi Jalaluddin Haqqani<sup>71</sup> gath-

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70. Maulana Muhammad Ahmad, known as Hakim Saheb is one of the prominent leaders of Pakistani jihadi group, Harakat-ul-Mujahedeen, that were active in Kashmir and Afghanistan very often.

71. Mawlawi Jalaludin Haqqani used to live 1950s in the area of Zadrans in Paktia province and belongs to the tribe of Zadran. He completed his primary and secondary studies in local madrasas and graduated from Haqanya Dar-ul-ulum of Akora Kahtak. He began to fight against the regime in Afghanistan in the 1970s and in the subsequent decade he was one of the greatest guerrilla commanders of the *Hizb-i Islami* party of Mawlawi Munhammad Yunus Khalis. In 1985-86 he led severe fighting against Soviets in the battlefronts of Gardez and Khost so that he controlled the highway between Khost and Gardez. The Soviet and Afghan armies initiated a military operation (Magistral) in 1987-88 against him to open the highway. He became internationally known when he captured the city of Khost in 1989. He began to create among various groups of Mujahedeen a

ered their followers around themselves and reactivated the camps from the 1980s. The Haqqani Network centered itself in North Waziristan (Miranshah, Mirali) and on neighboring areas of Paktya, Paktika and Khost.

In 2007, pursuant to an understanding between them, the Haqqani Network was officially affiliated with Taliban. Sirajuddin Haqqani was granted membership in the Leadership Council of the Taliban and Jalaluddin Haqqani gained the honorary membership of this council. Badruddin Haqqani was given the leadership of the Military Commission for South-Eastern Afghanistan. Parallel to this understanding with the Taliban, the Haqqani Network trained a great number suicide attackers, who carried out attacks in various parts of Afghanistan. Improved explosive devices denying mobility, and the suicide attacks denying the claim of establishing security to the Government were the two key tactics that led to the defeat of the Coalition and Afghan forces by Taliban.

Pursuant to this understanding, the Quetta Council requested from 2008 on various regional commanders to introduce to the Council from their fighters some potential suicide attackers for training. Following this request, hundreds of young people from various parts of Pakistan and Afghanistan showed their preparedness. The Haqqani Network has, however set up stricter military conditions for selecting individuals for suicide attacks. Severe attention was paid to the physical and psychological wellbeing of every suicide attacker. In contrary to the tradition of Pakistani Taliban, children were not chosen for such an attack. Every suicide attacker must have been no less than 16 years old and with an appropriate beard.

In addition to Pakistani and Afghani suicide attackers, some Arab citizens have also registered themselves for such attacks, which have later took part in collective attacks on American military bases in Khalbesat and Sara Bagh of Khost. Among Arab suicide attackers, Dr. Humam Khalil Abu-Mulal al-Balawi, generally known as Abu Dujana Al-Khorasani was worth mentioning. He killed a large number of CIA staff, including a CIA senior officer and a senior secret service officer of the Jorda-

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common understanding in 1992. He joined the Taliban in 1995 and was appointed as the Minister for Tribal Affairs. After the overthrow of Taliban’s regime, his sons each Sirajuddin Haqqani, Nasiruddin Haqqani and Badruddin Haqqani built the “Haqqani Network”. Badrudin Haqqani was killed in a drone attack in Waziristan, Nasiruddin Haqqani was killed by unknown armed men in Islamabad. Sirajuddin Haqqani leads at present the “Haqqani Network”.

nian royal army on 30 December 2009.

The Quetta Shura decided in 2012 to construct new training centers for Taliban. The mountainous area of the Toba Kakar range in Pishin of Balochistan was selected for these centers. Two huge training centers were erected there and were led by the former governor of Khost during the time of Taliban, Torak Agha.<sup>72</sup>

The Quetta Shura requested then the Haqqani Network to limit their attacks only to Paktya, Paktika and Khost. According to this request, the suicide attacks in Kabul and other areas should hereafter be carried out only under the supervision and leadership of the Quetta Shura and through Mawlawi Muhibullah, originally from Kandahar, also known as Hajji Lala. At this time, a complex suicide attack was carried out under the supervision of Quetta Shura on the court building in Farah City on 4 April 2013 that killed 54 persons, including 35 civilians and injured more than hundred individuals. Two similar complex suicide attacks were carried out in Aino Mina (a major housing development on former Army Corps grounds for affluent citizens on the road to the airport – literally “peace village”) of Kandahar on 13 May 2013 that killed ten civilians and wounded almost a hundred.

Prior to this, the Haqqani network had become very famous for complex suicide attacks. One of the characteristics of its attacks was that they tried to keep the level of civilian casualties low, but the attacks led by Quetta Shura caused huge damage to the life and property of civilians. This approach resulted in damage to the reputation of Taliban.

At this juncture, disputes over the supervision of training camps increased. Even an armed clash in a camp in Pishin took place between two armed groups and three persons were reportedly killed from each side. Although media had not published any news about the clash, Pakistani authorities ordered the closure of these camps. Thus, the Quetta Shura was forced to submit the training of suicide attackers again to the Haqqani Network. There are dozens of training centers now alongside the border with Paktya, Paktika and Khost, where suicide attackers get elaborate commando-style training from the Haqqani Network.

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72. His name is also spelt Torek Agha, his real name however is Abdullah.

According to my information, these trainings are being conducted by prominent Afghan, Kurdish and Arab trainers. Despite the assassinations of Badruddin Haqqani, Nasiruddin Haqqani, Mawlawi Muhammad Jan / Ahmad Jan<sup>73</sup> and many other leaders, the network was always able to revive its activities through new and fresh leaders.

### Collecting Donations

It is obvious that collecting foreign donations is extremely vital for conducting and advancing partisan resistance movements. After the overthrow of the regime, Taliban lost all sources of donations, and they had to regenerate the old sources and find new ones to assist them restart their resistance.

In Afghanistan Taliban resorted to extortion. Based in a shadowy office in Kabul the Taliban contracts officer examined NGO and private contractor proposals. He negotiated right in Kabul for a percentage. One Afghan firm estimated that from its weekly US \$1 million revenue, about US \$ 200,000 were paid towards the Taliban. A supplier of pipes for a project in Helmand had to mark up 30% of the price of the pipes in order to be able to deliver them safely. In Farah, the Government's own rural development programme paid 40% of each project cost to the Taliban in order to be left in peace. Inside Afghanistan, Taliban collected poppy paste during the opium harvest, also 10% from the wheat. In 2010 they shifted to monetary payment of approximately \$150 per household.<sup>74</sup>

With the overthrow of the regime, Taliban began to contact various groups and individuals to get donations to support their families. Mulla Abdul Jalil was one of the senior members of the commission for collecting donations for Taliban; He explained to me how they began to collect donations after the fall of the emirate in Karachi: “We had supporters in Pakistan prior to the fall of Taliban, who assisted us and had also collected donations for us from other sources. Al-Rashid Trust and Al-Akhtar Trust are the organizations that deserve to be mentioned in this regard. In addition, hundreds of

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73. Mawlawi Muhammad Jan was widely known as Maulvi Ahmad Jan. He was killed in a drone strike on a *madrasa* in Hangu, Pakistan on 21 November 2013.

74. Jean MacKenzie “Who is funding the Afghan Taliban you don't want to know” Reuters 13 August 2009.

scholars and individual businessmen supported us on the basis of religious affiliation and loyalty. But we faced a very critical situation. Hundreds of our families lived in miserable situation as refugees. We did not have means to support them. We had to refer to our older friends. Some of them refused to assist, due to security reasons, some others, however have restarted their support to us. Although the level of assistance was low, but it sufficed to address our preliminary needs. [...] In the subsequent years as the situation became convenient, we contacted the leaders of various prominent religions schools and encouraged them to support us. They accepted our demand and began to render us assistance and encouraged their followers to do so. Individuals from different walks of life, including industrialists, taxi drivers, shoe makers and others helped us through these tough times.”

My interlocutor “Bilal” claimed that in 2010 Agha Jan Mutasim had shown the total amount of foreign donation to Taliban as being US \$ 89 million. “Bilal” estimated the whole amount of assistance plus the donation from Pakistan at that time to be around US \$ 100 million.

Torek Agha also was in charge of fundraising, as claimed by the United Nations. In 2012 Torak Agha and several other Quetta Shura members selected messengers to travel to Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries to collect financial donations on the Taliban’s behalf from both Afghan businessmen and smugglers. He had in 2010 raised approximately US \$ 4 mio. His transfers to Gul Agha were as follows: \$1 million from associates in Saudi Arabia; \$2 million from donors in Qatar, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Saudi Arabia; and \$600,000 from various Arab donors obtained on a fundraising trip to Qatar.

Taliban relied not only on members of *madaris* in the Deobandi network for getting assistance from non-official sources. Jamaat-ud-Dawa, the former Lashkar-e-Tayyiba, affiliated with the non-traditional elements, also supported them widely. Jamaat-ud-Dawa has also been involved in recruitment of fighters and providing weapons for Salafi mujahedeen nominally aligned with the Taliban operating in the provinces of Nuristan and Kunar.

Until 2006, Taliban authorized only a few persons to collect donations. These individuals lived in various cities of Pakistan and maintained contacts with local scholars

and jihadi groups. In the middle of that year, however, the Taliban established a financial commission to coordinate fundraising. The leadership of this commission varied from time to time. Mulla Agha Jan Mutasim and Gul Agha Ishaqzai were the powerful individuals introduced by Mulla Omar to take the leadership role of this commission. At the beginning, Mutasim – former Minister of Finance during the Taliban regime – was the head of the commission; in 2010 Gul Agha Ishaqzai took over this role.

An important question in this regard is to know, whether Afghan Taliban too attempted to collect money through illegal ways, e.g. involvement in general crime groups, extortion, assassinations for hire and abductions, as Pakistani Taliban did? In answering this question, “Bilal” says: “Really not. Since our movement has begun to eliminate crimes and abuses, we tried to keep our ranks free from every type of administrative and financial corruption to the extent possible. Mulla Saheb had issued a clear direction that nobody is allowed to extract money from any person. The main reason for establishing a financial commission was that prior to 2006 military field commanders collected donation for themselves and their armed companions. Afghan Taliban published news in Pakistani media that there were groups extracting money from people, using their personal relations and familiarity. The Afghan Taliban pointed out that this approach was not the proper way of collecting donation. That is why, the leadership decided that donation should be collected by definite persons from definite individuals and these individuals were introduced officially in writing to donors. It was emphasized that donors should only recognize these persons and nobody else can be trusted upon. In recent times, people who are not affiliated with Taliban try to collect donations. All people were given the warning from the Afghan Taliban not to provide any kind of assistance for these people.”

To sum it up, Pakistan is the key point of departure for fundraising for Pakistan. In a recent interview, Mulla Rahmatullah Kakazada stated that while territory under control of the Taliban in Afghanistan was expanding, fundraising was not keeping up. But despite the alleged availability of lot of territory in Afghanistan, he stated that “if we left Pakistan we would not survive one week”.<sup>75</sup>

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75. Jon Boone & Sami Yousafzai, Taliban facing financial crisis as civilian deaths deter donors, The Guardian 20 November 2016.



## Providing Logistic Materials

One other advantage that Taliban gained from operating on the territory of Pakistan was the provision of logistic materials. Since Pakistan is an industrial country, with many legal gaps on control over dual use materials, it is easy to have access to every kind of goods. As Taliban began to produce remote control devices and electric circuits, raw materials they needed were provided from Pakistan or through Pakistan as the importing country. “Ezzatullah” stated in Karachi that “we bought required materials for remote controls and electric circuits from the free market. We introduced ourselves as traders of these goods and purchased the required items in large quantity. We shipped them via cargo logistic firms to different destinations in the tribal areas. Thus, we had access to all required items in this market.”

“Bilal” added: “In addition, Taliban were also in need of chemical items and ammonium nitrate to produce explosive devices to be placed on highways. These items could also be bought in large quantity on the free market in Pakistan without any legal procedure. Taliban purchased these materials from free market until 2012; they produced explosive materials in their factories in the areas alongside the border. In 2013, Pakistani authorities banned the purchase and sale of such materials, but Taliban could easily obtain these items using their own channels.”

In accordance to my further investigation, Pakistani authorities have adopted recently stricter control measures on free access to such materials in the areas around Quetta. As a result, Taliban faced many problems and their expenditure amounted to four times more. To provide logistic items, Taliban claim to use hidden ways and places for the transportation of their goods from Pakistan to Afghanistan, but regularly, trucks on the main highways are found to transport raw materials for bomb-making to Afghanistan.

## Propaganda and Cultural Activities

In their armed struggle against Americans and the Afghan state, Taliban took successfully advantage from propaganda through conveying their messages and news about their activities. For recruiting new members, encouraging them and strengthening their moral, Taliban made use of the same means. Even Americans and other coalition forces have admitted that Taliban are stronger

than them in conducting their propaganda war. It is obvious that their success in this area rested on the availability for the Taliban of a conducive environment.

At first, Taliban activated mobile FM radio channels in various parts of Afghanistan that transmitted propaganda against Americans and the Afghan government and broadcasted emotional hymns and religious verses through the voices of various Taliban. Among these radios, one was the FM radio transmission in Ghazni and one other was installed in Zurmat by Mawlawi Saifurrahman and his friends. These two units were very famous from 2006 until 2008. But later, both of these radios became the target of operation by Coalition forces and were destroyed. The responsible person of Ghazni radio was arrested during a night raid, his other friends could escape to Pakistan.

Taliban focused on propaganda activities immediately after restoring their guerilla structure. “Ezzatullah” told us during an interview that, prior to the establishment of cultural commission, he and his friends were used to collect news from Taliban commanders, translated them into English, Arabic and Urdu and sent them to various *jihadi* websites and Pakistani local media. According to him, they began with this activity already in parallel to the “Operation Anaconda” in Shahi Kot valley in early 2002.<sup>76</sup> They published the news of Arab and Afghan fighters against Americans together with propaganda materials in local media in Pakistan. He said further, that this news was then translated into Russian, German and other languages of the world by *jihadi* websites. According to “Ezzatullah,” Taliban have also exploited the freedom of press in Afghanistan. They have, as “Ezzatullah” described, instructed their friends in round table talks with mass media in various parts of the country to raise questions that were in line with their policy. They instructed their sympathizers to approach participants of discussions and attempt to make the theme of the discussions revolve around these questions. He said that they experienced several times very interesting situations. He singled out one of these experiences and said: “In 2004, radio Voice of America (VOA) organized a round table discussion. The facilitator of the discussion was famous radio announcer and producer, Saaduddin Shpon. He had invited senior authorities of the Afghan government. One of them was the spokesperson of President Karzai.

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76. Stewart (2004), p. 30ff describes Operation Anaconda in detail.

Shpon raised questions with the participants of the discussion about development work in Afghanistan. During the discussion, an Afghan phoned from Saudi Arabia and asked the spokesperson of Mr. Karzai as to what was their reaction to the incident in a wedding party in Kabul, when American military officers threatened a female secretary of Mr. Karzai and as a result an armed clash took place between the armed people of Fahim and Americans. Given the sensitivity of the issue, Shpon tried to divert the question, but he became very emotional and used very bad language. The participant from Saudi Arabia had taken this news from the local media in Saudi Arabia and revealed that the news was published by the 'Okaz newspaper (Jeddah). Saudi Arabian newspaper had taken the news from *jihadi* websites. *Jihadi* websites received the news from us. Here we realized that the effects of our work were comprehensive.”

A well known Afghan journalist, peace actor and researcher, “Karwan” said about this issue, that at that time Taliban had not established their cultural commission, they collected news individually. He stated that “the Arab commander Abu Laith Al-Libi sent me his notes from the ground engagement of Shahi Kot in Arabic and I translated them into Urdu and got them published through local media in Karachi.” After some time, the American magazine “Soldier of Fortune” published the notes of an US commander about the battle. “Karwan” translated these notes into Urdu and got them published as well. “Karwan” claimed that both news items made it into Urdu and local media within twenty days. The accounts of the US General confirmed to great extent what Abu Laith al-Libi had written. From the beginning, the confirmed multi-sourced reporting within short timeframes won the trust of the public, and bestowed sanctity and spirituality on the war launched by the Taliban.

According to “Karwan”, after the Taliban have established the Cultural Commission, Mulla Baradar requested him to lead the Commission. Since he worked as a free journalist at that time and also cooperated with a Western radio station, he could not accept the offer, he said. Taliban later appointed their former minister for information and culture, Qudratullah Jamal, as head of the Commission and Abdulhai Motmaen as his Deputy. During the leadership of Jamal, the Taliban created websites under the title of Emirate (variations such as [alemara1.org](http://alemara1.org)) and Courage (variations of [shahamat.info](http://shahamat.info) and [al-amarah](http://al-amarah) are being used frequently) and published various volumes of glossy magazines titled “Morchal” and “Sharia”. But

since Qudratullah Jamal was quite weak in his performance and could not act decisively, he was replaced by Abdulhai Motmaen in 2007. However, a significant improvement in the quality and performance of the propagandistic work of the Commission was achieved when Amir Khan Motaqi returned after a long period of silence in 2008 and took over the leadership of the Commission. He had been engaged in information operations and contacts with journalists since 1994 and had gained valuable experience. At this time (2008), Taliban were financially better off, and Amir Khan Motaqi could generously support his friends; he rented houses for them, paid them higher salaries, provided them equipment and gave them full authority in their performance. Editorial policy was the only exception where he maintained a close grip.

In 2008 various individuals were appointed as spokespersons. After the arrest of Dr. Hanif, almost 10 persons have spoken so far with the media using the pseudo names of Yusuf Ahmadi and Zabihullah Mujahed. At this time, the video studios of Al-Hijrat, Al-Imarah and Manba-ul-Jihad were created to produce various visual materials, choruses and documentary films. Dozens of professional and technical staff were engaged in the studios. They provided dozens of effective and documented films and audio materials for the market. Central and secondary offices were established for this purpose in Karachi, Peshawar and Quetta. Internet servers were purchased, from Canada, Thailand, Vietnam, Singapore and United Arab Emirate, using unknown commercial names. Taliban created websites and domain addresses through these servers to publish their messages and news widely.

“Doctor Hasan” was cooperating at this time with the website of Taliban and is now working in his own pharmacy. He told us that since Americans followed their data, they had to keep dozens of domains and servers as backup and had loaded data on these servers already. Whenever Americans or others blocked their websites, they immediately afterwards re-activated their work using another website name but the same data.

A prominent member of the cultural commission of Taliban claimed that for the purpose of gaining technical and professional experiences they have used even the channels of North Korea. According to him, also several Muslim youths living in Canada, who maintained a pro-Taliban website ([theunjustmedia.com](http://theunjustmedia.com)), helped them financially and technically. The editors of the website provided the Taliban Cultural Committee at first 40 laptops

and \$10,000 in cash.

In 2009, under the leadership of Mawlawi Anwarul-haqq, the son of Yunus Khalis, a website was established in Eastern Afghanistan under the name of “Tora Bora Front”. Under this title a magazine was published as well. Although this organization was officially a part of the structure of Islamic Emirate, it has however not followed the policy of the Emirate in editorial affairs. When in 2006 Afghan authorities took measures against the editorial board, the website and magazine production was shifted from Jalalabad to Peshawar.

Mulla Agha Jan Mutasim, who headed the political commission of Taliban as well, published a magazine in Arabic in the Gulf countries under the title of Al-Samood to attract the attention and assistance of Arabs. One of the long-term Arab friends of the Emirate, the Egyptian Mustafa Hamid, also known as Abu Walid al-Masri<sup>77</sup>, used to write for him in that magazine. Mutasim followed his own publishing guidelines and had prepared a studio for producing audio-visual materials as well. However, the Al-Samood news magazine and studio were submitted to the Taliban cultural commission in the subsequent years and stopped following an independent editorial line.

The Cultural Commission of Taliban has at present Al-Emirate, Shahamat, Emirate-News, Islamic Emirate, and under several other names websites in Pashto, Dari, English, Arabic and Urdu and publishes magazines under the titles of Sharia and Morchal. They have recently introduced the fourth CD the “Army of Badr” series to the market, containing detailed videos of suicide attacks, the farewell messages and accounts of life of suicide attackers.

Manba ul-Jihad is directed by the Haqqani Network, but coordinates with the Cultural Commission. Taliban could reach their voice through their powerful media network to the people, who were addressed by the USA. They have also encouraged Afghans living in the Gulf States to carry out suicide attacks. As a result of their propagandistic activities, an Afghan businessman living in Kuwait, Mawlawi Muhammad Idrees, was won over to conduct a complex suicide attack on the Sara Bagh base of the United States near Khost in September 2012. Mawlawi Idrees was killed together with 16 other suicide attackers in this attack. In a video published by Manba

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77. Mustafa Hamid & Leah Farrall, *The Arabs at War in Afghanistan*, London 2015.

ul-Jihad, Mawlawi Idrees is seen in a position holding PK light machine guns in both hands and fires continuously, while standing very calm in his place, resembling a scene in a film.

Likewise, the suicide attack on the NATO contractor compound in Pul-i Charkhi on 2 July 2013<sup>78</sup> was carried out by a young man who had been working in the Gulf States prior to the attack. In both of these attacks, dozens of foreign soldiers and civilian contractors were killed. The attack on Sara Bagh was depicted as catastrophic in terms of material and human casualties. Destroyed helicopters and other weapons are seen very obviously in videos published by Taliban. Taliban were very successful in romanticizing professionally the training environment of suicide attackers for young people and could thus evoke their desire to be rewarded in the heaven. Dozens of such young people, depressed by the situation in the country, have left their homes, *madaris* and schools for Miranshah and other areas and joined the ranks of suicide attackers.

Osman Fateh was one of these young people. He was studying in a very modern and state-of-the-art school in Karachi. In 2006, through seeing the videos published by Taliban, he was slowly changed his mind and became a *jihadi*. Osman Fateh ran away from the school, but came back home several times. He received suicide attacker training in Miranshah and the Shawal valley and in other areas and was killed on 10 May 2012 in a ground engagement with US forces in Alishir of Khost. He wanted to reach the US base and carry out his suicide attack, but together with his friends ran into an ambush by US forces. After a few hours of conflict, he was killed together with his two friends. Besides being a Qari (reciter of Quran), Osman Fateh was a promising student in modern sciences. He was fluent in Urdu, Arabic and English. He had been active user of his own Facebook site (since then deleted) and translated various declarations and notes of the Taliban into Arabic. He translated the whole story of the great Kandahar jailbreak of 2011 into very simple and fluent Arabic and published it. Likewise, he published continuously very interesting articles in an Afghan website in Pashto language. Osman Fateh also had translated a booklet with the biographies of companions of

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78. In this complex attack, he drove the explosive-laden vehicle, three other attackers died when trying to storm the compound, see: “Suicide attack on NATO supply firm in Kabul” BBC 2 July 2013 and Javed Hamim Kakar “Nepalese among 7 killed in Kabul suicide attack” Pajhwok News 2 July 2013.

the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) that is in possession of his family.

In summary, Taliban were very successful in using the territory of Pakistan for their propagandistic activities. This propaganda work gave Taliban fighters a high morale. Through this, they attracted new young members to their ranks and brought their messages to the international community. It was through their videos that wealthy Arabs from Gulf States rendered them generously financial assistance and it was this propagandistic activity that helped Taliban become stronger power in the battle against coalition forces and the Afghan state.

#### Encouraging and Attracting Mass Political Support:

Taliban diplomats were successfully engaged in changing the mentality of the people of Pakistan to their advantage even as they were at the threshold of collapse of their regime. Among these diplomats, the ambassador of the Taliban's Islamic Emirate, Mulla Abdussalam Zaeef and the General Consul of the Taliban in Karachi, Mawlawi Rahmatullah Kakazada were very active. The General Consul in Peshawar, Mawlawi Najibullah, was more active in the economic field. Mr. Zaeef remained continuously in contact with media right until his arrest. Mr. Kakazada used to hold speeches in public gatherings and encouraged people to support the Taliban emirate in their struggle against the United States without considering any type of diplomatic protocol. He reportedly had collected millions of Pakistani Rupees as donation for Taliban, which was then submitted to senior Taliban leaders in Kandahar. Mr. Zaeef was submitted to US authorities after his arrest and Mr. Kakazada was expelled from Pakistan.

After some time from the collapse of their regime, Taliban were able again to establish relations with their former political allies. The former Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Taliban Mulla Abduljalil Akhund and the former Governor of Kandahar, Mulla Muhammad Hassan Rahmani were assigned to maintain contact with Pakistani *ulema* and Pakistani politicians. General Hamid Gul was also one of those persons, whom Taliban contacted immediately after their collapse. Someone, who had watched these contacts closely, told me that some of them were arrested: "During this period, we were in a perplexed situation. We needed supporters. Pakistani politicians and Mullas have collected prior to the collapse of the regime of Taliban a huge amount of dona-

tion upon our name, but have submitted a tiny part of these donations to us. They spent the larger part of this assistance on their own organizational and collective affairs. Even from South Africa, donations were collected in our name. In this respect, we received the guidance that every individual member should create contact with political figures in Pakistan. However, we were very cautious in relations to our own security. I was the first of those individuals who met General Hamid Gul in his house in Rawalpindi and requested him to help. He assured us from his own side of every type of assistance. He referred also to some security measures and advised us how to contact him in a secure manner. He gave us some rupees in cash and kept us for three nights in his own house. He told us that Musharaf has now lost his senses. He attacks everyone wildly. He advised me that 'I am watching the situation closely, and am in contact with my former friends and subordinate officers in the army. I try to change the mentality of Musharaf from an indirect way. Whenever I gave you green light, you may begin to search for contacts. Until then, do nothing, keep contact within yourself and consult each other how to organize the affairs from within.'"

After some time, as General Hamid Gul came to Karachi, he met him again. This time the General seemed happier and has told him that he will contact them after returning to Rawalpindi. General Hamid Gul informed them, and some Taliban leaders went to Rawalpindi to visit him. There they met also Qazi Hussain Ahmad, Hafez Muhammad Saeed from Jamaat-ud-Dawa and some leaders of Muslim League Nawaz Group. They gave Taliban leaders some money in cash and consulted with them. Qazi Hussain Ahmad promised them to provide possibilities for medical treatment for injured Taliban in Mansehra. Hafez Muhammad Saeed made similar pledges. Thus, contact channels between Pakistani politicians and Taliban were again opened. Various delegations of their financial commission visited them from time to time and collected considerable amount of money. The Taliban also contacted the leader of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam, Maulana Fazl-ur-Rehman as well. After these contacts, Taliban were able to visit freely *madaris*, centers and even the offices of businessmen under the influence of these political organizations and received from time to time financial help and logistic materials from them. Since Taliban were still afraid of open presence, they requested that Pakistani politicians refrain from speak in public meetings in their favor and do not publicly support them, but rather keep these relations within the lim-

its of discreet moral and financial support.

From 2010 onwards, the Taliban took advantage of these contacts and used them to establish and maintain relations with masses of people in Pakistan. Taliban living in various parts of Pakistan have gained membership in political parties. On one hand, they encouraged the people living in their sphere of influence to support these political organizations, and on the other hand they used the support of political influence of these parties to collect more assistance for Taliban.

“Mawlawi Nazanin,” who held a higher position within the intelligence service of the Taliban, came after the fall of the regime to Quetta. He was busy for some time with structural issues of Taliban. He got the membership of Jamaat-e-Islami of Pakistan in 2006 and got immediately after the party membership also the Pakistani identity cards not only for himself, but also for his family members. He became an influential political figure in the area of Quetta where he lived. He helped other Afghans to obtain Pakistani identity cards and encouraged them to vote for Jamaat-e-Islami in local elections and has widely remained engaged in activities in favor of Taliban.

#### Treatment of Injured Taliban

The question of the Taliban receiving medical support in Pakistan was extremely important for a movement without any base inside Afghanistan. It also was understandable given the tradition to resort to Pakistani hospitals from the time of the *jihad* onwards. Even Mulla Omar once underwent surgery in an ICRC hospital in Quetta in the 1980s.<sup>79</sup> The access to treatment in Pakistan was also very important during the period of the Taliban rule. Already in 1995, Pakistan made an agreement with the Taliban in Kandahar to arrange for medical treatment for the Taliban in Pakistan.<sup>80</sup>

As the Taliban and their associates in Afghanistan regularly targeted medical professionals, they also had a limited amount of educated medical sympathizers to call on for treatment. In many areas where the Taliban sought to establish their presence in Afghanistan at first, medi-

cal services were weak due to socioeconomic reasons to start with. Following the start of the insurgency, medical professionals left the districts under threat in massive numbers.

A major element for the Taliban medical service was the decision by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to provide them regularly with first aid training and materials. The ICRC provided training in Pakistan to Taliban combat medics, who were then issued regularly with medical supplies, which they then carried with them into Afghanistan. From 2006 onwards, ICRC also provided medical kits to Taliban medics inside Afghanistan in significant quantities. Every delivery of materials consisted of several truckloads of medical supplies.

Medical care inside Afghanistan always came with the risk of detection and subsequent arrest or death in a shoot-out with Afghan security forces. Inside Afghan prisons containing Taliban, the ICRC also provided medical support. This included psycho-pharmaceutical such as beta-blockers to treat depression, as well as advisory support for treatment of post-traumatic stress disorders. The ICRC would regularly give the medical aid to an identified Taliban prisoner, who was educated slightly above average. One of my friends, “Baheen” who was in Kabul Pul-i Charkhi prison from 2008 onwards, played this role for the ICRC. He had infrequent access to a mobile phone and told me “that the situation is very serious. Many Taliban in prison had been treated in the Afghan National Army hospital for war wounds, and then were transferred to the National Department of Security (NDS). In the NDS interrogation the Taliban were not all the time, but sometimes subjected to torture until they signed a confession. Based on the confession, they would then be judged and transferred to a special block in Pul-i Charkhi. When they arrive in my block, I see to their needs. Many need tablets against depression.”

Therefore, the major treatment was available only in Pakistan. As with other logistical tasks, the Taliban also in this case turned to the private business sector, not to the Pakistani government. From 2006 onwards, Afghan traders were expected to foot the bill for the treatment of wounded Taliban in Pakistan. These bills would be incurred in private medical practices, and then reimbursed by the Afghan traders. Many of these traders were of course in the narcotics business and required a working relationship with the Taliban in order to cross the des-

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79. Quote from former ICRC senior official (Delegate General for Asia) Jean-Michel Monot Nina Jacob, *Intercultural Management*, London 2003, p. 183

80. Kamal Matinuddin, *The Taliban Phenomenon - Afghanistan 1994-1997: With an Afterword covering major events since 1997*, Islamabad Karachi 2000, p. 130.

erts.<sup>81</sup>

In late 2006, more than 30 Taliban from Helmand, Kandahar and Zabul were interviewed by a British reporter in Quetta in a walled compound in Pashtunabad, Quetta. In the compound, they recuperated from wounds suffered fighting the UK forces in Helmand. They claimed to spend between three and six months inside Afghanistan or until they were wounded, then returning to the compound in Quetta. One of the Taliban, claiming himself to have been commanding the fighting in Musa Qala, also claimed that an Afghan businessman supported them by setting up a hospital to treat the fighters.<sup>82</sup>

In 2008, Hajji Fatah Ishaqzay, originally from in Helmand Province, a major trader in opiates and heroin started to finance a hospital. A hospital in Quetta financed by the narcotics dealer provided free medical care to wounded Taliban fighters. Access to the hospital was controlled through recommendation letters from Mulla Akhtar Mansour and Mulla Abdulhabib “Agha Jan” Alizai.<sup>83</sup>

Also the ICRC programme was scaled up in 2010. In April 2010 the ICRC reported publicly that in one month, they had reached over 70 members of the armed opposition (Taliban) for treatment. Private taxis were paid to transfer wounded Taliban from the border to private hospitals in Quetta. The Taliban in 2011 were reported to have access to five prominent private hospitals, most situated on the Quetta Airport Road. It was alleged that the ICRC paid for treatment carried out in these hospitals. The ICRC head of sub-delegation confirmed that they refund treatments carried out by Ikram Hospital and Imdad Hospital, without confirming however that they were paying for the treatment of wounded Taliban fighters.<sup>84</sup>

Taliban still showed that they had no compunctions about attacking medical personnel. In 2012 Khalil Dale, a British nurse working for the ICRC in Quetta was kidnapped on 5 January 2012 and later executed by his captors. His dead body was found dead on 29 April 2012. Even there were rumors that Mulla Omar had actually

died in a Pakistani hospital in Karachi. An unnamed senior Taliban leader – possibly Mullah Omar – was alleged to have received treatment in the Shaukat Khanum Memorial Cancer Hospital and Research Centre.<sup>85</sup> When reviewing Abdulhai Motmaen’s recent biography of Mulla Omar, a knowledgeable journalist mentioned his medical treatment in Pakistan.<sup>86</sup>

When Pakistan promised to pressurize the Taliban in 2015, their fighters were allegedly denied treatment in Al-Khair, Sangin, Emad and Sajjad hospitals in Quetta and Peshawar, as well as in Karachi’s Liaquat National Hospital, Agha Khan Hospital, as well as the Memon and Patel hospitals.<sup>87</sup>

The national security advisor of Pakistan, Mr. Sartaj Aziz stated in March 2016 that Pakistan has “some influence on them because their leadership is in Pakistan, and they get some medical facilities, their families are here. So we can use those levers to pressurise them to say, ‘come to the table’.”<sup>88</sup>

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81. Gretchen Peters, *How Opium Profits the Taliban*, Washington DC August 2009.

82. Tim Albone “Wounded Taliban treated in Pakistan” *The Sunday Times* 18 November 2006

83. United Nations 2015 (*S/2015/79*), para. 15

84. Butt and Baluch 2011

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85. Hamid Mir “Taliban leader treated at cancer hospital in Pakistan’s Lahore City” *Geo TV* 31 December 2015.

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## Conclusion

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Although Taliban claim to have used the territory of Pakistan successfully to promote their resistance movement against the occupation of their land, in reality, the strategic interests and will of Pakistan appear to be increasingly the real motivation of this process. This strategy enabled the Taliban tactic, not their aptitude to force Pakistan or to exploit weaknesses in Pakistan's state system. If there would not have existed a strategic interest of Pakistan to support the Taliban resistance against the United States, it would not have been possible for Taliban to freely stay in Pakistan or remain active.

Although Pakistan provided Taliban useful opportunities to promote their resistance movement and recruit new members for their forces, this opportunity had two negative dimensions as well. These aspects have affected primarily the organization of Taliban forces, and secondly their prestige and the legitimacy of their resistance movement in the eyes of the Afghan public and some academic circles.

First, Islamabad had never given Taliban the impression that they may have a free hand in using the territory of Pakistan to develop their program and move freely according to their own plan or needs. Rather, although Pakistan has tolerated on the one hand their activities, on the other hand Pakistan strictly monitored them and prevented any kind of their activity that was interpreted as independent of the interests of Pakistan. To make their resistance movement more effective, Taliban would have needed to establish strong leadership and a number of experienced cadres. They were however, not allowed to have such a leadership, rather the members of their leadership circle came under attack by Pakistani authorities from time to time, when they became too independent. During these attacks, dozens of their leaders of the first, secondary and tertiary ranks were arrested. Among the arrested leaders, the former minister for defense, Mulla Obaidullah Akhund, the former minister for justice, Mulla Nooruddin Turabi, the former friend of Mulla Muhammad Omar and his right hand and deputy *amir al-muminin* Mulla Abdul Ghani Baradar were included.

Some of them were released on the condition that they may not rejoin the Taliban's movement and some other died mysteriously. Other leaders, including Mulla Abdulghani Baradar are still in detention in Pakistan. Mulla Obaidullah Akhund died in detention in Pakistan in 2010. According to sources in his family, he died after severe torture and beatings. Mulla Nooruddin Turabi and the secretary of Mulla Muhammad Omar, Abdul Ahad Jahangirwal, were released after seven and eight years' imprisonment when their health conditions reached a critical stage. Mawlawi Abdulkabir, Mulla Agha Jan Mutasim, Mansor Dadullah and some others were arrested, then released after a short period of detention. Instead of developing new leaders, Pakistani intervention reinstated the old leaders who were released from jail.

Taliban sources have also stated that Pakistan has allegedly attempted to divide the leadership of Taliban into groups. The revolt against Mulla Omar initiated by Mulla Abdurrazaq Akhund, the former minister for interior in 2005, the conflict between Mulla Agha Jan Mutasim and the Leadership Council in 2009, the disputes between the head of the military commission Muhammad Ismail and some members of the Leadership Council in 2013 were examples of these divisions. Mulla Muhammad Ismail was arrested by Taliban as a result of this dispute and was detained for five months. He was accused of having received large bribes from foreigners in exchange for letting trucks pass unharmed, and pocketed the money. Taliban sources alleged, that he did this with the knowledge of Pakistan.

Secondly, the close relations of Taliban with Pakistan have damaged severely the prestige of Taliban from the perspectives of most political circles in Afghanistan. This situation has led many Afghans to evaluate Taliban as pure pro-Pakistan force and has negatively affected the mentality of Afghan state establishment in peace efforts with the Taliban. Based on this perception, many Afghans have argued to focus on negotiating with Pakistan alone to find a solution to the problem.

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## Author

Khalilullah Safi was born in 1978 in Afghanistan in Kama District of Nangarhar Province, which borders Pakistan and belongs to the Safi tribe, which for centuries provided royal bodyguards. After his family fled to Pakistan in 1979, he studied at the “Omar bin Abdul Aziz” primary school in Peshawar and graduated from the “Numan bin Sabit” high school in Mansehra. He received a Bachelor of Science degree from the agricultural faculty of Kabul University in 1996 just before the take-over by the Taliban, which closed the university for two years. He went for further study to Pakistan and obtained his Master degree in international relations from Peshawar University in 1999. He worked as a social mobilizer in the 2004 and 2005 elections in his native province of Nangarhar, and started afterwards to consult for the European Union, the United Nations and the Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs. He has published together with Thomas Ruttig the June 2018 article “Understanding Hurdles to Afghan Peace Talks: Are the Taleban a political party?” available online at <https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/understanding-hurdles-to-afghan-peace-talks-are-the-taleban-a-political-party/>.

His translator Joseph Mohr is a longstanding contributor to the Liechtenstein Colloquium and to Liechtenstein Institute on Self-Determination publications.

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