



## The 'AfPak policy' and the Pashtuns

RESEARCH PAPER 10/45 22 June 2010

In March 2009, the Obama Administration announced a new policy for Afghanistan and Pakistan that sought to combine military, civilian, political and development 'surges' on both sides of the Durand Line. The new policy soon became known by the shorthand term, 'AfPak'. The core goal of the policy is "to disrupt, dismantle and defeat al-Qaeda and its safe havens in Pakistan, and to prevent their return to Pakistan or Afghanistan". In April 2009, the then Labour Government set out its own "comprehensive strategy", in which it was stated that the "greatest international priority [...] is the border areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan." These border areas are predominantly inhabited by ethnic Pashtuns, from whom are drawn most of the membership of the Afghan and Pakistan Taliban, the two groups believed to be providing shelter and assistance to al-Qaeda.

The fate of the US AfPak policy currently hangs in the balance. There is certainly no shortage of sceptics. It is clear that the success or failure of the policy will be heavily shaped by how the Pashtuns respond to its inducements. Therefore, the first part of this paper focuses on the Pashtuns. It begins with a survey of the geographic, historical and cultural factors which have shaped Pashtun identities in Afghanistan and Pakistan before going on to describe the political and security arrangements under which they currently live. The paper then reviews the Pashtun armed militant groups currently operating in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The second part of the paper then looks at the US AfPak policy, setting out its origins and evolution before assessing the prospects for success over the coming year and beyond.

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## Summary

In March 2009, the Obama Administration announced a new, integrated policy for Afghanistan and Pakistan that would combine a range of ‘surges’ – military, civilian, political and development – in order “to disrupt, dismantle and defeat al-Qaeda and its safe havens in Pakistan, and to prevent their return to Pakistan or Afghanistan”. The new policy soon became known by the shorthand term, ‘AfPak’. In April 2009, the then British Government set out its own “comprehensive strategy”, in which it was stated that the “greatest international priority [...] is the border areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan.” These border areas are predominantly inhabited by ethnic Pashtuns, from whom are drawn most of the membership of the Afghan and Pakistan Taliban, the two main groups believed to be providing shelter and assistance to al-Qaeda. It is clear that the fate of the ‘AfPak policy’ will be heavily shaped by how Pashtuns, whether involved with the militants or not, respond to its inducements – particularly those based in the border areas.

The US has indicated that it hopes to be able to start significant troop withdrawals from mid-2011 onwards, once the balance of military forces has shifted against the Afghan Taliban and the right conditions for a political settlement have been created. So far this year has seen a renewed military effort by US and UK forces to push the Afghan Taliban out of key redoubts in Helmand Province. An offensive in Kandahar Province, originally set to begin in June, now seems to be being scaled down, with significant military operations not expected until September. There are also moves, following the January 2010 London Conference, to further build local security capabilities, strengthen governance, tackle corruption, combat the narcotics trade and promote the reintegration of Taliban fighters. The UN and Afghan Government, led by President Hamid Karzai, have also begun to explore the potential for political reconciliation, including through negotiations with elements of the Taliban leadership, although some, including parts of the US Administration, appear to view these efforts as premature.

In Pakistan, a major US-sponsored development plan, mainly aimed at the border areas, is slowly taking shape. Peace talks with the Pakistan Taliban are not envisaged, but the Pakistani military’s appetite for large-scale action against militants is less than it was in 2009, when it conducted a series of major offensives in the border areas. Operations by the Pakistani security forces have weakened, but not defeated, the Pakistan Taliban, which appears to have regrouped. In recent months, there have been arrests of senior Afghan Taliban figures in Pakistan. Although publicly welcomed by the coalition allies, doubts have been expressed both about their impact on future negotiations and about Pakistan’s motivations. US drone attacks against militants on the Pakistan side of the border continue, despite their continuing unpopularity amongst ordinary Pakistanis.

What, then, are the prospects for the AfPak policy? They should be much clearer by the end of 2010. For now, there are still more questions than answers.

**Are there meaningful ‘bottom lines’ or viable exit strategies on Afghanistan?** Many wonder whether agreement the coalition allies will be able to agree over whether the Afghan Taliban as a whole should be part of a future power-sharing arrangement, provided it severs all links with al-Qaeda, or whether only ‘moderates’ should be invited to take part. Also unclear is whether acceptance of the current Afghan Constitution will be sacrosanct in negotiations, or whether certain provisions – for example, on human rights and western-style democratic institutions – might ultimately be ‘traded’ for peace. There are also widespread doubts about whether President Hamid Karzai and his supporters can be relied upon to take the lead on political reconciliation when that outcome could involve a significant loss of power and influence. His government has a serious “legitimacy gap” following last year’s highly controversial presidential election and a very poor reputation on corruption. Much will also depend on how far the Afghan army and police really are ready to take over crucial security

roles by mid-2011. In this regard, there are many doubters. Some observers suspect that, if a viable power-sharing arrangement is not taking shape by mid-2011, US and other allied troop withdrawals will begin anyway as part of a 'run for the door'. Recent polls suggest that US and British public opinion takes the view that the conflict in Afghanistan is unwinnable. The Afghan Taliban may opt to wait out the next 18 months, believing that time is on its side. But if the objective of the coalition allies to weaken the military position of the Afghan Taliban is sufficiently achieved and if, as some assert, many of its fighters are indeed tired of fighting, these factors, along with growing Pakistani pressure to enter talks, could succeed in altering such calculations.

**Will Pakistan's political and security establishment deliver?** Large parts of the Pakistani establishment remain hostile to the very concept of 'AfPak', feeling unfairly stigmatised by it. They believe that the crisis in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas and beyond results from what is happening in Afghanistan, rather than the other way around. Many also question whether Pakistan's political and security establishment can genuinely be persuaded to cease 'hedging its bets' through supporting the Afghan Taliban when it remains so anxious about growing Indian influence in Afghanistan. Moves earlier this year against important Afghan Taliban figures may have helped to strengthen the standing of the Pakistan Government in some quarters, but many believe that the wave of detentions was primarily intended to demonstrate Pakistan's essential role in future peace negotiations at a moment when it feared being by-passed. The establishment's attitude towards the Pakistan Taliban and other militant groups has undoubtedly hardened in recent years, but still not to the point where it has decided that the price of a 'war to the finish' is one worth paying. Delivering a 'knock-out blow' is likely to prove beyond the Pakistani military, which has long been geared up mainly to fight an inter-state war with India. The current Pakistan Government, led by President Asif Zardari, is, like its Afghan counterpart, weak and beleaguered. Finally, while Pakistani public opinion appears to have shifted in favour of more assertive action against the country's home-grown militants, it is fickle. There is a deep strain of anti-Americanism that could easily trump other considerations again.

**Can the diverse objectives of the 'AfPak policy' be reconciled?** Many experts are sceptical about whether the benefits of the enhanced development initiatives now proposed for Afghanistan and Pakistan will materialise quickly enough, given inevitable donor delays, problems of 'absorptive capacity' on the part of the recipients and rampant corruption. The potential Western time-frame with regard to beginning troop withdrawals from Afghanistan does appear highly optimistic in terms of achieving development objectives. An end to the fighting is still far off. The formal economy of the border areas is shattered. There are hundreds of thousands of internally displaced people still to resettle. Changing all this will take years, not months. In addition, some remain concerned that, as in the past, more immediate military and security considerations will tend to compromise or even over-ride other, 'softer', priorities.

**Different Taliban?** Some observers have pointed to an alleged inconsistency within current Western conceptions of 'AfPak'. It can accommodate future talks with 'moderate Taliban', or even possibly the whole entity, in Afghanistan, but appears to refuse to accept the legitimacy of doing the same in Pakistan. The Pakistani authorities have been heavily criticised in the West for doing deals with militants in the past. The underlying reason for Western hostility to talking with parts or all of the Pakistan Taliban appears to be the conviction that it represents an existential threat to a nuclear-armed state in a way that their Afghan counterparts do not. Nonetheless, many argue that a differentiated approach will be difficult to sustain. Finally, some question the view that offers of negotiations may be a fruitful way of dividing and weakening the Afghan Taliban, arguing that the conceptual distinction that is often made between 'moderates' and 'irreconcilables' is largely illusory. Others assert that the distinction is better characterised as that between 'pragmatists' (the vast majority) and 'fanatics' (much smaller in number).

**Can ordinary Pashtuns be won over?** Statements by the coalition allies in Afghanistan assert that civilian protection is more than ever part of their core mission. Figures from the UN show that the number of civilian casualties in 2009 was down on 2008. However, it remains uncertain how much of an impact this will have on the attitudes of ordinary Pashtuns. There will continue to be civilian casualties. The absence of the Pakistani regular army from the border areas was part of the deal that secured Pashtun allegiance to the Pakistani state at independence. This arrangement ended in 2002 and has, many argue, been a major cause of the tension and instability witnessed since then. Some commentators also worry that the growing resort, on both sides of the border, to 'anti-Taliban' tribal militias may lead to increased violence. Many observers assert that one of the main causes of turmoil and insecurity in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas has been the suppression of constitutional and democratic rights. While this is in many ways a persuasive argument, there is no guarantee that modernised, fully democratic, federal arrangements on both sides of the border would be sufficient by themselves to stabilise the region. Moreover, some suggest that the current 'dysfunctional' arrangements in northwestern Pakistan may, in different ways, suit both the army and the militants.

**Pakhtunkhwa?** A minority of observers have contemplated establishing a *de facto* –if not *de jure* – independent 'Pashtunistan', or Pakhtunkhwa as it is known in Pashto, arguing that the AfPak policy, inadvertently or not, could be paving the way for it. There are claims that nationalist sentiment is still bubbling just beneath the surface in the Pashtun areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan, and that whatever popular support there is for the Afghan and Pakistan Taliban is really based on this sentiment, rather than on an attraction to *jihadi* militancy. Other commentators are less persuaded that ordinary Pashtuns are strongly motivated by nationalism. The recent decision to rename North West Frontier Province 'Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa' (Khyber side of the land of the Pashtuns), while supported by many Pakistani Pashtun politicians, has been viewed by some opponents as a 'trojan horse' for Pakhtunkhwa. At first sight, given that the renaming does not even involve the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, the move looks largely symbolic. In any case, non-Pashtuns on either side of the border would be highly unlikely to accept attempted Pashtun secession meekly and the international community has shown no enthusiasm for it.

**Is the 'AfPak policy' really a regional policy?** One absentee in particular has prompted this question –India, which forcefully resisted US attempts to incorporate it explicitly into the new policy. The absence of India is much resented by Pakistan. Traditionally, Pakistan's main strategic goal with regard to Afghanistan has been to create a pliant neighbour in order to afford it 'strategic depth' in relation to its main enemy, India. Pakistan has become increasingly anxious in recent years about growing Indian influence in Afghanistan. India is highly unlikely to be willing to forego this influence. Can the AfPak policy, as currently configured, successfully square this circle? In the absence of wider progress on hitherto intractable disputes between India and Pakistan – above all, Kashmir – it looks a tall order. Other countries which observers have worried are not being sufficiently embraced by the current regional policy framework are China, Iran, Russia and the Gulf States, including Saudi Arabia.

## List of abbreviations

ANA	Afghan National Army
ANCOP	Afghan National Civil Order Police
ANP	Afghan National Police
ANP	Awami National Party
ANSF	Afghan National Security Forces
APPP	Afghan Public Protection Programme
ASFF	Afghan Security Forces Fund
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CNPA	Counter Narcotics Police Afghanistan
CSF	Coalition Support Funds
EU	European Union
FATA	Federally Administered Tribal Areas
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office
FCR	Frontier Crimes Regulations
FMF	Foreign Military Financing
HIG	Hizb-i-Islami (Gulbuddin Hekmatyar group)
HIK	Hizb-i-Islami (Maulvi Younas Khalis group)
IDP	Internally displaced person
IMU	Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
ISI	Inter-Services Intelligence
JI	Jamaat-e-Islami
JUI-F	Jamiat-e-Ulema-e-Islami (Fazlur Rehman group)
MMA	Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NWFP	North West Frontier Province (now Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa)
OEF	Operation <i>Enduring Freedom</i>
PATA	Provincially Administered Tribal Areas
RC	Regional Command
TNSM	Tehrik-e-Nafaz-e-Shariat-Mohammadi
TTP	Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan
UN	United Nations
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
US	United States



# 1 The Pashtuns

## 1.1 Human geography

The Pashtuns are the predominant ethnic group on either side of the long and contested border between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The highly mountainous and porous border between the two countries, known as the Durand Line, extends in total 2,560 kilometres. 600 kilometres of it adjoin the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) in Pakistan. Some of the Durand Line cuts through Pashtun tribal land. In Waziristan, “it splits at least 12 villages and divides other villages from their fields.”<sup>1</sup>

The landscape in the border areas is one of arid and semi-arid highlands in south-eastern Afghanistan and north-western Pakistan. The mountains reach maximum heights of 6-7,000 metres. The mountains are broken up by basins and valleys, within which there are settlements and some agricultural activity.

An early 20<sup>th</sup> century colonial manual, *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, described the terrain of one of the Agencies in Pakistan’s FATA, South Waziristan, as follows:

The Mahsud country is a tangled mess of mountains and hills of every size, shape and bearing, and is intersected in all directions by ravines generally flanked through their course by high hills. At first sight the country appears to be occupied by hills and mountains running irregularly in all directions, but there are well-defined ranges which protect the interior of the country by double barriers and make penetration into it a matter of extreme difficulty.<sup>2</sup>

Road infrastructure in the border areas is limited. Traditionally, most people have moved via passes, some of which can often be impassable due to snow. The topography plays an undoubted part in explaining why state authorities of whichever complexion have always struggled to exercise much control over the Pashtuns, for whom the border may seem of little relevance.

There is little industrial development and there are few sources of paid employment in the border areas. The conditions for agriculture in these areas are generally poor, with the vast majority of land not suitable for cultivation, so there is intense demographic pressure on available farmland. Most economically active Pashtuns in these areas survive mainly as pastoralists, traders or smugglers. Weapons are available in abundance. State authorities have hitherto provided relatively little by way of education or health provision in the border area and government structures have long either functioned poorly or been non-existent.

Afghan Pashtuns living further away from the border areas – across the south and as far west as Afghanistan’s border with Iran, where overall population density tends to be less high – live mainly in more lowland terrain. A lot of this terrain is also arid or semi-arid, but in some areas, particularly those close to rivers such as the Helmand, conditions are considerably more conducive to agriculture, which has often included opium production. Individually-owned small holdings are the norm.

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<sup>1</sup> H. Synnott, *Transforming Pakistan: Ways out of instability*, 2009, p101

<sup>2</sup> As quoted by B. Coughley, “Insurrection, terrorism and the Pakistan army”, Pakistan Security Research Unit, University of Bradford, Brief No. 53, 10 December 2009, p10-11. The Mahsuds – described in this paper as the Mehsuds – are one of the largest and most influential tribes in the FATA.

Pashtuns have also migrated in considerable numbers to major cities in both countries – for example, Kabul and Karachi, where many rely on trading or artisanal work for a living.<sup>3</sup> Some make it as far as the Gulf States. Overall, it can be said that the vast majority of Pashtuns have adopted survival strategies that draw upon multiple livelihoods.

According to one expert, in addition to complex tribal affiliations (see below), the Pashtuns can also be divided into the following groups: the “traditional leaders” (tribal leaders and religious leaders), “merchants and smugglers with transnational ties”, “the educated class” and the “common people” (peasants, the landless and youth).<sup>4</sup>

Although the population statistics available should be viewed with some caution, it seems reasonably safe to say that there are at least 35 million Pashtuns living in the two countries. Pashtuns have been said to comprise an estimated 42% of the population of Afghanistan, which, at around 11.8 million, makes them the largest single ethnic group in the country. In Pakistan, Pashtuns have been said to comprise an estimated 15% of the population, which, at around 26.2 million, makes them the second largest ethnic group in the country.

The map below gives a broad indication of the location of the ‘Pashtun belt’ that runs through Afghanistan and Pakistan.



Source: Heritage Foundation

<sup>3</sup> Recent reports have suggested that there may be as many as 2.5 million Pashtuns in Karachi.

<sup>4</sup> “The Taliban as a social movement”, Yale Afghanistan Forum, 16 December 2009. Available at: <http://afghanistanforum.wordpress.com/2009/12/16/the-taliban-as-a-social-movement>

## 1.2 History

Mountstuart Elphinstone, the first British envoy to the court in Kabul, wrote a classic account of Afghanistan at the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In it he compares the relationship between the clans and central authority to ancient Scotland:

There is reason to fear that the societies into which the nation is divided possess within themselves a principle of repulsion and disunion, too strong to be overcome, except by such a force as, while it united the whole country into one solid body, would crush and obliterate the features of every one of the parts.<sup>5</sup>

In Afghanistan, the Pashtuns (or Pakhtoons, Pathans, Pukhtuns or Pushtoons) are divided into two principal tribal confederations, the Durrani and the Ghilzais. The third most important confederation is made up of the hill tribes in the mountainous areas to the east of the country and across the border in Pakistan. The two most prominent hill tribes on the Pakistan side of the border are the Mehsuds and the Waziris; on the Afghan side, the Mangals and the Wardaks have played a major role. All were renowned for their resistance to the British during the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Pashtuns have been closely identified since the earliest times with the areas that they now inhabit, and some accounts date the term 'Pashtun' as far back as eight thousand years ago, associating it with the Aryan invasions of the Indian subcontinent. Others have placed the origins of the Pashtuns with the Hun invasions from Central Asia, in the third and fourth centuries AD. Some even claim that the Pashtuns may be one of the 10 lost tribes of Israel.<sup>6</sup>

Afghanistan and the mountainous areas of western Pakistan have always been a crossroads between Central Asia, the Middle East and South Asia, and this has shaped the area's history. The importance of Afghanistan's strategic location was highlighted by the 'Great Game' clash of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Russian and British empires, and the Cold War struggle in the 20<sup>th</sup> century leading to the Soviet invasion in 1979.

In 1747 a young Durrani Pashtun officer named Ahmed Khan was elected shah, or king, by a tribal *jirga* (assembly). From his base in Kandahar, he went on to establish an empire that covered the area that is now Afghanistan and beyond to Delhi in the east, Meshed in present day Iran to the west, and Karachi on the Arabian Sea coast in what is now Pakistan. Ahmed Khan is respected as the 'father of the nation' by Afghans: "An inspired military leader, he was also an astute politician and diplomat who showed an exceptional grasp of the problems of securing and keeping the allegiance of the Pushtoon tribes."<sup>7</sup> The new Afghan state was based on autonomy for ethnic and sub-ethnic groups. Ahmed Khan founded a dynasty which provided kings right up to the overthrow of the monarchy in the 1978 Communist revolution.

The tradition of autonomy for the differing ethnic groups in relation to the state was eroded, however, particularly in the 19<sup>th</sup> century under Emir Abdur Rahman Khan, whose resettlement policies resulted in the distribution of Pashtuns in small numbers across the north of the country. However, the state did not increase its control over social matters, and the Pashtuns, especially those from rural and mountainous areas along the border with Pakistan, kept considerable freedom of action.

### ***Durand Line***

The British India had recurring problems with raids by Pashtun hill tribesmen into settled lowland areas during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. British administration reached only as far as the

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<sup>5</sup> Mountstuart Elphinstone, *Account of the Kingdom of Cabul and its Dependencies in Persia and India* (1815), quoted in Martin Ewans, *Afghanistan. A new history*, Curzon, 2001, p29

<sup>6</sup> "Pashtun clue to lost tribes of Israel", *Observer*, 17 January 2010

<sup>7</sup> Martin Ewans, *Afghanistan. A new history*, 2001, p23

foothills of the mountains, and attempts to buy the hill tribes' cooperation or to pacify them with retaliatory raids were not particularly successful.

In 1893, agreement was reached between the British India and the Afghan Emir Abdur Rahman Khan to mark the extent of the influence of the Emir and of the British over the Pashtun hill tribes and to discourage raids into British India. The Durand Line, named after Henry Mortimer Durand, the Foreign Secretary of British India at the time, was a practical arrangement; in spite of it, the Pashtuns on the British (Indian) side of the line were still nominally subjects of the Emir.

The Durand line took no account of ethnic groups, not only dividing the Pashtuns in two, but also dividing particular Pashtun tribes, especially the Waziris and the Mohmands.

In practical terms, the line was a success. It ended decades of conflict between Afghanistan and British India and this stability was an essential element in the process that led to the recognition by Britain of Afghanistan's sovereignty in 1921. On the other hand, neither the Afghan state nor British India managed to control the tribes on their respective sides of the border. The Afghan Government gave secret support to Pashtuns on the British side of the line. Afghanistan has always questioned the legitimacy of the Durand Line, arguing that it has never been a border in international law and claiming the Pashtun areas within Pakistan as historically and legally part of Afghanistan. The existing border does not exactly follow the Durand Line.

Afghanistan was the only state to vote against Pakistan's membership of the United Nations in September 1947. In a sign of the divisions within Afghanistan's political class, some of whom were opposed to Pashtun nationalism, the Afghans changed their position and were one of the first countries to establish diplomatic relations with Pakistan. In 1949, Afghanistan switched direction again when it supported a declaration of independence by Pashtuns on the Pakistan side of the line. Relations with Pakistan immediately worsened and border clashes ensued.

Following its birth in 1947, Pakistan set out its position on the Durand Line, stating that it was:

a valid international boundary recognised and confirmed by Afghanistan on several occasions; that the Durand Line terminated Afghan sovereignty over the territory or influence over the people east of [the] Durand Line; and finally that Pakistan, as successor state [to British India], derived full sovereignty over this area and its people and had all the rights and obligations of a successor state.<sup>8</sup>

Pakistan has never accepted that the Pashtuns constitute a nation entitled to self-determination.

The legal status of the Durand Line has never been definitively settled. Although the British policy was and remains that the line represents a legal frontier, Afghan arguments that it was never intended as such have considerable credibility, not least because it was always envisaged that 'hot pursuit' in both directions across the line would be necessary if either side was to have any chance of controlling the area. A recent article questioned the legal status of the line as a border, and suggested a new approach to the problems that exist on both sides of it:

The fact that the Durand Line was not intended to be an international sovereign border, and cannot properly be administered as such, suggests that the best way to solve the

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<sup>8</sup> Farzana Shaikh, *Making sense of Pakistan*, 2009, p201-2

many problems on either side of it – poverty, illiteracy, poor health, corruption, terrorism, laws which contravene all notions of human rights – is not to persist in the attempt to split sovereignty, but to share it. An area so unified in terrain, population and custom cannot bear inequalities in administration, but requires a common approach on both sides to solve the problems.<sup>9</sup>

### **North West Frontier Province**

The North West Frontier Province (NWFP) was created in 1901, separating Pashtun areas from the Punjab. The province was later divided into the 'settled areas', subdued and directly administered by the British, and the Tribal Agencies, which would later become the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), ruled by local *khans* (rulers) and with British political agents who reported to the British Government of India in Calcutta.

Before the partition of India into India and Pakistan, residents of the 'settled areas' of the province and the Tribal Agencies were consulted by plebiscite on whether they wanted to become part of India or Pakistan. Pashtun nationalists boycotted the plebiscite and the turnout was only 55%. The result was that a majority of those who voted from both areas chose to become part of Pakistan but, in the case of the Tribal Agencies, Afghanistan objected on the grounds that the area had never been administered by the British and should have been offered independence.

On independence in 1947, agreements between the local leaders in the Tribal Agencies and the British Empire became void, and new agreements between the Pashtun tribal areas and the Government of Pakistan were reached. These agreements were the basis of the FATA, and were formalised in Pakistan's 1973 Constitution.

1953 saw the appointment of Mohammad Daoud as Prime Minister of Afghanistan. A keen nationalist conservative, his Government had ambitions to incorporate the Pashtun areas on the other side of the Durand Line into Afghanistan. The 'Pashtunistan' policy led to further deterioration in relations with Pakistan. In 1955, the Afghan Government, its requests for military and economic aid having been spurned by the United States (US), turned to the Soviet Union, and Krushchev and Bulganin announced their support for the Afghans' Pashtunistan policy. At the same time, a Pakistan Government move to reorganise its provinces, the One Unit Plan, was taken as a provocation by the Daoud Government in Afghanistan, which saw it as an attempt to recognise the Durand Line as the definitive border between the countries. Increasing confrontations with Pakistan over Pashtunistan led to blockades of landlocked Afghanistan's trade routes.

What exactly 'Pashtunistan' meant was not quite clear: if the NWFP was to be integrated into Afghanistan on ethnic grounds, why should the non-Pashtun areas of Afghanistan remain part of the country? The Congress Party-dominated NWFP government, on the other hand, had voted to join India, while many Pashtuns in the NWFP would have preferred complete independence. Elite Pashtuns in NWFP had gained from being part of British India and did not want to become part of impoverished Afghanistan, particularly as many had been recruited into the armed forces by the British, who valued them for their fighting skills, and Pashtuns were therefore well-represented in the officer corps.<sup>10</sup>

In 1958, the Pashtun General Ayub Khan took power as President of Pakistan. He was a determined opponent of Afghanistan's Pashtunistan policy.

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<sup>9</sup> Bijan Omrani and Frank Ledwidge, "Rethinking the Durand Line: the legality of the Afghan-Pakistani border", *RUSI Journal*, 154: 5, October 2009, pp48-56

<sup>10</sup> Angelo Rasanayagam, *Afghanistan: A modern history*, 2003, p33

In the 1960s, Pakistan shifted the emphasis of its policy towards the Pashtun areas. Determined to reduce the political damage inflicted by the problem, Pakistan decided to draw Pashtuns into state institutions, particularly the army, reinforcing a process started by the British. The new recruits were from backgrounds of a lower social status than had been the case in the past with the Pakistani armed forces, and this shift contributed to a gradual process of 'Islamisation'. The Pakistani authorities also increased their appeal to Islamic solidarity to bolster the case for retaining Pakistani Pashtuns within Pakistan, and justify their claim to be the natural home of Muslims in the region and to be considered in the same light as the great rival, India.

At the same time, Pakistan's alliance with the US was leading to an increase in Pakistani military power and an increasingly aggressive posture towards Afghanistan. India, meanwhile, made no secret of its support for the Pashtunistan policy.

The Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in 1979 to support the socialist government. The Soviet-backed government's longest-serving President was Mohammad Najibullah, a Ghilzai Pashtun from the large Ahmedzai tribe. He was appointed by the Soviets because of his record of effective leadership of the secret police service in separating the Ghilzai and the mountain Pashtun tribes from the resistance. In spite of Najibullah's skills, the resistance to his government mounted, and Pakistan finally saw the chance for a friendly government in Afghanistan, and consequently lent its support to the *mujahideen* ('freedom fighter' in Arabic) resistance. If an Islamic state was set up in Afghanistan, Pakistan hoped that the Pashtunistan problem would be resolved. According to Farzana Shaikh, the new policy:

entailed the use of the ethnic and religious connections to reinforce links between Pakistan's Pashtun population (by now key players on the economic and social scene) and their Afghan counterparts, who were favoured by Pakistan at the expense of other groups in Afghanistan. By doing so, Pakistan not only furthered a vision that insisted upon the primacy of religion over ethnicity, but also successfully transformed the ethnic Pashtun question into an Islamist project tailored to enhance Pakistan's identity as the natural homeland for the Muslims of the region.<sup>11</sup>

At the same time, some five million Afghan refugees from the war against the Soviets entered Pakistan, either settling in refugee camps or mixing with local Pashtuns in towns in the NWFP, particularly Peshawar, across the Khyber Pass from Kabul. During this time, Peshawar became the essential supplies depot and training centre for the Afghan forces fighting the Soviets, with millions of weapons and tons of ammunition pouring into the area.

The emergence of a Tajik-dominated government in Kabul after the collapse of the Soviet-backed regime was not the outcome that Pakistan had sought. To rectify the situation, Pakistan started to support Pashtun groups, including the many Pashtun fighters raised in refugee camps in Pakistan, who had been inculcated in radical Islam. These fighters were the basis of the Afghan Taliban. Pakistan hoped that, in gratitude and Islamic solidarity, the Afghan Taliban would recognise the Durand line and curb Pashtun nationalism. However, the Afghan Taliban, which controlled most of Afghanistan from around 1996, refused to recognise the Durand Line or drop Afghan claims to part of the NWFP.

In 2001, al-Qaeda, whose leadership was closely involved with the Taliban regime, and whose training facilities had been hosted by Afghanistan, planned and executed the 9/11 attacks on the US. After the attacks, the US delivered an ultimatum to the Taliban. Among the conditions were demands to hand over all al-Qaeda operatives and to close training facilities while allowing US authorities access for inspection. The Taliban refused and the

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<sup>11</sup> Farzana Shaikh, *Making sense of Pakistan*, 2009, p206-7

United Nations Security Council authorised an invasion under the UN Charter's provisions for self-defence.<sup>12</sup>

Military operations began in October 2001 and by December the Taliban had withdrawn from Kandahar, their last stronghold. Al-Qaeda operatives, meanwhile, are thought to have escaped across the border into the tribal areas of Pakistan, despite the deployment of large numbers of US special forces and regular troops along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border.

Having fostered the Afghan Taliban, Pakistan failed to control it. Far from Afghanistan providing strategic depth for Pakistan, the result has arguably been that Pakistan has provided strategic depth for the Taliban and other Afghan insurgents. Indeed, commentators worry about the 'Talibanisation' of Pakistan, with militants apparently determined to overthrow the US-backed Pakistani state.

By 1998 Pakistani pro-Taliban groups were imposing their version of Sharia law in towns in the Pakistani side of the border: banning TVs and videos, performing stoning and amputations, killing Shia Muslims and imposing dress codes, particularly on women.<sup>13</sup>

Pashtuns are well-represented in the present Afghan Government, with both the Presidency and almost half of the seats in the National Assembly held by Pashtuns. Nevertheless, its opponents may not view it as a fully Pashtun government because of its association with the Northern Alliance (which brought down the Afghan Taliban government) and the US-led international coalition.

### 1.3 Culture

Pashto (sometimes Pashtu or Pukhto/u, Afghani or Pathani), one of the official languages of Afghanistan, along with Dari, is an Indo-European language and is related to Farsi (Persian). The language of Pashtuns on the Pakistani side of the border only differs from that of Afghan Pashto in the number of Urdu words that have entered Pakistani Pashto. Pashto is not an official language in Pakistan. Pashtuns are largely illiterate and the divisions among Pashtuns and between them and other groups in the region are based on 'differences which escape definition in terms of modern political theory'.<sup>14</sup>

#### **Identity**

While the concept of tribe is often used when discussing Afghanistan, it is easy to misinterpret. As the fact that there are tribal federations, tribes, sub-tribes and smaller groupings suggests, Pashtun society is highly complex and fissile. Any policy that relies on the coherence of the tribe as an organising principle in Afghanistan runs a high risk of failure. Honour concepts and rivalries can cause bitter feuds even between close relatives.<sup>15</sup>

*GlobalSecurity.org* offers the following summary of Pashtun tribal structures:

- The Durrani tribal confederation, mostly concentrated in Southeast Afghanistan. The current president of Afghanistan, Hamid Karzai, is a Durrani. The Durrani are the most powerful and influential tribal confederation in

<sup>12</sup> For more detail on the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks see the following Library Research Papers: [11 September 2001: the response](#) (October 2001); [Operation Enduring Freedom and the conflict in Afghanistan: an update](#). (October 2001); [The campaign against international terrorism: prospects after the fall of the Taliban](#) (December 2001); and [Afghanistan: the culmination of the Bonn process](#) (October 2005)

<sup>13</sup> Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban. The story of the Afghan warlords*, 2001, p194

<sup>14</sup> Raja Anwar, *The Afghan tragedy*, 1988, p127

<sup>15</sup> For further information on the tendency to feuding in Pashtun society, see United States Army, *My Cousin's Enemy is My Friend: A Study of Pashtun "Tribes" in Afghanistan*, September 2009 [Unless otherwise stated, this and all subsequent links accessed at 17 June 2010]

Afghanistan. The Durrani are divided into two branches; the Zirak and the Panjpai. Tribes within the Zirak branch include the Popolzai (east of Kandahar and west of the Helmand River), the Alokozai (east of Kandahar and north of Helmand), the Barakzai (southwest of Kandahar in the Arghistan River Valley), and the Atsakzai (Zamindawar region and along the Kohdaman Ridge). Tribes within the Panjpai branch include the Nurzai (southwest and western Afghanistan), the Alizai (Zamindawar and Helmand), and the Ishaqzai (west of Kandahar, Farah region, and in Seistan). The Saddozai is the senior tribe of Popalzai, and therefore of the Abdalis, who themselves are the elder branch of the offspring of Saraban, the eldest son of Kais Abdul Eashid, descended from Saul, Abraham, and Adam. This genealogy, however absurd, has procured the head of the Saddozais great respect.

- The Ghilzai tribal group is concentrated mostly in eastern Afghanistan and has historically been the arch-rival of the Durrani. Some of the primary Taliban leaders, notably Mullah Omar, are Ghilzais. The Ghilzais are part of the Bitani tribal confederation. The Ghalji confederacy is divided into two groups, the Turan (western) and the Burhan (eastern). The Turan include the Nasir, Kharaoci, Hotaki, and Tokhi (Qalat-I Ghilzai) tribes. The Burhan includes the Sulaymen Khel (southeast of Kabul to Jalalabad), the Ali Khel (Mukur region), and the Tarakkis (Mukur) tribes.
- The Karlanis, or "hill tribes," are the third largest group of Pashtuns. They straddle the border areas between Pakistan and Afghanistan in Waziristan, Kurram, Peshawar, Khost, Paktia, and Paktika, and include the Mangals, the Mehsuds and the Waziris.
- The Sarbanis consist of two major geographically separated groups. The larger group, located north of Peshawar, includes tribes such as the Mohmands, Yusufzais, and Shinwaris, while the smaller segment consists of Sheranis and Tarins scattered in northern Balochistan. This faction comprises the traditional aristocracy of the Pashtun.
- The Ghurghushts are found mostly in northern Balochistan and include tribes such as the Kakars, Mandokhels, Panars, and Musa Khel. Some of the groups' sub-tribes, like the Gaduns and Safis, are found in the NWFP.<sup>16</sup>

Afghan Pashtuns see themselves as the principal ethnic group in Afghanistan. However, they refer to themselves as Afghans rather than as Pashtuns and to their language as Afghani. Other ethnicities in Afghanistan are more likely to refer to themselves primarily as Tajiks or Uzbeks, for example, and as Afghans only secondarily, if at all.<sup>17</sup> This might be taken to undermine the argument that Pashtuns take no notice of what state they are in. For the Afghan Pashtuns, having their 'own' state is important. Many Afghan Pashtuns have long believed that the Pashtun areas in what is today Pakistan should be part of Afghanistan. Pakistan also has a much shorter history as a distinct country and, to some who live within its borders, including Pashtuns, questionable legitimacy as a state.

Afghanistan is the 'heartland' of the Pashtun belt: the relatively fertile lowlands around Herat, Kandahar and Ghazni are the traditional home of both the Durrani, which produced the Afghan royal household, and the other major tribal grouping, the Ghilzais. The Pashtun tribes in the mountainous areas along the Pakistani border and within Pakistan itself, such as the

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<sup>16</sup> List of Pashtun tribes, with minor adaptations, from the [Pashtuns](http://www.globalSecurity.org) page, [www.globalSecurity.org](http://www.globalSecurity.org)

<sup>17</sup> Martin Ewans, *Afghanistan. A new history*, 2001, p3



Waziris, Afridis and the Khattaks, live on the edge of the heartland and are even more fiercely independent and uncompromisingly Muslim than the lowlanders.

An important concept is the '*qawm*' - the basic social unit - in which a *khan* leads the group, with guidance from a *jirga*, or assembly of adult males or elders. Traditionally, the *qawm* is the most important social unit for a Pashtun, overriding all other groups and certainly being more important than the state, which has long been seen as a foreign and frequently hostile influence. The *khans* who rule sub-tribes, clans or *qawms* have gained in economic power relative to their subjects over the years and the democratic element of Pashtun society, the *jirga* has become weaker.<sup>18</sup>

Afghan Taliban policy-making is done by a *shura* (council), based in Quetta, Pakistan. The *shura* is a consultative body whose origins are said to be found in early Islam. It has also been compared to the *jirga*.

### ***Pashtunwali***

*Pashtunwali*, the Pashtun code of honour, is central to Pashtun identity, and can be said to constitute a belief system in itself. In *Pashtunwali* concepts of revenge, hospitality, sanctuary and honour are crucial. *Pashtunwali* has gradually become, less strict over the years, but it still influences behaviour of leaders in Pashtun areas. Not only is *Pashtunwali* more important than the nation, it may even be more important than membership of the Pashtun community.

According to the US-based Tribal Analysis Center, *Pashtunwali* does not require the truth to be told at all times. It is argued that it is acceptable for Pashtuns (and other Afghans) to lie when important interests are at stake or unpleasant situations arise, and that this applies especially when dealing with foreigners and, even more so, with non-Muslim foreigners. The Mehsud tribe reportedly has a saying: 'We are very untrustworthy people'. The Tribal Analysis Center claims:

While the Pashtu quote above was derived from the Mehsud tribe, it fits all Pashtuns as they *are* very untrustworthy people and any agreement entered into must be both verifiable and enforceable or it *will* be violated.<sup>19</sup>

The atomisation of sub-tribes and the predatory nature of relations between them have meant that honour concepts have given rise to vendettas and feuds at various levels of society. *Pashtunwali* demands blood vengeance, even on fellow-Muslims. This contradicts the Quran, which calls on Muslims not to kill fellow-believers. *Pashtunwali* concepts of honour also result in extreme competitiveness among even closely-related men. A common tendency is for first cousins in the male line to feud between themselves, particularly over land and money.<sup>20</sup> This fractiousness has made it difficult for any power to make use of tribal structures to exert control over the Pashtuns.

*Pashtunwali* also departs from Sharia law on issues such as adultery. Sharia law requires the evidence of four witnesses to prove adultery while, under *Pashtunwali*, hearsay is enough because it is family honour rather than the morality of the situation which is important. *Pashtunwali* prohibits women from inheriting any property, whereas the Quran provides that women should inherit half as much as the share of the male heir. In other ways, *Pashtunwali* is harsher than Islam in relation to such issues as adultery, and restrictions on women: for

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<sup>18</sup> Martin Ewans, *Afghanistan. A new history*, 2001, p6

<sup>19</sup> [Pashtun Reconciliation Programs](#), Tribal Analysis Center, July 2008

<sup>20</sup> For a discussion of the problems with viewing Afghanistan as a 'tribal' society, see [My Cousin's Enemy is My Friend: A Study of Pashtun "Tribes" in Afghanistan](#), Afghanistan Research Reachback Center, White Paper TRADOC G2, Human Terrain System, US Army, 2009

example the use of the *burkha* - the form of women's dress that reveals only the wearer's eyes - was widespread long before the Taliban took control of Afghanistan.

It is not only over specific rules of behaviour that there is tension between *Pashtunwali* and Islam. The *ulema* (Islamic scholars, particularly those who interpret Sharia law) in Afghanistan and elsewhere promote Islam as a unifying force, transcending tribal and ethnic differences, whereas *Pashtunwali* is precisely a tribal and inward-looking concept.

*Pashtunwali* differs from Sharia law in that it prefers arbitration and the adjustment of claims to the more draconian punishments offered by Sharia. In traditional *Pashtunwali*, blood money may be paid to the family of a murder victim by the family of the murderer, rather than the Sharia concept of the victim's family being allowed to inflict the same damage on the perpetrator. Restitution for theft is favoured over amputations. It has been argued that the rise of the *mullah* (Islamic cleric, or leader of a mosque) as a power figure under the Taliban, and their promotion of a highly purist Islam may have destabilised Afghanistan and fomented feuding by eclipsing *Pashtunwali*.<sup>21</sup>

#### 1.4 Islam

In both Pakistan and Afghanistan, Islam is the national religion, the basis of the culture and the greatest unifying force. Pashtuns are overwhelmingly Sunnis of the Hanafi school, traditionally the most liberal of the four schools of Islamic law.<sup>22</sup> There are a handful of Shia Muslims among certain Pashtun tribes. *Mullahs* exercise a powerful influence over Pashtun society. Hanafi Islam is also essentially non-hierarchical and rejects central authority, which may have contributed to Pashtun tendencies to be hostile to outside interference.

Sufism is also influential in Pashtun Islam. Sufis are Islamic mystics. They are less concerned with regulating everyday behaviour than other Muslims. The Qadiriyya Sufi order, founded in Baghdad in the 12<sup>th</sup> century became particularly influential among Pashtuns in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Sufism has traditionally been closely involved in politics and opposed to any foreign influence. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, Sufi teachers became leaders of uprisings against British rule on the North-West Frontier and more recently Sufi leaders of the Qadiriyya and the Naqshbaniyya orders have become leaders of Afghan resistance movements.<sup>23</sup>

For much of its history, religion and the state have been distinct in Afghanistan. Militant Islam in the Pashtun areas, however, has a long history, and the presence of the British in India played a role in encouraging militancy. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, Sayyed Ahmed Barelvi, from north eastern India, built up an Islamic movement and chose what is now Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (formerly NWFP) as a base from which to attack British India. Barelvi advocated the adoption of Sharia law and based his organisation on the *ulema* – Islamic scholars – rather than on tribal authorities, and *jihad* was advocated against the British.

After the creation of Pakistan, followers of Barelvi's movement set up religious schools, called *madrassas*, in NWFP and Baluchistan and later in camps for Afghan refugees from the war with the Soviets, offering not just a free education but also shelter and food. The mullahs who ran these schools were often poorly educated themselves and the teaching was heavily influenced by *Pashtunwali* and by the traditionalist Wahabbism of Saudi Arabia, where much of the funding came from. These schools have provided many of the Afghan *ulema* since 1947.

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<sup>21</sup> Michael Griffin, *Reaping the whirlwind: The Taliban movement in Afghanistan*, 2001, p58-9

<sup>22</sup> The four schools of Islamic law are the Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi and the Hanbali.

<sup>23</sup> Martin Ewans, *Afghanistan. A new history*, 2001, p6

After the Soviet withdrawal, many ordinary Pashtuns, affected by the insecurity resulting from the civil war, were attracted by the Afghan Taliban's promise of an Islam that was above ethnic rivalries and which would bring the country together.

## 2 Political and security arrangements in Pashtun areas

### 2.1 Afghanistan

#### *Political arrangements*

##### *Provinces*

Afghanistan is divided into 34 provinces, each of which has a governor. Pashtuns dominate in the two large southern provinces of Helmand and Kandahar, which are considered the political heartland both of the Afghan Taliban and the Pashtuns. These two provinces have also seen some of the harshest conflict over the last few years. The smaller provinces such as Paktia and Khost in the mountainous southeast are also majority-Pashtun, although the level of violence in these is perhaps slightly lower than in Kandahar and Helmand.

Much of the US-led international coalition's efforts since the fall of the Afghan Taliban has been directed towards bolstering central government. This has begun to change. In a report published in 2007, the World Bank called on donor countries to adopt policies that would strengthen sub-national government, while not calling for devolution.<sup>24</sup>

However, provincial governors are appointed by the President rather than elected and their tenures often do not last long, as they are frequently moved to other provinces or sacked. The fact that provincial governors are appointed by the President rather than elected means that they are beholden to Kabul and may focus more on responding to the needs of the Presidency than to those of local constituencies. Taliban influence has reduced the effectiveness of provincial governments even further. Security is an acute problem: according to the United Nations, about 30% of districts were largely inaccessible to unarmed government officials in December 2009, a slightly worse figure than in the previous year.<sup>25</sup>

Governors are severely under-resourced, making it difficult for them to attract qualified civil servants to work in the provinces, and are consequently unable to offer much in the way of public services. In an acknowledgment of the inadequacy of provincial government funding, in January 2010, a Performance-based Governors' Fund was launched. The fund allocates \$25,000 per month to each governor.<sup>26</sup>

Since 2005, each province has also had a directly elected Provincial Council. Provincial Councils advise the provincial administration headed by the governor.<sup>27</sup> The results of the latest provincial council elections were certified in December 2009, despite allegations that the provincial council elections were 'massively rigged'.<sup>28</sup> Provincial Councils have no budgetary discretion and few official powers.

#### Helmand

Helmand has a population of about 822,000 people.<sup>29</sup> The Helmand River flows through what is otherwise a largely desert area and irrigation from the river and its tributaries enables agriculture to flourish, including the cultivation of opium. Part of the Pashtun heartland, much of the population of Helmand Province is sympathetic to the Afghan Taliban (or at least reluctant to oppose it directly).

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<sup>24</sup> World Bank, *Service delivery and governance at the sub-national level in Afghanistan*, July 2007

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, p18

<sup>26</sup> UNAMA, *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security*, Report of the Secretary General, UN, January 2010, p4

<sup>27</sup> UNDP Afghan Elections website, *Provincial Council Elections*

<sup>28</sup> *A UN Postscript to the Provincial Council Elections*, Afghan Analysts Network blog, 8 January 2010

<sup>29</sup> USAID web page *Afghanistan's provinces* [25 May 2010]

Since March 2008, Mohammad Golab Mangal has been Governor of Helmand. Described as “one of the most accomplished governors to have served Afghanistan since 2001”<sup>30</sup> by a United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) official, he is a Pashtun from Paktia Province and served as governor of that province, another Taliban stronghold in the East, from March 2004 until March 2006. From 2006 to 2008, he was Governor of Lagham Province. On taking office, Mangal held a series of *shuras* with tribal elders to try to gain support for his government. Mangal supports the policy of reconciliation with Taliban fighters. He said in March 2008, “I’m going to work hard to get the insurgents to change sides and work with the government rather than against it. The British are already doing this and we will work together”.<sup>31</sup>

Progress in improving government services, however, has been painfully slow. As in many areas of Afghanistan, the failures of the official justice system give the Taliban a crucial means of increasing their influence over local affairs. Governor Mangal said:

Despite the presence of our district governors and district security commanders, the public refer to the Taleban to solve their issues and problems. This is a reality. Why? Because they do not believe that their problems will be solved and rights defended if they go to the district office, or to the district governor. The people are not sure that the government will protect their rights or adjudicate for them.<sup>32</sup>

Helmand produces more opium than any country in the world, and Marjah district is at the centre of that trade. The district, located between Lashka Gar and Kandahar, is an important base for the Afghan Taliban. It was estimated in early 2010 that the Taliban receive- as much as \$200,000 a month from the Marjah opium trade alone.<sup>33</sup> It is difficult for coalition forces to clear the district of insurgent activity and prevent insurgents from returning, particularly because of the network of irrigation canals that covers the area – canals that were supplied with the help of international aid – make intensive opium cultivation possible. The majority of locals earn their main livelihood from opium.

### Kandahar

Kandahar Province is the birthplace of the Afghan Taliban. Kandahar City is one of the oldest cities in the world, the second largest in Afghanistan and the historic birthplace of the state of Afghanistan. It has a population of perhaps half a million people and is Afghanistan’s biggest religious centre. It is nominally controlled by the Afghan Government. The surrounding rural areas, however, are largely ‘ungoverned’, with only 5 of the 17 districts accessible to government officials. Four districts are completely under the control of the insurgency.<sup>34</sup> Although officials are appointed to each district, they are largely powerless because they only have some 50 police officers in each district with an average population of perhaps 50,000, so government services barely exist.

Tooryalai Wesa is the current Governor of Kandahar Province. He is a Pashtun and a childhood friend of Afghan President Karzai. He said recently in an interview: “Kandahar means Afghanistan. The history of Afghanistan, the politics of Afghanistan, was always determined from Kandahar, and once again, it will be determined from Kandahar. If we have a peaceful Kandahar, we will have a peaceful Afghanistan.”<sup>35</sup> Wesa is an agricultural expert

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<sup>30</sup> “New hope for Helmand province”, *BBC News Online*, 23 March 2008

<sup>31</sup> Ibid

<sup>32</sup> “Afghan Taleban often trusted over government in Helmand says governor”, *Tolo TV, Kabul* (translation by BBC Monitoring), 26 March 2010

<sup>33</sup> “The Meaning of Marjah”, [www.stratfor.com](http://www.stratfor.com), 16 February 2010

<sup>34</sup> “Kandahar Becomes Battlefield Even Before a U.S. Offensive”, *New York Times*, 27 March 2010

<sup>35</sup> “Fight for Kandahar may be crucial stage in Afghanistan war”, *Guardian*, 22 February 2010

who worked at a Canadian university for 13 years, and he succeeded Major General Rahmatullah Raufi, who only lasted a few months in the post.

Wesa may be the Governor, but many observers think that the real power broker in the area is Ahmed Wali Karzai, elected head of the Kandahar Provincial Council and half-brother of the Afghan President. American officials accuse Ahmed Wali Karzai of corruption, protecting the illegal drugs trade and organising voting fraud in the presidential election of August 2009.<sup>36</sup> Ahmed Wali Karzai is also alleged in the US media to be on the payroll of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). Diplomats in Kandahar say that much of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's (NATO) intelligence comes from Ahmed Wali Karzai. A former NATO official with long experience in Afghanistan was recently quoted as saying about the situation in Kandahar:

You have essentially a criminal enterprise in the guise of government, using us [NATO forces] as its enforcing arm. [...] the people are turning to the Taliban as the only means of protection and outlet for their anger.<sup>37</sup>

The battle for control of the Kandahar area is many-sided: the Afghan Taliban and the local Alokozai (Durrani) tribe, the Afghan Government, the coalition allies and Ahmed Wali Karzai all vie for influence in the city. The Alokozais are a powerful Pashtun tribe that controls much of the country around Kandahar and ejected the Taliban from the city in 2001. However, their leader died in 2007 and, against the wishes of tribal elders and at the insistence of Ahmed Wali Karzai, the leader's young son was appointed in his place. Since then relations between the Alokozais and the Afghan Government have deteriorated. Many leaders of the local Alokozai tribe have been assassinated and the Alokozais allege that Ahmed Wali Karzai's Durrani ex-militia fighters are responsible. Alokozai elders are reported to have turned to the Taliban for protection.

Control of Kandahar is said to be the top priority for the Afghan Taliban, and its forces have been making progress against a Canadian military presence that has struggled to cope with the challenge. Some have questioned the wisdom of NATO committing a large force to Helmand while Kandahar is such a vital strategic location.<sup>38</sup> The security situation in Kandahar City is now said to be at its worst since the fall of the Taliban Government in 2001, with insurgent fighters openly patrolling in the streets and those working for the Government in need of constant protection. In the suburbs of Kandahar City, as well as in the surrounding rural areas, particularly Arghandab to the north, the Taliban has a consolidated presence. There have been many incidents of violence. On 13 March 2010, for example, suicide bomb attacks killed 35 people. Not surprisingly, an atmosphere of fear is reported to pervade the city.

### Eastern Provinces

Zabul Province, north east of Kandahar, is an example of the problems encountered by the coalition allies and the Afghan Government. The US Stryker Battalion was withdrawn recently as the coalition focussed its attention on Helmand, leaving the weak provincial government vulnerable to Taliban attacks. There are now some 1,000 US troops in the province, which is home to about 300,000 people.

Zabul is largely a Ghilzai Pashtun area, although there are also Durrani Pashtuns. The present governor is Alhaj Ashraf Naseri, but his grip on the province is weak. One of the

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<sup>36</sup> "U.S. sets sights on Taliban bastion", *Washington Post*, 31 March 2010

<sup>37</sup> "A US Stumbling Block in Kandahar: Karzai's Brother", *Time Magazine*, 19 March 2010

<sup>38</sup> See for example Carl Forsberg, *The Taliban's campaign for Kandahar*, Institute for the Study of War, December 2009, p7

province's districts has been abandoned completely to the Afghan Taliban and its fighters travel at will across the area.<sup>39</sup>

Paktika Province is governed by Qayyum Khan Katawazi, a former intelligence officer. Neighbouring Paktia Province is governed by Juma Khan Hamdard, a Wardak Pashtun from the North of Afghanistan. Unlike Helmand and Kandahar, these provinces have not seen heavy set-piece conflicts in recent years but they are highly unstable and severely affected by more dispersed insurgent and criminal activity. The insurgency in these areas is largely indigenous.

Khost, Nangarhar, Kunar and Nuristan are smaller provinces further north along the border with Pakistan's FATA. Severely unstable and riven by intense tribal rivalries, the provincial governments of these provinces depend heavily on the US military presence. Recent events in Nangarhar illustrate the problems: leaders of the large Pashtun Shinwari group pledged in January 2010 to fight the Taliban. However, in mid-March an ancient land dispute re-emerged, as two sub-tribes of the Shinwaris, the Mohmands and the Alishers, vied for a piece of land. The Alishers removed the tents that the Mohmands had set up on the disputed land, reportedly with the help of the local governor, Gul Agha Shirzai, and the local police chief. Shooting broke out and at least 13 people were killed, according to reports.<sup>40</sup> Any cooperation against the Taliban took a lower priority than local feuding. Clearly, plans to work 'with the grain' of Afghan society and tribal structures appear a good idea, but in reality are difficult to implement.

### *Elections*

Afghanistan's political system is highly dysfunctional. Its problems are particularly severe in the border areas. There is a vicious circle of Pashtun alienation from the Karzai Government, growing insecurity, and failure of the government to deliver public services. The International Crisis Group (ICG) reported on the situation in Afghanistan after the 2009 presidential election:

In southern Afghanistan, particularly in Pashtun-majority provinces such as Kandahar and Helmand, high insecurity virtually ensured that few election observers, let alone voters, could gain access to the polls, undermining the legitimacy of the exercise.

Until the Afghan government engages in rigorous security sector reform, the insurgency will continue to exploit fault lines within the Pashtun population. Weak governance has strengthened the Taliban's hand and enhanced its recruitment opportunities. The public's perception of the democratic process has suffered as a result. Failure to regain trust in government institutions will drive a deeper wedge between Pashtuns and the rest of the population and make planning for and participation in future elections all the more difficult.<sup>41</sup>

The failure of the political system in the Pashtun areas is illustrated by the Independent Electoral Commission's audit of the presidential poll, which found that in six of Afghanistan's provinces less than half of votes cast were valid. Five of those provinces were Pashtun provinces in the border areas: Paktika (11.5% of the votes were valid), Nuristan (17.5%), Kandahar (28.4%), Paktia (33.0%) and Helmand (48.6%).<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> ""Alone" in Afghanistan; Officials in Zabol province say Taliban fighters emerged as U.S. troops left", *Washington Post*, 9 March 2010

<sup>40</sup> "Afghan Tribal Rivalries Bedevil a U.S. Plan", *New York Times*, 12 March 2010

<sup>41</sup> ICG, *Afghanistan: Elections and the Crisis of Governance*, Asia briefing 96, 25 November 2009, p6

<sup>42</sup> *Finishing the unfinished election (1): Helmand, Khost and Farah*, Afghan Analysts blog, 11 December 2009



The dubious democratic legitimacy of the state in many Pashtun areas is compounded by the failure of the Afghan state to uphold the rule of law. The criminal and civil justice system in Afghanistan is one of the weakest spots in the functioning of the state, giving the Taliban a space in which to offer its own version of justice.

#### *Afghan Taliban 'shadow governance'*

According to insurgents detained by coalition and Afghan national forces, there is a renewed focus among Afghan Taliban leaders on becoming a legitimate government which is seen as fair and incorruptible. To that end, the movement has sought to expand its 'shadow governance'. Military intelligence suggests that the effectiveness of Taliban shadow governance is increasing; there are now shadow governors for almost all of Afghanistan's provinces.

In areas controlled by the Taliban, many services that should be offered by the state are provided by the Taliban. Taliban provincial authorities are particularly known for offering a swift and effective judicial service for dispute resolution and this has been effective in preventing local populations turning to the Afghan Government, where judicial services have been very slow to develop and are notoriously prone to corruption.

The Taliban has also proved efficient at collecting taxes, more so than the Government. Some of this may in fact be little more than protection money, but the effectiveness of the system is clearly crucial to the continuing insurgency effort.

The Afghan Taliban's governing council, the 'Quetta *Shura*', appoints the shadow provincial governors, who are sometimes related to particular military groups. The leadership periodically replaces these shadow governors in order to demonstrate their power and prevent shadow governors from developing too much autonomous power. The Haqqani Network and the Hizb-i-Islami faction led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar do not accept the shadow provincial governors appointed by the Quetta *Shura* and have not set up shadow civilian structures in their areas.

Between 2005 and 2009, the number of shadow governors increased from 11 to 33, leaving only one province without a shadow governor as at December 2009.<sup>43</sup>

#### **Security Arrangements**

##### *ISAF and OEF*

The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) was mandated by the UN in 2001.<sup>44</sup> At first the force's mission was restricted to protecting Kabul and the interim government. In August 2003, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) took control of the mission and ISAF's mandate was expanded in October of the same year to cover the whole of Afghanistan,<sup>45</sup>

The following map shows the deployment of ISAF, which leads the Western security effort in Afghanistan, as at June 2010:

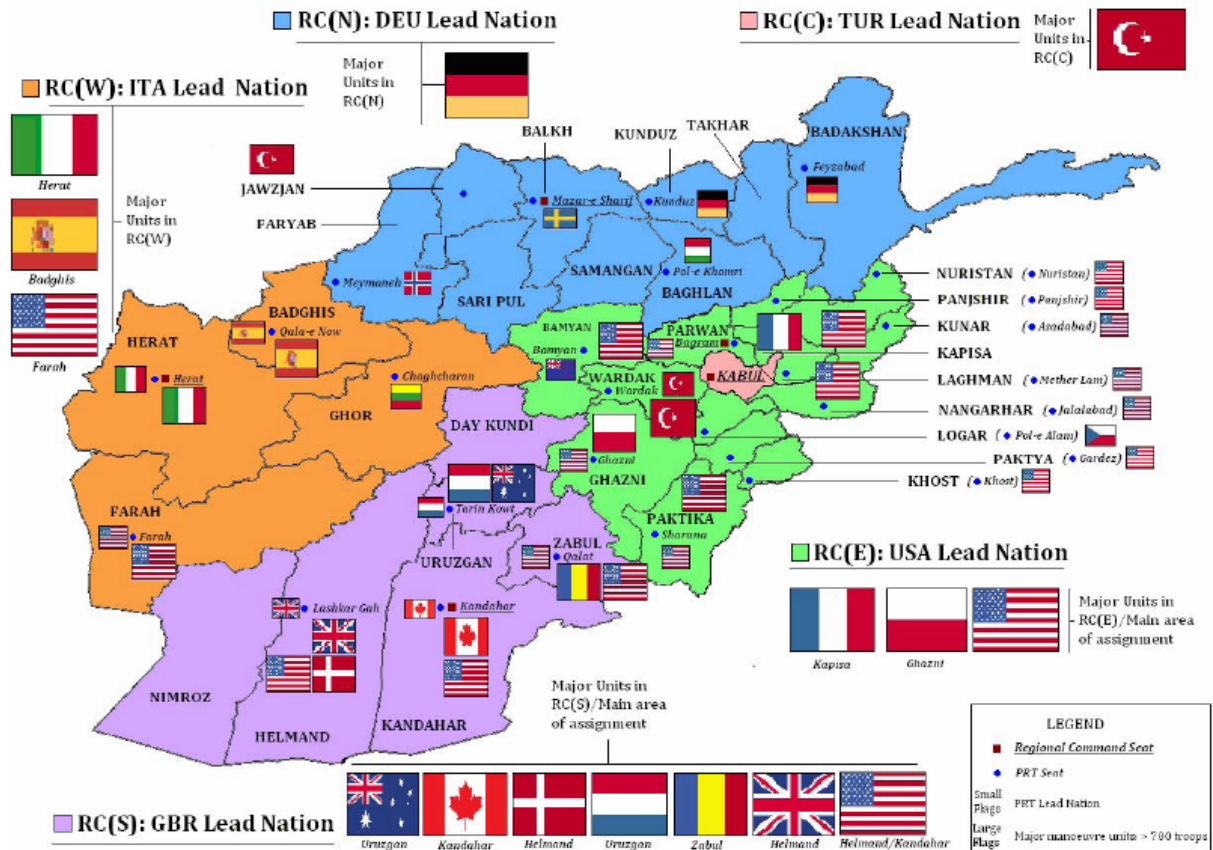
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<sup>43</sup> Michael Flynn, *State of the Insurgency: Trends, Intentions and Objectives*, ISAF, 22 December 2009, p18

<sup>44</sup> [UN Security Council Resolution 1386](#), 20 December 2001

<sup>45</sup> [UN Security Council Resolution 1510](#), 13 October 2003





Source: ISAF, 7 June 2010

The former US-commanded and overwhelmingly American forces that operated under the specifically counter-terrorist rubric of Operation *Enduring Freedom* (OEF) have largely been incorporated into ISAF.<sup>46</sup>

The American-led OEF started with an anti-terrorist objective. Rather than stabilising Afghanistan, the goal was to catch the members of al-Qaeda who had planned the 9/11 attacks. US troops were based in the eastern, mountainous provinces of Afghanistan, bordering on the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and other Pashtun provinces further south west along the Pakistan border, where from the beginning of the campaign it was known that al-Qaeda operatives were finding refuge. US troops under ISAF are also largely based in these provinces. While Afghan Government control of these provinces is tenuous, to say the least, the US military presence has prevented the Afghan Taliban from consolidating general control.

### *Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF)*

While it has always been the international coalition’s stated intention to transfer responsibility for Afghanistan’s security to Afghans, to allow for the withdrawal of international forces, the efforts to expand and train the Afghan National Army (ANA) and the Afghan National Police (ANP) have been widely criticised as being inadequate, and in some cases misguided. In the first place, both current and projected numbers of security personnel are low.

Secondly, the quality of the recruits is variable, so an effective training effort is essential. Both the coalition allies and the Afghan Government have an interest in positive presentations

<sup>46</sup> This paper does not deal in detail with the coalition’s military effort in Afghanistan. For more information, see the Library Standard Note SN/IA/5227, *The Military Campaign in Afghanistan*

of the development of the ANSF. Independent analysts and official audit bodies have consistently raised questions about their claims.

Anthony Cordesman has described ANSF development from 2007 to 2009 as 'crippled' by massive under-funding:

The US bears a large share of the responsibility for many of these failures. The US took more than half a decade to fund ANSF development seriously and then funded it erratically and failed to provide the proper numbers of trainers, mentors, and partners.<sup>47</sup>

A key aspect of the Obama Administration's new strategy has been to devote more resources to strengthening the ANSF.<sup>48</sup> The Afghan ministries of Defence and the Interior have initiated efforts to raise the numbers of army and police personnel from their 2009 levels of approximately 104,300 and 96,800, respectively, to 134,000 and 109,000 by October 2010, and to 171,600 and 134,000 by October 2011.<sup>49</sup> Even if these targets are met, however, and the personnel are well-trained and effective, the combined force of the ANSF and coalition troops will fall well short of the 600,000 minimum needed according to some counterinsurgency experts. Clearly, as international forces withdraw, the onus will fall on the ANSF even more heavily to maintain security in the country. Nevertheless, in his inauguration speech in November 2009, President Karzai set a goal of the ANSF taking full control of Afghanistan's security within five years.<sup>50</sup>

There are questions about whether Afghanistan can maintain security forces of the proposed size in the longer term. Japan, the US and other donor countries have pledged to make substantial contributions towards those costs for now but the Afghan economy is very small and that is not expected to change quickly; observers question what will happen when international contributions start to decrease. The economy may not be able to provide other jobs for those personnel and this entails a clear risk of destabilisation.<sup>51</sup> Another potential problem is that the Afghan security forces may become very powerful, particularly in the context of the weakness of other institutions in the country. An over-mighty military may imply a risk of excessive military participation in politics.

Another constraint on the growth and effectiveness of the ANSF is the shortfall in the number of trainers and mentors supplied by international partners. The US Department of Defense has indicated that this is the biggest gap in the international contribution.<sup>52</sup>

The US Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, which reports to Congress each quarter on the reconstruction programme, found in its most recent report that there were serious problems with the management of development efforts for the ANSF. It found that there was no overall plan for investment in housing and other infrastructure for the expanding security forces and was concerned that the Government of Afghanistan does not have the financial or technical capability to sustain completed ANA or ANP facilities. The Inspector General also cast serious doubt on the rating systems used to measure the

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<sup>47</sup> Antony H Cordesman, *Shaping Afghan National Security Forces*, Center for Strategic and International Studies, April 2010, piii

<sup>48</sup> For a detailed discussion of US AfPak policy, see sections 4 and 5 of this paper.

<sup>49</sup> UNAMA, *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security*, Report of the Secretary General, UN, January 2010, p8

<sup>50</sup> Information about and examples of international work on the training of the ANSF can be found on the [NATO Training Mission to Afghanistan website](#)

<sup>51</sup> See for example Stephen Biddle, "Afghanistan--A View from the Battleground", Transcript, Council on Foreign Relations, 24 November 2008

<sup>52</sup> US Department of Defense, *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan*, April 2010, p6

effectiveness of both the ANA and the ANP.<sup>53</sup> Analysts continue to treat claims of improvements in the ANSF with caution.

### Afghan National Army

Despite the growth in personnel numbers, analysts have continued to cast doubt on the effectiveness of the ANA, and have questioned the concept of relying on a national army for security.

Attempts to build an Afghan national army in the past have met with mixed success. Most recently, the army disintegrated with the fall of the Soviet-backed Najibullah government in 1992 and Afghanistan's descent into civil war. When the Northern Alliance finally brought the Taliban government down in 2002, the ANA was formed partly on the basis of Northern Alliance fighters, leading to a preponderance of Tajiks in the leadership and the ranks.

The ANA has many underlying problems, including poor leadership, illiteracy (affecting some 90% of personnel), ethnic divisions, drug use (as many as 80% are estimated to be drug users in some areas)<sup>54</sup> and corruption. While the Ministry of Defence is more highly regarded than the Ministry of the Interior, it is still reported to be troubled by ethnic frictions and political factionalism at the highest levels. The military bureaucracy is complex and civilian oversight is weak. A law modernising and clarifying military regulations (imposing standard conditions for recruitment, pay, promotion and other matters) has languished in Parliament since 2008, the victim of infighting between the military and the Ministry of Defence, with officials reportedly keen to preserve their freedom of action. In a recent report, the ICG called urgently for the legal situation of the military to be clarified.<sup>55</sup>

Against this background, training programmes have been described as superficial and reports of the effectiveness of trained units have been characterised as optimistic. Antonio Giustozzi, for example, has said:

The 'hope' in the National Army was a product of bureaucratic politics as much as a result of a propaganda effort to depict the war in Afghanistan as a successful enterprise by the previous US administration. Under pressure from the politicians to deliver, the Pentagon bureaucracy and the army units on the ground responded by presenting a rosy picture of the development and growth of the ANA; the politicians in Washington had no inclination to ask too many questions, even if middle-ranking officials were already raising doubts about the genuine character of the data.<sup>56</sup>

ISAF reports that a total of 76 of the 117 fielded units are now rated as capable of leading operations, although Cordesman has said that ISAF sometimes 'grossly exaggerates the capability of given kandaks [battalions].'<sup>57</sup> With the new higher targets for personnel in the ANA, the length of the basic training course is being cut, and class sizes are being increased.

In 2009, pay levels for the ANA were increased significantly to assist with recruitment and retention, and the pay rise led to a surge of applications. Differing levels of pay were applied

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<sup>53</sup> Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, *Quarterly report to the United States Congress*, 30 April 2010, p27

<sup>54</sup> Antonio Giustozzi, "The Afghan National Army: Unwarranted hope?", *RUSI Journal*, December 2009 Vol 154 No 6 p 37

<sup>55</sup> ICG, *A Force in Fragments*, Asia Report 190, 12 May 2010, p11

<sup>56</sup> Antonio Giustozzi, "The Afghan National Army: Unwarranted hope?", *RUSI Journal*, December 2009 Vol 154 No 6 p 36

<sup>57</sup> Antony H Cordesman, *Shaping Afghan National Security Forces*, Center for Strategic and International Studies, April 2010, p44

for Army personnel depending on the level of risk in the areas where they were deployed. Soldiers in Helmand and Kandahar (high risk provinces) received a \$75 increase per month on top of the previous basic \$125. Soldiers in Kunduz (medium risk) received \$65. Despite the increases in pay, it is thought that the Afghan Taliban and other insurgency organisations still pay more to new recruits than the Afghan Government does.

### Afghan police

The establishment of the rule of law in Afghanistan is a vital component of the efforts to bring peace and justice to its inhabitants, but the police in Afghanistan have perhaps not been given the priority that they deserve until recently. As Nick Grono of the ICG pointed out in a speech in 2009,

Policing is one of the most effective – and also the most ill-used – tools available to tackle extremism. In an insurgency police should be the eyes and ears in uncovering violent networks, spotting bombs, guarding public facilities and reporting suspicious activities. More generally – but just as importantly – police keep everyday public order on the streets. Reducing general criminality and providing security to the public provides the most widely shared and distributed public good. It is much more effective in winning hearts and minds than digging wells or building schools – and indeed encourages and protects such development activities.<sup>58</sup>

The level of funding and training available for the ANP is thought by many analysts to have been completely inadequate in the early years of the conflict. The German training contribution was singled out as unhelpful, for concentrating on conventional law enforcement and not taking into account the insecure environment in which the Afghan police must operate. The German training operation has now been taken over by an EU mission (EUPOL), and some of those problems have been addressed, although analysts still point to a lack of international coordination. NATO also has a training scheme for the police,<sup>59</sup> along with the US-led Embedded Training Teams initiative.

President Obama's 'AfPak policy', introduced in March 2009, calls for improvements in the ANP. The Afghan Ministry of the Interior approved a National Police Strategy in March 2010, setting out its goal of developing a police service that would "uphold the constitution of Afghanistan and enforce the prevailing laws of the country to protect all people of Afghanistan".<sup>60</sup> The document envisages enhanced recruitment, training and equipment for the ANP, and sets out how corruption and other internal problems will be dealt with.

According to the US Department of Defense quarterly report to the US Congress, some recruitment targets have been met, and some even exceeded. The quality of recruits remains a problem, though. Some 14% of ANP personnel have been found to have taken illegal drugs in tests, although in some areas the figure is much higher,<sup>61</sup> and problems such as illiteracy and drug use are worse for the police than the army.<sup>62</sup>

The police force is widely regarded as needing a stronger paramilitary element. With Afghanistan far from reaching 'normal' levels of security, the police need to do more than perform a law-enforcement role: they need to be able to protect themselves and to establish and maintain civil order in serious insurgency situations. One of the component parts of the

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<sup>58</sup> "[Policing in Conflict States – Lessons from Afghanistan](#)", Speech by Nick Grono, International Crisis Group, 16 June 2009

<sup>59</sup> See the NATO Training Mission- Afghanistan [website](#)

<sup>60</sup> Afghan Ministry of the Interior, *Afghan National Police Strategy (2010)*, p10

<sup>61</sup> US Department of Defense, *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan*, April 2010, p118

<sup>62</sup> See Asia Foundation, *Afghanistan in 2009: a survey of the Afghan people*, 2009, p38-40

ANP is the Afghan Gendarmerie, a paramilitary organisation (formerly called the Afghan National Civil Order Police (ANCOP)) which is due to expand in the coming year.

The ANP has a high rate of casualties (higher than the army, as they are perceived as softer targets) and are increasingly being deployed to frontline tasks where they are more at risk from suicide bombers. Partly in consequence, there is a very high rate of desertion. For the Gendarmerie, this was estimated to be 70% in 2009.<sup>63</sup>

Counter narcotics work is undertaken by the Counter Narcotics Police of Afghanistan (CNPA). This force is mentored by the US Drugs Enforcement Administration and supported by the European Union EUPOL programme. The Afghan Special Narcotics Force is a British-supported CNPA paramilitary unit whose mission is to carry out raids against high-value targets and drug infrastructure such as laboratories.

A report by the US Government Accountability Office published in March 2009 found that the CNPA had serious organisational problems and reported that the US Department of Defense estimated that it would take at least until 2013 before the regular CNPA would be able to conduct targeted and coordinated investigations at the national level.<sup>64</sup> The CNPA's specialised units were rated as more effective.

The other organisation within the ANP is the Border Police. At the end of March 2010, the strength of the various ANP organisations was as follows:

Afghan Uniformed Police:	81,842
Afghan Border Police:	14,494
Afghan National Civil Order Police:	3,964
Afghan Counter-Narcotics Police:	2,695. <sup>65</sup>

While Afghans have expressed respect and support for the ANP in public opinion surveys, it is not as highly regarded as the ANA.

Like the ANA, policemen since the end of 2009 have been paid according to the level of risk of their location. The highest risk provinces are Helmand and Kandahar, followed by some of the eastern provinces. The extra funding for those posted to these provinces is intended to tackle the ANP's persistent problem with desertion.

The weakness of the justice system has contributed to the weakness of the police service. According to the US Department of Defense:

Establishment of effective rule of law institutions is critical to the sustainment of an effective police force. To date, in the justice sector, there has been little enduring progress despite investment toward reform, infrastructure, and training. Courts are understaffed and chronically corrupt [...]

Security for judges and prosecutors continued to be a significant problem, especially in RC-South [Regional Command South, which includes the provinces of Helmand and Kandahar].<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> US Department of Defense, *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan*, April 2010, p116

<sup>64</sup> US Government Accountability Office, *Afghanistan Drug Control*, March 2010, p25

<sup>65</sup> NATO, *Facts and Figures: Afghan National Police*, April 2010



## The Afghan Public Protection Force

Given the continuing weaknesses of the ANA and the ANP, and with the Afghan Taliban gaining in strength, ISAF planners have looked to the experience in Iraq, where Sunni tribal leaders in Anbar Province turned against al-Qaeda in Iraq and provided militiamen to enhance security in the province, with financial assistance largely from the US. Traditional practice in Afghanistan includes *arbakai*, a form of community policing independent from central government. *Arbakai* has its roots in *Pashtunwali* and is particularly important in the Pashtun areas. Under *Pashtunwali*, a local *shura* may appoint local men to enforce its decisions. The aim of the Afghan Public Protection Programme (APPP) is to enlist that tradition to provide local armed forces but to subject them to central government control, in contrast with the traditional arrangement.<sup>67</sup>

Under the programme, tribal *shuras* agree to nominate recruits for the programme from their areas, who are vetted by ISAF and the Afghan Government, then given three weeks' training before returning to their communities to perform guard duties. Members of the APPP force are uniformed and carry AK47 rifles but do not have arrest authority, which remains with the Afghan National Police, though they can detain criminals until turning them over to ANP personnel. They are paid a salary by the Government.<sup>68</sup> The programme was piloted in Wardak Province in 2009 and has since been extended to Laghman Province. According to the US Department of Defense, the APPP pilot programme has resulted in enhanced security in the areas where it operates.<sup>69</sup>

Critics have expressed concerns that the APPP might legitimise local militias, which have a long and problematic history in Afghanistan. Specifically, there are worries that the programme could lead to fighting between different local APPP forces or between APPP forces and local Pashtun villagers, particularly as Tajiks and Hazaras are already over-represented in the APPP. ISAF and the Afghan Government have stressed that the APPP is not about creating militias.

The degree to which the forces operating under the auspices of the APPP come under effective central control will be crucial. If these forces are seen as part of the authorities and have some success, the legitimacy of the Government will likely increase. On the other hand, if these are seen as laws unto themselves and responsible for excesses against civilians, the legitimacy of the Government may well be damaged.

Afghanistan's decentralised culture does not make any form of social control easy. Firstly, because individuals do not necessarily obey tribal elders or act along tribal lines; rather, they may create or join factions that are hostile to other factions within their tribe or sub-tribe, reflecting the tradition of intra-family feuds in Afghanistan. Secondly, such tribal authority as may have existed has been eroded by decades of conflict and by the Taliban.<sup>70</sup>

US military historian Seth Jones writes:

While necessary, national security forces have *never* been sufficient to establish security in Afghanistan. [The present, national] strategy reflects a Western

<sup>66</sup> US Department of Defense, *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan*, April 2010, p118

<sup>67</sup> For more information on the *Arbakai*, see Mohammed Osman Tariq, *Tribal Security System (Arbakai) in Southeast Afghanistan*, London School of Economics, Development Studies Institute, 2008

<sup>68</sup> ISAF, "Locals Complete Afghan Public Protection Program", press notice, 23 February 2010

<sup>69</sup> US Department of Defense, *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan*, April 2010, p117

<sup>70</sup> For a full exploration of the difficulties of imposing discipline through working with tribal structures, see *My Cousin's Enemy is My Friend: A Study of Pashtun "Tribes" in Afghanistan*, Afghanistan Research Reachback Center White Paper TRADOC G2 Human Terrain System, United States Army, 2009

understanding of the “state,” more appropriate for U.S. efforts in Germany and Japan after World War II.<sup>71</sup>

### Operation *Moshtarak*

Operation *Moshtarak* (Together) was launched in February 2010 by coalition and Afghan security forces with the aim of taking Marjah and surrounding areas from Taliban control, in preparation for a larger offensive originally planned for the summer in Kandahar Province. Large numbers of foreign fighters were reported to be joining the fighting against ISAF and Afghan Government forces, including Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, Chechens and Arabs.<sup>72</sup>

The Marjah campaign was intended to be a model for the coalition allies’ new counterinsurgency strategy. Once the area was wrested from Taliban control, an effective Afghan army and police presence, backed by enough coalition troops, would ensure that the Taliban couldn’t regain control. “We’ve got a government in a box, ready to roll in”, commander of coalition forces in Afghanistan General McChrystal said in February.<sup>73</sup> After a campaign that would concentrate on protecting the local population rather than killing as many Taliban fighters as possible, security and government services would quickly and reliably be offered to the population, winning them over from supporting the Taliban.

Early press reports, perhaps influenced by official news management tactics, described the military operation as a success. Political problems, however, were intractable. The District Governor appointed in Marjah after Operation *Moshtarak*, Abdul Zahir, an elder in the Alizai Pashtun tribe, was reported to have a criminal record in Germany for a stabbing, although he denied this,<sup>74</sup> and by May 2010, press reports suggested that there were very few signs of progress in establishing meaningful government services in the area.<sup>75</sup>

ISAF, on the other hand, says that improvements have been achieved:

There are many positive indicators, especially in the areas of development and economic growth. We have roads being built, district centers being reconstructed, and a lot of minor infrastructure projects underway.<sup>76</sup>

Coalition and Afghan government forces control Marjah district during the day but at night Taliban fighters are reported to be intimidating those who might work with the Government. ISAF says that there are fewer bomb strikes in central Helmand than before Operation *Moshtarak* but concedes that the number of small arms attacks is increasing.<sup>77</sup>

### Operation *Hamkari*

Preparations have been under way for a major move in Kandahar Province. The original aim of the campaign, named *Hamkari*, or ‘cooperation’ in Dari, was to clear the Afghan Taliban from this crucial area, particularly from strongholds around the city, such as Zhari, Panjwai and Arghandab, and to establish an effective local government which would win the support of the populace.

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<sup>71</sup> Seth G Jones, [Community Defense in Afghanistan](#), *Joint Force Quarterly*, April 2010, p10

<sup>72</sup> “Afghan Senate summons security officials over deteriorating security”, *Tolo TV, Kabul*, (translation by BBC *Monitoring*), 7 March 2010

<sup>73</sup> “After Bullets, the Real Test”, *New York Times*, 13 February 2010

<sup>74</sup> “US takes risks with ties to strongmen”, *Financial Times*, 13 March 2010

<sup>75</sup> ““Nobody is winning,” admits McChrystal”, *Independent*, 16 May 2010

<sup>76</sup> “[Signs of Progress in Central Helmand](#)”, ISAF feature news release, May 2010

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.* The conclusions of the latest [Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 40 of resolution 1917 \(2010\)](#), dated 16 June 2010, may not support this assertion. See pages 41-42 of this paper.

The prospect of a massive US-led offensive in Kandahar Province in the summer of 2010 has gradually receded, however – thrown into doubt by a combination of the refusal of the Afghan Government to sanction it and problems with the Marjah operation. The precise date of the proposed action has become clouded in uncertainty. By mid-May 2010 it was being described as a “process” rather than a “massive military action”.<sup>78</sup>

Afghan and US military officials have been pressing local leaders to hold *shuras* to make clear that if governance in local areas is not improved and if the Taliban is not excluded, then those local areas will be a target for coalition military action. Ahmed Wali Karzai is said to have been specifically warned.<sup>79</sup>

Part of the US military’s preparation for the ‘process’ is an intensive drive to gather intelligence about the power structures in Kandahar – which tribes and individuals wield power and which have been excluded. US officials are acutely aware that to disrupt the delicate, if unsatisfactory, power balance in Kandahar could leave a vacuum and set the scene for something even worse.

The original plan was to encircle the city at 32 entry points, and to clear Afghan Taliban fighters from rural areas surrounding the city. However, the Afghan Government and the coalition forces are keen to avoid the casualties that a full scale military campaign would involve, and have stressed that the focus of Operation *Hamkari* will be as much political and administrative, and that the operation will not be conducted against the wishes of the local people. Exactly what the military element of the operations will now involve is unclear.

Large-scale military operations in Kandahar Province are now not expected until September. The number of coalition allied troops will be at its highest in the autumn of 2010, and Afghanistan will be a contentious issue in the US mid-term elections in November. President Obama has undertaken to begin the withdrawal of US troops in mid-2011. The political imperative for the Obama Administration will be to present the Kandahar operation as a success that paves the way for troop withdrawals, and one interpretation of recent comments by US officials is that the objectives of Operation *Hamkari* are being rendered sufficiently vague so as to give the US enough room to claim success. The reality, however, is that it will be difficult to achieve much in so short a time.

### Security achievements

The intensification of the conflict in southern Afghanistan, together with its expansion into areas previously considered stable, made 2009 the worst year for civilian fatalities since the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001. 2,412 civilian deaths were recorded by the UN, a 14% increase on 2008.<sup>80</sup> According to a poll conducted for ABC Television in 2009, the number of people in Afghanistan rating their security positively fell from 72% in 2005 to 55%. In the troubled border provinces of Helmand, Kandahar, Nimroz, Uruzgan and Zabul, only 26% felt secure from crime and violence; in Helmand province, that figure was as low as 14%.<sup>81</sup>

Despite the military ‘surge’ and the development of the ANSF, many analysts consider the number of security personnel in Afghanistan to be very low in relation both to the area of the country and the size of its population. It is rumoured that the classified section of General Stanley McChrystal’s report stated that a total of 500,000 troops would be necessary to

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<sup>78</sup> “Karzai and Clinton put different face on Afghan drive”, *New York Times*, 14 May 2010

<sup>79</sup> “U.S. sets sights on Taliban bastion”, *Washington Post*, 31 March 2010

<sup>80</sup> UNAMA, *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security*, Report of the Secretary General, UN, January 2010, p7

<sup>81</sup> “Support for U.S. Efforts Plummets Amid Afghanistan’s Ongoing Strife” ABC News/ ARD/BBC press release, 9 February 2009



control Afghanistan effectively. Mike Scheuer, former head of the CIA team hunting Osama bin Laden, said in 2009, “To defeat this enemy would take 400-500,000 troops”.<sup>82</sup> These estimates could be conservative. According to the 2006 edition of the US Army and Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Manual:

Twenty counterinsurgents per 1,000 residents is often considered the minimum troop density required for effective COIN operations; however, as with any fixed ratio, such calculations remain very dependent upon the situation.<sup>83</sup>

This ratio would translate into a *minimum* force requirement of approximately 600,000 troops. However, it should be noted that, in the 2009 edition of the Counterinsurgency Manual, the ‘20 per 1,000 inhabitants’ ratio was removed.<sup>84</sup>

In the autumn of 2010, coalition forces, combined with the ANSF, will peak at around 350,000. Although Afghan government forces will continue to grow after 2010, there remains a real danger that their effectiveness may decline once the coalition forces begin to withdraw.

There is also a view among some observers that the more security forces there are in Afghanistan, the more the overall level of violence will rise. Given the fragmented nature of Afghan society, almost anyone can be seen as an ‘outsider’. It is argued that the continuing preponderance of non-Pashtuns in the ANSF, combined with the military ‘surge’ by the coalition allies, means that – fuelled by *Pashtunwali* – a cycle of violence and retaliation is likely to be perpetuated.<sup>85</sup> Talking about British military operations in and around the town of Sangin, Helmand Province, which has become the most dangerous place in Afghanistan for the coalition allies, one Afghan refugee said: “[...] the more they fight, the more they will create enemies for themselves.”<sup>86</sup>

## 2.2 Pakistan

### ***Political arrangements***

Pakistan’s predominantly Pashtun areas are comprised by the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, called until recently North West Frontier Province (NWFP).

There are seven agencies in FATA: Bajaur Agency, Khyber Agency, Kurram Agency, Mohmand Agency, Orakzai Agency, North Waziristan Agency and South Waziristan Agency. Also part of the FATA are the tribal areas adjoining Peshawar district, Kohat district, Bannu district and Dera Ismail Khan district. They are known as the six Frontier Regions.<sup>87</sup> Below is a map of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and FATA<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> “US commander outgunned in battle for troop surge”, *Sunday Times*,

<sup>83</sup> *Counterinsurgency*, US Army and Marines manual, 2006, cited in Seth G Jones, [Community Defense in Afghanistan](#), *Joint Force Quarterly*, April 2010, p9

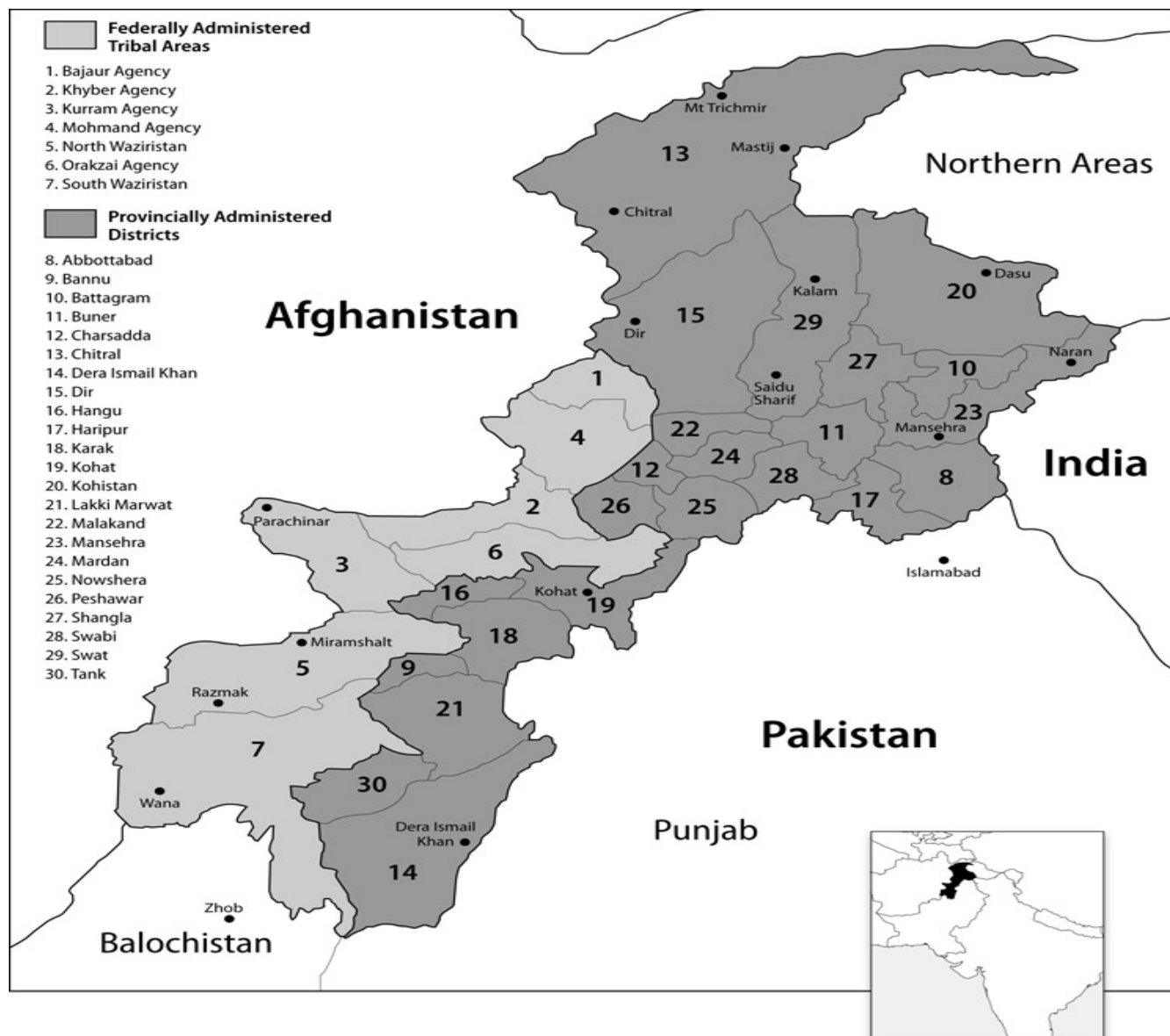
<sup>84</sup> US Armed Forces Joint Publication 3-24, *Counterinsurgency Operations*, October 2009, III-3

<sup>85</sup> See for example Hugh Gusterson, “[Why the war in Afghanistan cannot be won](#)”, *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 21 September 2009

<sup>86</sup> “The more Britain fights, the more it creates enemies”, *Guardian*, 22 June 2010

<sup>87</sup> Article 246(c) of the 1973 Constitution

<sup>88</sup> Source: ICG, [Pakistan: Countering militancy in FATA](#), Asia Report No. 178, 21 October 2009



The FATA are administered by the Governor of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa on behalf of the President. Colonial era laws remain in force – most notably, the Frontier Crimes Regulations (FCR) of 1901, under which a federally-appointed Political Agent exercises considerable executive, judicial and revenue raising powers.

The regular court system does not operate in the FATA and the Supreme Court has no jurisdiction there. The inhabitants of the FATA effectively do not enjoy the civil and political rights set out in the 1973 Constitution. Finally, the National Assembly has no powers to legislate for the FATA. Its laws will apply there if ordered to do so by the President.

A recent report by the ICG describes the powers that the Political Agent has enjoyed under the FCR:

Under a preventive clause that provides for “security and surveillance for the prevention of murder or culpable homicide or the dissemination of sedition”, the PA can require an individual believed to pose such a threat to provide a bond or surety “for good behaviour or for keeping the peace”. By rejecting the bond, the PA can impose a three-year jail term.

Other clauses empower the PA to punish an entire tribe for crimes committed on its territory through fines, arrests, property seizures and blockades. In violation of international law that bars collective punishment, the PA can order detention of all or any members of the tribe, seize their property or block their access to the settled districts if he has “good reason” to believe that a tribe or its members are “acting in a hostile or unfriendly manner”, have “failed to render all assistance in their power” to help apprehend criminals, “connived at, or abetted in a crime” or “suppressed evidence” of an offence. The PA can even seize the property or businesses of tribesmen in settled districts who do not live in FATA. These decisions cannot be appealed in any court.

The PA grants tribal elders the status of *malik*, with the NWFP governor's consent, on the basis of male inheritance, but can arbitrarily withdraw, suspend or cancel *malik* status if he deems the individual is not serving the interests of the state. *Maliks* receive financial privileges from the administration if their tribe cooperates in suppressing crime, maintaining social peace and generally supporting the government. The PA can also convene and refer criminal and civil cases to a *jirga* (council of elders), presided over by handpicked *maliks* and other tribal elites. This body's decision can be appealed to the PA, whose judgment cannot be reviewed by a regular court.<sup>89</sup>

The equivalent of the Political Agent in the six Frontier Regions is called a deputy district commissioner.

As the above extract makes clear, the tribal leaders, or *maliks*, have come a poor second to the Political Agent in terms of the hierarchy of power and authority in the FATA. Critics argue that this has created space for militants to challenge and supplant the authority of the *maliks*. However, the power of the Political Agents has in turn waned since the rise of militancy in the FATA, although the militants often tolerate them, provided they do not threaten their ascendancy. Their attitude to the *maliks* has been similar. Since 2004, when the level of military operations in the FATA began to rise, the army has come to exert increasing power and authority in the areas.<sup>90</sup>

There is a Federal Ministry of States and Frontier Regions, but in practice, its writ has barely run in the FATA. Since the mid-1990s, representatives of the seven Agencies have been elected to the National Assembly, although only on a non-party basis. These representatives, which have increasingly been clerics, rather than *maliks*, also have little power. The current Zardari Government has stated that in future, these elections can be party-based. There is a FATA Secretariat with responsibility for development planning. Since 2006, its efforts have been supplemented by a FATA Development Authority.

In addition to the FATA, there are also the Provincially Administered Tribal Areas (PATA). Formally part of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, the PATA comprise Malakand division, which includes Buner, Chitral, Upper and Lower Dir, Shangla and Swat districts. The PATA have been administered since 1975 under a different criminal and civil code from the rest of the province, one which allows for some application of Sharia law. There are also some PATA in the north of Baluchistan Province. As discussed below, militancy has also steadily spread into these areas.

Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa proper and Baluchistan both have their own directly-elected provincial assemblies and governments and are fully covered by the provisions of the Constitution. A national alliance of Islamist parties called the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA), in which the Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) and the Jamiat-e-Ulema-e-Islami [Fazlur Rehman group] (JUI-F) are the

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<sup>89</sup> ICG, *Pakistan: Countering militancy in FATA*, Asia Report No. 178, 21 October 2009, p2-3

<sup>90</sup> H. Synnott, *Transforming Pakistan: Ways out of instability*, 2009, p115

main components, won provincial elections in 2002 and formed a government in what was then NWFP.<sup>91</sup> While the JI is ideologically strongly ‘pan-Islamist’, has support across Pakistan and is urban and middle class in terms of its core constituency, the JUI-F’s support is mainly in the border areas. Its ideology has been described as “inseparably intertwined with tribal Pashtun social norms regarding gender and honour.”<sup>92</sup> The MMA was also part of the ruling coalition in Baluchistan Province. In 2008, the secular Pashtun nationalist Awami National Party (ANP) won provincial elections and is now running Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa. The present Chief Minister is Emir Haider Hoti. It is hostile to the Pakistan Taliban and other militants and friendly with the Afghan Government of President Hamid Karzai. Its equivalent in Baluchistan is the Pakhtunhwa Milli Awami Party. However, at the national level, the JUI-F is part of the coalition government led by the Pakistan People’s Party.

In August 2009, President Asif Zardari announced a reform package for the FATA that included allowing political activities, strengthening the legal and judicial system (for example, giving people the right of appeal and to seek bail) and reducing the powers of political agents.<sup>93</sup> However, proposals to change the anomalous constitutional status of the FATA vis-à-vis the rest of the country have yet to materialise. Proposals canvassed have involved merging the FATA with NWFP to create a province called Pakhtunkhwa (initially favoured by the ANP), or alternatively setting up the FATA as a fully-fledged province under the Constitution (favoured by some FATA-based political parties).<sup>94</sup> A parliamentary committee on constitutional reform, after nearly a year of consultation and debate designed to achieve maximum consensus between the Government and the opposition, tabled a Bill in Parliament entitled the *18th Amendment Bill* on 2 April. It included a provision changing the name of the NWFP to Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (Khyber side of the land of the Pashtuns) and some strengthening of provincial autonomy.<sup>95</sup> However, the fundamental status of the FATA was not addressed in the Bill, despite protests from most of the political parties operating there.<sup>96</sup> Some voices in Khyber Agency, particularly from the non-Pashtun Hazara ethnic group, have expressed opposition to the use of Khyber in the new name for the NWFP.<sup>97</sup> Nonetheless, the Bill was quickly passed and became law in mid-April. The new law also takes away the power of the president to dismiss provincial governments.

With regard to the FCR, the Government of President Asif Zardari has been proposing reform, rather than abolition. Some have called for the rejuvenation of the traditional system of tribal assemblies, known as *jirga*, as part of a return of powers to the *maliks*. Others argue that the system has collapsed beyond repair and would not, in any case, be an improvement in terms of justice and accountability. They claim that the only appropriate course of action is to extend the jurisdiction of the national and provincial higher court system to the FATA.<sup>98</sup>

### **Security arrangements**

It is impossible to say with certainty what the current strength of the Pakistani military in the border areas is. Inevitably, the number fluctuates. In 2008, it was stated that it stood at 112,000 troops. During the major offensive against militants in South Waziristan in late 2009,

<sup>91</sup> The JUI-F is one of two parties using the JUI name, following a split in the 1980s.

<sup>92</sup> J. Paris, *Prospects for Pakistan*, Legatum Institute, January 2010, p28

<sup>93</sup> K. Fischer, “The AfPak strategy: Reactions in Pakistan”, Afghanistan Analysts Network policy briefing, March 2010, p11

<sup>94</sup> “Committee finalises 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment Bill preamble”, *Daily Times* [Islamabad], 22 March 2010. There

<sup>95</sup> The full text of the Bill is available at: [http://criticalppp.org/lubp/wp-content/uploads/2010/04/report\\_constitutional\\_18th\\_amend\\_bill2010\\_020410.pdf](http://criticalppp.org/lubp/wp-content/uploads/2010/04/report_constitutional_18th_amend_bill2010_020410.pdf) (page 72 onwards)

<sup>96</sup> See: <http://www.allvoices.com/contributed-news/5521271-govt-to-be-pressed-for-fata-reforms-implementation/image/51151960-govt-not-sincere-in-fata-reforms>

<sup>97</sup> “Khyber residents not OK with NWFP’s proposed name”, [pakistanlink.org](http://pakistanlink.org), 5 April 2010

<sup>98</sup> J. Paris, *Prospects for Pakistan*, Legatum Institute, January 2010, p13-15

it was reported that an additional 30,000 troops had been deployed.<sup>99</sup> In April 2010, the then Foreign Secretary, David Miliband, said that for the first time since 1947 there were “more Pakistani troops on the Afghan border than on the Indian border.”<sup>100</sup> Levels of military expenditure continue to rise. In June 2010, the Pakistan Government announced that it planned to further increase defence spending by 17% over the coming year.<sup>101</sup>

The majority of the troops deployed will normally be composed of the paramilitary Frontier Corps, which has long constituted the main permanent presence in the FATA. It has an estimated strength of around 65,000.<sup>102</sup> When it is not taking part in military operations, its role is that of law enforcement. However, its performance has often been criticised. Poorly trained and drawing its numbers from among the local Pashtun, critics have claimed that it has often shown little real appetite or capacity for taking on the militants. Partly for this reason, the regular army, which until 2002 usually did not conduct operations in the FATA, has been increasingly deployed to the border areas. But critics have argued that the deployment of regular units has been a major mistake, contributing significantly to the alienation of local communities, which recall previous promises, including by Pakistan’s founder, Muhammed Ali Jinnah, not to do this. Many analysts have asserted that the army as a whole has been poorly equipped to undertake counter-insurgency, alienating local communities and, in the longer-term, “making it a target for revenge under tribal codes.”<sup>103</sup> Until very recently, it has simply not been the military’s priority. However, a Special Investigation Group has reportedly been established since 2008, incorporating armed and intelligence wings.<sup>104</sup> But Pakistan’s electronic surveillance capability has reportedly been weak, leaving it dependent on the willingness of Western agencies to share information.<sup>105</sup> Pakistan’s main adversary has traditionally been viewed as India. The bulk of the armed forces is deployed in and adjacent Azad Kashmir and in Baluchistan Province, in response to the long-running separatist insurgency in that province.<sup>106</sup>

There are also officially-sanctioned tribal militias (*lashkars*) and tribal police (*khassadars*) operating in the FATA. Both are formally under the control of the Federal authorities. The Political Agent in each of the Agencies is their commanding officer. The *lashkars* have been compared to the militias that were encouraged in Iraq as part of its ‘Sunni Awakening’, although it is claimed that, in this case, no US Government funding is involved. By the end of 2008, there were an estimated 25,000 *lashkars* operating in Bajaur, Orakzai and Dir.<sup>107</sup> They are viewed as poorly trained and equipped and underpaid. Many are former militants, retaining sympathies for the Afghan Taliban, leading some to refer to them as the ‘government Taliban’. Both forces are now being used to fight militants, although some consider them to be largely ineffective when operating on their own. In 2009, the Government announced plans to recruit more to both and improve their terms, conditions and training. There are concerns that this increased reliance on such groups will lead to

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<sup>99</sup> In February 2010, the British Foreign Secretary, David Miliband, spoke of a “150,000-strong deployment of Pakistani security forces on the western border [...]”. Foreign Affairs Committee, *Global Security: Afghanistan and Pakistan*, HC398, Session 2009-10, Q86

<sup>100</sup> HC Deb 6 April 2010 c804

<sup>101</sup> “Pakistan to increase defence spending”, *BBC News Online*, 5 June 2010

<sup>102</sup> International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 2009*

<sup>103</sup> H. Synnott, *Transforming Pakistan: Ways out of instability* (London, 2009), p. 93. See also: B. Coughley, “Insurrection, terrorism and the Pakistan army”, Pakistan Security Research Unit, University of Bradford, Brief No. 53, 10 December 2009

<sup>104</sup> “On the trail of Pakistan’s Taliban”, *Guardian*, 10 January 2009

<sup>105</sup> B. Coughley, “Insurrection, terrorism and the Pakistan army”, Pakistan Security Research Unit, University of Bradford, Brief No. 53, 10 December 2009, p20

<sup>106</sup> The Pakistani army currently has a total complement of 550,000 regular personnel.

<sup>107</sup> K.A. Kronstadt and K. Katzman, “Islamist militancy in the Pakistan-Afghanistan border region and US policy”, Congressional Research Service, 21 November 2008, p8. Available at: <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/113202.pdf>



serious human rights abuses being committed. The writ of the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa police, which itself is under-resourced and under-manned, does not run in the FATA.<sup>108</sup>

An estimated one-third of the FATA's population, estimated at 3.5 million, was internally displaced in October 2009, according to the International Crisis Group, which has asserted that these IDPs have received less attention or support than those in the Malakand division of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, following the 2009 military offensive in Swat (see below).<sup>109</sup> One source claimed that, at its height, the Swat offensive had left 2.8 million people displaced.<sup>110</sup>

Senior NATO, Afghan and Pakistani military officials meet regularly on both sides of the border under the auspices of a Tripartite Commission set up for that purpose. Since 2008 a number of 'border co-ordination centres' have been established which include "networks of radar nodes to give liaison officers a common view of the border area." One of these centres is at the Torkham Border Crossing.<sup>111</sup> The US has a small but unspecified number of military personnel in the Pakistan border areas. Some are reported to be involved in training the Frontier Corps and Pakistani special forces, funded by the Department of Defense under the Section 1206 'Global Train and Equip' budget line.<sup>112</sup> This has been going on since 2006, but it seems likely that there is also a strong intelligence component to all the work these personnel are carrying out. More generally, the Pakistani military has been supported and sustained by large amounts of US money through budget lines such as Foreign Military Financing and Coalition Support Funds (CSF). The former provides funds to purchase US military equipment while the latter reimburse the costs of conducting operations.<sup>113</sup> The amount of CSF provided between 2001 and early 2008 has been calculated as comprising about 25% of Pakistan's total military expenditure.<sup>114</sup>

US special forces had undertaken military operations on the Pakistani side of the border on at least four occasions by the end of 2009.<sup>115</sup> There have also been reports that some CIA-directed drone attacks by unmanned Predator aircraft have been launched from Pakistani soil.<sup>116</sup> Three Predators are said to have been based at a secret Pakistani airbase.<sup>117</sup> Some analysts have claimed that, given public sensitivities about the role US in Pakistan, Pakistani officials "condemn US actions in public while assisting them in private."<sup>118</sup>

Both the Pakistan Government and its international partners have taken the view that security in the FATA is closely linked to the promotion of development. International donors, including the US and the UK, provide support to the Pakistan Government's FATA Sustainable Development Plan for 2006-2015. USAID has its own FATA Development Program, which works with the FATA Secretariat and the FATA Development Authority. A significant proportion of the funds that are being made available to Pakistan through the current AfPak policy are to be directed towards such development programmes.

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<sup>108</sup> ICG, *Pakistan: Countering militancy in FATA*, Asia Report No. 178, 21 October 2009, p17-18

<sup>109</sup> Ibid, p8-9

<sup>110</sup> H. Synnott, *Transforming Pakistan: Ways out of instability*, 2009, p84

<sup>111</sup> K.A. Kronstadt and K. Katzman, "Islamist militancy in the Pakistan-Afghanistan border region and US policy", Congressional Research Service, 21 November 2008, p12. Available at: <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/113202.pdf>

<sup>112</sup> Ibid

<sup>113</sup> In addition to FMF, there are also direct commercial arms exports licensed under the *Arms Export Control Act*.

<sup>114</sup> K.A. Kronstadt and K. Katzman, "Islamist militancy in the Pakistan-Afghanistan border region and US policy", Congressional Research Service, 21 November 2008, p16

<sup>115</sup> Ibid, p5, 13; Michael Boyle, "Do counterterrorism and counterinsurgency go together?" *International Affairs*, Vol. 86, No. 2, March 2010, p347

<sup>116</sup> "Invincible Taliban routed in raids on border camps", *Times*, 1 March 2010. D. Byman, "Taliban vs. Predator: Are targeted killings inside Pakistan a good idea?", *Foreign Affairs*, 18 March 2009

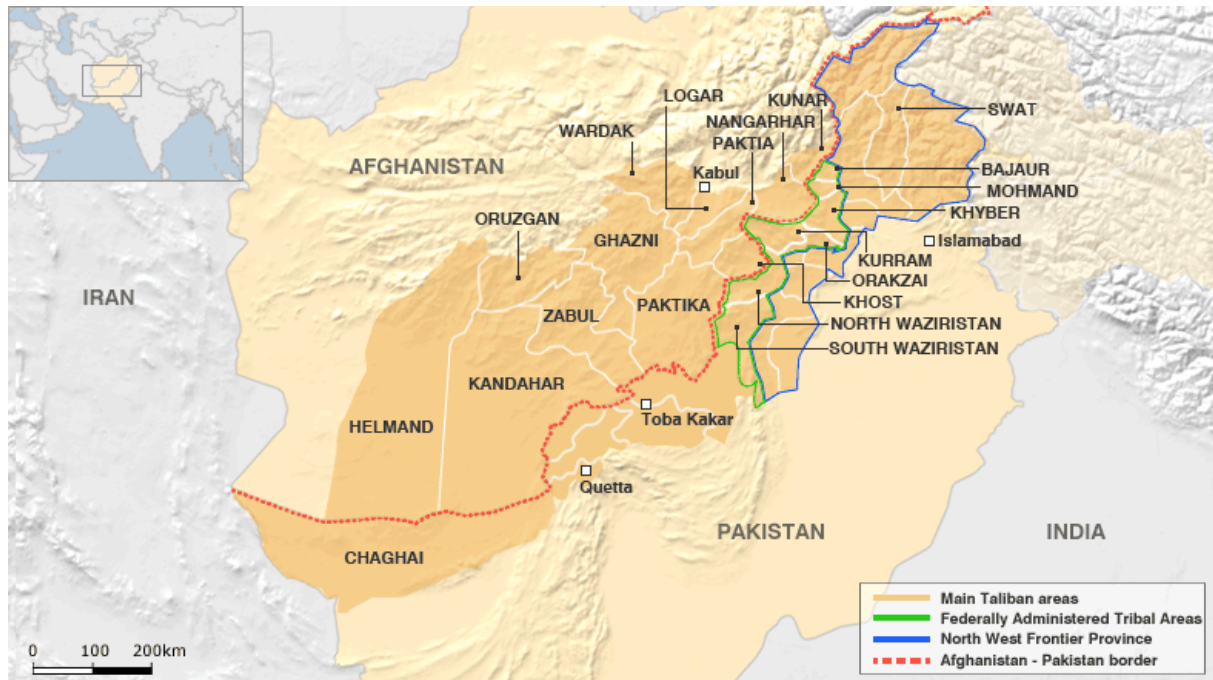
<sup>117</sup> K.A. Kronstadt and K. Katzman, "Islamist militancy in the Pakistan-Afghanistan border region and US policy", Congressional Research Service, 21 November 2008, p13

<sup>118</sup> Ibid

### 3 Armed militant groups in Pashtun areas

Given the complexity and fluidity of the situation on the ground and our reliance on secondary sources which inevitably reflect a given moment in time, the absolute accuracy of what follows cannot be guaranteed.

The following map shows how closely the heartlands of militancy corresponded with the majority-Pashtun areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan at the end of 2009:<sup>119</sup>



#### 3.1 Afghanistan

##### ***Afghan Taliban***

After the fall of the Najibullah Government in 1992, chaos reigned in Afghanistan, with different *mujahideen* groups fighting for control of territory. The Afghan Taliban emerged as a new force at this time, claiming to offer a non-sectarian alternative based on Islamic justice and order. However, the new movement, far from being simply a 'home-grown' Afghan force offering domestic stability, was from the start funded and supported both by the Pakistani political and security establishment and by related Pakistani commercial interests. These Pakistani actors saw overlapping opportunities to further Pakistan's traditional policy of gaining 'strategic depth' through a compliant regime in Afghanistan and to create trade routes to the potentially lucrative Central Asian markets.

The group's ideology and recruits owed much to Pakistan's Jamiat-e-Ulema-e-Islam (JUI), a radical Islamist group supported by many Pashtuns in Baluchistan Province and NWFP.<sup>120</sup> Taliban recruitment among the young Pashtun refugees based in these areas and among students at the Deobandi *madrassas* proved highly successful. By 1994 several hundred Taliban had received basic military training.

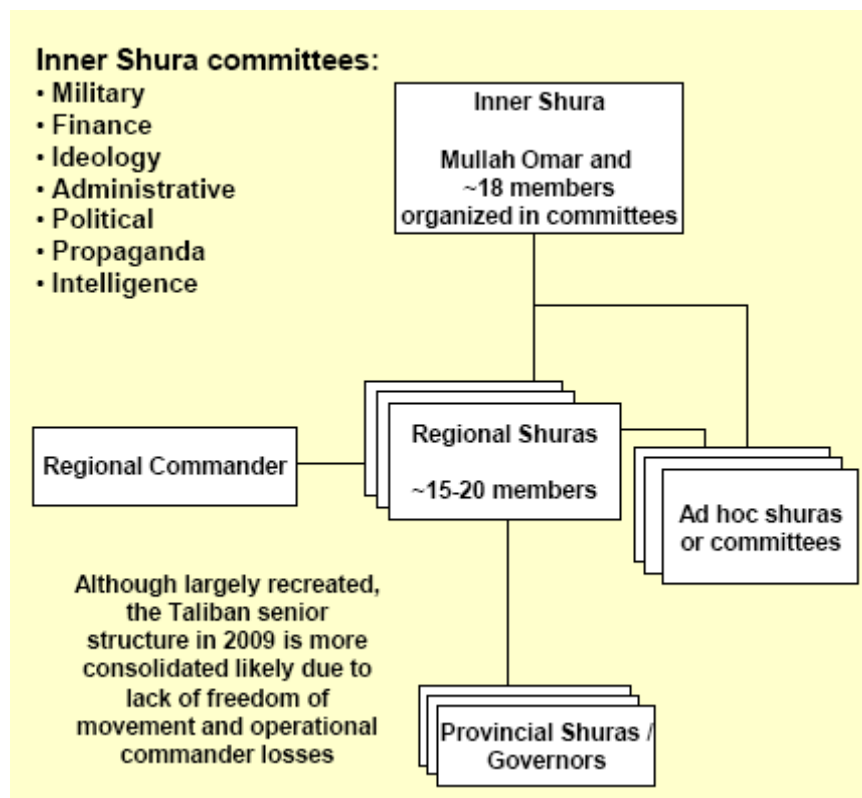
The young organisation was – and continues to be – led by a veteran of the *mujahideen* struggle against the Soviets, Mullah Mohammad Omar. Today, Mullah Omar heads the Inner

<sup>119</sup> Source: "The Afghan-Pakistan Militant nexus", *BBC News Online*, 1 December 2009

<sup>120</sup> The JUI later split into the JUI and the JUI-F led by Maulana Fazal-ur-Rehman. The JUI-F is much the more active of the two groups

*Shura*, or council, which is based in Quetta in Pakistan's Baluchistan Province. It is composed of about 18 close associates drawn from the organisation's birthplace, Kandahar. The mainstream Taliban movement is sometimes known as the 'Kandahari Taliban'. Subordinate to the Inner *Shura* are Regional *Shuras* with perhaps 15 to 20 members; Regional *Shuras* control the Provincial *Shuras* and shadow Provincial Governors.

*Taliban structure in 2009*



Source: Michael Flynn, *State of the Insurgency: Trends, Intentions and Objectives*, ISAF, 22 December 2009

Mullah Omar is a Durrani Pashtun, although a member of neither the *khan* class, nor the Mohammadzai branch, which is the traditional source of Afghanistan's kings. The Taliban is traditionally dominated by Ghilzai Pashtuns, although the present top leadership, the Inner *Shura*, probably based in Quetta in Pakistan, contains at least four Durranis, including – until his reported arrest on 15 February 2010 in the Pakistani city of Karachi – the second in command and Deputy Imam, Mullah Baradar. Some non-Pashtun ethnic groups have also been represented. While most of the Taliban are still Pashtuns, they are increasingly attempting to appeal to non-Pashtuns.<sup>121</sup> Representatives of the Haqqani and Mansur networks are also said to sit on the Quetta *Shura* (see below).

Afghan Taliban commanders are reported to be based principally in three Pakistani cities, from where they run the fight in Afghanistan. The most important base is Quetta. From here operations in Kandahar, Helmand, Uruzgan and Farah provinces are directed. Operations in Khost, Paktia and Paktika provinces are allegedly directed from Miranshah, while Nuristan, Kunar, Nangahar, Logar and Laghman provinces are said to be controlled by the Peshawar group.<sup>122</sup>

<sup>121</sup> For a detailed analysis of the elements of the Afghan insurgency, see Thomas Ruttig, *The other side: Dimensions of the Afghan insurgency, causes, actors and approaches to talks*, Afghanistan Analysts Network, July 2009

<sup>122</sup> Jane's Terrorism and Insurgency Centre, Taliban profile [accessed 18 February 2010]



Opinions vary as to the extent to which the Afghan Taliban is controlled by elements of the Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). In a report published in June 2010, Matt Waldman argued that the Pakistani intelligence service, the ISI, “orchestrates, sustains and strongly influences the movement” and that there may even be ISI representatives on the Inner *Shura* in Quetta.<sup>123</sup> One interviewee quoted in the report said:

Everything is controlled by the ISI. Without the agreement of the ISI, then the insurgency would be impossible... The big problem is that Pakistan created the fundamentalists; the government, military and ISI supported them; yet while the first two have stopped supporting them, the ISI continues to ... of course ISI are on the Quetta Shura.<sup>124</sup>

The Afghan Taliban continue to recruit in the Pashtun border areas. NATO estimated in October 2009 that the Afghan Taliban had 25,000 to 30,000 fighters, up from the 2006 estimate of 7,000 (estimates vary widely).<sup>125</sup> Afghan Taliban recruits from three major sources. One source is impoverished and often young men from all over Afghanistan, sometimes for short periods only, as foot soldiers. It also finds more ideologically-committed recruits from the refugee camps on the other side the border with Pakistan. According to Jane’s Terrorism and Insurgency Centre, the camp at Girdi Jangle, over the border from Helmand Province, has been a particularly important source of recruits.<sup>126</sup> The Taliban moved into the camp as refugees began to make their way back to Afghanistan and have used the camp as a base beyond the reach of Afghan and ISAF forces. The other main source of recruits for the Afghan Taliban is religious *madrassas* in Pakistan. It is estimated that the number of Pakistanis fighting for the Afghan Taliban is greater than the number of Arabs, despite the latter’s higher profile.

The success of the Afghan Taliban recruitment campaign is shown by the number of fighters currently estimated to be under its command. Intensified fighting and attendant civilian casualties are a powerful recruitment tool for insurgents, and the coalition allies’ new strategy of prioritising the protection of civilians over the killing of insurgents has tried to take that into account.

The Afghan Taliban controls perhaps 10 Afghan provinces, including most of Wardak and Nargahar, adjacent to Kabul Province, Ghazni, most of Kandahar and some of Helmand. While there has been intense conflict in Paktia Province and in the north of the neighbouring Paktika Province, these areas are not judged currently to be under Taliban control.

In recent years, Afghan Taliban forces have increased the number of their attacks mounted in northern and north-western areas of Afghanistan. The upsurge in violence in these areas is largely attributed to the fact that they contain significant pockets of Pashtun population – the result of a 1970s migration policy designed to reduce ethnic divisions in the country. Northern areas have also increased in importance to the insurgents as the coalition allies have relied more heavily on the routes into Afghanistan through Central Asian countries for aid and military supplies. In the second half of 2009, extra US ISAF troops were posted to the hitherto relatively peaceful northern province of Kunduz, to support the existing German ISAF presence. Despite the upsurge in violence in the north, the southern provinces of

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<sup>123</sup> M. Waldman, “The sun in the sky: The relationship between Pakistan’s ISI and Afghan insurgents”, Discussion Paper 18, Crisis States Research Centre, London School of Economics, June 2010, abstract. Available at: <http://www.crisisstates.com/Publications/dp/dp18.htm>

<sup>124</sup> Ibid, p10

<sup>125</sup> “Taliban leaders unlikely to accept offer, Gates says”, *New York Times*, 19 January 2010

<sup>126</sup> Jane’s Terrorism and Insurgency Centre, Taliban profile [accessed 18 February 2010]

Kandahar and Helmand and the eastern province of Khost recorded the highest number of attacks in the period November 2008 to October 2009.<sup>127</sup>

The Pakistani army's increased hostility to the Pakistan Taliban appears to be driving a wedge between the two branches of the Taliban movement. It is becoming increasingly clear that the two branches do not have an identical strategy, despite sharing a very similar ideology. An Afghan Taliban commander was quoted as saying in late 2009:

There will not be any support from us. [We] don't have any interest in fighting against other countries. Our aim was, and is, to get the occupation forces out and not to get into a fight with a Muslim army.<sup>128</sup>

The Afghan Taliban leadership has said that it wants to establish good relations with neighbouring Islamic states if it returns to power, which means it is making efforts not to antagonise the Pakistani or Iranian authorities. To this end, the Afghan Taliban is thought to be discouraging attacks in Pakistan, while encouraging support for action in Afghanistan.

According to ISAF intelligence, al-Qaeda was still proving useful to the Afghan Taliban in providing facilitation, training and some funding for insurgency in Afghanistan during 2009.<sup>129</sup> However, it does appear that the Afghan Taliban and other Afghan groups are increasingly distancing themselves from al-Qaeda. Captured fighters say that al-Qaeda is now seen as a handicap.<sup>130</sup> Al-Qaeda is not an Afghan force and, as foreigners, its fighters can and do often provoke hostility among the Pashtun population. As such, Mullah Omar's distancing of the Afghan Taliban from al-Qaeda may partly be designed to bolster the Afghan Taliban's credentials as a Pashtun movement. Whether it should be viewed as a move to facilitate negotiations with the Afghan Government of President Karzai remains to be seen.

### ***The Haqqani and Mansur Networks***

An autonomous group allied to the Afghan Taliban, the Haqqani network was founded by Jalaluddin Haqqani, a Pashtun and former *mujahideen* anti-Soviet fighter and a former Taliban minister. During the struggle against the Soviet invasion, large amounts of money were channelled to Haqqani from the CIA, through the Pakistani security services. He developed a fearsome reputation as a field commander. Although Haqqani was a minister in the Taliban Government, he did not join the movement. He is said to favour an Islamic republic rather than an emirate for Afghanistan, and to interpret the rules of Islam more flexibly than does the Afghan Taliban leadership. Despite these differences, the Haqqani Network is closely linked to the Taliban and uses Taliban 'branding' for some of its activities. On the other hand it is more ethnically diverse. US officials are reported to estimate the strength of the Haqqani network at around 4,000 fighters.<sup>131</sup>

A more flexible interpretation of Islam does not mean a more tolerant attitude to what it would view as 'foreign interference', and the Haqqani network is considered the most dangerous and sophisticated of the pro-Afghan Taliban groups, with the best connections to Pakistani intelligence and to Arab international jihadists. It is a major threat to international coalition goals in Afghanistan; the network conducted an assassination attempt on President Karzai in 2008 which killed three bystanders.

Day-to-day leadership has passed from Jalaluddin Haqqani to his son Sirajuddin, who has expanded the network and introduced suicide bombers to Afghanistan, importing the

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<sup>127</sup> Jane's Terrorism and Insurgency Centre, JTIC Country Briefing – Afghanistan, 1 November 2009

<sup>128</sup> "Insurgents Share a Name, But Pursue Different Goals", *New York Times*, 23 October 2009

<sup>129</sup> Michael Flynn, *State of the Insurgency: Trends, Intentions and Objectives*, ISAF, 22 December 2009, p3

<sup>130</sup> Ibid, p13

<sup>131</sup> "Pakistan is said to pursue role in Afghan talks", *New York Times*, 10 February 2010

technique through the group's contacts with al-Qaeda. The network is active in the eastern provinces of Paktia, Paktika, Khost, Logar, and Ghazni, and in parts of Paktika, Khost and Paktia it has established parallel government structures, controlling the countryside in many districts. In 2009, a member of the Afghan Parliament from Khost Province was quoted as saying, "In Khost, government officials need letters from Haqqani just to move about on the roads in the districts."<sup>132</sup> The leadership of the group is thought to be based in North Waziristan, an agency in Pakistan's FATA. Both Jaladuddin and Sirajuddin Haqqani are listed on the UN '1267 Committee' list as individuals associated with al-Qaeda and the Taliban.<sup>133</sup>

The Haqqani network is a radical organisation and observers consider that it is unlikely that they will be amenable to a negotiated settlement. It is said to be even more strongly influenced by the Pakistani ISI than the mainstream Afghan Taliban.<sup>134</sup>

Like the Haqqani network, the Mansur network is based on a family group and is composed of remnants of *mujahideen* fighters. It is led by Abdullatif Mansur. Together, the Afghan Taliban and the Haqqani and Mansur Networks constitute the heart of the insurgency, and the leaders of the Haqqani and Mansur networks are both reported to be on the Taliban leadership council.

### ***Hizb-i-Islami – Gulbuddin***

The other main group in the Afghan insurgency is the Hizb-i-Islami (Party of Islam) – Gulbuddin (HIG), led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. The smallest of the Taliban-associated groups, it was founded in the 1970s. The group is overwhelmingly Pashtun and mainly operates along Afghanistan's eastern border with Pakistan, particularly in the largely Pashtun provinces of Kunar, Nangarhar and Nuristan; Gulbuddin Hekmatyar is thought to be based in Pakistan and the group also has a presence there.

The group has a tradition of hostility towards the Afghan Taliban, but the groups have probably joined forces at times, however uneasily, to fight the common enemy of the coalition allies and the Afghan Government.

Hekmatyar rose to prominence through a familiar route of CIA- and Pakistan-supported fighting against the Soviet invasion, retains Pakistani contacts and is alleged by the US State Department to have given shelter to Osama bin Laden in the 1990s. The State Department categorises Mr Hekmatyar, a former Afghan Prime Minister, as a terrorist.<sup>135</sup> HIG denies any links with al-Qaeda.

Hekmatyar has held preliminary talks with the Afghan Government on a negotiated settlement. Afghan politicians have been reported as saying that Hekmatyar had offered easier terms than the Taliban leadership, suggesting that foreign troops could remain in the country for 18 months after the initiation of peace talks.<sup>136</sup>

Gulbuddin's son, Feroz Hekmatyar, is said to have attended a secret conference with representatives of the Taliban and Parliament in January 2010. He is reported to have said at the time:

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<sup>132</sup> "The most deadly US foe in Afghanistan", *Christian Science Monitor*, 1 June 2009

<sup>133</sup> United Nations, *The Consolidated List established and maintained by the 1267 Committee with respect to Al-Qaida, Osama bin Laden, and the Taliban and other individuals, groups, undertakings and entities associated with them*, [29 March 2010]

<sup>134</sup> M. Waldman, "The sun in the sky: The relationship between Pakistan's ISI and Afghan insurgents", Discussion Paper 18, Crisis States Research Centre, London School of Economics, June 2010, p16

<sup>135</sup> For more information about Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, see *BBC News Online*'s [profile](#), 23 March 2010

<sup>136</sup> "Afghanistan: Peace talks with the Taliban's Gulbuddin Hekmatyar", *Christian Science Monitor*, 11 February 2010

Hezb-i-Islami is not against peace in Afghanistan. We are not against Karzai and peace talks [...] We are not seeking any position. We want foreigners to leave, to go out of Afghanistan.<sup>137</sup>

The Afghan Parliament's lower house contains "something like 25 to 28 MPs" from HIG.<sup>138</sup> However, the parliamentary group claims to be independent of Hekmatyar.

### ***Hizb-i-Islami Khalis***

Hizb-i-Islami Khalis (HIK) is a splinter faction of HIG. A former ally of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, Maulvi Younas Khalis split from HIG in 1979 to form his own party. The group's presence is limited to a part of Nangarhar Province. A political group in Parliament is associated with HIK. Western governments hope that the HIK will be amenable to talks.

### ***Tora Bora Military Front***

This is another splinter group, set up in 2007 by Anwar-ul-Haq Mujahed in Nangarhar Province. Anwar-ul-Haq Mujahed is the eldest son of Maulvi Khalis, leader of Hizb-i-Islami Khalis (see above). They were reported to have re-occupied the old al-Qaeda base in the Tora Bora caves and to number 200 to 250 fighters in 2007, though not much has been heard of them in recent months.

### ***Salafist groups***<sup>139</sup>

There is a number of small Salafist groups which follow a particular variety of Islam (distinct from the *Pashtunwali*-related Islam that is the norm among Pashtuns and more akin to al-Qaeda). These groups are active in the eastern provinces, particularly Kunar and Nuristan.

### ***Other former mujahideen groups***

Some fighters that have not prospered in the post-2001 political system have turned against the Government and the coalition allies. These fighters are said to be growing in number and, while they do not accept Mullah Omar as their leader, they sometimes use Taliban methods and agree to cooperate on individual military operations.

### ***Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan***

As its name suggests, the origins of this group are in the north of the country. However, many of its fighters were driven out of Afghanistan by American forces after the 2001 invasion and took refuge in the Pashtun border areas. Since then, these exiled forces have merged with other forces involved in both the Afghan and Pakistani insurgencies and have participated in fighting in the Pashtun border areas. The IMU presence in eastern Afghanistan is concentrated on the border between Zabol and Uruzgan provinces, where it maintains training camps.<sup>140</sup> The IMU is on the UN's '1267 Committee' list of organisations affiliated to al-Qaeda and the Taliban.<sup>141</sup>

### ***Al-Qaeda***

Al-Qaeda clearly has an inspirational role in Afghanistan, as it does for *ihadis* across the world, but it does not appear to carry out directly many attacks in Afghanistan, nor to use

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<sup>137</sup> "Afghanistan: Peace talks with the Taliban" by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, *Christian Science Monitor*, 11 February 2010

<sup>138</sup> M. Hassan Wafaey with Anna Larson, *The Wolesi Jirga in 2010: Pre-election Politics and the Appearance of Opposition*, Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, June 2010, p5

<sup>139</sup> Salafism is a purist school of thought within Sunni Islam whose adherents often support violent *ihad*.

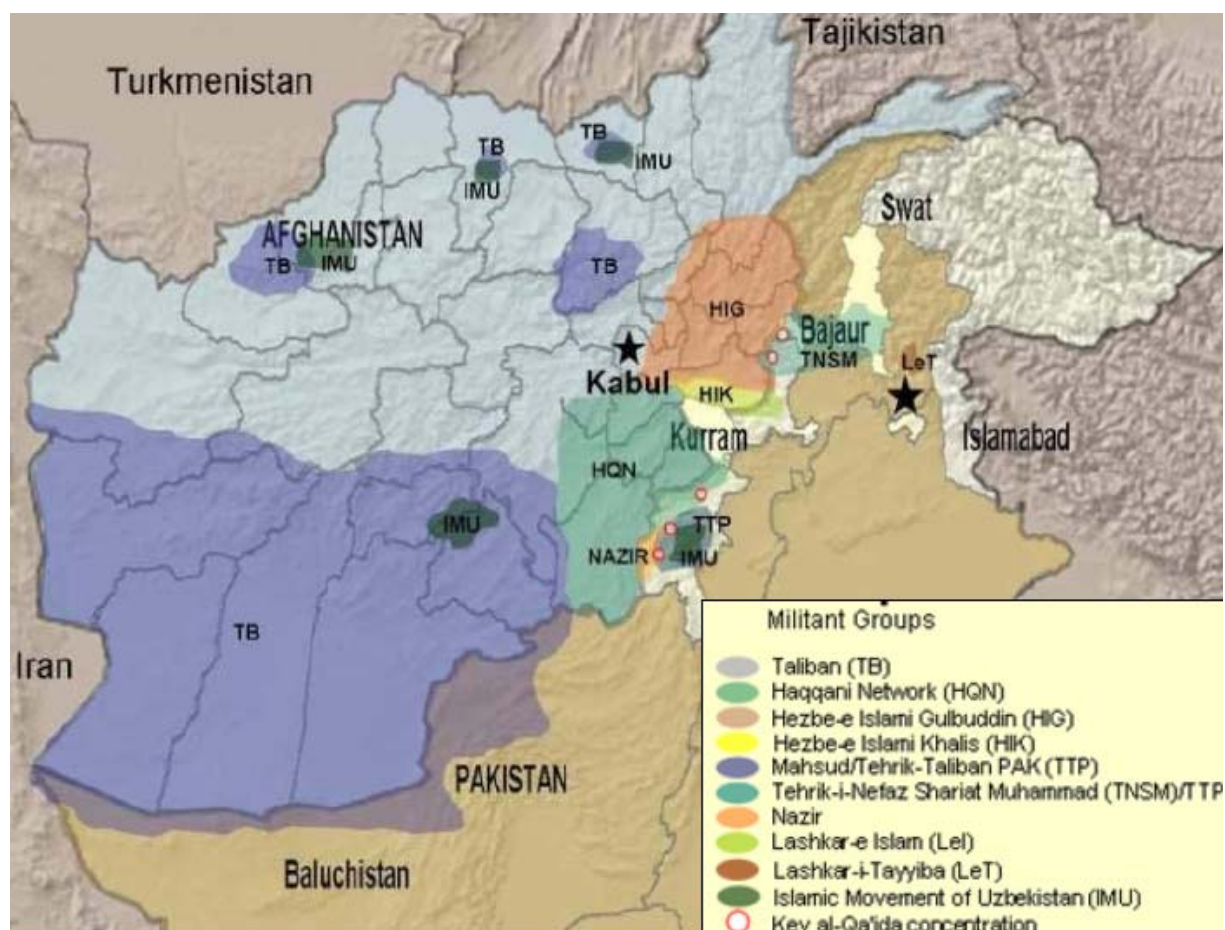
<sup>140</sup> Australian National Security web page, [Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan](#) [accessed 29 March 2010]

<sup>141</sup> United Nations, *The Consolidated List established and maintained by the 1267 Committee with respect to Al-Qaida, Osama bin Laden, and the Taliban and other individuals, groups, undertakings and entities associated with them*, [accessed 29 March 2010]



Afghanistan as a base to organise attacks in other countries. U.S. National Security Adviser James Jones was reported as saying in October 2009 that the “maximum estimate” of Al Qaeda fighters in Afghanistan itself was less than 100 and that there were no al-Qaeda bases there.<sup>142</sup> On 1 June it was reported that Mustafa Abu al-Yazid (better known as al-Masri), al-Qaeda’s operational commander in Afghanistan, had been killed in north-western Pakistan in a CIA-directed drone attack.<sup>143</sup>

Nevertheless, al-Qaeda channels expertise, volunteers for suicide bombing attacks, financial support (often from the Gulf Arab states) to the Afghan Taliban and other groups, particularly the Haqqani Network.<sup>144</sup>



Source US Department of Defense, *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan*, April 2010

### ***The situation on the ground in border areas***

The following maps show how insurgent activity in Afghanistan, measured by the number of attacks recorded, is no longer confined to Pashtun areas along the border with Pakistan and in the south, where it was concentrated in 2007, but has expanded into the north and west of the country.

In June 2010, the UN’s quarterly report on the situation in Afghanistan stated that the number of security incidents had increased significantly compared to previous years, and against seasonal trends (violence normally peaks in summer). Roadside bomb attacks had increased

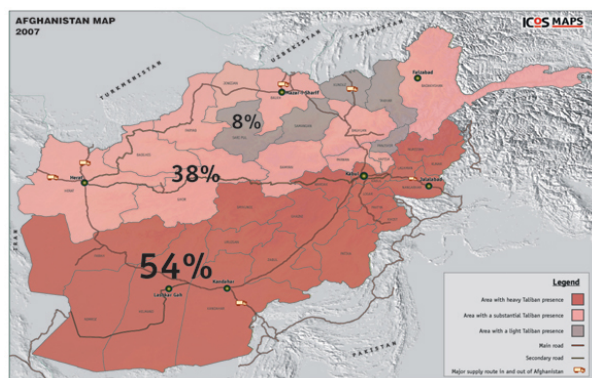
<sup>142</sup> “State of the Union” programme, *CNN*, 4 October 2009

<sup>143</sup> ‘Death of Mustafa Abu al-Yazid ‘setback’ for al-Qaeda’, *BBC News Online*, 1 June 2010

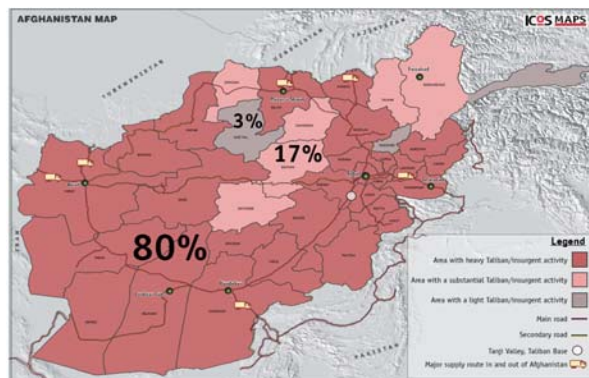
<sup>144</sup> Stanley McChrystal, *Commander’s initial assessment*, US Department of Defense, 21 September 2009. Available at: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/09/21/AR2009092100110.html>

by 94% compared to the same period in 2009. The increase in violence was largely attributed to the increase in military operations in the south of the country.<sup>145</sup>

2007



2009



Source: International Council on Security and Development: [Afghanistan Map - Areas of Taliban presence in Afghanistan during January - August 2009](#), (for information on how the maps were compiled, go to the website).

### 3.2 Pakistan

This section begins by discussing in some depth the main Pashtun armed group operating in Pakistan – the Pakistan Taliban. It then briefly reviews the al-Qaeda presence in the border areas. Finally, it describes which groups are active in different parts of the FATA and in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (formerly NWFP). The Afghan Taliban also has a significant presence in Pakistan. However, it was covered in section 3.1 above and so is not discussed again here.

#### **The Pakistan Taliban**

Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), the Pakistan Taliban, was originally the umbrella name adopted by a loose alliance of Pashtun militants in the Pakistan border areas which had emerged by 2007. In December 2007, five months after Pakistani security forces had controversially used force to end a militant occupation of the Red Mosque complex in Islamabad, signalling to many militants that the Pakistani state had become the enemy, thirteen groups came together to formally declare the birth of the Pakistan Taliban. Nonetheless, use of the term does run the danger of obscuring the fractious and highly ambiguous nature of the Pakistan Taliban. Claims that it is a single organisation should be viewed sceptically. Its composition is continuously changing, as alliances are made and unmade.

One analyst has claimed that, despite its rhetoric, the Pakistan Taliban is really more of a local, rather than a global *jihadi*, phenomenon, with one powerful Pashtun tribe, the Mehsuds, at its heart:

These tribal dynamics are the primary variable in the FATA's context and the story of the Mehsud-led insurgency, in other words the story of the TTP, is written first and foremost at the tribal level, by tribal actors, and in accordance with tribal values. All the rest is impermanent [...]<sup>146</sup>

<sup>145</sup> United Nations, [Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 40 of resolution 1917 \(2010\)](#), 16 June 2010

<sup>146</sup> "Competing voices within the Taliban leadership in Pakistan", NEFA Foundation, September 2009. Available at: [http://www.nefafoundation.org/miscellaneous/FeaturedDocs/nefa\\_competingvoices0909.pdf](http://www.nefafoundation.org/miscellaneous/FeaturedDocs/nefa_competingvoices0909.pdf)

Others take a different view, giving a greater motivating role to militant Islamist ideology. Another expert argues that the Pakistan Taliban feed (largely opportunistically) off underlying popular discontent about the extremes of inequality and injustice that prevail in the country.<sup>147</sup>

Most of the Pakistan Taliban's funds come from the narcotics trade, although extortion rackets and transport or timber smuggling also help to raise money.<sup>148</sup> In 2008, the Pakistan Taliban was estimated to have a 'budget' of \$45 million by the Governor of the then North West Frontier Province (NWFP).<sup>149</sup>

Many of its members are believed to be the product of religious schools which have links with the Afghan Taliban and which have been expressly set up to produce *jihadis*. The heartland of the Pakistan Taliban was originally South Waziristan, with North Waziristan and Bajaur Agency being other important theatres of operation. Overall, its influence has extended across the whole of the FATA and into a significant number of the districts in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa – perhaps most notably, Swat. It has been in these areas that the Pakistan Taliban and its affiliates have been able, at points, to create the impression of an 'alternative government'.

The Pakistan Taliban's stated purpose is to establish an Islamic state in Pakistan based on Sharia law, to resist any Pakistani army attempts to counter this, and to support efforts to expel coalition forces from Afghanistan. It regards the current Pakistan Government as apostate and therefore a legitimate target. It also endorses the global *jihadi* agenda. However, some analysts have claimed that its commitment to Afghanistan has been honoured more in the breach than in the observance. Pakistan Taliban operations in Afghanistan have been relatively few in number to date. There are claims of divisions within its ranks over the balance to be struck. Another important issue that has caused division has been whether to welcome and support 'foreign fighters'. Several commentators have also argued that the emergence of the Pakistan Taliban, with its hostile attitude to the Pakistani state, was in part a response to the forcible retaking by the authorities of the Red Mosque in Islamabad from militants in the summer of 2007. The Pakistan Taliban is reported to have its own structure of *Shura* (Councils), like its Afghan counterpart, with the most influential having been the North Waziristan and South Waziristan *Shura*.<sup>150</sup>

31-year old Hakimullah Mehsud is currently the leader of the Pakistan Taliban. He succeeded Baitullah Mehsud in August 2009 following the latter's death at the hands of a US drone attack. The Pakistan Taliban launched a suicide attack on US Forward Operating Base Chapman in Khowst Province, Afghanistan, in late December 2009, killing seven CIA operatives and a Jordanian intelligence official, in revenge for the death of Baitullah Mehsud. Hakimullah took up the role after a turbulent struggle for power with more experienced rivals within the alliance. He is known to strongly support continued militant action within Pakistan. There were unconfirmed reports that Hakimullah may have met the same fate as his predecessor in January 2010. However, in May 2010, it emerged that Hakimullah was still alive, although debate has continued over how far his authority is intact.<sup>151</sup> His deputy, Qari Hussain, has also been reported to be dead.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> O. Bennett-Jones, "Pakistan inequality fuelling Taliban support", *BBC News Online*, 13 May 2010

<sup>148</sup> H. Synnott, *Transforming Pakistan: Ways out of instability*, 2009, p86

<sup>149</sup> NWFP was renamed Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa in mid 2010. K.A. Kronstadt and K. Katzman, "Islamist militancy in the Pakistan-Afghanistan border region and US policy", Congressional Research Service, 21 November 2008, p6. Available at: <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/113202.pdf>

<sup>150</sup> T. Masadykov, A. Gustiozzi and J. Page, "Negotiating with the Taliban: Towards a solution for the Afghan conflict", Crisis States Research Centre (LSE) working paper no. 66, January 2010, p11

<sup>151</sup> "Return from the grave is more than humiliating for Pakistan", *Financial Times*, 5 May 2010

<sup>152</sup> 'Invincible Taleban routed in raids on border camps', *Times*, 1 March 2010



The Pakistan Taliban's relations with the Pakistani authorities have fluctuated markedly over time. At various times, groups within its ranks have done controversial 'peace deals' with the authorities. However, none, to date, have endured. Despite this, there may well be further such deals in the future. According to one analyst, Jonathan Paris, the Pakistan Taliban has six main strategies: "Engage multiple fronts"; "leverage local demands"; "pursue soft control of urban areas"; "exploit sectarian conflict"; "present a unified front"; and "press for compromise arrangements".<sup>153</sup> The Pakistani authorities have consistently deployed one or more of three main strategies to weaken 'anti-Pakistan' Taliban forces, depending on the circumstances – sometimes several of them in combination: divide and rule, peace deals; and the use of force.

Paris concludes:

The Taliban know that they can get a great deal of what they want – territorial control, access to resources, Islamisation, recruitment and mobilisation of local populations against Western forces – simply by avoiding the government's red lines. These red lines are:

- a. the formation of viable separatist and/or ethno-nationalist movements;
- b. an unduly embarrassing loss of control of the government's sovereign territory; and
- c. militant presence in the frontier which curtails the state's ability to effectively project influence into Afghanistan.<sup>154</sup>

Following major military offensives in Swat and South Waziristan during 2009, one expert described the Pakistan Taliban as "an enfeebled insurgency".<sup>155</sup> A Western diplomat was quoted in March 2010 as saying:

The military was keen to smash the myth of Mehsud invincibility in Waziristan and to be fair it has done so. And since, they have gone on to hit the Taleban throughout FATA with a shifting set of operations combining air power, artillery and assault.<sup>156</sup>

However, delivering a 'knock-out blow' to a phenomenon that has always been fluid and amorphous – a brand, or franchise, which has at points been attached to some sort of organisational arrangement – may prove beyond the Pakistani military, even if this has become its goal, which some analysts doubt. Indeed, the current emphasis appears to be more on military 'exit strategies' from the areas where there were large-scale offensives during 2009-10. The Pakistan Government has said that militants have moved in significant numbers into towns and cities, where they are less easy to isolate and target – an argument apparently supported by a renewed wave of attacks in settled areas since March, including in Lahore.<sup>157</sup> There are also reports that Hakimullah and many of his fighters may have found sanctuary in North Waziristan and that a closer relationship with the Haqqani network (see below and section 2.2), which is based there, may be developing.<sup>158</sup>

In the conventional political sphere, both the JI and the JUI-F, which has strong support amongst Pashtuns, is believed to have particularly strong links with both the Afghan Taliban

<sup>153</sup> J. Paris, *Prospects for Pakistan*, Legatum Institute, January 2010, pp39-42. According to Paris, the move towards "hard control" in the Swat Valley in 2009 proved a mistake, posing a threat to the Pakistani authorities that they were unwilling to tolerate.

<sup>154</sup> Paris., pp43-44

<sup>155</sup> A. Khan, "Conceptualizing AfPak: The prospects and perils", Asia Programme Paper ASP PP2010/01, Chatham House, January 2010, p24

<sup>156</sup> 'Invincible Taleban routed in raids on border camps', *Times*, 1 March 2010

<sup>157</sup> "Pakistan resists call to squeeze Taliban", *Financial Times*, 17 March 2010

<sup>158</sup> "Af-Pak border manoeuvres", *Jane's Terrorism and Security Monitor*, 9 April 2010

and the Pakistan Taliban and, indeed, with al-Qaeda (see below). An important interlocutor between the JUI-F and the Pakistan Taliban is reported to be Mufti Kifayatullah, the party's spokesman in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa.<sup>159</sup>

Since the beginning of 2009, when the Pakistani authorities began to be increasingly strongly associated in the minds of militants with the US-sponsored campaign against international terrorism, not least in Afghanistan, there has been evidence of greater co-ordination with other non-Pashtun based militant groups in Pakistan, whose original objectives were often driven more by Pakistan's long-running dispute with India over Kashmir or by anti-Shia sectarianism within the country. Among these groups are Lashkar-e-Taiba, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, Jaish-e-Mohammed, Harakat-ul-Majahdeen and Sipah-e-Sahaba (of which Hakimullah Mehsud is a former member). Others argue that these links are not new, with many personal relationships going back to the Afghan war against the Soviet occupation.

Some analysts have talked about a 'Punjabi Taliban,' rooted in southern Punjab and formed by members of some of these groups, which has provided logistical assistance for attacks in cities in Punjab Province, traditionally Pakistan's political heartland, and beyond, although others worry that the term is lazy shorthand for a more complex phenomenon.<sup>160</sup> There have been claims that the prime mover behind the Punjabi Taliban is Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, whose leader, Qari Mohammed Zafar, was killed by a US drone attack in North Waziristan in February 2010.<sup>161</sup> The Pakistani authorities have had successes in countering the Punjabi Taliban, but its networks have not been destroyed.<sup>162</sup> Critics of the provincial government in Punjab Province, which is governed by the Pakistan Muslim League – Nawaz, accuse it of being reluctant to confront the militants.<sup>163</sup> Even the south of the country is not beyond the reach of the Pakistan Taliban: there appears to be a cell in Karachi.

Within Pakistan, the Pakistan Taliban's main targets have been tribal leaders who oppose them, rival local militant leaders, individuals that have, in its view, violated Sharia law, and the Pakistani police and army. Its most infamous operation is widely believed to be the assassination of Benazir Bhutto in December 2007, despite denial of responsibility by Baitullah Mehsud. Suicide attacks have become its main *modus operandi*, leading some to argue that this reflects the influence of al-Qaeda, with which it has had close links. There are also, of course, close ties with the Afghan Taliban. Baitullah Mehsud swore allegiance to Mullah Omar as his Emir. However, as discussed in section 3.1 of this paper, the latter has argued that the Pakistan Taliban should devote much more energy to supporting the campaign against coalition forces in Afghanistan and less to fighting on the Pakistani side of the border. The Afghan and Pakistan Taliban cannot simply be viewed as two sides of the same coin.

Nobody knows for sure how many fighters there are within the ranks of the Pakistan Taliban. One upper estimate was that it had 30-35,000 members by 2009. By this time the Pakistan Taliban's influence had spread across the FATA and, to the alarm of many observers, was beginning to expand beyond. This, among other factors, led to a series of major military operations by the Pakistani security forces, for example in Bajaur, Swat and, most recently, South Waziristan. It is unclear what the impact of these military operations has been. They have probably had some affect on overall cohesion, although this was never one of the strengths of the alliance. A significant number of fighters are likely to have withdrawn or

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<sup>159</sup> "Competing voices within the Taliban leadership in Pakistan", NEFA Foundation, September 2009

<sup>160</sup> K. Riikonen, "Punjabi Taliban' and the sectarian groups in Pakistan", Pakistan Security Research Unit, University of Bradford, Brief No. 55, 12 February 2010, pp6-7

<sup>161</sup> "Top militant 'killed in Pakistan'", *BBC News Online*, 2 March 2010 . See also: K. Riikonen, "Punjabi Taliban' and the sectarian groups in Pakistan", Pakistan Security Research Unit, University of Bradford, Brief No. 55, 12 February 2010

<sup>162</sup> "Punjab Taliban strike again", *Jane's Terrorism and Security Monitor*, 8 April 2010

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid*

'melted away' in the face of superior military capabilities, returning for a while to classic guerrilla tactics rather than attempting permanently to control large tracts of territory and significant populations. Certainly, militant attacks continue to take a heavy toll across Pakistan.

### ***Al-Qaeda***

The top al-Qaeda leadership fled to the Pashtun border areas of Pakistan in 2001 and 2002. Most observers believe it remains there. Its initial popularity was largely related to the money which it had available to spread around the border areas. In early March 2010, the Pakistani military declared that they had taken control of a large cave network in the Bajaur Agency which had been the main base for the leadership.<sup>164</sup> The exact number of al-Qaeda personnel in the Pashtun border areas of Pakistan is unknown, but it is known that a significant proportion of its affiliates are foreign fighters. Organisations said to have some representation among these ranks, although this has been difficult to corroborate definitively, include the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, Islamic Jihad, the Libyan Islamic Fighters Group, the Eastern Turkestan Islamic Movement, Jamaah Islamiyah, Abu Sayyaf (both Southeast Asian in origin) and the Palestinian Abu Nidal Organisation. Analysts suggest that the main role of al-Qaeda in the Pakistan border areas is to promote cooperation amongst militant groups. However, it is also clear that al-Qaeda has been a strong advocate of continued militant action against the Pakistani authorities, a stance that differs from that of the Afghan Taliban. However, some detect a difference within al-Qaeda's ranks on this issue, with 'Arabs' favouring a greater emphasis on *jihad* in Afghanistan and Uzbeks calling for a simultaneous struggle on two fronts.<sup>165</sup> In recent months, there have been reports that some of the groups operating under the banner of al-Qaeda are moving their bases to the Afghan side of the border.<sup>166</sup>

### ***The situation on the ground in the border areas***

#### ***North Baluchistan***

This area of Baluchistan Province is part of the 'Pashtun belt' that straddles both Afghanistan and Pakistan. The city of Quetta has often been named as the 'headquarters' of the top leadership of the Afghan Taliban, including the reclusive Mullah Mohammed Omar. This is known as the 'Quetta *Shura*', although some now claim that, following US threats to begin drone attacks in North Baluchistan, the *Shura* may have begun moving to Karachi, where an estimated 2.5 million Pashtuns live.<sup>167</sup> Up to now, Pashtuns have been broadly supportive of the Pakistani military in its campaign against Baluch insurgents. US drone attacks might threaten this support.

Apart from Quetta, there are believed to be a range of other Afghan Taliban bases in North Baluchistan. Senior al-Qaeda figures have also in the past been reported as operating from this area. The Pakistan Government has denied all such claims.

#### ***South Waziristan***

This area became a militant stronghold following the movement of hundreds of fighters out of Afghanistan in late 2001/early 2002. Foreign fighters, including Arabs, Chechens and Uighur Chinese, were among their number and several hundred are believed to have remained in the region subsequently to fight the Pakistani army. There was a controversial peace deal between the authorities and Pakistani militants in the Agency in 2004, which, in return for a ceasefire, allowed the militants to establish their own courts and police. Critics viewed it as a

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<sup>164</sup> "Pakistan's Army takes control of al-Qaeda cave network on Afghan border", *Times*, 3 March 2010

<sup>165</sup> "Competing voices within the Taliban leadership in Pakistan", NEFA Foundation, September 2009

<sup>166</sup> "Af-Pak border manoeuvres", *Jane's Terrorism and Security Monitor*, 9 April 2010

<sup>167</sup> "Chaotic city with violent history is haven for fugitives", *Guardian*, 17 February 2010

turning point for the militants, assisting their efforts to consolidate and spread their influence across the FATA and beyond. A further peace deal was agreed in 2005.

The eastern part of the region is the home of the Mehsud tribe and the heartland of the Pakistan Taliban. While not all of its clans support the leadership of Hakimullah Mehsud, he is believed to control an estimated 15,000 fighters, which, if true, would make it the largest single militant group in Pakistan. However, the permanent core of this force may be smaller.

The Pakistan Taliban's commander in South Waziristan is Wali ur-Rehman Mehsud, who was also the alliance's 'finance man' under Baitullah, to whom he was very close. There were reports of tensions between Wali and Hakimullah over who should take over as leader following the death of Baitullah Mehsud. He remains a very powerful figure. A cousin of Baitullah, Qari Hussain Mehsud, who tutored Hakimullah in his early fighting days, is another senior figure in South Waziristan.

The western part of the region, which abuts Afghanistan, is the home of the Ahmadzai clan of the Waziri tribe, with whom the neighbouring Mehsuds have often clashed in the past. The Ahmadzai Waziris live on both sides of the border. The current leader is Maulvi Nazir. While the main target of attacks by the Mehsuds has been the Pakistani army, the Ahmadzai Waziris, who have also sometimes deployed the 'Taliban' label, have mainly focused on attacks in Afghanistan in recent years and, accordingly, have had a better relationship with the Pakistani authorities than the Mehsuds.

The Mehsuds were the main target of the October-December 2009 offensive in South Waziristan by the Pakistani military. Waziri areas were largely untouched. A 'mutual defence pact' which had been agreed between Hakimullah Mehsud's predecessor, Baitullah Mehsud and Waziri leaders Maulvi Nazir and Hafiz Gul Bahadur (see North Waziristan) early in 2009, which was supposed to lead to a new alliance called the Shura-al-Mujahideen, counted in the event for little. Both Maulvi Nazir (who was injured by one in 2008) and Hafiz Gul Bahadur strongly oppose US drone attacks, which they claim have killed many Waziri civilians, holding the Pakistani authorities responsible for them. Some commentators have claimed that Hakimullah actively opposed the *rapprochement* with the Waziris that his predecessor, Baitullah, sought.<sup>168</sup> In 2007 Nazir's fighters engaged in gun battles with Uzbek foreign fighters affiliated with al-Qaeda, expelling them from Waziri-controlled areas.<sup>169</sup> Nazir also has strong ties with the Haqqani network.

#### *North Waziristan*

The Haqqani network, which is led by Afghan tribal leader and warlord Jalaluddin Haqqani and his son, Sirajuddin, has primarily been based in North Waziristan in recent years. It is viewed as a major threat by the coalition allies in Afghanistan. It co-ordinates with the Afghan Taliban but maintains a separate identity. Relations with the Pakistani authorities have tended to be cordial, although there are reports that Sirajuddin was briefly detained by the ISI at the beginning of 2010, to remind him not to try and 'go freelance'<sup>170</sup> There has been speculation that the Pakistani military might yet take action against the network, leading to suggestions that it may move many of its personnel back onto the Afghan side of the border.<sup>171</sup> Jalaluddin, who is now an old man, has in the past mediated between the Mehsuds and Waziris – for example, during the Shura-ul-Mujahideen episode mentioned above. He

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<sup>168</sup> "Competing voices within the Taliban leadership in Pakistan", NEFA Foundation, September 2009

<sup>169</sup> The Waziris played a leading role in 2003-04, led by Nek Mohammed, in an anti-government insurgency in defence of foreign fighters that had settled in the area following their retreat from Afghanistan. After an internal struggle in the wake of Nek Mohammed's death, Maulvi Nazir, who was hostile in particular to the Uzbeks, prevailed over his rivals.

<sup>170</sup> C. Reuter, "Some birds with one stone", Afghanistan Analysts Network blog, 2 March 2010

<sup>171</sup> "Af-Pak border manoeuvres", *Jane's Terrorism and Security Monitor*, 9 April 2010

reportedly has little sympathy for the foreign fighters who attack the Pakistani military from this region.

The Waziris also have a powerful presence in this region in the form of the Uthmanzai clan. The Waziri militants there are led by Hafiz Gul Bahadur. Like Maulvi Nazir, his main theatre of operations has been Afghanistan. Bahadur initially signed up with the Pakistan Taliban but later fell out with Baitullah Mehsud over his emphasis on military attacks on the Pakistani side of the border.

The Mehsuds have also often had a presence in this region. Following the Pakistani military's offensive in South Waziristan in October 2009, many of Mehsud's fighters were killed or forced to retreat into North Waziristan. There are also some foreign fighters in this region.

Peace deals in 2006 and 2008, agreed between the authorities and Bahadur and Nazir, foundered in 2009. The Pakistani military has not so far – despite US pressure to do so – launched a major offensive in North Waziristan, perhaps reflecting the fact that it views the militants in the Agency as less of a threat to its interests than those operating in other Agencies.

#### *Other Agencies of the FATA*

The Bajaur and Mohmand Agencies are the 'northern belt' of the FATA. The leader of the Pakistan Taliban in the Bajaur Agency of the FATA is Maulvi Faqir Mohammed. For a brief period following the death of Baitullah Mehsud, Faqir Mohammed also appeared to make a bid for the leadership of the Pakistan Taliban as a whole. However, he eventually accepted the position of deputy to Hakimullah Mehsud. There was a military offensive against the militants in August 2008. After claiming victory, a peace deal was agreed, but it broke down again in July 2009. The relationship between the main tribe in Bajaur, the Mamunds, and the Pakistan Taliban has sometimes been difficult. In early 2009, following concerted operations by the Pakistani military, the Mamunds reportedly agreed to repudiate the Pakistan Taliban. However, this does not seem to have happened.

Bajaur is also a base for Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, who is fighting the coalition allies in Afghanistan. The veteran warlord has ties with the Afghan Taliban, al-Qaeda and the Pakistan security establishment. Several years ago, Bajaur was widely believed to be the most likely hide-out of the top al-Qaeda leadership. A US drone attack reportedly nearly killed top Afghan Taliban leader Ayman al-Zawahiri in this area in early 2006.

In Mohmand, the main militant leader is Omar Khalid. He is a key commander within the Pakistan Taliban. There were peace deals in 2007 but these collapsed in 2008 after militants fleeing military operations in Bajaur were given sanctuary in Mohmand.

The Orakzai, Kurram and Khyber Agencies comprise the 'middle belt' of the FATA. In recent years, the Mehsuds have built a presence in these agencies, thereby strengthening their influence across the entire FATA. Hakimullah Mehsud was the Pakistan Taliban's commander in Orakzai, Kurram and Khyber from 2008 until he ascended to the leadership. While playing this role, it is also said that he developed links with Pakistani militant groups with a strong anti-Shia sectarian streak.

Khyber, where the new Pakistan Taliban commander is reported to be Tariq Afridi, also resisted Pakistani military operations during this period, initiated with the aim of reducing the number of militant attacks on NATO supply trucks making their way into Afghanistan via the Khyber Pass. There are believed to be some foreign fighters in the area. Khyber is also the home area of a Sunni militant group called Lashkar-e-Islami, led by Afghan *Mujahideen* stalwart Mangal Bagh. After a period in which it supported a rival umbrella alliance to the Pakistan Taliban called the Muqami Tehrik-e-Taliban (MTT, Local Taliban), there are

indications it may have begun recently to co-operate with the Pakistan Taliban. Laskhar-e-Islami has also been hostile to another militant group based in the Agency, Ansar ul-Islam, which is supported by Sunnis from a different tribe. In early 2010, the two organisations clashed violently. Khyber is also the home of criminal networks with links to the Pakistan Taliban that are involved in transport.

Kurram has become known for regular outbreaks of Sunni-Shia violence. The Turi tribe, concentrated in the north of the Agency, is Shia, making up a significant minority of the local population, while the Bangash tribe to the south is Sunni. The Bangash support the Pakistan Taliban and also have links to groups such as Lashkar-e-Jangvi. Thousands are reported to have been killed or injured and transport links to the rest of the country have been gravely affected. Mangal Bagh also has a presence in this Agency.

Orakzai, where it has been reported the current commander is Mullah Toofan, was the site of Pakistani military operations between late 2009 and early 2010. Like Kurram, there is a tradition of Sunni-Shia sectarian violence. Mangal Bagh also has a presence in this Agency.

### *The PATA*

The Provincially Administered Tribal Areas (PATA) are formally part of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa. The PATA comprise Malakand division, which includes Buner, Chitral, Upper and Lower Dir, Shangla and Swat districts. These have all seen significant militant activity, including on the part of the Pakistan Taliban. What was known as the 'Swat Taliban', led by Maulana Qazi Fazlullah, for a while controlled much of the Swat Valley, seeking aggressively to enforce Islamic law. When May 2008 and February 2009 peace deals, in which the imposition of full Sharia Law was consented to by the authorities in exchange for a ceasefire, collapsed because the militants refused to disarm and then spread into neighbouring districts, the Pakistani army launched a major offensive. As a result, the Swat Taliban was weakened and dispersed, albeit at major humanitarian cost. However, Fazlullah, who prior to 'Talibanising' himself was already well-known as the leader of the militant group Tehrik-e-Nefaz-e-Shariat-Mohammadi (TNSM), reportedly escaped to Afghanistan, from where he has threatened to organise renewed attacks. In May 2010, it was reported that insurgents led by Fazlullah had clashed with Afghan police in the eastern Afghan province of Nuristan.<sup>172</sup> Swat is home to major timber smuggling networks with which the Pakistan Taliban has links.

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<sup>172</sup> "Taliban besiege Afghan district", *BBC News Online*, 26 May 2010

## 4 The 'AfPak policy': Origins and evolution

Following his inauguration as President in January 2009, Barack Obama initiated an interagency review of US policy in Afghanistan and Pakistan. It rapidly became clear that the new Administration was thinking in terms of a more integrated and regional policy, which soon became known by the shorthand term, 'AfPak'.

It should be noted that the Pakistan Government has never endorsed the 'AfPak' formulation and that since the beginning of 2010, the US Administration has ceased to use it as shorthand for its policy. It has been retained here, because – for the moment – the term has been retained by many analysts and significant sections of the media.<sup>173</sup>

### 4.1 US White Paper

The result of the US review was announced in March 2009 with the publication of a [White Paper](#). Affirming that the “core goal of the US must be to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al-Qaeda and its safe havens in Pakistan, and to prevent their return to Pakistan or Afghanistan”, it went on to define the AfPak policy's key objectives:

These include:

- Disrupting terrorist networks in Afghanistan and especially Pakistan to degrade any ability they have to plan and launch international terrorist attacks.
- Promoting a more capable, accountable, and effective government in Afghanistan that serves the Afghan people and can eventually function, especially regarding internal security, with limited international support.
- Developing increasingly self-reliant Afghan security forces that can lead the counterinsurgency and counterterrorism fight with reduced U.S. assistance.
- Assisting efforts to enhance civilian control and stable constitutional government in Pakistan and a vibrant economy that provides opportunity for the people of Pakistan.
- Involving the international community to actively assist in addressing these objectives for Afghanistan and Pakistan, with an important leadership role for the UN.

The White Paper acknowledged that, with regard to the people of both countries, there was a “trust deficit [...], where many believe that we are not a reliable long-term partner.” But it also posed a challenge to both the Afghan and Pakistan Governments. Amidst growing frustration with its record on accountability and human rights, the White Paper warned that increased assistance to Afghanistan would be limited unless it improved its governance performance. Equally, increased assistance to the Pakistan Government would be limited unless it too improved its performance, as well as showing a “greater willingness” to confront al-Qaeda and other extremist groups operating across the country.

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<sup>173</sup> [Team Obama scuttles the term "AfPak"](#), blog by Josh Rogin on *Foreign Policy Online*, 20 January 2010. India has also rejected any moves to include it in the policy. India's absence, along with the policy's characterisation of Pakistan itself, helps to explain Pakistani suspicion of the policy. This is discussed in more depth in section 4.2 of the paper.



## 4.2 The British response

The then Labour Government was quick to broadly endorse the conclusions of the US White Paper of March 2009 in a document setting out its own “comprehensive strategy”, *UK policy in Afghanistan and Pakistan: the way forward*.

The strategic objectives set out in the document were:

### **In the wider region:**

- improving regional stability.

### **In both Afghanistan and Pakistan:**

- ensuring Al Qaida does not return to Afghanistan, and is defeated or incapacitated in Pakistan’s border areas;
- reducing the insurgencies on both sides of the Afghanistan and Pakistan border to a level that poses no significant threat to progress in either country;
- supporting both states in tackling terrorism and violent extremism, and in building capacity to address and contain the threat within their borders;
- helping both states contain and reduce the drugs trade, and divide it from insurgency;
- building stronger security forces, better governance, and economic development, so that progress is sustainable.

### **In Pakistan:**

- helping Pakistan achieve its vision of becoming a stable, economically and socially developed democracy and meet its poverty reduction targets;
- encouraging constructive Pakistani engagement on nuclear security and nonproliferation.

### **In Afghanistan:**

- helping Afghanistan become an effective and accountable state, increasingly able to handle its security and deliver basic services to its people;
- providing long-term sustainable support for the Afghan National Development Strategy, particularly on governance, rule of law, human rights and poverty reduction.

In a statement to the House of Commons on 29 April 2009, introducing this “updated” strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan, the then Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, said:

Our counter-terrorist strategy, published last month, set out how we are working to tackle terrorism around the globe, but one priority—indeed, the greatest international priority—is the border areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan. They are the crucible for global terrorism, the breeding ground for international terrorists, and the source of a chain of terror that links the mountains of Afghanistan and Pakistan to the streets of Britain [...]<sup>174</sup>

He continued:

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<sup>174</sup> HC Deb 29 April 2009 c869

[...] In our December 2007 strategy, we made the right long-term decisions for Afghanistan, decisions that were reinforced in the conclusions of the United States' review last month. Now, following our own review to identify what is working and where we need to go further, I want to set out an updated strategy for our actions in both Afghanistan and Pakistan, and how we will mobilise our resources to take those actions. In both countries we are working with the elected Governments, including through our commitments to support their economic development and through combined development and stabilisation expenditure of £255 million, £256 million and £339 million—a total of almost £1 billion over three years. In both countries our involvement is focused on the tasks that are necessary to enable them to counter the terrorist threat themselves.

For Afghanistan, our strategy is to ensure that the country is strong enough as a democracy to withstand and overcome the terrorist threat, and strengthening Afghan control and resilience will require us to intensify our work in the following key areas. First, we will build up the Afghan police and army and the rule of law, and we should now adopt the stated goal of enabling district by district, province by province handover to Afghan control. Secondly, we want to strengthen Afghan democracy at all levels, including by ensuring credible and inclusive elections and improving security through that period. Thirdly, we want to help strengthen local government in Afghanistan, not least the traditional Afghan structures such as the local *Shuras*. Fourthly, we want to give people in Afghanistan a stake in their future, promoting economic development as the best way of helping the Afghan people to achieve not just stability but prosperity.

In Pakistan, our strategy to tackle the same underlying problem of terrorism results in different proposals. First, we want to work with the elected Government and the army, but while Afghanistan's forces are at an early stage and so international forces have to play a front-line role, by contrast Pakistan has a large and well funded army, and we want to work with it to help it counter terrorism by taking more control of the border areas. Secondly, not least through support for education and development, we want to prevent young people from falling under the sway of violent and extremist ideologies.<sup>175</sup>

At a meeting with Pakistani Prime Minister Yousouf Raza Gilani in December 2009, Gordon Brown announced that £50 million was being provided to assist the Pakistan Government to achieve the “long-term stabilisation” of its side of the border.<sup>176</sup>

In March 2010 it was announced that £82 million had been allocated from the Conflict Pool for financial year 2010-11 to Afghanistan and Pakistan. This involved an increase in funding for work on Pakistan.<sup>177</sup> £9-9.5 million, the largest amount for any country, was also to be made available for Pakistan in 2010/11 from the FCO's counter-terrorism budget under the Strategic Programme Fund.<sup>178</sup> Although we have been unable to find an exact figure, this budget will certainly include funds for work on Afghanistan during 2010-11. £5.4 million was provided in 2009-10.<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>175</sup> HC Deb 29 April 2009 c869-70

<sup>176</sup> “PM told Bin Laden not in Pakistan”, *BBC News Online*, 3 December 2009

<sup>177</sup> HC Deb 25 March 2010 c57-58WS

<sup>178</sup> FCO budget constraints briefly caused political controversy in January 2010 over whether or not counter-terrorism funding for Pakistan was being subject to reductions. See: HC Deb 21 January 2010 c439-46; HL Deb 21 January 2010 cc1105-7

<sup>179</sup> HC Deb 14 May 2009 c915W

Meanwhile, the UK continued to play a leading role in allied anti-narcotics efforts.<sup>180</sup> In March 2010, the Labour Government stated that it was providing £6 million to a UN Development Programme Accountability and Transparency Project, making it the largest supporter of the Afghan High Office of Oversight.<sup>181</sup>

### 4.3 The US refines its policy

During the course of 2009, moves continued in Washington, to give effect to the US Administration's revised strategy on Pakistan. On 30 September Congress passed *The Enhanced Partnership with Pakistan Act* (S. 1707), which tripled US non-military aid to Pakistan to US\$1.5 billion a year between 2010 and 2014. The legislation has a strong focus on strengthening democracy, promoting development and improving education in Pakistan. It also authorises military assistance to Pakistan, requiring that funds go mainly towards counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism efforts.<sup>182</sup> The conditions attached to non-military aid in earlier drafts of the legislation had been considerably watered down by the time the Act was passed, following protests by powerful elements within the Pakistani political and security establishment.<sup>183</sup> A joint [explanatory statement](#) by Senators John F. Kerry and Howard Berman stated:

The legislation does not seek in any way to compromise Pakistan's sovereignty, impinge on Pakistan's national security interests, or micromanage any aspect of Pakistani military or civilian operations. There are no conditions on Pakistan attached to the authorization of \$7.5 billion in non-military aid. The only requirements on this funding are financial accountability measures that Congress is imposing on the U.S. executive branch, to ensure that this assistance supports programs that most benefit the Pakistani people.

A first [Pakistan Assistance Strategy Report](#) was submitted by the US Government to Congress in December 2009.

In January 2010 the Office of the US Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, Richard Holbrooke, published an [Afghanistan and Pakistan Regional Stabilization Strategy](#), which provided the most detailed overview yet available of the concrete measures being pursued, with price tags attached, by the US Government, as it seeks to implement the AfPak policy.

Below is a list of activity headings, with an approximate US Dollar figure for the resources available for each initiative during Fiscal Year 2010 (that is, October 2009-September 2010) next to each heading.

#### **Afghanistan**

Deploying additional civilian expertise	\$400m
Rebuilding Afghanistan's agriculture sector	\$300m
Strengthening Afghan governance	\$1.8bn

<sup>180</sup> For further background on this issue, see House of Commons Library Standard Note SN/IA/5025, [Afghanistan and narcotics. Opium poppy cultivation trends, 2001-09](#) (last updated 24 March 2009). For a recent discussion of the issue, see Foreign Affairs, *Global Security: Afghanistan and Pakistan*, HC398, Session 2009-10, Q44-52

<sup>181</sup> HC Deb 29 March 2010 c646W

<sup>182</sup> "House passes bicameral legislation increasing assistance to Pakistan, improving US-Pakistan ties", House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs, press release, 30 September 2009

<sup>183</sup> K. Fischer, "The AfPak strategy: Reactions in Pakistan", Afghanistan Analysts Network policy briefing, March 2010, p6

Enhancing Afghan rule of law	\$400m
Supporting Afghan-led reintegration	\$100m
Combating the Afghan narcotics trade	\$1bn
Building an economic foundation for Afghanistan's future	\$2.5bn

### **Pakistan**

An enhanced Partnership with Pakistan	\$2.3bn
Enhancing Pakistan's counterinsurgency capabilities	\$455m <sup>184</sup>

### **General**

Disrupting illicit financial flows to extremists	Not specified
Countering extremist voices	\$250m
Mobilising international support	Not specified

A plan for Reconstruction Opportunity Zones, first proposed by former President George W. Bush in 2006, under which duty-free access to the US market would be granted for certain goods, as part of the promotion of economic activity in the FATA and Afghanistan, also remains – despite prolonged Congressional delays – on the agenda.

In March 2010 the US and Pakistan resumed their 'Strategic Dialogue', which had been in abeyance since 2008, with a week of high-level talks in Washington. A further round of talks will be held in Pakistan later this year.

The AfPak policy is backed up by the continuing availability of funding sources for the Afghan and Pakistani security forces that pre-date it. For example, there are government-to-government arms sales and grants from the US to Afghanistan and Pakistan through Foreign Military Financing (FMF). Through FMF, funds are provided with which US military equipment, services and training can then be purchased. Both countries also benefit from Coalition Support Funds, which reimburse allies for the cost of counter-terrorist military operations. CSF reimbursements have been a major component of US financial transfers to Pakistan since 2001.<sup>185</sup> These issues came up at the March 2010 'Strategic Dialogue', at which the US agreed to move ahead with the supply of further military equipment, including F-16 fighter aircraft, and to pay back Pakistan \$2 billion which it is owed to recoup the cost of military operations.<sup>186</sup>

#### **4.4 Afghanistan: The military and political surges<sup>187</sup>**

At the NATO summit in April 2009 support was expressed for the principles of the new AfPak policy, in particular the commitment to expand and enhance the capabilities of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). By the middle of 2009, there was growing concern about the security situation in Afghanistan. Concerns were further heightened when the Afghan

<sup>184</sup> This does not include Coalition Support Funds. \$700m was also appropriated in the FY2009 Supplemental for the Pakistan Counterinsurgency Capability Fund.

<sup>185</sup> K.A. Kronstadt and K. Katzman, "Islamist militancy in the Pakistan-Afghanistan border region and US policy", Congressional Research Service, 21 November 2008, p15-16

<sup>186</sup> "Will the Pakistan-US relationship survive?", *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 14 April 2010. See also: "What strategic dialogue? US-Pakistani cooperation in Afghanistan", [www.opendemocracy.net](http://www.opendemocracy.net), 7 April 2010

<sup>187</sup> See also House of Commons Library Standard Note SN/IA/5227, [The military campaign in Afghanistan](#)

presidential election in August 2009 quickly descended into controversy. After a prolonged further review of US strategy on Afghanistan, on 1 December 2009 President Obama announced in a [speech at West Point](#) that 30,000 additional US forces would be deployed to the country during the first half of 2010, bringing the total US contribution to Afghanistan to nearly 100,000 personnel. On 30 November 2009 the then Labour Government announced that it would increase its military presence by 500 personnel, bringing the total number of UK personnel in Afghanistan to just over 10,000.<sup>188</sup> £4 billion was earmarked for UK military operations in financial year 2010/11.<sup>189</sup> These troop increases were those deemed necessary to carry out plans to build up the strength and capabilities of the ANSF with a view to handing control over security to them, district-by-district, from the end of 2010. Progress to this end, it was said, could lead to coalition forces beginning to withdraw from mid-2011. The US Administration is spending \$9.2 million in Financial Year 2010 on the ANSF, an increase of 63% over 2009.<sup>190</sup>

President Obama has stated that US Afghan policy will be reviewed again at the end of 2010.

With the overall parameters of the military surge agreed, on 20 January 2010, a [conference on Afghanistan](#) was held in London. The intention of the conference was to establish a comprehensive political framework for progress in Afghanistan, including measures for internal political reform. The conference expressed support for a reintegration plan for the Afghan Taliban, as proposed by the Afghan Government, targeting those who are tired of fighting or who have simply had enough. This included the establishment of a £500 million Peace and Reintegration Trust Fund in order to finance that plan.

The then Foreign Secretary, David Miliband, made a [speech on Afghanistan](#) on 10 March which, amongst other things, set out the views of the British Government on an issue which rapidly rose up the agenda following the London Conference – whether or not to negotiate with the Afghan Taliban.<sup>191</sup> This led some to argue that the British Government was more strongly in favour of negotiation than either its US or Afghan allies.

The new UK Coalition Government, which came to office in May 2010, has broadly endorsed the strategy on Afghanistan and Pakistan which it inherited from its predecessor, although there has arguably been some change in tone and approach.<sup>192</sup> Its focus has so far been much more on Afghanistan than on Pakistan. On Afghanistan there has been a process of “taking stock not in the sense of deciding whether to support the international strategy there, but in the sense of deciding how best to support it in the months and years ahead.”<sup>193</sup> While looking to move “further and faster” in stabilising Afghanistan, the new Government has been unwilling to talk in terms of deadlines by which troop withdrawals might begin. However, it has ruled out the possibility of additional British troops being sent to the country.<sup>194</sup>

On 2 June, the Prime Minister, David Cameron, said of Afghanistan:

Afghanistan is my top priority. That is why we have set up the National Security Council and why it met on the first full day of the new Government. In terms of the

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<sup>188</sup> HC Deb 30 November 2009 c831-36

<sup>189</sup> The figure for 2009-10 was an estimated £4.2 billion. “Outlay in conflict zone to remain at £4bn”, *Financial Times*, 25 March 2010

<sup>190</sup> This is being channelled through the ‘Afghan Security Forces Fund’. Congressional Research Service, [FY2010 Supplemental for Wars, Disaster Assistance, Haiti Relief, and Court Cases](#), 12 May 2010, p12

<sup>191</sup> This was despite the fact that Miliband did not mention the Afghan Taliban by name.

<sup>192</sup> “Cameron and Karzai: Why it’s different”, *BBC News Online*, 11 June 2010

<sup>193</sup> As described by William Hague, the new Foreign Secretary, at HC Deb 26 May 2010 c178

<sup>194</sup> “David Cameron sets stage for eventual UK withdrawal from Afghanistan as he visits Kabul”, *Guardian*, 10 June 2010

military strategy, we are six months into the troop surge ordered by President Obama. That surge is to provide a proper counter-insurgency campaign, protecting the people while tackling the insurgents. We back that strategy, and we must give it time to work [...] As I said in the debate on the Queen's Speech, we have to support that military strategy with a political surge [...]<sup>195</sup>

On 10 June, during his first visit to Afghanistan as Prime Minister, he announced, amongst other things, the allocation of an extra £200 million to Afghanistan from the existing budget of the Department for International Development.<sup>196</sup> On Pakistan, William Hague stated in the Queen's Speech debate on 26 May that Britain and the US would

[...] work extremely closely to co-ordinate our efforts in Pakistan given the colossal American resources that are deployed in Pakistan and the enormous British expertise about Pakistan. Those factors need to be brought more closely together.<sup>197</sup>

Further information on British Government activities and support for Afghanistan and Pakistan can be found via the [Afghanistan](#) and [Pakistan](#) country pages on the website of the Department for International Development. For the figures on the cost of UK military operations in Afghanistan, see Library Standard Note [SN/SG/3139](#).

A US and UK-led operation against the Afghan Taliban in Marjah district, Helmand Province, began in February 2010. A major US-led offensive in Kandahar Province was due to begin in June 2010. However, large-scale operations have now been delayed until at least September. The NATO summit in Lisbon in November will provide an important opportunity for the coalition allies to review how the campaign in Afghanistan is faring. A follow-up conference to the January London Conference is due to be held in Kabul on 20 July, at which the Afghan Government is expected to present its plan for improving development, governance and security across the country.

#### 4.5 European Union and G8 initiatives

In October 2009, the European Union agreed an [Action Plan for Afghanistan and Pakistan](#). In a [speech to the European Parliament](#) in December 2009, the new High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Baroness Ashton, summarised its contents as follows:

Let me start with Afghanistan. We are at an important point in our relations here. Our future support must help build a Government responsive to the needs and concerns of the Afghan people. As the situation is volatile, we need to both work with and to influence the situation on the ground. That's what the international conferences starting in London next month are all about.

We are ready to put in more resources. The Commission is raising its development assistance by a third to 200 million Euros. We need these extra resources to repeat successes like the extension of the primary healthcare system to 80% of Afghans – including far better treatment for women and girls – and recent success in turning provinces poppy free. Our Member States have also committed to help get our police training programme up to strength.

But all that's just the start. We need to deliver this as part of a coherent EU contribution within a coordinated international response. This response must have the Afghans working with the UN at the centre of it.

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<sup>195</sup> HC Deb 2 June 2010 c433

<sup>196</sup> "David Cameron sets stage for eventual UK withdrawal from Afghanistan as he visits Kabul, *Guardian*, 10 June 2010. For the fullest exposition of the Prime Minister's views, see his statement to the House on 14 June 2010 in Hansard, c603-16.

<sup>197</sup> HC Deb 26 May 2010 c180

The Action Plan agreed by the Council in October gives the opportunity to do this. Together with US efforts and NATO security operations, it sends a strong message to the region and international community about our commitment. It also dovetails the priorities set out by President Karzai, particularly in the fields of improved governance and anti-corruption.

The Plan confirms that we will continue to place key sectors such as the rule of law and agriculture at the centre of our engagement.

We are already assisting the Afghan government to improve the skills of administrators in Kabul. We will now start to roll these skills out across the provinces to help the Afghan people manage their own affairs and ensure the government provides – and is seen to provide – services to them.

The Plan sends the message that we will support the integration of insurgents who are ready to respond to President Karzai's call to work with his government.

The European Electoral Observation Mission also presents its report in Kabul today and I would like to pay tribute to Thijs Berman and his team for a job well done in a difficult circumstances. We will ensure follow up, since it is clear the credibility of the government and political system rests upon a major overhaul of the electoral system.

Finally, but perhaps most importantly, we are streamlining our structures on the ground. Member States will align policies with the resources to back them and I hope to merge the EU Special Representative and Head of the EU Delegation into a single post as soon as possible. This will help us build a coherent approach that can serve as a model for elsewhere.

Turning to Pakistan, our overriding interest is that Pakistan should be a stable democracy free from terror and able to join with its neighbours in defence against common threats.

The Action Plan underlines this and builds on existing commitments made at June's EU-Pakistan Summit, including humanitarian aid, reconstruction support, assistance to the police and judiciary and strengthening democratic institutions and civil society to improve human rights as well as agreements on trade and socio-economic development. We will also continue to support implementation of the recommendations of the 2008 Election Observation Mission.

The Action Plan is backed up by a substantial financial resources of just under €500 million from the Commission until 2013 plus a €100 million renewable energy loan from the European Investment Bank ) as well as commitments to deepen our trade and political relations. The Action Plan also specifies intensified dialogue on all these issues and there should be second Summit next year within the Spanish Presidency.

The Action Plan also makes clear that the EU will use its expertise in regional integration to help Afghanistan, Pakistan and their neighbours kick-start economic relations, particularly with India. There will be no overnight solution to current tensions but we must make a start in overcoming distrust. The potential gains from this kind of regional cooperation in terms of trade and investment would dwarf anything we can do as the EU.

In conclusion, implementation of the EU Action Plan for Afghanistan and Pakistan is central to our future engagement in these countries. It is a joint endeavour between Member States and EU institutions, and it is the first of its kind which, if successful, can help shape the international civilian response to crises that have so far largely been defined in military terms.



The current EU Special Representative for Afghanistan (and Head of the EU Delegation) is Vygaudas Ušackas, replacing Ettore Sequi in April. An EU Police (EUPOL) mission continues to operate in Afghanistan. Efforts are being made to improve how it co-ordinates with NATO work in this sphere.<sup>198</sup> An EU-Pakistan summit took place on 21 April.

On 29 March 2010, the foreign ministers of the Group of 8 (UK, Canada, Germany, France, Italy, Japan, Russia and the US) announced the establishment of the [Afghanistan-Pakistan Border Region Prosperity Initiative](#). Building on activities that began in 2007, and working with the Afghanistan and Pakistan Governments, the Initiative will focus in its first year on a range of infrastructure projects in the border areas. No information was provided at the time of the announcement of the financial resources that will be attached to the Initiative. An announcement may come at the G8 summit in Canada on 25-26 June 2010.<sup>199</sup>

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<sup>198</sup> HC Deb 30 March 2010 c101WS

<sup>199</sup> "Pakistan wants changes to Canadian-led G8 border initiative", [www.ctv.ca](http://www.ctv.ca), 10 May 2010

## 5 Making sense of the 'AfPak policy'

### 5.1 Summary of main developments since March 2009

Since March 2009, when the AfPak policy was announced by the White House, there has been an overall intensification in the level of military action against militant Islamists in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Within a matter of months of the new policy being unveiled, the deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan provoked the US Administration to review whether additional troops were required. After a long period of deliberation, President Obama announced at the beginning of December 2009 that the number of US personnel would be increased by 30,000 in the short-term, with a view to creating conditions which would allow withdrawals to begin from mid-2011.<sup>200</sup> The extra troops would be concentrated in the southeast, the heartland of the Afghan Taliban. The then Labour Government announced that there would be a further small increase in British troop numbers, bringing the total UK military presence to just over 10,000 personnel. Other allies have also increased their military presence in Afghanistan, although the Dutch are planning to leave in August 2010, the Canadians in 2011.<sup>201</sup> The increase in troop numbers was called the 'Afghan surge' by some commentators, referring back to its predecessor in Iraq.

The additional US troops are arriving. Maximum strength on the ground is expected by the autumn. In February 2010 a major allied offensive (the largest since 2001) began against the Afghan Taliban, *Operation Moshtarak* (Together), in Helmand Province, with a view to clearing the Taliban out of the district of Marjah. The troops went in allegedly ready to follow-up by facilitating the rapid establishment of a viable, Afghan-led, administration ('government in a box'). On this basis, the coalition allies hoped that, following previous attempts that wholly or partially failed, the approach known as 'clear, hold and build' could be effectively implemented. US military officials have warned that the results of the operation will not be known until late 2010.<sup>202</sup> The scale of the overall task was highlighted in March when General David Petraeus, head of US Central Command, testified before Congressional Armed Service Committees, saying that 15 provinces in the north, east and west of Afghanistan now faced a serious threat from insurgents and that the border areas between Pakistan and Iran were a serious concern.<sup>203</sup> There is mounting evidence that the Afghan Taliban have been receiving significant quantities of weaponry from Iran.<sup>204</sup>

The introduction of new 'rules of engagement' designed to protect civilians has not prevented civilian casualties in Afghanistan during the first months of 2010. For example, at least 27 civilians were reportedly killed by a NATO air strike in Uruzgan Province in late February.<sup>205</sup> US soldiers killed four civilians on a bus in Kandahar Province in mid-April.<sup>206</sup>

Soon after the Marjah operation began, the top US commander in Afghanistan, General Stanley McChrystal, gave indications that another large-scale offensive, this time in Kandahar Province, was being planned for June 2010 onwards.<sup>207</sup> A key objective was said to be to push the Afghan Taliban right out of the city of Kandahar. By early May, there were reports that special operations were under way in the province in order to prepare the ground for the offensive.<sup>208</sup> However, at the same time senior NATO officials began seeking to

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<sup>200</sup> Full text of the speech available at: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-address-nation-way-forward-afghanistan-and-pakistan>

<sup>201</sup> House of Commons Library Standard Note SN/IA/5227, *The military campaign in Afghanistan*

<sup>202</sup> "Drug claim clouds diplomatic relations", *Financial Times*, 7 April 2010

<sup>203</sup> "Military priorities in Afghanistan", [www.stratfor.com](http://www.stratfor.com), 19 March 2010

<sup>204</sup> "Exclusive: Iran supplies weapons to Taliban", [www.channel4.com](http://www.channel4.com), 18 March 2010

<sup>205</sup> "Air strike kills Afghan civilians", *BBC News Online*, 22 February 2010

<sup>206</sup> "US soldiers kill four civilians on Kandahar bus", *Financial Times*, 13 April 2010

<sup>207</sup> "General Stanley McChrystal puts focus on Afghan province of Kandahar", *Times*, 22 February 2010

<sup>208</sup> P. Rogers, "Afghanistan: A phantom endgame", [www.opendemocracy.net](http://www.opendemocracy.net), 5 May 2010

counter expectations that a major military operation was imminent, talking instead in terms of a broader-based “process”.<sup>209</sup> By mid-June, General McChrystal was stating operations would proceed at a slower pace than originally planned in order to ensure local support.<sup>210</sup> Significant military operations are now not expected in Kandahar Province until September.

The coalition allies have made it clear that they accept that the continuing presence of their forces is not a “solution for peace” in Afghanistan.<sup>211</sup> Signals appeared to be sent out, including at the London conference on Afghanistan in late January 2010, that there was a willingness to negotiate with ‘moderate Taliban’ and other armed groups. There were even unconfirmed reports (quickly denied) that there had already been discussions between the UN and senior Afghan Taliban figures, although it was said that the top leadership, widely believed to be based in the city of Quetta in the predominantly Pashtun areas of northern Baluchistan, had not been involved.<sup>212</sup> There were also reports that the top Afghan leadership had decided to sever its ties with al-Qaeda and foreign militants in order to reposition itself for future negotiations. Meanwhile, five senior Afghan Taliban figures were removed from the UN’s ‘1267 Committee’ list of organisations affiliated to al-Qaeda and the Taliban and are therefore no longer subject to sanctions. In February 2010, President Karzai was reported to be seeking the assistance of Saudi Arabia in persuading Taliban representatives to attend a ‘peace *Jirga*’, scheduled for April or May, although some continued to doubt the depth of his commitment to the ‘political track’.<sup>213</sup>

This coalition emphasis on negotiations was portrayed as consistent with President Hamid Karzai’s policy of political reconciliation, under which any Taliban who has renounced violence is being promised an amnesty, assistance with reintegration and a stake in Afghanistan’s political future. An Amnesty Law came into force in December 2009.<sup>214</sup> But the shift may also have been prompted by growing allied concern about the weak legitimacy and effectiveness of Karzai and his government following the deeply flawed presidential election of August 2009, which took months to resolve. Parliamentary elections, due in May 2010, were postponed until September. Relations between Karzai and the US Administration remained tense. They were not improved when, in late February 2010, Karzai passed a presidential decree giving him the power to appoint the members of the Electoral Complaints Commission, the body which, with three non-Afghan commissioners out of five on it, held up his re-election as president for several months in 2009 while it investigated fraud allegations. However, Parliament subsequently rejected the decree. By early April, Karzai’s statements about relations with the US and its allies were increasingly negative. At one point, he seemed to accuse the West of wanting a “puppet government” and warned (jokingly, he later claimed) that he might join the Taliban.<sup>215</sup> In April, the US and its allies scored a victory when the controversial head of the Independent Electoral Commission, who some had implicated in election rigging during the presidential election, resigned.<sup>216</sup> There was also praise for steps taken by Karzai to strengthen the anti-corruption body, the High Office of Oversight, and replace underperforming Governors in several provinces.<sup>217</sup>

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<sup>209</sup> “Kandahar braces itself for bloody summer offensive”, *Guardian*, 10 May 2010

<sup>210</sup> “NATO-led Kandahar operation ‘to go slower than planned’”, *BBC News Online*, 10 June 2010

<sup>211</sup> “US troops could withdraw from Afghanistan ahead of 2011 deadline”, *Daily Telegraph*, 10 March 2010

<sup>212</sup> Pakistan denies that Quetta is the main base for the Afghan Taliban leadership. “On the trail of the Taliban in Quetta”, *BBC News Online*, 25 January 2010

<sup>213</sup> “Battle begins to win over Taliban to Karzai’s court”, *Independent*, 3 February 2010; “UK seeks Afghan political drive”, *BBC News Online*, 10 March 2010

<sup>214</sup> For an unofficial English translation of the Amnesty Law, see S. Kouvo, “After two years in legal limbo: A first glance at the approved ‘Amnesty Law’”, Afghanistan Analysts Network blog, 22 February 2010

<sup>215</sup> “Trip in doubt after outburst from Karzai”, *Financial Times*, 7 April 2010; “Polite gestures fail to conceal strains in ties with Karzai”, *Financial Times*, 13 April 2010

<sup>216</sup> “Afghan election officials resign”, *BBC News Online*, 7 April 2010

<sup>217</sup> HC Deb 6 April 2010 c798

Throughout 2009 US officials made the argument that, as the US Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, Richard Holbrooke, put it, “The core of the problem are the people in sanctuary in Pakistan”. Statements of this kind by senior US officials led some analysts to suggest that, in order to reflect the primary importance of Pakistan, the formulation should be ‘PakAf’, rather than ‘AfPak’.<sup>218</sup> Allied pressure, along with militant encroachments beyond NWFP towards Pakistan’s political heartland, the Punjab, and other major cities, persuaded the Pakistani military to launch major offensives against the Pakistan Taliban and foreign fighters linked to al-Qaeda – first, in May in the Swat Valley, after militants reneged on a peace deal, and then between October and December in South Waziristan, one of the Pakistan Taliban’s strongholds. Both took a heavy toll on civilians, causing massive displacement. The UN called the displacement in Swat the worst such crisis since Rwanda in 1994.<sup>219</sup>

These offensives appear to have had considerable success in disrupting militant networks and closing down bases, but they have not decisively defeated the enemy, some of whom have withdrawn into Afghanistan.<sup>220</sup> Others moved into parts of the border areas not covered by the offensives or towards more settled and urban areas in Punjab, Sindh and Baluchistan.<sup>221</sup> As important in weakening the militants have been the significantly increased number of CIA-directed drone attacks against Pakistan Taliban leaders. It has been claimed that the Obama Administration had mounted more such attacks by mid-December 2009 than President George W Bush’s administration had done throughout its eight years in office.<sup>222</sup>

The attitude of the Pakistani public to the military offensives was largely positive, given the rapid escalation in militant attacks around the country during 2009, although some reservations set in later. However, despite a number of high-profile successes – most notably, the death of the leader of the Pakistan Taliban, Baitullah Mehsud, in August 2009 – public attitudes towards the drone attacks, which have also exacted a significant toll on innocent civilians, remained deeply ambivalent. There were reports during the first quarter of 2010 that the Pakistan military did not intend to undertake major new military offensives against the Pakistan Taliban in 2010, although it would safeguard and build on the gains made in 2009.<sup>223</sup> Military operations against militants in the border areas have continued in recent months, for example in Orakzai, in the course of which over 200,000 people were reportedly displaced.<sup>224</sup> However, the US Administration was said to have been asking unsuccessfully for action against the Haqqani network, which is linked the Afghan Taliban but which has its base in North Waziristan.<sup>225</sup> It may not be a coincidence that US drone attacks on targets in North Waziristan have become much more common since the beginning of this year. In January 2010 there were reports that Baitullah Mehsud’s successor, Hakimullah Mehsud, had also been killed by a drone attack. However, by May it was confirmed that he was still alive. There have been civilian casualties on the Pakistani side of the border during 2010. At least 73 died in March after a village in Khyber Agency was bombed by a Pakistani army jet.<sup>226</sup> In April it was reported that the US military had started to use more compact drones and smaller missiles as part of efforts to reduce civilian casualties.<sup>227</sup> However,

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<sup>218</sup> A. Khan, “Conceptualizing AfPak: The prospects and perils”, Asia Programme Paper ASP PP2010/01, Chatham House, January 2010, p18

<sup>219</sup> “Swat Valley could be worst refugee crisis since Rwanda, UN warns”, *Guardian*, 18 May 2009

<sup>220</sup> “Fighters ‘sent to Afghan Taliban”, [www.aljazeera.net](http://www.aljazeera.net) 23 December 2010

<sup>221</sup> H. Mullick, “Holding Pakistan: The second phase of Pakistan’s counterinsurgency operations”, [www.foreignaffairs.com](http://www.foreignaffairs.com), 24 March 2010

<sup>222</sup> “Obama outlines a vision of might and right”, *New York Times*, 11 December 2009

<sup>223</sup> “Pakistan snubs US over militants”, *BBC News Online*, 21 January 2009

<sup>224</sup> “Pakistanis flee assault on Taliban”, *Financial Times*, 13 April 2010

<sup>225</sup> “US struggles to convey common enemy message”, *Financial Times*, 25 January 2010

<sup>226</sup> “‘Civilians die’ in Pakistan raid”, *BBC News Online*, 13 April 2010

<sup>227</sup> “Taliban leader in Pakistan survived CIA drone strike said to have killed him, spy agency says”, *Guardian*, 29 April 2010

others viewed the deployment of a new generation of drones as representing a dangerous escalation in operations.<sup>228</sup>

Attacks by the Pakistan Taliban have continued in 2010, despite official claims that it had been decisively defeated. For example, in mid-March 2010 suicide attacks on Lahore, a city which had been relatively unscathed up to this point, took place, in which over 50 people were killed. The Pakistan Taliban claimed responsibility and threatened a massive wave of further suicide bomb attacks.<sup>229</sup> In April there were several violent attacks in Peshawar, including one on the US Consulate, which left three guards dead.<sup>230</sup> In addition, US military personnel based in Pakistan have begun to be targeted by militants. In early February, three US soldiers working in the border areas, reportedly part of a special operations team, were killed and two others were injured in a bomb attack by militants on a school in Lower Dir. Three school girls were also killed.<sup>231</sup> These were the first US military personnel to die in Pakistan. In April there was an attack on the US Consulate in Peshawar, in which three Pakistani guards died.<sup>232</sup> Then, in early May, there was a failed bomb attack in Times Square, New York City, for which the Pakistan Taliban claimed responsibility. This claim was initially dismissed but subsequently given greater credence.<sup>233</sup>

With the wider emergence of a more nuanced allied position with regard to the Afghan Taliban, there have been increasing indications in recent months that Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), which has been called the 'godfather' of the Afghan Taliban, is willing to play a key brokering role between it and the allies.<sup>234</sup> In addition, it now appears that it is prepared, if necessary, to put greater pressure on the Afghan Taliban and its leadership than in the past. In February, the Pakistani authorities, reportedly in co-operation with the CIA, arrested the man believed to be the second in command of the Afghan Taliban and its military mastermind, Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, in Karachi.<sup>235</sup> Other significant arrests followed.<sup>236</sup> The head of the Pakistani armed forces, General Ashfaq Kayani, has stated that Pakistan should seek "strategic depth" in future through the promotion of lasting peace and stability in Afghanistan, rather than, as in the past, through a compliant, 'pro-Pakistan' regime.<sup>237</sup> However, some viewed these moves as signalling rather than the ISI had been unhappy about elements within the Afghan Taliban failing to co-ordinate sufficiently with it any tentative peace efforts.<sup>238</sup> In mid-March President Karzai visited Islamabad and talked positively about an improved relationship between the two countries.

In March, Senators John Kerry and Richard Lugar wrote to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton expressing concern that the aid programme under *The Enhanced Partnership with Pakistan Act*, which was passed in September 2009, was moving too slowly. Richard Holbrooke stated in response that the Administration was looking at ways to accelerate disbursements.<sup>239</sup> The

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<sup>228</sup> P. Rogers, "Washington vs Waziristan: The far enemy", [www.opendemocracy.net](http://www.opendemocracy.net), 14 May 2010

<sup>229</sup> "Deadly blasts hit Pakistani city", *BBC News Online*, 12 March 2010

<sup>230</sup> "US anger at Pakistan mission raid", *BBC News Online*, 5 April 2010; "Many dead in Peshawar bomb blast", *BBC News Online*, 19 April 2010

<sup>231</sup> A. Wliken, "Smoke gets in your eyes. Pakistan in 2010", Afghanistan Analysts Network policy briefing, March 2010, p6

<sup>232</sup> "US soldiers die in Pakistan blast", *BBC News Online*, 3 February 2010

<sup>233</sup> "Return from the grave is more than humiliating for Pakistan", *Financial Times*, 5 May 2010

<sup>234</sup> "Pakistan intelligence offers key to Taliban", *Financial Times*, 26 January 2009; "Pakistan sees Afghan Taliban role", *BBC News Online*, 28 January 2009

<sup>235</sup> "Pakistan confirms Taliban arrest", *BBC News Online*, 17 February 2010

<sup>236</sup> "Arrests of top Taliban fuel talk of Pakistan policy shift", *Guardian*, 19 February 2010; "Taliban militant held in Karachi", *Financial Times*, 8 March 2010

<sup>237</sup> Ibid

<sup>238</sup> "US harbours doubts over Islamabad's will to pursue all Taliban militants", *Financial Times*, 10 March 2010

<sup>239</sup> "Briefing on upcoming US-Pakistan strategic dialogue", Department of State, 19 March 2009; "Waiting on a civilian surge in Afghanistan", Interview with John Herbst, Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization, State Department, Council on Foreign Relations, 31 March 2010

issue was among others raised at the US-Pakistan 'Strategic Dialogue' in Washington, D.C., held in the same month.

Also in March, the former UN special representative in Afghanistan, Kai Eide, shortly after standing down from his role, confirmed that he had held "talks about talks" with senior Afghan Taliban leaders, whose participation had been endorsed by the 'Quetta Shura', since spring 2009. He criticised the Pakistani authorities for arresting Mullah Baradar and other Taliban figures in February. He added that the Karzai Government had also held talks with the Afghan Taliban. Karzai and Baradar hail from the same Pashtun tribal group.<sup>240</sup> Eide has been replaced in the role by Staffan de Mistura. Also in March, representatives of the Karzai Government met with representatives of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's Hizb-i-Islami. Hekmatyar was said to have offered to act as a bridge between the Government and the Afghan Taliban in future negotiations between them, provided coalition allies gave a firm deadline for their withdrawal.<sup>241</sup> In May a senior Afghan official was reported as saying that a deal was close, with Hekmatyar – accused of responsibility for major human rights abuses during Afghanistan's civil war in the 1990s – possibly going into exile.<sup>242</sup>

In late April 2010, the US Department of Defense published a report in which it said that the Karzai Government had the support of the public in only 29 of the 121 Afghan districts considered to be the most strategically significant in the war against the Afghan Taliban and that levels of violence were increasing. However, the report also said that the Taliban was coming under "unprecedented pressure" and that the majority of the Afghan people felt that overall security was improving.<sup>243</sup> In the same month, NATO reiterated its intention to hand control of parts of Afghanistan over to the Afghan security forces by the end of 2010.<sup>244</sup> However, NATO's most senior official in Afghanistan, Mark Sedwill, stated that the coalition allies should expect to be engaged in combat roles for another three or four years, adding that the imminent Kandahar operation would be a "critical test".<sup>245</sup> As already stated, during May and early June statements were made seeking to lower expectations about the operation.

Meanwhile, senior Pentagon officials reported in April that Pakistan Taliban fighters were finding their way back into those border areas from which they had been cleared in the course of the 2009 offensives by the Pakistani military.<sup>246</sup> During May, there were a number of major attacks by the Pakistan Taliban. For example, two mosques were attacked in Lahore, leaving over 90 worshippers from the Ahmadi sect dead. Attacks continued into June. On 8 June, a convoy of 50 NATO supply trucks on their way to Afghanistan was attacked on the outskirts of Islamabad and destroyed.<sup>247</sup> A few days earlier, the Pakistan Government had announced that it planned to further increase defence spending by 17% over the coming year.<sup>248</sup>

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<sup>240</sup> "Pakistan arrests halt secret UN contacts with Taliban", *BBC News Online*, 19 March 2010; "Hamid Karzai held secret talks with Mullah Baradar in Afghanistan", *Daily Telegraph*, 16 March 2010

<sup>241</sup> "Afghan insurgents in peace talks", *BBC News Online*, 22 March 2010

<sup>242</sup> "Afghan officials met insurgent representatives in Maldives", *Times*, 21 May 2010

<sup>243</sup> "Damning US Afghan report released", *BBC News Online*, 29 April 2010. For the full text of the Pentagon report, see: [http://www.defense.gov/pubs/pdfs/Report\\_Final\\_SecDef\\_04\\_26\\_10.pdf](http://www.defense.gov/pubs/pdfs/Report_Final_SecDef_04_26_10.pdf)

<sup>244</sup> "NATO plans Afghanistan transfer", *BBC News Online*, 23 April 2010. For an official NATO outline of its plans, see its Backgrounder, "Phase 4: Transition to Afghan ownership and leadership in security". Available at: <http://www.nato.int/isaf/topics/factsheets/phase4.pdf>

<sup>245</sup> "Four more years of Afghan war, warns NATO official", *Guardian*, 30 April 2010

<sup>246</sup> "US must help Pakistan beat insurgency, officials say", American Forces Press Service, 29 April 2010. See also: "Pakistan faces Taliban resurgence", *BBC News Online*, 10 May 2010

<sup>247</sup> "Taliban torch 50 Nato supply trucks on outskirts of Islamabad", *Guardian*, 9 June 2010

<sup>248</sup> "Pakistan to increase defence spending", *BBC News Online*, 5 June 2010



In May the Karzai Government made public its detailed proposals for a 'Peace and Reintegration Programme', to which it had agreed at the London Conference in January. Under the plan, a new High Level Peace Council will be established. It will oversee the reintegration and, where it is deemed necessary, the de-radicalisation training, of Afghan Taliban fighters that have renounced violence. The plan is aimed at the Taliban's 'foot soldiers'. It appears to suggest that the Taliban leadership can expect at best the opportunity to live in exile. The plan was to be put before the long-awaited 'peace *Jirga*', whose status by now was said to be purely consultative, for endorsement (see below).<sup>249</sup>

On 10 May President Karzai began a four-day visit to the US. During this visit, serious efforts were made by both the Afghan and US Governments to patch up a relationship that had become increasingly testy and fraught over past months. Karzai played down the prospect of negotiations with the Afghan Taliban leadership in the near term.<sup>250</sup>

On 2-4 June, President Karzai convened the consultative peace *jirga* in Kabul. It involved about 1,600 people, including tribal elders, religious leaders and politicians. The legal opposition, led by figures such as defeated presidential candidate Abdullah Abdullah, refused to attend. Active insurgent groups condemned the meeting and were not represented. At the end, participants expressed their support for the Government's efforts to bring about peace through negotiation with the insurgents; endorsed Karzai's proposals to offer an amnesty to insurgents and reintegration incentives to ordinary fighters who lay down their arms; called on the Afghan authorities to guarantee the safety of former Taliban members and to release those being held in American and Afghan prisons; and supported the idea of removing the names of Taliban leaders from the UN's '1267 Committee' list of organisations affiliated to al-Qaeda and the Taliban, and offering them asylum in another Islamic country should they agree to join peace talks and renounce all ties with al-Qaeda. Finally, they endorsed the role being played in Afghanistan by the international community and asked for its continued support.<sup>251</sup> While the US and UK welcomed the outcome, there continued to be debate about the true significance of the *jirga*, with a significant number of observers were largely dismissive of it.<sup>252</sup> A follow-up conference to the January London Conference is due to be held in Kabul on 20 July, at which the Afghan Government is expected to present its plan for improving development, governance and security across the country.

There was an attack by the Afghan Taliban on the first day of the *jirga*. Three rockets landed close to the venue of the event. Two senior security officials, both of them reportedly highly regarded by the US and its allies but out of favour with Karzai, subsequently took responsibility for the attack and resigned. They were Minister of the Interior, Hanif Atmar, and head of the National Directorate of Security, Amrullah Saleh.<sup>253</sup> Saleh was subsequently reported to have claimed that President Karzai had lost confidence in the ability of the coalition allies to defeat the Afghan Taliban and was increasingly looking to work closely with the Pakistan Government in pursuit of his goals.<sup>254</sup>

Following on as it did from attacks in May on Bagram airbase, just north of Kabul, a NATO airfield in Kandahar and a NATO convoy driving through Kabul, in which six coalition soldiers

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<sup>249</sup> "Taliban leaders to be offered exile as Afghan government unveils plan to disarm militants", *Guardian*, 6 May 2010

<sup>250</sup> "Joint statement from the President and President Karzai of Afghanistan", White House press release, 12 May 2010; "Karzai's diplomatic language in US charm offensive", *BBC News Online*, 14 May 2010

<sup>251</sup> "Afghan peace jirga backs Karzai Taliban talks", *BBC News Online*, 4 June 2010

<sup>252</sup> For example, see: C. Wadhams, "Afghanistan fluffy peace jirga", *The Afpak Channel*, Foreign Policy and New America Foundation project, 4 June 2010. Available at: [http://afpak.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2010/06/04/afghanistans\\_fluffy\\_peace\\_jirga](http://afpak.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2010/06/04/afghanistans_fluffy_peace_jirga)

<sup>253</sup> M. Van Bijlert, "The resignation of Atmar and Saleh: early thoughts", Afghanistan Analysts Network blog, 6 June 2010

<sup>254</sup> "Afghan president 'has lost faith in US ability to defeat Taliban", *Guardian*, 9 June 2010

died, it was widely taken as a token of the growing confidence of the insurgents, who had earlier announced a 'spring offensive'.<sup>255</sup> Ten NATO soldiers were killed in one day on 7 June.<sup>256</sup> On 10 June, at least 39 people died at a wedding party in Kandahar Province following an attack by the Taliban; members of an anti-Taliban local militia attending the event were reported to have been the target.<sup>257</sup> The *jirga* was held amidst continuing reports that the Afghan Government was holding private meetings with representatives of insurgent groups.

While final preparations for the peace *jirga* were under way, al-Qaeda confirmed that one of its most senior leaders in Afghanistan, Mustafa Abu al-Yazid, had been killed in a US drone attack on the Pakistan border areas.<sup>258</sup>

At the beginning of June, the UN Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions, Philip Alston, issued a report to the Human Rights Council in which he criticised CIA-directed drone attacks on targets as potentially violating international humanitarian law, referring to the development of a "playstation mentality". He called for the military to take over responsibility for the drone operations in order to strengthen accountability.<sup>259</sup>

The new UK Coalition Government, which came to office in May 2010, has broadly endorsed the strategy on Afghanistan and Pakistan which it had inherited from its predecessor, although its initial focus has been much more on the former than on the latter. The Prime Minister, David Cameron, met President Karzai in London on 15 May. The Foreign Secretary, William Hague, Secretary of State for Defence, Liam Fox, and the Secretary of State for International Development, Andrew Mitchell, made a joint visit to Afghanistan a week later as part of "taking stock"<sup>260</sup> of the situation. Following this, there was some domestic controversy over Liam Fox's apparent description of Afghanistan as a "broken thirteenth century country", suggesting to some observers that he might be relatively sceptical about the extensive state- and nation-building efforts being supported by donors, including the UK.<sup>261</sup> Any such suggestions were denied by the Government. In late May, it was announced that UK forces in Helmand Province, where there are now 20,000 US troops, would come under the command of US Major General Richard Mills on 1 June, as part of the ISAF's new Regional Command South-West.<sup>262</sup> On 5 June, William Hague welcomed the peace *jirga*, saying that he hoped that it "marks the start of a comprehensive, inclusive and genuinely representative political process which helps bring conflict to an end."<sup>263</sup> On 10 June, David Cameron arrived in Afghanistan for his first visit as Prime Minister. Although there has been a reluctance to talk about timeframes for withdrawal, during his visit he said that sending more troops to Afghanistan was "not remotely on the UK's agenda" and that Britain and the US needed to move "further and faster" in stabilising the country, adding:

Nobody wants British troops to be in Afghanistan a moment longer than is necessary. The president doesn't, the Afghan people don't, the British people don't.<sup>264</sup>

William Hague is expected to visit Pakistan in the near future.

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<sup>255</sup> "Afghan insurgents attack key NATO base in Kandahar", *BBC News Online*, 23 May 2010

<sup>256</sup> "NATO loses 10 troops in deadly Afghanistan day", *BBC News Online*, 7 June 2010

<sup>257</sup> "39 killed in Afghan wedding explosion", *Daily Telegraph*, 10 June 2010

<sup>258</sup> "Senior al-Qaeda leader 'killed' in Afghanistan", *BBC News Online*, 1 June 2010

<sup>259</sup> "UN official criticises US over drone attacks", *BBC News Online*, 2 June 2010

<sup>260</sup> As described by William Hague, the new Foreign Secretary, at HC Deb 26 May 2010 c178

<sup>261</sup> "Eyes on Helmand", *Financial Times*, 7 June 2010

<sup>262</sup> HC Deb 26 May 2010 c-4WS

<sup>263</sup> "Foreign Secretary statement on Afghanistan peace jirga", FCO press release, 5 June 2010

<sup>264</sup> "David Cameron sets stage for eventual UK withdrawal from Afghanistan as he visits Kabul", *Guardian*, 10 June 2010

During a visit to the UK on 9 June, the US Secretary for Defense, Robert Gates, said that the US and British publics “will not tolerate the perception of a stalemate, where we are losing our young men.”<sup>265</sup> On 21 June, the number of UK service personnel killed in the conflict in Afghanistan reached 300.<sup>266</sup> On 22 June, it was reported that Sir Sherard Cowper-Coles, the UK Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan since February 2009, had taken “extended leave” from his position.<sup>267</sup>

## 5.2 Prospects

Ayesha Khan has argued that:

The success of the AfPak strategy is contingent on understanding the borderland. But any analysis of borders, borderland societies and their relationship with the state is conspicuously absent. By borderland is broadly meant the ‘non-state spaces’ at the ecological margins or geographical periphery of the state – the Pashtun borderland being one of the most important but least understood. This borderland is significant because it plays a central role in state formation and state collapse. Historically it has either resisted state encroachment or acted as an agent of the state. The failure to correctly contextualize it in the AfPak strategy will complicate all aspects of the strategy’s implementation, and may even provoke the borderland to act as a catalyst for the dismemberment of the state.<sup>268</sup>

From the outset, there has been considerable public debate about whether the AfPak policy, as conceptualised, offers a major opportunity to roll back the gains that have been made by Islamist militants in both countries, or whether it is, as Khan claims, full of “contradictions, anomalies and structural flaws that may risk destabilizing the Afghanistan-Pakistan borderland and lead to the creation of a frontier quagmire.”<sup>269</sup> The prospects for the AfPak policy will be clearer by the end of 2010. Many variables will shape the outcome. What follows is a brief discussion of some of the key questions that commentators have been asking.<sup>270</sup>

### ***Afghanistan: are there meaningful ‘bottom lines’ or viable exit strategies?***

Today, the US and their allies agree that the key is to find a ‘political solution’ in Afghanistan, and that the short-term increase in the intensity of allied military operations should contribute to such a solution rather than hinder it. But it is not clear as yet how far there is agreement among the US and its allies over what that ‘political solution’ might in practice amount to. In recent months, progressively greater emphasis has been put on the importance of a meaningful process of political reconciliation getting underway, although there are indications

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<sup>265</sup> “Afghan president ‘has lost faith in US ability to defeat Taliban”, *Guardian*, 9 June 2010

<sup>266</sup> The number of US military fatalities at the time of writing was 1126. For a full breakdown of the military fatalities incurred by the coalition allies in Afghanistan, see: <http://www.icasualties.org/OEF/Index.aspx>

<sup>267</sup> “UK Afghan envoy quits as 300<sup>th</sup> soldier dies”, *Guardian*, 22 June 2010

<sup>268</sup> A. Khan, “Conceptualizing AfPak: The prospects and perils”, Asia Programme Paper ASP PP2010/01, Chatham House, January 2010, p5-6

<sup>269</sup> Ibid, p5. Some also view AfPak as involving little real change in policy. See I. Kfir, “A review of AfPak and the ongoing challenge of Pakistan”, Pakistan Security Research Unit, University of Bradford, Brief No. 51, 10 December 2009, p4

<sup>270</sup> The discussion is neither comprehensive nor definitive in its coverage.

that parts of the US Government may be in less of a hurry on this than its UK ally, wanting first to seriously weaken and divide the Afghan Taliban, including through military action.<sup>271</sup>

So, will an acceptable political solution be one involving some form of power-sharing arrangement that includes the Karzai Government, the Afghan Taliban leadership and other important political stakeholders, provided that the Taliban agrees to break with al-Qaeda?<sup>272</sup> Or will such an arrangement be acceptable only if the Taliban is first gravely weakened and divided, and with only 'moderates' involved? Will the current Afghan Constitution be absolutely sacrosanct, or might certain provisions – for example, on human rights and western-style democratic institutions – ultimately be subject to negotiation?<sup>273</sup> These issues are yet to be resolved.

Some go so far as question whether there will be meaningful 'bottom lines' at all as mid-2011 draws nearer. The US Government is talking about being able to start reducing troop numbers in Afghanistan from mid-2011 if certain conditions are met – for example, sufficient capacity on the part of the Afghan security forces to take on the leading role in maintaining security.<sup>274</sup> The new Coalition Government has so far been considerably more reticent about timetables but it has nonetheless made it clear that it wishes to begin withdrawing troops as soon as possible.<sup>275</sup> However, the evidence suggests that the army and the police continue to struggle to combat desertions and improve their effectiveness. Pashtuns from the southwest remain poorly represented in army ranks.<sup>276</sup> According to a recent report:

[...] the army is a fragmented force, serving disparate interests, and far from attaining the unified national character needed to confront numerous security threats.<sup>277</sup>

Some commentators speculate that, when the time comes, it is more likely than not that the process of withdrawal will begin even if most of the conditions set out above have not really been met, and will proceed quickly thereafter. By this analysis, behind the rhetoric, the underlying US goal is as honourable an exit from Afghanistan as can be contrived, while assuaging an increasingly sceptical public opinion that it has avoided the fate of the Soviet Union, whose withdrawal in 1989 was widely portrayed as a humiliating defeat.<sup>278</sup> The

<sup>271</sup> See, for example, Ahmed Rashid, "Making war and peace in Afghanistan", *BBC News Online*, 10 March 2010; "NATO will fail unless you end corruption, US commander tells Karzai", *Times*, 30 March 2010. For a fuller discussion of the differing views within the international community on the idea of political reconciliation, see: T. Masadykov, A. Gustiozzi and J. Page, "Negotiating with the Taliban: Towards a solution for the Afghan conflict", Crisis States Research Centre (LSE) working paper no. 66, January 2010, p12-16. This report claims (p12) that many in Afghanistan mistrust British efforts to promote reconciliation following events in Musa Qala in 2006 and subsequently.

<sup>272</sup> US special representative Richard Holbrooke might be sceptical about such an outcome, given that in December 2009 he described the two as "so far, inseparable organisations". "Remarks upon receiving the Augsburg Prize for Reconciliation and International Understanding", speech by Richard Holbrooke, 8 December 2009. Available at: [http://www.state.gov/s/special\\_rep\\_afghanistan\\_pakistan/133711.htm](http://www.state.gov/s/special_rep_afghanistan_pakistan/133711.htm)

<sup>273</sup> For example, the then British Foreign Secretary, David Miliband, said that he expected that there would be "a tribal political system". See: Foreign Affairs Committee, *Global Security: Afghanistan and Pakistan*, HC398, Session 2009-10, Q31. See also his answer to Q67, in which he accepted that tribal structures have been corroded over the last 30 years. He also described the Afghan Constitution as one of the "bottom lines" but ended with: "there will have to be a lot of licence in the country". In his answer to Q76, he committed himself unequivocally to opposing any "watering down" of women's and girl's rights.

<sup>274</sup> There have even been hints that withdrawals could begin earlier than that. "US troops could withdraw from Afghanistan ahead of 2011 deadline", *Daily Telegraph*, 10 March 2010

<sup>275</sup> "Afghanistan deadline 'unhelpful'", *BBC News Online*, 23 May 2010

<sup>276</sup> A. Khan, "Conceptualizing AfPak: The prospects and perils", Asia Programme Paper ASP PP2010/01, Chatham House, January 2010, p5

<sup>277</sup> ICG, "A force in fragments: Reconstituting the Afghan National Army", Asia Briefing No. 190, 12 May 2010, Executive Summary

<sup>278</sup> Some Russian commentators have warned against a "rapid exit strategy" on the grounds that "withdrawal without victory might cause a political collapse of Western security structures." B. Gromov and D. Rogozin, "Russian advice on Afghanistan", *New York Times*, 12 January 2010

Obama Administration may well want to be able to point to significant troop withdrawals from Afghanistan by the time of the next presidential election in November 2012. One analyst has argued that the current strategy is far more about denying the Afghan Taliban outright victory than achieving an outright allied victory, hopes of which have in reality been abandoned.<sup>279</sup> If correct, it would be unwise to interpret either the Marjah operation, or the one due to take place in Kandahar Province, in triumphal terms. One commentator has argued:

General McChrystal's plan is to recapture 40 districts this year and another 40 next year, but if progress is as slow as the Marjah operation, he is going to need 20 years, not two. In any case, reports from the ground in Marjah suggest US 'control' is patchy.<sup>280</sup>

McChrystal has described Marjah as a "bleeding ulcer" and has accepted that 'government in a box' is yet to work there.<sup>281</sup> According to some reports, local opposition to the planned Kandahar offensive was still strong in mid-May and NATO had begun to talk in terms of a "process that is encompassing military and non-military instruments", through which the Taliban is progressively 'squeezed', rather than of an offensive.<sup>282</sup> A senior UN official has claimed:

The US cannot be seen to lose a big, well advertised operation as planned for Kandahar. It would be very difficult to recover from such a setback [...] Gen. McChrystal has to make the objectives achievable without looking as if he has retreated from his original plan because it was beyond him. I think he got a bit carried away and over-optimistic.<sup>283</sup>

While he has adopted a more cautious tone, McChrystal retains ambitious objectives for the Kandahar operation and remains optimistic that the Taliban can be defeated:

[...] when we get Kandahar, it's a great step towards success in Afghanistan [...] Defeating an enemy is defeating him from accomplishing his mission. When we secure any part of Afghanistan, we deny the Taliban the opportunity to be successful. At the end of the day that's what it takes to defeat the Taliban.<sup>284</sup>

Another commentator has argued:

Marjah's ongoing troubles show that the Kandahar operation will probably not go as planned. Hopefully, contrary to reporting, there is in fact a Plan B (plan C, perhaps?) or the coalition will have to do this all again next year, with less political capital and fewer military resources.<sup>285</sup>

Some may say that, with any large-scale military operations in Kandahar Province now postponed to September, doubts about the direction of the conflict are looking more plausible by the day, although the option of abandoning the mid-July 2011 timeframe may yet rise up the agenda. However, that would risk running into conflict with public opinion, including in Britain, where polls have consistently suggested that it sides with the view that the conflict in

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<sup>279</sup> B. Finel, A substitute for victory. Adopting a new counterinsurgency strategy in Afghanistan", [www.foreignaffairs.com](http://www.foreignaffairs.com), 8 April 2010

<sup>280</sup> "Is it time to talk to the Taliban?", *Guardian*, 5 May 2010

<sup>281</sup> "Confidence in Kandahar campaign wanes", *Financial Times*, 28 May 2010

<sup>282</sup> "Kandahar braces itself for bloody summer offensive", *Guardian*, 10 May 2010; What now in Afghanistan's crucial year?", *BBC News Online*, 7 June 2010

<sup>283</sup> "Kandahar plan draws criticism", *Financial Times*, 14 June 2010

<sup>284</sup> What now in Afghanistan's crucial year?", *BBC News Online*, 7 June 2010

<sup>285</sup> J. Wallace, "Showtime in Kandahar", *The AfPak Channel*, Foreign Policy and New America Foundation Project, 25 May 2010. Available at: [http://afpak.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2010/05/25/showtime\\_in\\_kandahar](http://afpak.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2010/05/25/showtime_in_kandahar)



Afghanistan is 'unwinnable'.<sup>286</sup> Senior US and UK officials have sometimes sounded nearly as pessimistic about the prospects for success as their critics.<sup>287</sup>

Equally crucially, there remains a major question-mark in many minds about the viability and credibility of the current Afghan Government, following last year's highly controversial presidential election – and given its poor reputation on governance and corruption.<sup>288</sup> One analyst has spoken of Karzai's "legitimacy gap".<sup>289</sup> General McChrystal has said recently: "The government is more popular [than the Taliban]. But it does not have the level of credibility that it needs to build the confidence of the Afghan people."<sup>290</sup> Tariq Ali goes further, describing the Afghan Government as a "Western implant that would disintegrate overnight without the NATO praetorians dispatched to protect it."<sup>291</sup> There is considerable scepticism about claims that President Karzai can turn things around over the year ahead.<sup>292</sup> Many have raised questions about the role of his controversial brother, Ahmed Wali Karzai, who is the dominant political figure in Kandahar Province. In addition, any 'peace process' will involve some diminution in the influence and power of Karzai and his supporters – motive enough, potentially, for them to undermine such a process. Will these people, in a time-honoured tactic, have to be bought off – some of them not for the first time?

For the moment, then, few detect any real appetite on the part of Karzai and his backers for significant political compromise with the Afghan Taliban leadership. The tenor of the Peace and Reintegration Programme which the Karzai Government announced in May 2010 appears to indicate as much.<sup>293</sup> It also appears that the leverage that the coalition allies can exercise over Karzai is proving less than might be hoped.<sup>294</sup> The current US Administration is, to put it mildly, lukewarm in its attitude towards Karzai, who has made some strong 'anti-foreigner' statements, possibly in the hope that they will shore up his position domestically.<sup>295</sup> Following his visit to the US in May, both sides indicated that they would seek to address differences of perspective in private, rather than air them publicly. But the resignations in June of the Minister of the Interior, Hanif Atmar, and the head of the National Directorate of Security, Amrullah Salih, both of whom were highly regarded by the coalition allies, renewed fears that Karzai might be looking to chart a more independent path, distancing himself from the US and moving closer to Pakistan.<sup>296</sup> However, for now the US continues to accept that there appears no alternative to Karzai as a partner, however frustrating it may find him.<sup>297</sup>

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<sup>286</sup> "Afghan war is 'unwinnable' – poll", *BBC News Online*, 23 February 2010

<sup>287</sup> For example, see: "US envoy wary on outcome of Afghan campaign", *Financial Times*, 5 March 2010

<sup>288</sup> For a recent report on corruption in Afghanistan, see: M. Gardizi, K. Hussmann and Y. Torabi, "Corrupting the state or state-crafted corruption? Exploring the nexus between corruption and subnational governance", Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, June 2010

<sup>289</sup> M. Boyle, "Do counterterrorism and counterinsurgency go together?" *International Affairs*, Vol. 86, No. 2, March 2010, p351

<sup>290</sup> "British role in Helmand 'critical'", *Financial Times*, 1 June 2010

<sup>291</sup> T. Ali, "Obama at war", *New Left Review*, January/February 2010, p110

<sup>292</sup> There was considerable discussion about President Karzai's role in the Foreign Affairs Committee's February 2010 oral evidence session with the Foreign Secretary, David Miliband. See *Global Security: Afghanistan and Pakistan*, HC398, Session 2009-10, Q8-13

<sup>293</sup> "Taliban leaders to be offered exile as Afghan government unveils plan to disarm militants", *Guardian*, 6 May 2010

<sup>294</sup> R. Stewart, "The 'good war' isn't worth fighting", *New York Times*, 22 November 2008

<sup>295</sup> There have been claims that Hamid Karzai is a 'CIA asset'. See T. Ali, "Obama at war", *New Left Review*, January/February 2010, p. 108. Ali is also amongst the many observers to have claimed the same of the president's brother, reportedly the richest man in the country as a result of his involvement in the drugs trade. "Short cuts", *London Review of Books*, 19 November 2009

<sup>296</sup> "Afghan president 'has lost faith in US ability to defeat Taliban", *Guardian*, 9 June 2010

<sup>297</sup> "Obama backs Afghan Taliban effort", *BBC News Online*, 13 May 2010



Michael Semple, the deputy EU special representative for Afghanistan during 2004-07, argued at the time that it was announced that the consultative 'peace *jirga*' would be "little more than political theatre, and the Taliban will not engage."<sup>298</sup> The *jirga* finally took place in early June 2010. Whether Semple was right on the first count still remains to be seen. On the second, he was correct. The then Foreign Secretary, David Miliband, appeared to share such concerns about the 'peace *jirga*' in a speech he gave in March.<sup>299</sup> The new Coalition Government welcomed it, but not effusively.

Semple has also dismissed the talks that have taken place between the Afghan Government and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's group as of little significance, even if they lead to a deal, given that it is a relatively small part of the insurgency. However, Semple also believes that most of the Taliban leadership might be pragmatic enough to consider entering peace talks if it was felt to be in their interests and would have little hesitation, as part of a deal, in agreeing to sever all ties with al-Qaeda.<sup>300</sup> Others speculate that the detention by Pakistan of a number of ostensibly pragmatic Taliban leaders, such as Mullah Baradar, could open the way for hard-liners, sometimes called the 'neo-Taliban', within the insurgency.<sup>301</sup>

In turn, whether the Afghan Taliban, as a whole or in part, can be persuaded to do a deal with the Government while coalition allied forces remain on Afghan soil is also unclear. Critics worry that the Afghan Taliban may ultimately pay more attention to the US's 'withdrawal symptoms' than the current mix of coercion and incentives emanating from the AfPak policy and decide that, if it waits out the next 18 months and retains a degree of support from elements within the Pakistan political and security establishment, it will have the strategic advantage.<sup>302</sup> However, if the objective of the coalition allies to weaken the military position of the Afghan Taliban is sufficiently achieved and if, as some assert, many of its fighters are tired of fighting, these factors, along with growing Pakistani pressure to enter talks, could conceivably alter such calculations.<sup>303</sup>

### ***Will Pakistan's political and security establishment deliver?***

There also remain unanswered questions about the attitude of the Pakistani political and security establishment. Doubts remain about the motivation behind the wave of detentions of senior Afghan Taliban figures that took place earlier this year, some of whom were soon released, with some arguing that it was to demonstrate Pakistan's essential role in future peace negotiations and avert danger of being by-passed as a mediator in favour of Saudi Arabia, as briefly seemed on the cards. Richard Holbrooke has declared himself "agnostic" about whether the detentions meant that Pakistan had broken decisively with the Afghan Taliban.<sup>304</sup> US officials have been reported as saying that the arrest of Mullah Baradar in February had been "accidental" and US officials have had limited access to him. There have even been claims in Pakistan that Baradar is a CIA agent. Few expect Afghanistan's extradition request to be acceded to.<sup>305</sup> Former UN envoy in Afghanistan, Kai Eide, has accused the Pakistani authorities of acting as 'spoilers' of the negotiations which he and,

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<sup>298</sup> "We need to offer the Taliban more than just money", *Financial Times*, 5 February 2010. See also Semple's article in the *Irish Times* on 3 June 2010, "Taliban ghosts haunt peace forum".

<sup>299</sup> "UK seeks Afghan political drive", *BBC News Online*, 10 March 2010. David Miliband subsequently said that the meeting would not be "about negotiations, but about preparing the ground". See: HC Deb 6 April 2010 c811

<sup>300</sup> "We need to offer the Taliban more than just money", *Financial Times*, 5 February 2010

<sup>301</sup> "Is it time to talk to the Taliban?", *Guardian*, 5 May 2010

<sup>302</sup> See, for example, Philip Stephens, "The west wavers between the enemy and the exit", *Financial Times*, 29 January 2009

<sup>303</sup> Seasoned observer Ahmed Rashid is amongst those who detect genuine fatigue. "Five steps to making a deal with the Taliban", *BBC News Online*, 22 March 2010

<sup>304</sup> For example, see: "US envoy wary on outcome of Afghan campaign", *Financial Times*, 5 March 2010

<sup>305</sup> Ahmed Rashid, "Making war and peace in Afghanistan", *BBC News Online*, 10 March 2010

separately, the Afghan Government had begun with the Afghan Taliban in 2009.<sup>306</sup> Another analyst has claimed that the Pakistani security services are now establishing a more reliable (from their point of view) Afghan Taliban leadership but one less inclined towards negotiations.<sup>307</sup> A recent report claimed that observers continue to underestimate the degree to which the Pakistani political and security establishment is still providing support to the Afghan Taliban and that a number of members of the Quetta *Shura* are ISI representatives.<sup>308</sup>

As for the Pakistani political and security establishment's attitude towards the Pakistan Taliban and other home-grown militant groups, this has undoubtedly hardened in recent years, but still not to the point, it seems, where it has decided that the price of all-out war is one worth paying. Others have argued that, while there was a strong desire to reduce the power of the Mehsuds through its late 2009 military offensive in South Waziristan, the Pakistani military lacked the capacity to destroy them and was willing to allow many militants to 'melt away' in order to avoid provoking a wave of retaliatory attacks by triggering the Pashtun obligation to seek revenge under the code of honour known as *Pashtunwali*.<sup>309</sup>

In January, one expert described the Pakistan Taliban as "an enfeebled insurgency".<sup>310</sup> A Western diplomat was quoted in March 2010 as saying:

The military was keen to smash the myth of Mehsud invincibility in Waziristan and to be fair it has done so. And since, they have gone on to hit the Taleban throughout FATA with a shifting set of operations combining air power, artillery and assault.<sup>311</sup>

However, delivering a 'knock-out blow' to a phenomenon that has always been fluid and amorphous may prove beyond the Pakistani military, which has long been geared up mainly to fight an inter-state war with India and which remains ill-prepared to wage effective and sustained counter-insurgency.

By this analysis, containment would seem to remain the overall objective. This appears to be confirmed by a series of statements at the beginning of 2010 that the Pakistani military did not envisage further major offensives this year – most notably, in North Waziristan. Although substantial military operations have continued – for example, in Orakzai – the emphasis has appeared to be more on military 'exit strategies' from the areas where there were large-scale offensives during 2009.<sup>312</sup> Some experts view this as a serious mistake, calling for the territory gained to be held onto.<sup>313</sup> Others claim that the regular army is not the right body to play this role but bemoan the fact that there are still not adequately trained police or paramilitary forces available to do it instead.<sup>314</sup> Violent militant attacks have continued and recent reports suggest that the Pakistan Taliban is returning to parts of the FATA from which it had been ejected.<sup>315</sup> The reluctance of the Pakistani military to open up a major new front

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<sup>306</sup> "Pakistan arrests halt secret UN contacts with Taliban", *BBC News Online*, 19 March 2010

<sup>307</sup> C. Reuter, "Some birds with one stone", Afghanistan Analysts Network blog, 2 March 2010

<sup>308</sup> M. Waldman, "The sun in the sky: The relationship between Pakistan's ISI and Afghan insurgents", Discussion Paper 18, Crisis States Research Centre, London School of Economics, June 2010. The report also states (p8-9) that some of the Taliban leaders detained earlier this year were quickly released.

<sup>309</sup> "US struggles to craft Pakistan policy", *IJSS Strategic Comments*, February 2010. See also: M. Qadri, "Public perceptions of Pakistan's war against the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan", Pakistan Security Research Unit, University of Bradford, Brief No. 54, 10 December 2009

<sup>310</sup> A. Khan, "Conceptualizing AfPak: The prospects and perils", Asia Programme Paper ASP PP2010/01, Chatham House, January 2010, p24

<sup>311</sup> "Invincible Taleban routed in raids on border camps", *Times*, 1 March 2010

<sup>312</sup> "Pakistan resists call to squeeze Taliban", *Financial Times*, 17 March 2010

<sup>313</sup> H. Mullick, "Holding Pakistan: The second phase of Pakistan's counterinsurgency operations", [www.foreignaffairs.com](http://www.foreignaffairs.com), 24 March 2010

<sup>314</sup> S. Zaidi, "Pakistan's anti-Taliban counter-insurgency", *RUSI Journal*, February/March 2010, p17

<sup>315</sup> "Pakistan faces Taliban resurgence", *BBC News Online*, 10 May 2010

in North Waziristan may in time also be reconsidered, particularly now that it seems confirmed that the Pakistan Taliban had a hand in the failed bomb attack in New York in early May, and if US pressure to act becomes impossible to ignore.<sup>316</sup>

The current Pakistan Government, led by President Asif Zardari, is, like its Afghan counterpart, weak and beleaguered. This follows the loss, after a ruling by the Supreme Court, of Zardari's immunity from prosecution on corruption charges. Although warnings that the militants might capture the state have been shown to be excessively alarmist, some analysts have expressed serious concern about the possible consequences of a growing militant presence in Punjab.<sup>317</sup> A long-term future for the Zardari Government certainly cannot be predicted with any confidence and some variation on the theme of 'state failure' cannot be ruled out.<sup>318</sup> And while Pakistani public opinion appears to have shifted in favour of more assertive action against the country's home-grown militants, it is fickle and there is a deep strain of anti-Americanism that could easily trump other considerations again in future – for example, when humanitarian needs arising from military operations are not met or when civilian casualties occur. A 2009 Pew survey found that 64% of the public viewed the US as an enemy.<sup>319</sup> There are already claims that the international community has not done enough to assist efforts to provide for and resettle the internally displaced people (IDPs) generated by the Pakistani military's offensives during 2009.<sup>320</sup> Reports that Pakistan is now being more regularly consulted before US drone attacks are carried out could prove a double-edged sword in terms of public opinion, given that they signify a closer alliance.

Pakistanis will need continuous reassurance that the US is not going to abandon them, turning from ally to foe, as it is commonly believed to have done on more than one occasion, including following the withdrawal of the Soviet Union from Afghanistan in 1989. However, it is a moot point whether the massive injection of funds being made by the US will provide that reassurance. One analyst has asserted that Pakistan takes for granted that the US will begin its pull-out from Afghanistan in mid-2011, "and probably complete it by 2012."<sup>321</sup>

Although the official response of the Pakistan Government was positive, significant parts of the political and security establishment are hostile to the very concept of 'AfPak', largely because it feels Pakistan is being unfairly stigmatised by its inclusion.<sup>322</sup> That establishment believes that the crisis in the FATA results from what is happening in Afghanistan, rather than the other way around. There is also unhappiness that India has been able to avoid the stigma of inclusion within the formal ambit of the policy (see below).<sup>323</sup> One analyst has concluded:

Dependent on massive infusions of American cash and equipment, it cannot afford to defy Washington openly, even when obliged to act against its own interests; covertly, it always seeks to retain a margin of autonomy, so long as confrontation with India persists. It will harry its own citizens at US behest, but not to the point of setting the

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<sup>316</sup> "Return from the grave is more than humiliating for Pakistan", *Financial Times*, 5 May 2010

<sup>317</sup> "Punjab Taliban strike again", *Jane's Terrorism and Security Monitor*, 8 April 2010

<sup>318</sup> A. Khan, "Conceptualizing AfPak: The prospects and perils", Asia Programme Paper ASP PP2010/01, Chatham House, January 2010, p22

<sup>319</sup> "US struggles to craft Pakistan policy", *IISS Strategic Comments*, February 2010

<sup>320</sup> ICG, "Pakistan's IDP crisis: Challenges and opportunities", *Asia Briefing No. 93*, June 2009

<sup>321</sup> K. Fischer, "The AfPak strategy: Reactions in Pakistan", Afghanistan Analysts Network policy briefing, March 2010, p9

<sup>322</sup> *Ibid*, p5

<sup>323</sup> A. Khan, "Conceptualizing AfPak: The prospects and perils", Asia Programme Paper ASP PP2010/01, Chatham House, January 2010, p19; "Pakistan pessimism at Obama revamp", *BBC News Online*, 27 March 2009

tribal areas irretrievably on fire, or helping to extirpate all resistance across the border.<sup>324</sup>

### ***Can the diverse objectives of the 'AfPak policy' be reconciled?***

Many have called in the past for improved co-ordination of security and development assistance and hope has been expressed that the AfPak policy can deliver this.<sup>325</sup> However, others point to possible downsides. A number of international aid agencies have expressed their concerns about a further “militarisation of aid” in Afghanistan.<sup>326</sup> Khan has argued that military-led programmes through the Provincial Reconstruction Teams and Quick Impact Projects in the south of Afghanistan have too often been ineffective and divisive, adding: “According to UN security maps, Afghanistan’s Pashtun belt is now out of bounds for neutral humanitarian/aid workers.”<sup>327</sup> She went on to call for “development projects that are not defined by and subservient to security concerns” and for “an aid package that is delinked from the counterinsurgency budget”.<sup>328</sup> For now, it does not seem as if the trend is in this direction.

Another concern that has been expressed is whether, by appearing to ‘reward’ areas where there has been intense conflict, the increased development assistance being made available might heighten resentment outside the border areas of the two countries and, indeed, create incentives for further violence in areas that feel excluded. This illustrates a wider question: Is ‘AfPak’ really a policy for the border areas, or is it genuinely for Afghanistan and Pakistan as a whole?<sup>329</sup> On the other hand, it does appear as if the FATA had been relatively neglected in previous years. A senior USAID official was quoted as estimating that between 2001 and 2007 only about 6% of US economic aid to Pakistan had gone into projects there.<sup>330</sup>

Some analysts also worry that the US and the UK have increasingly conflated, conceptually and in practice, counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency approaches to Afghanistan and Pakistan, when these two “models of warfare” are far from automatically complementary. They point to the use of counter-terrorism methods against Pashtun insurgents – for example, escalating US drone attacks in the Pakistani border areas against Pakistan Taliban leaders – that are more likely, in their view, to hinder than help win ‘hearts and minds’.<sup>331</sup> At the heart of this debate are disputes about how far global jihadism and local anti-occupation sentiment have become fused in the border areas.

Others note that the US-defined timeframe with regard to beginning troop withdrawals from Afghanistan does appear highly optimistic in terms of achieving development objectives. The military campaign may, as it has in the past, struggle to ‘clear and hold’ – the necessary preconditions for ‘build’.<sup>332</sup> Some are arguing that events in Marjah district show that this is happening already. An end to the fighting is certainly still far off.<sup>333</sup> The ICG has described the economy of the border areas as “shattered”. There are hundreds of thousands of IDPs to resettle. Changing all this will take years, not months.<sup>334</sup> Actual processes of aid

<sup>324</sup> T. Ali, “Obama at war”, *New Left Review*, January/February 2010, p112

<sup>325</sup> J. Ingram and C. Lockhart, “It’s about development, stupid”, *World Today*, February 2010, p12

<sup>326</sup> “Afghan aid risks militarisation”, *BBC News Online*, 27 January 2010

<sup>327</sup> A. Khan, “Conceptualizing AfPak: The prospects and perils”, Asia Programme Paper ASP PP2010/01, Chatham House, January 2010, p13

<sup>328</sup> *Ibid*, p27

<sup>329</sup> *Ibid*, p25

<sup>330</sup> K.A. Kronstadt and K. Katzman, “Islamist militancy in the Pakistan-Afghanistan border region and US policy”, Congressional Research Service, 21 November 2008, p17

<sup>331</sup> M. Boyle, “Do counterterrorism and counterinsurgency go together?” *International Affairs*, Vol. 86, No. 2, March 2010

<sup>332</sup> “Drug claim clouds diplomatic relations”, *Financial Times*, 7 April 2010

<sup>333</sup> “US warns of ‘hard Afghan fight’”, *BBC News Online*, 9 March 2010

<sup>334</sup> ICG, *Pakistan: Countering militancy in FATA*, Asia Report No. 178, 21 October 2009, p7

disbursement are often frustratingly slow. In addition, both the Afghan and the Pakistani authorities may struggle to absorb the large sums of money that are set to be provided. A January 2010 report by USAID noted that over the two previous years only \$15.5 million of a \$45 million package for Pakistan's tribal areas had been spent.<sup>335</sup> There are already warning signs regarding the new reconstruction and stabilisation funding for Afghanistan (see above).

### **Different Taliban?**

Some observers have also alleged that there is an understandable but nonetheless potentially damaging inconsistency within current Western conceptions of the AfPak policy, in that there is a willingness increasingly to contemplate, sooner or later, peace processes involving 'moderate Taliban', or indeed, the leadership as a whole, in Afghanistan, but a continuing outright rejection of anything similar in Pakistan.<sup>336</sup>

This is a fraught and complex issue. With regard to the Afghan Taliban, some argue that the conceptual distinction that is often made between 'moderates' and 'irreconcilables' is largely illusory, suggesting that negotiations are therefore pointless. However, others claim that distinctions can be made, but that they are better characterised as those between 'pragmatists' (the vast majority) and 'fanatics' (much smaller in number).<sup>337</sup>

The Pakistani authorities have been heavily criticised in the West for doing deals with the Pakistan Taliban in the past.<sup>338</sup> Many have said that they were bad deals that ultimately fuelled, rather than quelled, the insurgency. But does this mean that there can be no deals of any kind in future? Gareth Price has noted that the offensive in late 2009 by the Pakistani military in South Waziristan against Pakistan Taliban forces led by Hakimullah Mehsud was facilitated by deals with local rivals of the Pakistan Taliban that nonetheless support the Afghan Taliban.<sup>339</sup> Another expert, Haider Mullick wrote in March 2010:

As the security situation in these areas improves, the army will turn to the third initiative of its holding plan: reintegrating the Pakistani Taliban. Unlike US military leaders who are still waiting for the Afghan Taliban to be weak enough for negotiations to be feasible, the Pakistani generals say that they have already gained the initiative against the Pakistani Taliban and are ready to talk now.<sup>340</sup>

The underlying reason for Western hostility to peace deals with parts or all of the Pakistan Taliban appears to be the conviction that it represents an existential threat to a nuclear-armed state in a way that its Afghan counterpart does not.<sup>341</sup> A senior US official was reported in May as having said: "The Pakistani Taliban gets treated like Al Qaeda [...] We aim to destroy it. The Afghan Taliban is different."<sup>342</sup>

However, given that both Talibans are predominantly Pashtun in composition and share a similar social composition, can such a rigidly differentiated approach be justified or sustained? If it was true, as the Pakistani military has sometimes claimed, that the Pakistan Taliban has been broken by its offensives over the last year, perhaps it could. However, the evidence suggests that reports of its demise are premature and a process of militant reconfiguration is currently under way. In this event, further disputes over the advisability or

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<sup>335</sup> "US struggles to craft Pakistan policy", *IJSS Strategic Comments*, February 2010

<sup>336</sup> P. Rogers, "AfPak: The unwinnable war", *OpenDemocracy.net*, 16 October 2009

<sup>337</sup> "We need to offer the Taliban more than just money", *Financial Times*, 5 February 2010

<sup>338</sup> "Pakistan see Afghan Taliban role", *BBC News Online*, 28 January 2010

<sup>339</sup> "Clear, hold, build", *The World Today*, December 2009

<sup>340</sup> H. Mullick, "Holding Pakistan: The second phase of Pakistan's counterinsurgency operations", [www.foreignaffairs.com](http://www.foreignaffairs.com), 24 March 2010

<sup>341</sup> See, for example, the statement by the former Foreign Secretary, David Miliband, at HC Deb 1 December 2009 c957

<sup>342</sup> "An enemy that may mutate and even grow", *New York Times*, 16 May 2010

otherwise of peace deals between the Pakistani authorities and parts, if not all, of the Pakistan Taliban appear likely to recur in future.

### ***Can ordinary Pashtuns be won over?***

Matthew Green, writing in the *Financial Times*, has said of the Afghan insurgency:

The critique runs like this: today's conflict is the latest phase in a 30-year war in which Afghan factions have skilfully played off superpowers. Fighting grinds on because Afghanistan lacks a system for distributing power in such a way that all communities have a stake. The insurgency represents a loose coalition of the marginalised. Under this view, Gen McChrystal's plan to separate "the people" and "insurgents" defies logic: the people are the insurgents.<sup>343</sup>

Others are sceptical of this kind of argument, pointing to opinion polls that have found that the number of Afghans who would prefer a return to government by the Afghan Taliban to be very small.<sup>344</sup> They argue that it must follow that many Pashtuns share this view. Similar debates continue with regard to Pashtuns living on the Pakistani side of the border.

Another issue that comes up in the context of debates about where the allegiances of Pashtuns lie is whether, even now, there is enough understanding on the part of Western governments involved in the region of the complex political, social, economic and cultural dynamics at work, not least in the Pashtun border areas, to successfully win over 'hearts and minds'. Green, presumably, would argue that there is not.<sup>345</sup> If right, by extension this could also have worrying implications for the success of efforts to talk with parts of the Afghan Taliban. Khan reports that the US Army's Human Terrain System, set up to give it this local understanding, has been subject to criticism, including on the grounds that it is skewed by its links to intelligence-gathering efforts in support of combat operations.<sup>346</sup>

In addition, despite recent statements by coalition allies in Afghanistan that civilian protection is more than ever part of their core mission, and figures from the UN showing that the number of civilian casualties in 2009 was down on 2008, it remains uncertain how far ordinary Pashtuns can be persuaded that any level of casualties is justified. The use of air power can be minimised and its precision improved, but it cannot be eliminated. Nor, realistically, can human error. In March it was reported that US special forces had been brought within a more unified command structure following a number of operations by them in Afghanistan in which there had been a significant loss of civilian life.<sup>347</sup> As for the use of US drones, the trend is still, for now, sharply upward, with both al-Qaeda and Taliban militants their target.<sup>348</sup>

The operations of the Pakistani military in Swat and South Waziristan during 2009 showed that their counter-insurgency capabilities remain patchy, taking a significant toll on civilians and creating hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons (IDPs). Meanwhile, the level of militant attacks across the country rose – arguably partly because *Pashtunwali*, the

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<sup>343</sup> "McChrystal fails to acknowledge 'the people' are the insurgents", *Financial Times*, 28 January 2010

<sup>344</sup> See, for example, a poll commissioned by the BBC, ABC News and Germany's ARD in January 2010. Available at: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/bsp/hi/pdfs/11\\_01\\_10\\_afghanpoll.pdf](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/bsp/hi/pdfs/11_01_10_afghanpoll.pdf)

<sup>345</sup> For an example of a US attempt to intervene in Afghan tribal politics in Nangarhar Province that allegedly went wrong, see: "US military runs into Afghan tribal politics after deal with Pashtuns", *Washington Post*, 10 May 2010

<sup>346</sup> A. Khan, "Conceptualizing AfPak: The prospects and perils", Asia Programme Paper ASP PP2010/01, Chatham House, January 2010, p14

<sup>347</sup> "General Stanley McChrystal reins in special forces after raids kill civilians", *The Times*, 17 March 2010; "NATO admits killing Afghan women", *BBC News Online*, 5 April 2010

<sup>348</sup> P. Rogers, "Washington vs Waziristan: The far enemy", [www.opendemocracy.net](http://www.opendemocracy.net), 14 May 2010



Pashtun code of honour, demanded revenge.<sup>349</sup> Some commentators worry that resort to 'anti-Taliban' tribal militias (*arbakai*), based on the idea of a 'Pashtun awakening' similar to that which emerged in Iraq, may increase, rather than reduce, the level of civilian casualties.

There are signs that the Afghan Taliban has adjusted its strategy in the battle for 'hearts and minds'. Mullah Omar has urged fighters to maintain good relations with the population:

This is our mission: to keep people and their property safe. Do not let those people that love money take our local people's property and cause them problems. Keep good relationships with your friends and the local people, and do not let the enemy divide/separate you.<sup>350</sup>

[...] mujahideen, commanders and the provincial authority should have good relationships with local people so that the mujahideen will always be welcomed by local people and they should always help them.<sup>351</sup>

The guidance issued called for suicide bombers to be used only for important targets, and for civilian casualties to be avoided. He has also repeated prohibitions on certain other tactics, such as taking children to conduct *jihad*, forcibly taking personal weapons, punishment by maiming, searching homes and kidnapping people for money.<sup>352</sup>

There are some signs that Omar's guidance is being followed. Suicide bombings may have been producing fewer casualties, certainly in comparison with bombings in Pakistan, where no such restraint has been shown. A few of the most brutal commanders have been removed by Mullah Omar. Haji-Khan Muhammad Khan, a tribal elder from Shawalikot, a rural district of Kandahar Province, was quoted as saying:

There is a tremendous change in the Taliban's behaviour. They don't behead people or detain those they suspect of spying without an investigation. But sometimes they still make mistakes, people still fear them, but now generally they behave well with people. They had to change because the leadership of the Taliban did not want to lose the support of the grass roots.<sup>353</sup>

On the other hand, although there is also evidence to suggest that Mullah Omar is trying to assert greater authority over local commanders, control from the centre extends over certain areas only and many local commanders are not acting on the Afghan Taliban's new strategy.

Some sceptics go as far as to doubt whether the Pashtuns will, in practice, ever settle wholeheartedly for fuller incorporation into the political and administrative life of either of the two states, Afghanistan and Pakistan. For example, the absence of the Pakistani regular army from the border areas was part of the deal that secured Pashtun allegiance to the Pakistani state. The end of this arrangement since 2002 has, it is argued, "breached the social contract between the state and its borderland communities."<sup>354</sup> With regard to Afghanistan, others assert that the 'top-down' focus on state building that has dominated Western approaches for most of the period since 2002 has been found wanting and that more success can be had in winning over ordinary Pashtuns if they acknowledge the "local

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<sup>349</sup> A. Khan, "Conceptualizing AfPak: The prospects and perils", Asia Programme Paper ASP PP2010/01, Chatham House, January 2010, p21

<sup>350</sup> Quoted in Michael Flynn, *State of the Insurgency: Trends, Intentions and Objectives*, ISAF, 22 December 2009, p6

<sup>351</sup> Quoted in Jane's Terrorism and Insurgency Centre, JTIC Country Briefing – Afghanistan 1 November 2009

<sup>352</sup> Michael Flynn, *State of the Insurgency: Trends, Intentions and Objectives*, ISAF, 22 December 2009, p6

<sup>353</sup> Taliban Using Lighter Touch To Win Allies", *New York Times*, 21 January 2010

<sup>354</sup> A. Khan, "Conceptualizing AfPak: The prospects and perils", Asia Programme Paper ASP PP2010/01, Chatham House, January 2010, p21

nature of power” in the country and formulate strategies that go much more with that grain.<sup>355</sup> This has been increasingly acknowledged by the coalition allies in recent years.

Many observers argue that one of the main causes of turmoil and insecurity in Pakistan’s FATA is that constitutional and democratic rights have been suppressed there. In a recent report, Amnesty International described north western Pakistan as a “rights-free zone”.<sup>356</sup> While this is in many ways a persuasive argument, there is no guarantee that modernised, fully democratic, federal arrangements on both sides of the border would function effectively or be sufficient by themselves to stabilise the region. Others argue that deep economic and social inequalities fuel support for militants in Pakistan, including in the border areas, and that these must also be tackled.<sup>357</sup> An important consideration, albeit one that is difficult to gauge, is the degree to which the current dispensation suits the main protagonists to the conflict in the Pakistani border areas. For example, both the militants and the army may well prefer the current lack of effective democratic representation in the FATA, as it leaves both less restricted in terms of their freedom of manoeuvre. Ongoing debates about changing the political and legal status of the FATA remain heavily contested.<sup>358</sup> Recent constitutional changes in Pakistan, important as they were in many regards, did not address the FATA’s anomalous position, despite protests from most of the political parties operating there.<sup>359</sup>

Afghan Pashtuns are, in the main, less ambivalent about Afghanistan than their cousins are about Pakistan. However, this may in part be because many of them have a default view of Afghanistan as a ‘Pashtun state’. In addition, their enthusiasm is undoubtedly greater when they do not feel marginalised from the political process, as many have done since the fall of the Taliban in 2001. President Karzai is Pashtun, as are many of those in office, but his Government is not seen as inclusive of all the Pashtun tribes in the country. For example, Pashtuns from the South are seriously under-represented in the new Afghan army.<sup>360</sup>

### ***Pakhtunkhwa?***<sup>361</sup>

A minority of observers have contemplated, if the AfPak policy ends in failure, instead establishing a *de facto*, if not *de jure*, independent ‘Pashtunistan’, or Pakhtunkhwa as it is known in Pashto? This is a concept with a long history. There are claims that nationalist sentiment is still bubbling just beneath the surface in the Pashtun areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan, and that whatever popular support there is for the Afghan and Pakistan Taliban among Pashtuns is based more on this sentiment than on a deep and abiding attraction to *jihadi* militancy.

Owen Bennett-Jones has written:

Most of the Islamic militants have a strictly religious agenda; above all else they want Sharia Law. Many people living in the NWFP, however, harbour a different dream. Whilst they are generally very devout, they are more interested in a nationalist demand – for an independent Pashtun homeland. One of the key questions facing Pakistan is whether in the future the Islamists making religious demands will join forces with

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<sup>355</sup> S. Jones, “It takes the villages. Bringing change from below in Afghanistan”, [www.foreignaffairs.com](http://www.foreignaffairs.com), May/June 2010

<sup>356</sup> “As if hell fell on me’: The human rights crisis in northwest Pakistan”, Amnesty International, 10 June 2010

<sup>357</sup> O. Bennett-Jones, “Pakistan inequality fuelling Taliban support”, *BBC News Online*, 13 May 2010

<sup>358</sup> ICG, *Pakistan: Countering militancy in FATA*, Asia Report No. 178, 21 October 2009, p13

<sup>359</sup> These changes are discussed in section 2.2 of this paper. See: <http://www.allvoices.com/contributed-news/5521271-govt-to-be-pressed-for-fata-reforms-implementation/image/51151960-govt-not-sincere-in-fata-reforms>

<sup>360</sup> A. Khan, “Conceptualizing AfPak: The prospects and perils”, Asia Programme Paper ASP PP2010/01, Chatham House, January 2010, p24

<sup>361</sup> Sometimes also referred to as Paktunistan or Pukhtunistan

Pashtuns making nationalist demands. Should they ever become a united force then they could threaten the very integrity of Pakistan.<sup>362</sup>

A few commentators go so far as to allege that the AfPak policy, through its strong emphasis on the border areas, could be laying some of the groundwork, consciously or not, for an independent Pakhtunkhwa. While on occasions this prospect is viewed positively, more often the perspective is hostile.<sup>363</sup> One opponent of the idea writes:

[...] the ill-named AfPak strategy conjures up the political map of 'Pukhtunistan' [...] The Obama administration should not allow a misnomer conjured out of historical amnesia and ignorance of the region to become a self-fulfilling prophecy.<sup>364</sup>

Other commentators are much less persuaded that most ordinary Pashtuns are strongly motivated by nationalism. While there is no disputing that Pashtuns share a common cultural identity and a hostility to 'foreign domination', the same culture promotes internal rivalries as much as co-operation. When it does occur, the invocation of a common political identity may reflect pragmatic calculation as much as principle. By this analysis, the recent decision to rename NWFP in Pakistan 'Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa' (Khyber side of the land of the Pashtuns), which was supported by many Pakistani Pashtun politicians, can be viewed as reflecting an acknowledgement that unity for the entire 'Pashtun nation' is neither realistic nor a priority. This is despite the fact that opponents of the proposal have warned that a 'trojan horse' has been built that could lead to the eventual break-up of Pakistan. At first sight, given that the renaming does not even involve the FATA, the change does not much look like Pashtun nationalism 'on the move'.<sup>365</sup>

If a fully independent Pakhtunkhwa – one that dissolves the Durand Line – is ever to emerge, Afghan Pashtuns would have to make a decisive break with the Afghan state. Equally likely (or unlikely, depending on your view) might be an attempt to reunify the Pashtuns within a 'Greater Afghanistan'. Non-Pashtuns on both sides of the border would be highly unlikely to accept attempted Pashtun secession meekly. In Pakistan, it could give encouragement to other discontented ethnic groups to seek the same – for example, the Baluchis, with whom the Pashtuns could well end up vying for territory.

The US, along with those coalition allies willing to go along with such a scheme, would also probably have to be prepared to act as the security guarantors of an independent Pashtunistan, perhaps as they have effectively done with regard to (semi-independent) Iraqi Kurdistan. Neither the US nor the UK has given any indication that they would support redrawing the border, let alone back the creation of a Pashtunistan independent of both Pakistan and Afghanistan.<sup>366</sup> This is certainly not the purpose of the US's AfPak policy.

### ***Is the the 'AfPak policy' really a regional policy?***

This question has mainly been asked with regard to the absence of India from the 'AfPak' policy framework, but can be applied more broadly. When the Obama Administration was

<sup>362</sup> O. Bennett-Jones, "On the verge", *RUSI Journal*. February/March 2010, p5-6

<sup>363</sup> For a hostile view, see P. Escobar, "Welcome to Pashtunistan", *Asia Times Online*, 6-7 November 2009. Available at: <http://afpakwar.com/blog/archives/2052>. For a positive view, see M. Holmes, "Secessionist jihad: The Taliban's struggle for Pashtunistan", *Military Intelligence*, July-September 2008. Available at: [www.fas.org/irp/agency/army/mipb/2008\\_03.pdf](http://www.fas.org/irp/agency/army/mipb/2008_03.pdf).

<sup>364</sup> A. Khan, "Conceptualizing AfPak: The prospects and perils", Asia Programme Paper ASP PP2010/01, Chatham House, January 2010, p25

<sup>365</sup> However, it should be noted that the Pakistan Taliban saw the move as significant, launching a suicide attack on a rally held in Lower Dir to celebrate the proposed name-change, killing at least 43 people. "Suicide bomb at Pakistan rally", *BBC News Online*, 5 April 2010

<sup>366</sup> For a recent statement on the Durand Line by David Miliband, the former Foreign Secretary, see HC Deb 1 December 2009 c957

undertaking its review of policy on Afghanistan and Pakistan at the beginning of 2009, some observers urged it to ensure that India was incorporated into the new regional framework. However, India resisted this incorporation. This is one reason why the Pakistan Government has never endorsed the 'AfPak' formulation.

There are fears that the 'absence' of India could have serious consequences for the viability of the AfPak policy. Traditionally, Pakistan's main strategic goal has been – working with Afghan allies, including the Taliban – to create a pliant neighbour which will ensure that it has 'strategic depth' in relation to India. Pakistan has become increasingly anxious in recent years about growing Indian influence in Afghanistan. It is reported to be Afghanistan's fifth-largest donor.<sup>367</sup> Paul Rogers believes that it is a crucial issue for Pakistan's political and security establishment:

It is difficult to overestimate the vulnerability that is felt in Islamabad over Indian influence in Afghanistan. In this context it is important to note that for Pakistan strategists, controlling the (Pakistani) Taliban based in the country's western regions is essential to state security; but this does not remotely mean that Islamabad wants to limit (Afghan) Taliban power across the border. Quite the reverse, since these militias offer almost the only counter to the rise of Indian influence in Afghanistan and the risk this carries of Pakistan losing its one regional asset in the decades-long confrontation with its giant neighbour. For the United States this remains a formidable difficulty. If your supposed ally in the region cannot afford to see you achieve your political goals because they run counter to its own perceived security needs, what price the possibility of victory – no matter how many troops are surged into Afghanistan?<sup>368</sup>

With regard to the Indian perspective, Shashank Joshi argues that India has long had an AfPak strategy of its own – well before Western countries adopted the neologism. He asserts pessimistically that it would be a mistake for Indian policy-makers to assume that the country could ever assuage Pakistani anxieties sufficiently over Afghanistan to change Pakistan's fundamentally hostile stance towards India, which it has invested too much in to give up.<sup>369</sup> India is highly suspicious of ideas that 'moderate' Afghan Taliban should be engaged with and is reportedly concerned that this could place it at odds with the US, with which it has sought to strengthen relations over the last decade.<sup>370</sup>

One analyst has gone so far as to argue:

The Americans want to leave – and if the price of departure is leaving behind an emboldened Pakistan supporting a militant structure that can target India, the Americans seem fine with making India pay that price.<sup>371</sup>

This prospect could lead to India reviving its ties to those Afghan forces which had a prominent role in the non-Pashtun 'Northern Alliance' that played a role in the overthrow of the Afghan Taliban in late 2001/early 2002.<sup>372</sup>

Can the AfPak policy, as currently conceived, successfully square the 'Indian circle'? Despite more hopeful signs recently, it is a tall order. Talks aimed at resuming the 'composite dialogue' between the two countries, halted after the November 2008 attacks in Mumbai, led

<sup>367</sup> S. Joshi, "India's Af-Pak strategy", *RUSI Journal*, February/March 2010, p20

<sup>368</sup> P. Rogers, "AfPak: The unwinnable war", *OpenDemocracy.net*, 16 October 2009

<sup>369</sup> S. Joshi, "India's Af-Pak strategy", *RUSI Journal*, February/March 2010, p20

<sup>370</sup> The main achievement of this *rapprochement* has been the civil nuclear co-operation deal that India agreed with the US. Pakistan, having unsuccessfully sought an equivalent deal, has persuaded China to provide further support for its own civil nuclear programme.

<sup>371</sup> P. Zeihan, "Three points of view: The US, Pakistan and India", [www.stratfor.com](http://www.stratfor.com), 28 April 2010

<sup>372</sup> "Karzai visit seen as a chance for India to voice fears of a deal with the Taliban", *Guardian*, 26 April 2010

by the armed militant group Lashkar-e-Taiba, took place in late February 2010.<sup>373</sup> This suggested to some that the Indian Government had accepted that it has a role to play in seeking to reassure Pakistan. But it is too early to say with any confidence that renewed dialogue will produce concrete results – in April, Indian Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, suggested that a further round of talks would not take place until there had been fuller Pakistani co-operation in bringing the Mumbai attackers to justice -- and fears remain that any such moves, which are not universally supported within India's political class, would be rapidly sidelined again by another major militant attack on Indian soil.<sup>374</sup> Days after the resumption of the dialogue was announced in February, at least 16 people were killed in a bomb attack in the Indian city of Pune.<sup>375</sup> High-level contacts continue but a major crisis between India and Pakistan could happen at any time and prompt the latter to draw down the number of troops currently deployed to its western border, so that the eastern border can be reinforced. The inevitable result would be a scaling down of counter-insurgency operations against the Pakistan Taliban and its allies.

Other countries which observers have worried may not be sufficiently embraced by the regional policy framework are China, Iran, Russia and the Gulf States, including Saudi Arabia. The Pakistan Government also takes this view.<sup>376</sup> Calls by some analysts for the establishment of a 'contact group' that includes these countries have not to date been heeded.<sup>377</sup> However, all were present, with the exception of Iran, at the London conference on Afghanistan in January. The then Foreign Secretary, David Miliband, described its absence as "a mistake on the Iranian part", but said that it remained welcome to join international discussions on the future of Afghanistan.<sup>378</sup> Iran's parlous relations with the US are probably sufficient explanation for its absence. Iran has a strong interest in a stable Afghanistan, especially since Iran is the major trade route for Afghan narcotics and levels of addiction are high in Iran itself. At present elements in Iran are supporting the Afghan Taliban in order to discomfort the US and its allies, even though the official policy of the Iranian Government is to support President Karzai. There have been recent reports of significant provision of weaponry to the Afghan Taliban from Iran and insurgent activity on that border is on the increase.

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