

# LOYA PAKTIA'S INSURGENCY: THE HAQQANI NETWORK AS AN AUTONOMOUS ENTITY

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Within the post-2001 insurgency, Loya Paktia (Greater Paktia)<sup>1</sup> represents a quasi-autonomous region. Its three constituent provinces, Paktia, Paktika and Khost, are one of the three major Pashtun regions of the country, along with Southern (sometimes called South-Western) Afghanistan around Kandahar and Eastern Afghanistan around Jalalabad. Located a relatively easy two and a half hours' drive south-east of Kabul, with only one pass to cross, it is the Pashtun region closest to the Afghan capital. During the regime of the Soviet-backed People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) and the subsequent *mujahidin* and Taliban regimes, the three provinces constituted a semi-official administrative unit, a "region" (Dari/Pashto: *tanzima*) or "zone".

Loya Paktia is inhabited by a number of Pashtun tribes, the most important ones being the Ahmadzai, Zadran, Zazi, Kharoti, Mangal, Sabari, Suleimankhel, Tani and Wazir and the smaller tribes of the Khost basin, sometimes put under one label as Khostwal. There are also small Tajik and Sikh minorities, mainly in urban areas, as well as small Shia groups, among both Pashtuns and Tajiks. Most South-Eastern Pashtun tribes are distinct from their Southern and Eastern brethren. Except for the Ahmadzai, the Kharoti and the Suleimankhel who are Ghilzai, they belong to neither of the two most famous Pashtun tribal "confederations", the Durrani and the Ghilzai.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Paktia, Paktika and Khost were a single province prior to the 1978 coup d'état. Paktika was established by the pro-Soviet government in 1979 by merging the southern part of Paktia (the Loy Wuluswali of Urgun) with the Suleimankhel-inhabited Loy Wuluswali of Katawaz hitherto belonging to Ghazni province. Khost was upgraded from a Loy Wuluswali (within Paktia) to a full province in 1985, also during the PDPA regime.

<sup>2</sup> Those tribes mainly belong to the Karlani (or Karlanri) confederation. However, this part of their genealogy does not seem to be relevant any more. When the author asked random Loya Paktia Pashtuns, hardly anyone knew this term at all. In general, tribal genealogies are often ambiguous. The Khugiani, for example, are often perceived as Durrani in Southern Afghanistan, while elsewhere they are considered

The non-Ghilzai tribes of the South-East live mainly in mountain valleys. The limited space for settlement provides that they are relatively small and closely knit. Their traditional tribal institutions—the tribal leaders (the *khan*), the tribal intermediaries with government (the *malik*), the tribes' egalitarian (but male-only) decision-making body, the *jirga*, and their enforcement organ, the volunteer-based *arbakai* (plural: *arbaki*)—are significantly stronger than those of the lowland tribes. However, even among the South-Eastern Pashtuns these institutions have been partly weakened and superseded by powerful newcomers during almost 40 years of violence, coups d'état, civil war, occupation and resistance, mainly by former *mujahidin* commanders.<sup>3</sup> The South-Eastern Pashtuns strongly adhere to their ancient code of behaviour, the Pashtunwali, although it might differ slightly from tribe to tribe.

The Pashtuns of the South-East consider themselves as the traditional kingmakers in Kabul and are in fact deeply pro-government. This is mainly due to two historical events. First, the South-Eastern tribes, who in 1929 just had contributed to the overthrow of the reform-minded King Amanullah, revolted against his successor Habibullah II, a Tajik and the first non-Pashtun ruler since modern Afghanistan's emergence in 1747, and resurrected the Pashtun monarchy by helping General Nader Khan (ruled 1929-34) to ascend to the throne. Secondly, historiographers from the region also claim that the uprising against the PDPA regime started in Loya Paktia.<sup>4</sup> As a reward for their services to the kings, the tribes of Loya Paktia have been exempted from paying taxes and conscription by central governments for over 100 years and have also been free from most other forms of state influence. This feeling of power has contributed to an extremely strong sense of independence and self-confidence among the Loya Paktia Pashtuns.

Loya Paktia was never a stronghold of the Taliban movement, neither during their Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (1996-2001) nor in the phase of its new incarnation, the

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Ghilzai. Actually, the "Ghilzai" should be called "Ghilzi" because this is a plural, like Durrani. This paper, though, sticks to the familiar spelling.

<sup>3</sup> There are no real warlords in South-Eastern Afghanistan who control a significant and unified territory and exert quasi-autonomous power. For the discussion of warlords in Afghanistan, see for example: Antonio Giustozzi and Noor Ullah, "The Inverted Cycle: Kabul and the Strongmen's Competition for Control over Kandahar 2001–2006", *Central Asian Survey*, 26 (2007) 2, S. 167–84.

<sup>4</sup> It is claimed that the Zadran of Ziruk district already proclaimed *jihad* six days after the 27 April 1978 coup d'état. See: Gul Zarak Zadran, *De Afghanistan Tarikh: stergo-lidena khateruna, darsuna, 'ebratuna* [History of Afghanistan: witnessed impressions, lessons, warnings], Vol. 2, Kabul: Nomani, 1386 (2007), p. 206.

post-2001 neo-Taliban insurgency. As a movement that had emerged from the South-Western region (“Greater Kandahar”), it was alien to Loya Paktia. Furthermore, the leadership around Mullah Muhammad Omar, made *Amir-ul-momenin* by a gathering of *ulema* in Kandahar in 1996, had jealously protected its superiority in the movement, only allowing a few token non-Kandahari into their inner circle that really takes the decisions. The Taliban did not have to conquer most of Loya Paktia on their advance towards Kabul in 1995. They took Paktia, Paktika and Khost without a fight in the last days of January. Paktika’s large Suleimankhel tribe called them to take over the province’s centre, Sharana, after they had conquered Ghazni (on 20 January 1995)<sup>5</sup> from a particularly abusive *mujahidin* commander, Qari Baba. Khost town followed on 15 February. The mujahidin-led administration of the province went to receive the Taliban advance party at the Seta Kandao pass in neighboring Paktia, stepped down and handed over provincial affairs to the newcomers. Lacking a consistent supra-tribal leadership, the Loya Paktia tribes were hoping that the Taliban would put an end to the post-1992 political chaos in their region, and also assumed that they would support them in escaping the influence of the mainly non-Pashtun Northern Alliance<sup>6</sup> that ruled in Kabul. In some areas, however, the Taliban had to fight local forces like those of Hekmatyar’s Hezb-i Islami Afghanistan (Islamic Party of Afghanistan) in Eastern Khost in August 1996.<sup>7</sup>

#### *Loya Paktia’s four-pronged insurgency*

The post-2001 insurgency in Loya Paktia has not been homogeneous. It is composed of four different strands. There are two networks led by the Haqqani and the Mansur families respectively. Besides them, there are Taliban groups acting independently from these two networks, led directly by the Taliban *Rahbari* or ‘*Ali Shura* (Leadership or Supreme Council) or by individual influential commanders in Quetta. Organisationally

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<sup>5</sup> With the help of local Harakat fighters which, in this area, most probably would have been Mansur’s (on the Mansur network, see below in this article). Kamal Matinuddin, *The Taliban Phenomenon: Afghanistan 1994-1997*, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 71.

<sup>6</sup> Officially: National Islamic Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan, with Prof. Burhanuddin Rabbani as its political and Ahmad Shah Massud as its military leader.

<sup>7</sup> Interviews with the then deputy head of the Suleimankhel *shura* and with a leading Hazara who supported the Taliban takeover of Ghazni, Kabul, October 2007; Matinuddin, *The Taliban Phenomenon...* (note 143), pp. 259-60; Anthony Davis, “How the Taliban Became a Fighting Force”, in William Maley (ed.): *Fundamentalism Reborn? Afghanistan and the Taliban*, New York University Press, 1998, p. 65.

even further apart, separate structures of Hezb-i Islami have an insular operational base in Loya Paktia. While Taliban and Hezb structures are distinct from each other, the leadership of the former reportedly has instructed its fighters not to attack the fighters of the latter early on after 2001.

All insurgent organisations field a number of small armed groups headed by local commanders who mostly operate in their own tribal areas. Some control only a dozen men, others up to a few hundred. For Khost province alone, a number of some 150 commanders is given, 95 per cent of them linked to the Haqqani network.

In contrast to the Taliban's and Hezb's country-wide structures, the Haqqani and Mansur networks are regionally based and traditionally have not operated outside the South-Eastern region (including Ghazni province which is not part of Loya Paktia). Afghan security organs, however, claim that this changed. They point to a number of commando-style operations in Kabul in 2008 - the attack on the Serena Hotel on 14 January, the sniper attack against the VIP stand during the 7 Saur (27 April) National Day parade, and the suicide car-bomb attack on the Indian Embassy in Kabul on 7 July. For these extremely daring operations, the Haqqani network also claimed responsibility. The same network seems now to be operating in Logar, Eastern Ghazni and, to a lesser extent, Wardak too, coopting other jihadis (see Chapter 3 in this book). These developments were preceded by an expansion of the Haqqani networks in Loya Paktia at the expense of other insurgent structures. It took over parts of Taliban structures that were operated directly from Quetta before, and at least a part of the Mansur network's *ulema* base. Prominent Taliban commanders from the region like Mullah Kabir, the deputy chairman of the former Taliban Emirates' Council of Ministers and governor of Nangrahar—a Zadran from Nika district—left the region. While there were still two parallel Taliban structures in Loya Paktia in 2003—one run by Jalaluddin Haqqani, the head of the Haqqani network, the other led first by the Taliban Emirate's former Minister of Finance and Economy, Taher Anwari from Kulalgo village (in Zurmat district of Paktia province), and later by Kabir—this competition was decided in Haqqani's favour by October 2007, when Kabir was appointed head of the Taliban forces in Eastern Afghanistan.<sup>8</sup> Apart

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<sup>8</sup> Which put him into a new conflict with this region's other semi-autonomous insurgent group, the Tora Bora Front, another remnant of Hezb-e Islami/Khales, led by Khales' son Anwar-ul-Haq Mujahid.

from Haqqani's military strength, the fact that Kabir had been one of his sub-commanders during the *jihad* was supposed to have influenced the decision. Also other South-Eastern Taliban commanders like Maulawi Sedrazam, Kabir's deputy as governor, moved to the East. This also could indicate that the Haqqani network asserts some influence in Eastern Afghanistan now.

The Haqqani and Mansur networks divided operational areas in Loya Paktia among themselves, with one exception: both use the mountainous Shahikot area (in Zurmat) as a hideout and staging area. In contrast, there are overlaps between the different Taliban strands and Hezb-i Islami. For example, the Haqqani network also carries out operations in Sabari (a.k.a. Yaqubi) district (Khost province) which has a larger Hezb presence. But it is not clear whether this is result of some coordination or not. Furthermore, both the Haqqani and the Mansur networks and Hezb-i Islami have established influence across the border in Pakistan, in the Pashtun-inhabited region called the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). From the 1970s, they developed extensive links with the local tribal population, the Pakistani authorities—first of all the army and its Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI)—and various Islamist political parties. These links were reactivated after 2001 by the neo-Taliban and other insurgent groups that had only temporarily been paralysed by the US-led invasion of Afghanistan after 9/11.

### *One, two or many insurgencies?*

There has been a lot of argument about whether the Haqqani network is an integrated part or a distinct organisation within the Afghan insurgency. A Pentagon report issued in June 2008 talks of a “potential for two distinct insurgencies in Afghanistan”: apart from “a Kandahari-based insurgency dominated by the Taliban in the south (...) a more complex, adaptive insurgency in the east”, described as “a loose confederation of affiliates such as the Haqqani Network [note the capital “N” in Network – *the author*] and like-minded groups that are prepared to cooperate” with the mainstream Kandahari Taliban like al Qaida, Hezb-i Islami and the Pakistani groups Jaish-i-Muhammad, Lashkar-i-Tayba and Tehrik-i-Nafaz-i-Shariat-i-Muhammadi. Seth Jones of the Rand Corporation speaks about

“a range of insurgent groups such as (...) the Haqqani network”.<sup>9</sup> Already in late 2004, Kucera had quoted an anonymous<sup>10</sup> US defence official along the same lines, adding that these “two insurgencies (...) definitely talk, (...) have a common cause (...) coordinate at the strategic and operational level (...). They’ve kind of broken the country up and operate in one area and the other operates in a different area.”<sup>11</sup>

According to UN analysts in Kabul, the insurgency consists of “several distinct groups” with “numerous fault-lines” among each other (among them what they call the “Haqqani tribal organisation or HTO”), while other UN officials in the South-Eastern region call Jalaluddin and his son Serajuddin Haqqani “Taliban commanders”.<sup>12</sup> The UN Sanctions Committee also labels Haqqani an “active Taliban leader”.<sup>13</sup> These analyses also must have informed the Policy Action Group (PAG), a body formed in 2006 by the representatives of countries with troops in Southern Afghanistan (Canada, Netherlands, UK, US) and Afghan top politicians to develop a counter-insurgency strategy. PAG documents seen by the author also speak of the Haqqani Network as a separate entity in the insurgency. A British analyst concluded that the different insurgent groups are only under a “certain degree of central leadership”.<sup>14</sup>

Exactly how big this “certain degree” is remains uncertain. The background for this uncertainty is that Taliban structures in general remain extremely secretive and elusive. For obvious reasons, they are not very transparent, there is no regular contact with leading figures, and if they speak publicly they give a lot of contradictory information, so

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<sup>9</sup> “Report on Progress toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan”, Report to Congress in accordance with the 2008 National Defense Authorization Act (Section 1230, Public Law 110-181), June 2008, p. 10, [http://www.defenselink.mil/pubs/Report\\_on\\_Progress\\_toward\\_Security\\_and\\_Stability\\_in\\_Afghanistan\\_1230.pdf](http://www.defenselink.mil/pubs/Report_on_Progress_toward_Security_and_Stability_in_Afghanistan_1230.pdf) (last access: 17 Sept. 2008).; Seth G. Jones, “The State of the Afghan Insurgency: Testimony presented before the Canadian Senate National Security and Defence Committee on December 10, 2007”, p. 2, [http://www.rand.org/pubs/testimonies/2007/RAND\\_CT296.pdf](http://www.rand.org/pubs/testimonies/2007/RAND_CT296.pdf) (last access: 18 Sept. 2008).

<sup>10</sup> This is a general problem: Almost no insurgency-related information, even basic, is given in a way that it can be attributed. The author met a US military commander in an Afghan province who was not even ready to mention well-known names of Taliban commanders in his area of operations.

<sup>11</sup> Joshua Kucera, “Paving the Way to Peace – Counter-Insurgency in Afghanistan”, *Jane’s Defence Weekly*, 15 Dec. 2004, p. 26.

<sup>12</sup> Author’s interviews, Kabul, April 2007 and April 2008, Gardez, October 2007.

<sup>13</sup> “The Consolidated List of the United Nations Security Council’s al-Qaida and Taliban Sanctions Committee”, 14 Mar. 2008, <http://www.un.org/sc/committees/1267/consolidatedlist.htm#talibanind#talibanind> (last access: 18 Sep 2008).

<sup>14</sup> Paul Rogers, “The Afghan Summer of War”, *Oxford Research Group: International Security Monthly Briefing*, Sept. 2006, p. 3.

that it is not clear what is truth and what propaganda. Afghan and international analysts largely agree that there are four insurgents' councils (*shura*) below the leadership level—the “Amir”, Mullah Muhammad Omar Mujahid, and the Leadership Council—that direct day-to-day operations in certain geographical areas: the Quetta Shura for “Greater Kandahar” and the areas further west up to Herat, the Peshawar Shura for Eastern Afghanistan, the Haqqani-led Miramshah Shura for Loya Paktia and provinces north towards Kabul, and a separate *shura* for the North and North-East. Often the Leadership Council and the Quetta Shura are confused because they are based in the same area. There also seems to be a significant overlap of the membership of both.

Although it is mentioned often, it seems far from clear (at least to this author) whether Jalaluddin Haqqani is really a member of the Taliban Leadership Council, and if so, whether this council can convene so regularly that it really counts in decision-making. Also a report from May 2006 that Jalaluddin Haqqani has been appointed the overall Taliban “head of military operations” contradicts what is known about the general Taliban structure and might have been deliberately placed to boost Haqqani’s standing. Some Taliban leaders reject the notion that Jalaluddin Haqqani is the commander of all Taliban fighters, call Serajuddin Haqqani “a main commander” (not *the* main), and insist that he “always coordinates his actions with the Taliban and is completely subject to the Taliban’s [supreme council’s] discipline.”<sup>15</sup> The last part, however, sounds more like wishful thinking; other reports speak a different language. According to Mullah Abdussalam Zaeef, the Taliban’s former ambassador to Pakistan and currently one of the most prominent “reconciled” insurgents, “Jalaluddin Haqqani and Abdullatif Mansur both listen to Mullah Omar”, i.e. respect him as their spiritual leader, the *Amir-ul-momenin*. It has to be noted that he talks of “respect” towards a spiritual leadership, not about obedience to a commander in the military sense. The veteran Pakistani journalist Rahimullah Yusufzai reported that major commanders of the network endorsed Serajuddin Haqqani’s leadership role in 2005 and also “reiterated their trust in the

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<sup>15</sup> Syed Saleem Shahzad, “Secrets of the Taliban's success”, *Asia Times Online* (Hong Kong), 11 Sept. 2008, [http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South\\_Asia/JI11Df01.html](http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/JI11Df01.html) (last access: 17 Sept. 2008; this is an interview with the former Taliban deputy foreign minister Mullah Abduljalil); Syed Saleem Shahzad, “Iraq and Afghanistan: The changing face of resistance”, *Asia Times Online*, 23 June 2006, [http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle\\_East/HF23Ak02.html](http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle_East/HF23Ak02.html) (last access: 17 Sept. 2008).

leadership of Taliban leader Mullah Muhammad Omar”.<sup>16</sup> Note again: “trust”, not “subordination”. Even one Western intelligence source accessed by this author says that Jalaluddin Haqqani “always stood outside the Taliban chain-of-command”. Another US-based author describes the Haqqani network as based on “a more ethnically diverse fighter corps (e.g., Pashtuns, Uzbeks, Pakistani, Chechens, and “foreign Arabs”) that is operating out of Peshawar and Waziristan”.<sup>17</sup> The body directing its operations, the Miramshah Shura, appears to be composed not only of Afghans, but also of Pakistani Taliban and, possibly, foreign fighters. This makes it more of a transnational Jihadi body that transcends the mainly national orientation of the Kandahari mainstream Taliban. Consequently, this *shura* has the capability to operate independently of the Taliban Leadership Council. Its exact composition, however, remains largely unknown.

*The Haqqanis: ‘Taliban warlords’?*

The Haqqani network is the strongest insurgent structure in Loya Paktia and is responsible for most of the armed activities there.<sup>18</sup> An increasing number of analysts agree with those US and Afghan officials quoted in a US magazine report that Serajuddin Haqqani has become “the most active, aggressive and powerful [insurgent] commander along the border” between Afghanistan and Pakistan. A US commander in Afghanistan says: “Siraj[uddin] Haqqani is the one who is training, influencing, commanding and leading [...] Kidnappings, assassinations, beheading women, indiscriminate killings and suicide bombers – Siraj[uddin] is the one dictating the new parameters of brutality associated with Taliban senior leadership.”<sup>19</sup> The US military put a bounty of

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<sup>16</sup> Author’s interview, Kabul, Oct. 2007; Rahimullah Yusufzai, “Taliban refute defection reports”, *The News* (Islamabad), 16 Feb. 2005, p. 10.

<sup>17</sup> Robert C. Martinage: *The Global War on Terrorism: An Assessment*, [Washington]: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2008, [http://csbaonline.org/4Publications/PubLibrary/R.20080223.The\\_Global\\_War\\_on\\_/R.20080223.The\\_Global\\_War\\_on\\_.pdf](http://csbaonline.org/4Publications/PubLibrary/R.20080223.The_Global_War_on_/R.20080223.The_Global_War_on_.pdf) (last access: 17 Sept. 2008).

<sup>18</sup> On the structure of the Taliban movement, see: Thomas Ruttig, *Die Taleban nach Mulla Dadullah. Ihre Strukturen, ihr Programm - und ob man mit ihnen reden kann*, SWP-Aktuell 2007/A 31, Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, June 2007.

<sup>19</sup> Ron Moreau and Mark Hosenball, “Pakistan’s Dangerous Double Game”, *Newsweek*, 22 Sept. 2008, <http://www.newsweek.com/id/158861> (last access: 22 Sept. 2008); Bill Roggio, “Targeting Taliban commander Siraj Haqqani”, *The Long War Journal*, 20 Oct. 2007, [http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2007/10/targeting\\_taliban\\_co.php](http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2007/10/targeting_taliban_co.php) (last access: 1 Dec. 2008).

US\$200,000 on his head and published this on posters distributed all over the area covered by its Regional Command East.

The Haqqani network's main area of operations is the Zadran territory that stretches over nine tribally almost homogeneous districts at the border triangle of Paktia, Paktika and Khost provinces (see Map). This so-called Zadran Arc has direct access to the staging area in Zurmat district, and in fact constitutes a corridor to it from Pakistan through Spera, Gayan and Zurmat and further on to Ghazni and Logar provinces. The Shahikot area of Zurmat, theatre of the 2002 Operation Anaconda, and possibly the non-Zadran Sabari district—with small guerrilla groups led by commanders Muhammad Khan Gurbuz and Khenjo—are the only areas inside Afghanistan where Haqqani fighters are constantly present. In late 2007, US forces identified the Zambar area in the northern part of Sabari as the “main insurgent safe haven” in Khost province “for some time”.<sup>20</sup> There are even not any permanent bases in the Zadran Arc, including the Haqqanis' home village of Srana in Gerda Tserey district. Instead, most of the networks operations are carried from temporary staging areas set up by cross-border “patrols”, from safe houses in Loya Paktia villages or completely as cross-border attacks.

The network itself is led by the veteran Afghan Islamist and *mujahidin* commander Jalaluddin Haqqani, a Zadran Pashtun<sup>21</sup> from the Gerda Tserei area, an unofficial district of Paktia province, and one of his sons, Serajuddin Haqqani (a.k.a. “Khalifa”), born to the elder Haqqani's Arab wife. Owing to old age (he was most probably born between 1930 and 1938<sup>22</sup>) and illness, Serajuddin Haqqani has taken over the responsibility for day-to-

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<sup>20</sup> “ANSF-led combined force arrest suspected Taliban leaders in Khowst”, *Operation Enduring Freedom, Combined Joint Task Force - 101, Bagram Media Center*, 27 Dec. 2007, <http://www.cjtf-101.com/index.php/Press-Releases/ANSF-led-combined-force-arrest-suspected-Taliban-leaders-in-Khowst.html> (last access: 1 Dec. 2008).

<sup>21</sup> More precisely, the family belongs to the Sultankhel clan of the Mezi (a.k.a. Batkhel) subtribe of the Zadran.

<sup>22</sup> Ludwig W. Adamec, *Historical Dictionary of Afghanistan*, Metuchen, NJ and London: Scarecrow Press, 1991, p. 103, gives 1930 as his year of birth. Jere Van Dyk, *In Afghanistan: An American Odyssey*, San José, New York, Lincoln, Shanghai: Authors Choice Press, 1983, p. 96, gives an age of 43 for the autumn of 1981 when the author visited Haqqani (meaning that he would have been born in 1938). The UN Sanctions Committee gives 1942 as the year of birth, but that seems too late. See: “The Consolidated List...” (note 151); Syed Saleem Shahzad, “Secrets of the Taliban's success” (note 153) even gives an age of 58 years in 2008 (i.e. born in 1950!). S. Haqqani is said to be in his 20s or 30s, some sources give 34 in 2008. A UN source, however, put him at the age of 37 in July 2007. In June 2007 there were Afghan media reports, referring to intelligence sources, of J. Haqqani's death and burial in his home village. In a videotape released on 22 March 2008 on al-Jazeera, Haqqani rejected the reports of his demise. See:

day operations from his father. In February 2005 he identified himself as the head of the Taliban military committee for the provinces of Paktia, Paktika, Khost, Ghazni and Logar.<sup>23</sup>

Serajuddin is often is described as less ideological, but more radical (or ruthless) than his father; however he clearly lacks his standing. Jalaluddin Haqqani is still lending the authority of his familiar name and his long-standing resistance credibility to his son. This is meant to stabilise the network vis-à-vis possible challengers to the young Serajuddin's leading role. Indeed, Serajuddin's takeover was not accepted unanimously, even within the family. There were reports coming from the Afghan intelligence community that Ibrahim Omari, one of Jalaluddin Haqqani's three brothers—and as such senior to his nephew Serajuddin—tried to take over control over the networks fronts in the summer of 2007, but unsuccessfully. Since then, he seems to have withdrawn from the insurgency, but still lives in Pakistan. Until then, he had been reported as responsible for the networks liaising with Arab and Chechen fighters in Miramshah.<sup>24</sup>

Other members of the wider Haqqani family play a leading role in the network also. Among them is the second brothers, Haji Khalil. Some intelligence sources call Haji Maulawi Abdurrahman Zadran, a cousin of Jalaluddin Haqqani, the network's head of operations. The second son of Jalaluddin Haqqani, Badruddin, seems to be a commander in the network while the third, Nasruddin (also from his Zadran wife), is called a commander by some sources.<sup>25</sup> There are some individuals that are reported the

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"Taliban key commander Haqqani dies", *Bakhtar Information Agency* (Kabul), 13 June 2007, <http://www.bakhtarnews.com.af/default.asp?Lang=E&ContID=1702> (last access: 1 Dec. 2008);

"Commander Jalaluddin Haqqani is Dead?", *Pajhwok Afghan News* (Kabul), 14 June 2007, <http://www.pajhwak.com/viewstory.asp?lng=eng&id=37895> (last access: 1 Dec. 2008).

<sup>23</sup> Rahimullah Yusufzai, "Taliban refute..." (note 154). Afghan sources from the region reported for 2008 that there were parallel (rivalling) Taliban and Haqqani network structures in Logar and Wardak provinces.

<sup>24</sup> Claudio Franco, "A Taliban Resurgence: The Destabilization of Kabul?", *NEFA Foundation Terror Watch*, [www1.nefafoundation.org/miscellaneous/nefatalibankabul1107.pdf](http://www1.nefafoundation.org/miscellaneous/nefatalibankabul1107.pdf) (last access: 12 Dec. 2008).

Earlier, though, after Operation Anaconda in 2002, Ibrahim Haqqani had surrendered to the Afghan authorities, and was held under house arrest by the Afghan Ministry of Defence's South-Eastern zone representative in Logar province and later in Kabul where he met US officials. See also: Kathy Gannon, "U.S. prepares for final fight", *Associated Press*, 12 Mar 2002,

<http://careers.thedailycamera.com/news/terror/mar02/12aafgh.html> (last access: 3 Oct. 2008). The third brother, Ismail, was killed fighting the Soviets.

<sup>25</sup> Other sources say that Nasruddin is too young and stays at home. Author's interviews with serving and former Paktia officials, Oct. 2007 and Oct. 2008. Badruddin Haqqani was the one who denied his father's death in an interview with a private Afghan TV station. "Son of senior Taliban commander rejects his father's death", *Ariana TV* (Kabul), 15 June 2007.

network's deputy commanders: Sangin Zadrán operating in Spera, Maulawi Bakhta Jan, also a Zadrán from Gian district, operating from Urgun (Paktika), and Hakim Khan. None of them seems to belong to the Haqqani family.

Beyond this, there is very scarce information about how exactly the network is led. It is clear only that the operational planning is done by the so-called Miramshah Shura. But, again, the composition of this body is not known—including whether there are only the Haqqani sub-commanders or also representatives of the wider Taliban movement or even other insurgent groups. Reportedly, Janbaz Zadrán heads the Haqqanis' office in Miramshah. Together with Maulawi Gul Badar, a Wazir, he is said to be responsible for coordinating suicide attacks. Another Wazir, Maulawi Sadeq Nur, supposedly coordinates the deployment of car-bombs. There is only one report from early 2005 that mentions some other of the network's commanders' names—in connection with the endorsement of Serajuddin Haqqani as their commander; they are Maalim Jan, Ghani Muhammad, Maulawi Naeb-salar, Maulawi Abdurrahman (Zadrán), Maulawi Zaman, Haji Darin, Sher Muhammad. Also Sher Khan Mangal, a former provincial head of the Taliban intelligence, is reportedly among the most influential commanders.

*Where Haqqani came from.* Jalaluddin Haqqani was one of the earliest Afghan Islamists. He obtained his education first in a private *madrassa* in Afghanistan and later in the famous Dar-ul-Ulum Haqqania of Akora Khattak, situated halfway between Peshawar and the legendary Khyber Pass, in Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province. With the first group of Afghan Islamists, he went to Pakistan a few months after Daud's 1973 coup d'état to get military training in order to take up weapons against the new regime. He settled in Miramshah, barely 15 kilometres inside Pakistan and less than 50 kilometres from his home in Srana.<sup>26</sup> Among the 500 "fighters and commanders" who were trained in Pakistan by the Frontier Corps led by Nasrullah Babar (who, in the 1990s, as Interior Minister under Benazir Bhutto became the first mentor of the Taliban) at that time, were

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<sup>26</sup> See: James Rupert, "Afghan ally Haqqani is now a foe", *Washington Times*, 16 Oct. 2008, <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2008/oct/16/afghan-ally-is-now-a-foe/> (last access: 1 Dec. 2008).

future prominent *mujahidin* leaders like Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and Ahmad Shah Massud.<sup>27</sup>

On 22 July 1975, some groups from this contingent started an uprising simultaneously in different parts of Afghanistan. It was suppressed quickly because of its lack of popular support. Jalaluddin Haqqani led the most vicious attack. A small band of fighters under his lead ambushed the convoy of the governor of Urgan *Loy Wuluswali* in the Mandzkai gorge in Ziruk district of today's Paktika province.<sup>28</sup> The governor, one of the Parchamis allied with President Daud, survived but twelve members of his administration were killed. This incident established Haqqani's Jihadi credentials. From 1976 to 1979 he was a member of the executive committee of Hizb-i Islami Afghanistan when it still was the unified Islamist organisation with most future *tanzim* (or mujahidin "party") leaders as members, including Hekmatyar, Khales and Rabbani.<sup>29</sup> In an even more spectacular operation in early 1979, he lured the PDPA Minister for Tribal Affairs, Gen. Faiz Muhammad, into a trap in Paktia and killed him. Ostensibly inviting him for negotiations, Haqqani served the minister and his team a rich meal, after which the guests fell asleep and were slaughtered. At that point, Haqqani already belonged to Hezb-i Islami Afghanistan/Khales (Islamic Party of Afghanistan/Khales faction), a loosely structured *tanzim* that mainly relied on the Eastern Afghan Khugiani tribe and was led by conservative tribal *ulema*. In January 1979, the Paktia tribes held a *jirga* in Miramshah (Waziristan), where they allowed the different *tanzim* to operate on their territories. Haqqani became the only significant commander of Khales' party in the South-East and was virtually independent of it. His main base inside Afghanistan then was already situated in the Shahikot Mountains.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Henry S. Bradsher, *Afghan Communism and Soviet Intervention*, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 17. According to this source, there were 500 fighters and commanders under Pakistani training.

<sup>28</sup> Afghans interviewed on this issue do not recall the exact date of this event. As there also seem to be no published renderings of it, it cannot be established whether the Ziruk ambush was part of the planned uprising or a separate incident. A *Loy Wuluswali* (greater district) was an administrative unit in pre-*mujahidin* Afghanistan.

<sup>29</sup> David B. Edwards, *Before Taliban: Genealogies of the Afghan Jihad*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2002, p. 240.

<sup>30</sup> Edwards, *Before Taliban...* (note 168), pp. 260-1; Van Dyk, *In Afghanistan...* (note 160), photographs following p. 128.

Haqqani's rival Hekmatyar was still the ISI favourite among the Afghan *mujahidin* at that time. On 31 March 1991, two years after the withdrawal of the Soviet troops, the *mujahidin* captured their first important provincial capital, Khost, from the Najibullah regime. Haqqani's fighters were the backbone of this attack but ISI made sure that Hekmatyar was able to present himself as the real victor.<sup>31</sup> Haqqani inherited Hekmatyar's position only after the latter had taken an anti-US position in the first Gulf War.

After the fall of Dr Najibullah's regime in March 1992, Jalaluddin Haqqani was appointed Minister for Justice in the first *mujahidin* cabinet led by Interim President Prof. Sebghatullah Mojaddedi (the same in which the current President Hamed Karzai served as Deputy Foreign Minister later). Under the subsequent government of the Islamic State of Afghanistan under Rabbani, he was the quasi-warlord in the Khost/Paktia area. When the Taliban marched towards Kabul, he first opposed them taking over the area but soon joined them in 1995, allegedly prompted by ISI. He became one of their strongest battle commanders, taking part in the conquest of the Eastern region and the fighting against Massoud's forces in the Shimali plain north of Kabul in the winter of 1996/97. When the Taliban made him Minister for Tribal and Frontier Affairs in 1998, this was mainly a symbolic gesture. They honoured Haqqani's fire-power but kept him away from the real decision-making process in Kandahar at the same time; the cabinet in Kabul only had limited governing authority. Even on the military side, Haqqani was kept on the sidelines. When he raised troops to attack Mazar-e Sharif again after the Taliban defeat in 1997, he nevertheless was "powerless to take military decisions" because "Kandahari officers" had the supreme command at that front.<sup>32</sup> After 9/11 but still in September 2001, Mullah Omar appointed Haqqani to lead all Taliban forces in their effort to resist the expected US attack. The Kandahari core forces, in the meantime, started to melt away into their villages or across the border to Pakistan.

Between 9/11 and the Bonn Conference on Afghanistan that started in late November 2001, there apparently were attempts to encourage a "moderate" faction of the Taliban to

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<sup>31</sup> Bradsher, *Afghan Communism...* (note 166), p. 346.

<sup>32</sup> Maulawi Wakil Ahmad Mutawakkil, *Afghanistan au Taliban* [Afghanistan and the Taliban], Kabul: Baryalai Pohantun, 1384 (2005), p. 33; author's interview in Kabul, May 2008; Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban, Islam, Oil and the New Great Game in Central Asia*, London and New York: I.B. Tauris, p. 60.

break away from the mainstream movement and to become part of the following political process. It was reported that US and British agencies saw Haqqani as the possible leader of such a group and offered him a leading role in a future Afghan government. A spokesman of the Pakistani Foreign Ministry confirmed that Haqqani had visited Islamabad “as part of a search for a “broad-based government” to succeed the Taliban’s, and that his meetings involved at least one with representatives of the former Afghan King.<sup>33</sup> It can be assumed that this idea had been planted by ISI, which counted Haqqani among its most reliable allies in Afghanistan.

This initiative failed, but it remains unclear why. Possibly it was a case of lack of coordination between different US authorities: one report indicates that Haqqani’s younger brother Ibrahim Omari was arrested by the military while other agencies negotiated with him.<sup>34</sup> After a visit to Pakistan from 17 to 21 October 2001, Jalaluddin Haqqani rebuffed any such plans and declared that he would start a guerrilla war against the expected US invasion. He even became the “key organiser” of the al Qaida escape.<sup>35</sup>

*The Haqqanis’ comeback.* After the fall of their regime and their retreat from Kabul on 13 November 2001, the Taliban’s leadership went into hiding or exile in Pakistan. It had suffered a defeat and was not sure whether the movement could be sustained. Some groups and individuals changed sides, gave themselves in to the US-led Coalition or stretched out feelers towards the new Karzai administration in Kabul. Among them were protagonists of the Haqqani and Mansur networks, the latter ones re-emerging in the form of a political party, Jamiat-i Khuddam-ul-Furqan (Society of the Servants of Providence), established in Pakistan in January 2002. Its participation in the Loya Jirgas of 2002 and 2003 and its registration as a political party were rejected by the Karzai administration. Currently, it exists in the form of a circle of some 30 “reconciled” Taliban lodged in

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<sup>33</sup> John F. Burns, “Taliban army chief scoffs at report of peace talks”, *New York Times*, 21 Oct. 2001, <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9B07E4DD1E3EF932A15753C1A9679C8B63> (last access: 1 Dec. 2008).

<sup>34</sup> See: Daniel Eisenberg, “Are There Any Moderates Here? ”, *Time*, 21 Oct 2001, [www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1001072,00.html](http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1001072,00.html) (last access: 6 Nov. 2008); Jay Solomon, “Failed courtship of warlord trips up U.S. in Afghanistan”, *Wall Street Journal*, 8 Nov. 2007, [www.online.wsj.com/article/SB119448472303085968.html](http://www.online.wsj.com/article/SB119448472303085968.html) (last access: 6 Nov. 2008).

<sup>35</sup> Ahmed Rashid, *Descent into Chaos*, New York: Viking, 2008, p. 268.

government guest houses in Kabul and consulted by the President on reconciliation issues from time to time.

Jalaluddin Haqqani also retreated to Pakistan, where he resided in Danday Darpakhel, a suburb of the town of Miramshah in North Waziristan (FATA) in the neighbourhood of the Pakistani Army's 11<sup>th</sup> Corps HQ with its ISI office. In the 1980s, he had built a mosque and a *madrasa* there, the Manba-ul-Ulum. Afghan sources allege that in those years he resided under the protection of the Pakistani military or even in a compound reserved for Pakistani army officers. The Haqqani network was not represented at the Bonn Conference on Afghanistan in late 2001. Instead, Jalaluddin Haqqani's arch-enemy Pacha Khan Zadran, a commander from a rival Zadran subtribe and a US ally with 600 of his men hired as auxiliary troops, was invited there—as the only member of the royalist Rome group delegation based inside the country. When, as a result of the conference, Pacha Khan's brother Amanullah Zadran was awarded the Tribal and Border Affairs portfolio—the same that Jalaluddin Haqqani had held under the Taliban—in the new Karzai-led Interim Administration, he was very likely further alienated from the political process.<sup>36</sup> By mid-2002, however, Haqqani's followers among the Zadran still had not broken their links with the UN mission in Kabul. His cousin Haji Abdurrahman Zadran, today said to be the network's head of operations, still participated in a delegation of Loya Paktia tribal elders meeting high-ranking UNAMA staff in April 2002, complaining about US bombings of villages. From then onwards the Haqqanis slowly drifted back into the insurgency, soon becoming known as “the Haqqani network”. As a result, the security situation in Loya Paktia was gradually to deteriorate every year.

It started in Paktika province, which had already become volatile by 2003. When UNAMA undertook a security assessment mission to the province in September that year, it was able to visit only ten out of 22 districts; twelve were already inaccessible. The paucity of effective government presence there had led to Taliban influence in various degrees; at least one district (Barmal) was already without even a symbolic government presence and completely in the hands of the Taliban. Elsewhere in the province, their forces were becoming more aggressive and extended their activities beyond border

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<sup>36</sup> In contrast to Haqqani, Pacha Khan Zadran has fought the Taliban and supported the late King Zahir Shah. He later fell out with President Karzai and the US. In 2005, he was elected a member of parliament.

districts, setting up embryonic parallel administrations in some areas, mainly Barmal, Gayan and Terwa districts, sometimes with the tacit support of some district officials. Ten of the 12 Paktia districts and all districts in Khost were still accessible for the UN then. However, the UN reported operations by anti-government elements “throughout the region with high infiltration [rates] at [the] border areas with Pakistan”, and coordinated attacks on police posts often involving more than 100 fighters, also mainly in areas close to the border, as well as regular attacks against Coalition forces, governmental installations and NGOs, including IED attacks on Coalition vehicles in Gardez. Attacks on US supply convoys on the road between Sharana and Ghazni province had started by 2003.

In January 2003 the Taliban’s radio *De Shariat Ghag* (Voice of Sharia) had temporarily started broadcasts for the South-Eastern region.<sup>37</sup> On 19 June 2007 it came back with a daily 30-minute FM programme of better quality that, however, could be received only in some areas of the region. It was not clear whether it transmitted from one of the dozens of Islamist-run FM stations just across the border in FATA or from a mobile base inside Afghanistan.

In June 2003, Taliban spokesman Muhammad Mukhtar Mujahid announced that a new 10-member Supreme (or Leadership) Council had been established that included Jalaluddin Haqqani and Abdullatif Mansur from the South-East.<sup>38</sup> One month later, in July 2003, reports came in about a new command structure of the Taliban in the South-East and a visit by Jalaluddin Haqqani to villages in the Zadran gorge in Spera district. In Khost the Taliban, the Haqqani network and Hezb were reported to have divided the districts into distinct operational areas among themselves. Towards the end of that year, increasing infiltration of Haqqani fighters into Paktia was noticed, in particular through Tsamkani district, just about ten kilometres from the Afghan border and the Pakistani town of Parachinar, a major insurgent base.

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<sup>37</sup> Robert D. Crews, “Moderate Taliban?”, in Robert D. Crews and Amin Tarzi, eds, *The Taliban and the Crisis of Afghanistan*, Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2008, p. 283.

<sup>38</sup> Amin Tarzi, “The Neo-Taliban”, in Robert D. Crews and Amin Tarzi, eds, *The Taliban and the Crisis...* (note 176), p. 295; Rahimullah Yusufzai, “Omar Names Council to Resist Occupation”, *The News* (Islamabad), 24 June 2003, quoted in: International Crisis Group, *Countering Afghanistan’s Insurgency: No Quick Fixes*, Asia Report No. 123, 2 Nov. 2006, p. 9.

In 2004 the Haqqani network was “waging small-unit, small-arms, hit-and-run attacks on U.S. bases just a mile or two across the border” from Pakistan.<sup>39</sup> In April 2005, 50 Taliban showed up on 30 motorbikes in Paktika. However, UNAMA still spoke of “extremely high levels of support for Karzai” during the elections process of 2004/5. In early 2005 the governors of Khost and Paktia—Merajuddin Pattan, a Western educated liberal businessman, and Assadullah Wafa, a conservative tribal elder from Kandahar province close to President Karzai—publicly claimed to be in contact with Haqqani commanders or even Jalaluddin Haqqani himself for reconciliation efforts, a fact strongly denied by the latter. At approximately the same time, some Afghan officials reported that communities in the Panjshir valley started to sell government-owned weapons stocks to the Taliban, including those active in Loya Paktia.<sup>40</sup>

When this author visited the region in April 2006, the Haqqanis and Mansurs had consolidated their networks for broader operations. The regional Taliban *amer* Taher Anwari—there were still two different Taliban networks in the South-East then—and other Taliban commanders moved freely in the region, without being involved in direct combat operations. They were mainly networking and conducting propaganda activities. These included a call from Jalaluddin Haqqani to all those working in the government, the Afghan army, the occupation forces and the administrative system to terminate their involvement. Pro-insurgency propaganda, particularly in two border districts of Paktia, also was increased by mullahs in official mosques, who incited the population against “foreign occupiers” and openly justified the killing of pro-government locals and government employees. Newly recruited Taliban groups became visible in the Zadran areas. In the first week of April, Taliban shot at the convoy of the newly-arrived UNHCR country director when it passed Gerda Tseray district, the Haqqanis’ area of origin. A first suicide attack occurred in Paktika, in Barmal district, against an ANA checkpoint, while a larger Taliban group tried unsuccessfully to take over Dila district centre, also in Paktika. A mission from the EU Special Representative’s office in Kabul in July 2006 still assessed Khost and Paktia as “relatively secure and stable, despite intense efforts by insurgent commanders to mobilise former networks and increase attacks against

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<sup>39</sup> Moreau and Hosenball, “Pakistan’s Dangerous Double Game” (note 157).

<sup>40</sup> Author’s interviews, Kabul, April 2006.

government and international targets”. But the number of incidents had already doubled in relation to the previous year, from 87 in the whole of 2005 to 97 between January and June 2006 alone. According to this report, the South-Eastern insurgency was still “in the hit-and-run phase”. It also noted that the government tried to stem this rise by increasingly involving the tribes through the creation of *arbaki*. By early 2006, the governor of Paktia had agreed with the main tribes of the area to appoint 30 *arbaki* members per district, which were supposed to be paid 50 US\$ per month from his operational funds. This was later increased to 200 US\$ per district. But at that point, most of the *arbaki* already were unpaid for four months, which might help to explain why the number of attacks doubled nonetheless.

On 10 September 2006 a suicide bomber sent by the Haqqani network succeeded in killing the highest-ranking Afghan official by then, Paktia governor Hakim Taniwal. When insurgents also bombed the governor’s funeral in his home village of Tanai the next day, killing seven more people, the Haqqanis’ reputation suffered a significant setback among the population. A UN report in March 2007, however, saw the situation further deteriorated. Areas most affected by the insurgency were Zurmat in Paktia and the border districts of Khost, Paktia and Paktika. The groups operating there, it stated, were still “not beyond the scope of dialogue”. A month later, a UN official in the South-East summarised the state of the insurgency there as follows: “The networks are already there and only need to be mobilised.” According to him, they drew on “a class of disenfranchised, jobless, frustrated young men, and there are incentives [for them] to fight; but there are very few incentives not to fight.” Still, there were no open, large-scale attacks. There was more distribution of pro-Taliban propaganda, but most of the still relatively few IEDs planted were recovered with the help of the local population. UNAMA was working intensely with the Zadran tribe, in particular with Jalaluddin Haqqani’s sub-tribe in Gerda Tserey, and there was still hope that an indirect dialogue could be maintained. Even the US troops in the area seemingly held themselves back vis-à-vis the Haqqanis. To describe the situation, Paktia governor Rahmatullah Rahmat quoted a Pashtun proverb: “The bear doesn’t climb down from the mountain; the hunter doesn’t climb up on the mountain.” The above-mentioned UN official stated that this

district's *shura*, with some close Haqqani relatives as members, "has never been closer to the government than now".

However, the shortcomings of the government were already too visible. A local UN official summed up the reasons for the growing insurgency at this time as follows: "the non-existence of visible reconstruction projects of significant scope, weak and resource-starved province administrations, increasing threats to the presence of district administrations on the ground and the almost complete non-presence of foreign NGOs [that] led to the perception among the tribal population that the peace process has no impact on their lives and that the central government doesn't care about them." Governor Rahmat, a former UNAMA political officer, was kept at arm's length by the Kabul government. When he took over his position, he was not paid the operational funds his predecessor had received.<sup>41</sup> This deprived him of crucial means in counter-insurgency, like public outreach, contact and hospitality as well as pay for *arbaki*. While in Paktia the *arbaki* were still in being, hoping for a resumption of payments, those in Khost already had dispersed around the same time. Corrupt and openly criminal members of the administration did their share to discredit the reputation of the Kabul government and its local representatives. In one striking example the Zurmat chief of police Qadam Gul, a former Khalqi, raided a mosque during prayer in the district in February 2007. His men robbed the congregation of money and watches. When those being robbed staged some resistance, one of the policemen was killed. The police chief radioed to Kabul that he had been attacked by Taliban and had lost one man. Although UNAMA reported the incident, the police chief was still not removed when the author visited Gardez in October of the same year. In late 2007, there were reports from Paktia that the *wuluswal* and the police chief of one district were setting up illegal checkpoints and dividing the "taxed" money between them on the basis of a daily quota.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Officially, the payment of these funds was stopped altogether. However, some governors with good contacts in Kabul still received them.

<sup>42</sup> Author's interviews with government official and tribal elder, Kabul, Nov. 2007 and May 2008.

During 2007, the situation deteriorated drastically. According to UNAMA, the outreach for civil servants declined in 34 of the 43 official South-Eastern districts<sup>43</sup> between March and June 2007. Paktika was described by a tribal elder from neighbouring Paktia as “lost” and “a black hole”. But now also Paktia and Khost were deteriorating rapidly. By April 2007, groups of Haqqani fighters were regularly operating in non-Zadran districts like Dand-e Pattan and Zazi Aryub (Paktia). Insurgents’ ambushes were better prepared and coordinated and resulted in a higher number of casualties. Khost province experienced the biggest increase in security incidents in the whole South-East and had the third highest suicide attack rate in all Afghanistan. July 2007 saw a 250 per cent increase in security incidents along the Gardez-Khost road, a reflection of Serajuddin Haqqani’s intention to destabilise the road’s construction that had been delayed at least since 2003 for the lack of sufficient funds. The US PRT had subcontracted an Indian company to carry out the work—a welcome target for the Pakistani-backed Haqqanis. Towards the end of the year there was an increase in direct attacks on district centres and police posts, civilians involved in the political process were targeted more often. There were “large concentrations” of insurgents in Western and Northern Paktia and “prolonged combat situations” on the rise in Paktia and Paktika. The Haqqani network was more and more effectively able to constrain governmental space in Loya Paktia and, from there, in Wardak and Logar since the end of 2006. It still relied, according to UNAMA, on small, relatively isolated cells and mainly carried out cross-border attacks.

A non-governmental organisation with good contacts in the region registered more Taliban visibility and contacts with tribal elders in October 2007. As a result, elders were increasingly intimidated; many moved into urban centres. That reduced the inclination of local tribes to prevent the insurgents from using the twelve infiltration routes that led through Khost province alone.<sup>44</sup> At approximately the same time, in September 2007, UNAMA found out that 35 per cent of the 7,000 police officers in the South Eastern region’s structure were there on paper only, with commanders pocketing the salaries of

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<sup>43</sup> There are a number of so-called unofficial but mostly functioning districts created by the different governments over the last 30 years that are not yet officially recognised. Their officials do not receive any salary but live from locally (most extra-legally) acquired resources.

<sup>44</sup> Author’s interview, Kabul, Oct. 2007; own observations.

the ghost policemen. In the problematic district of Zurmat, only 25 out of a theoretical 174 were on duty.

In the summer of 2008, the deterioration in Paktia and Khost continued. Local families warned relatives working for NGOs not to travel to the area any more; more NGO and UN personnel moved their families out of the region. Afghans from the region reported *shabname* in Pakistani-coloured Pashto sanctioning the “execution” of US troop translators as “Islamic” and warning teachers and officials that if they continued working for the government it would be “their own responsibility” if they were hurt. Youths on motorbikes openly intimidated government officials by following them to their homes. Propaganda video cassettes and DVDs proliferated, although the insurgents were not able yet to openly use mosques for propaganda as in Paktika or Southern Afghanistan. According to Afghan newspaper reports, mullahs in Khost, enraged by US air strikes causing civilian casualties (among them a member of the celebrated Afghan cricket team), had started a “campaign” that appealed to the local population no longer to cooperate with Coalition forces trying to identify insurgents.<sup>45</sup> In June 2008, insurgents attacked the US/ANA base in Laka Tiga at a strategic bridge on the Khost-Gardez road. Haqqani groups that had infiltrated the margins of Paktia’s provincial capital Gardez (including the area just outside the local UNAMA office) were carrying out a series of armed raids, kidnappings and executions around the town throughout 2008. In their boldest attack yet they entered Khataba village mosque in a suburb of Gardez, selected five men from the assembled worshippers and took them with them on 23 September (they were released later). Since the spring of 2008 in particular, the Haqqanis’ fighters had been reinforced by a large number of Pakistani Taliban from the Wazir, Dawar and Massud tribes.<sup>46</sup> Some sources speak of up to 4,000 of them, mainly based in the Zadran Arc.

District centres started being targeted more aggressively. According to the governor of Khost and local Afghan intelligence officials, there still was not a single attack on a district centre in that province by the autumn of 2007. In neighbouring Paktia there had been only one, on Shwak in June. In Paktika the situation was much worse: in June,

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<sup>45</sup> “Preachers’ Campaign Against NATO”, *Paiman* (Kabul), 19 Oct. 2008, p. 1.

<sup>46</sup> The Dawar tribe controls the area around the Haqqanis’ Pakistani residence in Miramshah.

insurgents temporarily held the centre of Yahyakhel district, and on 30 August they even tried to storm the provincial centre in Sharana. The district centre of Dila was abandoned by government.<sup>47</sup> This changed in 2008. During this year, Haqqanis' fighters also attacked the district centres of Waza Zadran, Shwak (both Paktia), Spera (Paktika) and Zazi Maidan (Khost) and temporarily took over those of Gayan (Paktika), Gerda Tserey (Paktia) and Sabari and Qalandar (Khost).

Meanwhile, the operations also affect the main road between Kabul, Gardez and Khost. There are also frequent attacks on both main passes along this road, Tera Kandao and Seta Kandao. Construction sites for secondary roads to the district centres and the workers on them are attacked. In May 2008 the Haqqani network issued a decree banning any road construction in Zurmat district (Paktia) altogether. *Shabname* ("night letters" or leaflets) are distributed in order to intimidate government officials and civilians who sympathise with the government or work for international actors, both military and civilian.<sup>48</sup> In late 2005, local sources reported that premiums of 15,000 Pakistani rupees were being offered for the assassination of Afghan officials and 100,000 rupees for a foreigner.<sup>49</sup> In April 2007 a UN official said that the Haqqani network "researches international organisations in the South-East" for their internal structures in order to identify possible targets. These threats did not remain empty ones. In 2008 alone, insurgents killed the spokesman of the Paktika governor, the head of the Khost appeal court, the district attorney of Zurmat, three security officials in Khost (among them the provincial security head) and tribal elders in Alisher (also known as Terezai, Khost), Wormamay and Urgun (Paktika). On 13 August 2008 Taliban killed three female international staff members of the NGO International Rescue Committee (IRC) in Logar province, on the Gardez-Kabul road. After this incident, the UN stopped all its personnel in the South-Eastern region moving by road except for larger convoys for well-prepared missions.

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<sup>47</sup> Jason Motlagh, "Coalition moves on Taliban before election", *Washington Times*, 11 Dec. 2008, <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2008/dec/11/disruptive-operation-coincides-with-voter-registra/> (last access: 12 Dec. 2008).

<sup>48</sup> On Taliban propaganda activities see: International Crisis Group, *Taliban Propaganda: Winning the War of Words?*, Asia Report No. 158, 24 July 2008.

<sup>49</sup> Claudio Franco, "Islamic Militant Insurgency In Afghanistan Experiencing "Iraqization"", *Eurasianet*, 8 Nov. 2005, <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav110805.shtml> (last access: 17 Sept. 2008).

*How does the Haqqani network function?* The coherence of the Haqqani network is based on a combination of tribal and ideological loyalties. The initial core of its fighters was recruited from the Haqqanis' sub-tribe among the Zadran, the Mezi. Immediately after the Soviet invasion, it was described as "very tribal in character".<sup>50</sup> Its basis was broadened during the anti-Soviet struggle when *mujahidin* were also recruited from other South-Eastern Pashtun tribes. A foreign observer noted in 1984 in Paktia how closely Jalaluddin Haqqani worked with local tribal leaders, "sharing jurisdiction with them and allowing them to apply customary tribal law to resolve internal disputes". Another speaks of "some tribally mixed fighting groups" in Paktia under Haqqani's command by 1985.<sup>51</sup> It also became known that a commander from Keshm (Badakhshan) in Northern Afghanistan, a Tajik, fought alongside Haqqani in Paktia during the 1980s.

After 2001, but possibly earlier also, the Haqqani network additionally included Zadran and other Pashtuns from across the border in Pakistan. One of them, Darim Sedgai, acted as his liaison to Baitullah Mehsud's Pakistani Taliban. He was reported as killed in January 2008 but the fact was rejected by Taliban sources. Another was 'Id Niaz Borakhel, killed in late 2007.<sup>52</sup> According to recent reports from the area, the Haqqanis still give financial support strategically to tribal elders (*khans* and *maliks*) in Loya Paktia.<sup>53</sup>

As of late, fighters with a background in nomad (*kuchi*) tribes are gaining more prominence among Haqqani's fighters in Khost and Paktia.

The tribal base of the Haqqani network, though, is also a cause of one of the major fault lines in the insurgency: the lack of inter-tribal confidence between the Kandaharis and the Paktiawal (those from Paktia). The Haqqani network draws its support mainly from the latter. In contrast, from the outset in 1994, the Taliban leadership was mainly

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<sup>50</sup> Olivier Roy, *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan*, Cambridge University Press, 1986, p. 128.

<sup>51</sup> David B. Edwards, *Before Taliban...* (note 168), p. 252. See: Van Dyk, *In Afghanistan...* (note 160), pp. 97, 125; Roy, *Islam and Resistance...* (note 189), p. 129.

<sup>52</sup> "Coalition forces confirm Sedgai death", *Pajhwok Afghan News* (Kabul), 26 Jan. 2008, [www.pajhwok.com/viewstory.asp?lng=eng&id=49101](http://www.pajhwok.com/viewstory.asp?lng=eng&id=49101) (last access: 12 Dec. 2008); Janullah Hashamzada, "Taliban repudiate claims about Sedgai's death", *Pajhwok Afghan News* (Kabul), 28 Jan. 2008; Ismail Khan and Carlotta Gall, "Tribesmen urge Pakistan to halt raids after heavy civilian and combatant toll", *New York Times*, 11 Oct. 2007, [www.nytimes.com/2007/10/11/world/asia/11pakistan.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/11/world/asia/11pakistan.html) (last access: 12 Dec. 2008).

<sup>53</sup> Author's interviews with Khost residents, Kabul, May 2008.

made up of “Kandahari” Pashtuns, i.e. Pashtuns from the provinces of “Greater Kandahar”, comprising Helmand, Uruzgan, Zabul and Kandahar itself. They belong to either of the two most well-known Pashtun tribal “confederations”, the Durrani and Ghilzai. Although there were some representatives of other Pashtun tribes and ethnic groups in the official Taliban leadership (the Leadership Council in Kandahar and the cabinet in Kabul), the closest circle around Mullah Omar was dominated by brothers-in-arms from his home province of Uruzgan whom he knew and trusted from their common anti-Soviet struggle. The others had difficulties in gaining Mullah Omar’s full confidence. On the all-Afghanistan level, this Kandahari-Paktiawal fault-line within the Taliban seems to be much stronger than the much-discussed Durrani-Ghilzai gap. During the Taliban regime, occasionally Loya Paktia tribes openly resisted what was perceived as Kandahari dominance. There were at least two revolts in 2000 when Taliban officials tried to suppress a local tradition to celebrate the new year, the so-called “egg fighting”, perceived by them to be un-Islamic—a conflict followed that evolved into open fighting. Seeking appeasement, the Taliban were forced to take recourse to the same means as other regimes who did not want to alienate the local tribes: convening local *ulema*, tribal leaders and people’s representatives who were persuaded to voice their support for the government—in return for the government’s tacit climb-down on the issue.<sup>54</sup>

It seems that the elder Haqqani owed his rise to become one of the strongest *mujahidin* commanders more to his military prowess (and his political and supply links in Pakistan) than to his religious status. It was his firepower that allowed him to oust and replace the traditional Zadran khans from the Babrakzai family.<sup>55</sup> His (rather formal) membership in Hezb/Khales mainly ensured that he had direct access to Western and Arab military and financial supplies distributed through ISI as a monopolist. One can only speculate about Jalaluddin Haqqani’s motivation to continue his fight with the Taliban. Although he is one of Afghanistan’s Islamist pioneers and an Islamic scholar, and has founded a number of *madrasas*, some people who have met Haqqani over the past decades doubt that he is mainly motivated by religious feelings. Some also claim that

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<sup>54</sup> See: Robert D. Crews, “Moderate Taliban?” (note 176), pp. 266-7.

<sup>55</sup> Roy, *Islam and Resistance...* (note 189), p. 152.

he runs his *madrassas* more for fund-raising than for Islamic purposes, knowing their attraction for Arab donors.<sup>56</sup>

The elder Haqqani is undoubtedly a religious conservative who does not see much of a difference between the current US-led NATO intervention in his country and the Soviet occupation before. His growing intransigence, however, can possibly be explained by a series of political about-faces for which he might feel victimised. In 1989, Haqqani was one of the central figures in the anti-Soviet resistance. For the US, he was among the “less publicized CIA favourites”, located “[a]t the centre of [the] border nexus” of “interlocking networks of Pakistani intelligence officers, Arab volunteers, and Wahhabi *madrassas*”. He “was seen by CIA officers in Islamabad and others as perhaps the most impressive Pashtun battlefield commander in the war”, had “the CIA’s full support”, received payments and supplies and was entrusted with testing new weapon systems and tactics. According to Steve Coll, he was a so-called “unilateral asset” of the CIA in 1988 and 1989.<sup>57</sup> His switch to the Taliban, however, turned him into an enemy of the US. As a Taliban minister, he was included on the UN sanctions list against al Qaida and the Taliban already before 9/11, on 31 January 2001.<sup>58</sup>

Today, Haqqani’s fight might be increasingly motivated by feelings of revenge. During various bombing raids and predator drone attacks against his houses and *madrassas*, in both Afghanistan and Pakistan, starting in early 2002 and with the latest strike on 23 October 2008 on his *madrassa* in Danday Darpakhel near Miramshah, many of his family members, among them women and infants, and students lost their lives. In early July, his youngest son Omar was fatally injured during a skirmish at Sata Kandao pass at the border between Paktia and Khost provinces, which, it was reported, he had been videoing.

The Haqqani network is definitely on the rise. It has expanded its area of operations further north, towards Kabul. There are reports that the Haqqanis are trying to reach out

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<sup>56</sup> Author’s interviews, Gardez, Khost and Kabul, Oct. 2007 and April 2008.

<sup>57</sup> Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001*, New York: Penguin Press, 2004, pp. 157, 167, 202; Steve Coll, *The Bin Ladens*, quoted in Karen DeYoung, “Missiles for Afghanistan, Bin Laden took part in 1986 arms deal, book says”, *Washington Post*, 1 April 2008, p. A12.

<sup>58</sup> His son Serajuddin was listed on 13 Sept. 2007. “The Consolidated List...” (note 151).

to “some Northern Alliance groups” and Hezb-i Islami.<sup>59</sup> This is quite possible. As one of the major resistance commanders and later a minister in the *mujahidin* government, Jalaluddin Haqqani has good personal relations with many former *mujahidin* leaders. Such relations count a lot in Afghan society. Former Haqqani sub-commanders are members of post-2001 institutions, like the Khost Mujahidin Shura, the Shura of Khost’s three unofficial urban districts (Matun, Lakan, Shamal), and even of the lower house of the Afghan parliament. Moreover, many northern commanders who are officially part of the new Afghan institutions harbour bad feelings towards Karzai and his external backers because of their perceived exclusion from the political set-up. Being religious conservatives, and often even Islamists, they secretly reject the (far from blameless) international involvement in their country as an occupation and an attack on Afghan culture.

On the military side, the Haqqani network’s main *modus operandi* is still asymmetrical warfare, using means of terrorism and guerrilla warfare including the use of IEDs, mines and suicide attacks. Spectacular operations aim at showing that it is able to “hit everywhere” and to catch international media attention. Meanwhile, open military combat operations remain sporadic and an absolute exception. Apart from some insular bases, it has not been able to organise permanent fronts on Afghan territory and does not control any district centre or even village full time, as the mainstream Taliban in Southern and Eastern Afghanistan do. The use of terrorist means is a copy of Islamist militant tactics elsewhere and perhaps puts the Haqqani network much closer to al Qaida than even most of the Kandahari Taliban leadership. This increasing ruthlessness carries the message to Afghans: we are not trying to win hearts and minds any more, like the Taliban of the 1990s. It is “shock and awe” *à l’afghane*. It might also represent the attempt of hawkish Taliban elements to sabotage possible negotiations.

However, this also deepens rifts within the insurgency. There are more and more reports that old-time, “pious” Taliban commanders internally express abhorrence at the bloodshed among the Afghan civilian population caused by car bombs and suicide

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<sup>59</sup> Hamid Mir, “8,000 foreign fighters in Fata ring alarm bells in Islamabad”, *The News* (Islamabad), 21 July 2008, [http://www.thenews.com.pk/arc\\_default.asp](http://www.thenews.com.pk/arc_default.asp) (last access: 27 Nov. 2008).

attacks. Some of these reports emanate from Loya Paktia.<sup>60</sup> This is perhaps reflected by Mullah Omar's 'Id address of 2008 which also is distributed as a *layha* (instruction) among Taliban ranks:

“I once again give you the same guidelines, to stand in front of the enemy like steel. But be very careful when you face the general people and your innocent countrymen. Don't go for an attack which has a possibility of harming the general people. All your operations must be in the light of the sayings of Allah and the way of Muhammad (Sallaho Alaihe wa Sallam). Always leave your personal and emotional feelings behinds.

Every act which is not in harmony with the teachings of Islam or is not according to the Islamic civilization or does not look good with the Muslim Ummah [...] like blasts in [mosques] and where there are a gathering of the general people, looting of the properties on the highways, cutting noses and ears in the name of [sectarian] differences which Islam forbids [...] or the burning of Islamic books must be strongly countered.”<sup>61</sup>

This seems to be an attempt by the Taliban leadership to indirectly distance itself from Haqqani's practices (although some of its commanders like the late Mullah Dadullah also used them) and remedy growing concerns in its own ranks. Whether leaflets bearing Haqqani's signature and criticising Mullah Omar for jeopardising the future of the Taliban, which appeared in Eastern Afghanistan in mid-2008, really originate from this source or are part of the psy-ops battle cannot be finally answered. It can be said, though, that such open and personal criticism, even putting Mullah Omar's Islamic credentials in question, would be very unusual in Pashtun society.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Author's interviews with Afghans living in or travelling to South or South-Eastern Afghanistan in Kandahar, Tirinkot and Berlin, 2008.

<sup>61</sup> Ameer Al-Mu'meneen Mullah Mohammad Omar Mujahid about the pleasure of Eid al-Fitr, <http://www.afghanvoice.com/index.php/news/news-in-english/237-ameer-al-mumeneen-mullah-mohammad-omar-mujahid-about-the-pleasure-of-eid-al-fitr> (last access: 27 Nov. 2008).

<sup>62</sup> The author saw one copy in August 2008 in Kabul. See also: Waliullah Rahmani, "Jalaluddin Haqqani Challenges Mullah Omar's Leadership of the Taliban", *The Jamestown Foundation: Terrorism Focus*, Vol. 5, Issue 25, 1 July 2008, [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no\\_cache=1&tx\\_ttnews%5Btt\\_news%5D=5026](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=5026) (last access: 12 Dec. 2008).

*Links with foreign Jihadis and Pakistan.* Significantly, Haqqani was the first Afghan *mujahidin* commander who welcomed and incorporated Arab Jihadi volunteers into his groups. This happened as early as 1987.<sup>63</sup> Already before that, he had established durable connections with wealthy Saudis during *hajj* pilgrimages, as well as with the Saudi intelligence service, and run fund-raising offices in Persian Gulf countries. One of Haqqani's two wives comes from the United Arab Emirates. All this laid the ground for his extremely close relationship with Arab sponsors, including Osama bin Laden personally, whom he met during the construction of the Zhawara base in Khost province (carried out by Bin Laden and his company),<sup>64</sup> as well as ISI and later the al Qaida network. According to some sources, the Arab influence on the Haqqani network might have even increased recently with the younger Haqqani's rise. He has no personal experience of the anti-Soviet resistance and mainly grew up in the FATA's radicalised environment. It can be assumed that most of the no more than "150 to 500 hard-core Qaeda fighters" in Pakistan's tribal areas "financing, training recruits and facilitating attacks into Afghanistan" are closely linked to the Haqqani network.<sup>65</sup>

The second pillar of the Haqqanis' support—their symbiotic relations with Pakistani power structures, the military, ISI and the Islamist parties—largely remained intact after 2001. A high-ranking police officer in Loya Paktia says that ISI has maintained an extensive contact network amongst the region's tribal leaders since the 1980s. The Haqqani network today uses these connections to bribe those elders with "cash payments, passports, houses in Pakistan and trips to the Gulf", to recruit fighters and to request that those tribes reject access to their territories for fighters of other groups (and the

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<sup>63</sup> There is at least one report about an Egyptian and a Pakistani former army officer working with Haqqani as early as the autumn of 1981. See: Van Dyk, *In Afghanistan...* (note 160), pp. 99, 125. The Syrian-born al Qaeda strategist Abu Musab as-Suri also joined Haqqani's group in 1987. See: Brynjar Lia, *Architect of Global Jihad: The Life of Al-Qaida Strategist Abu Mus'ab al-Suri*, London: C. Hurst & Co., 2008, pp. 84-5.

<sup>64</sup> Steve Coll talks of a "long history with bin Laden personally" in the PBS radio programme "Return of the Taliban" (transcript: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/taliban/militants/haqqani.html>, posted 3 Oct. 2006 (last access: 30 April 2008). See also: Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars...* (note 196), pp. 157, 202. In late 1981, Haqqani had already travelled to Pakistan, Iran, Saudi-Arabia and the Emirates, see: Van Dyk, *In Afghanistan...* (note 160), p. 109.

<sup>65</sup> Eric Schmitt, "Militant gains in Pakistan said to draw more fighters", *New York Times*, 10 July 2008, [http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/10/world/asia/10terror.html?\\_r=1&hp&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/10/world/asia/10terror.html?_r=1&hp&oref=slogin) (last access: 27 Nov. 2008).

government).<sup>66</sup> A US news magazine reported in September 2008 that American officials “say they have evidence that some elements of Pakistan’s ISI are protecting and even helping the Haqqani network”. It carried a story of how a Haqqani sub-commander travelled in a five-vehicle convoy to Pakistan to get supplies and instructions from Serajuddin Haqqani, passing various Pakistani military checkpoints just by calling an apparent minder of the Haqqanis. The commander concluded that the younger Haqqani “seems to feel invulnerable” in Pakistan and that “[t]he ISI protects him”. Senior Pakistani officials still hold their hands over the Haqqanis. They are quoted in the same report as saying that “now is not the time to move against [them]”. In July 2008, US military and CIA officials confronted their Pakistani counterparts with evidence of ISI links to the Haqqani network at least in two meetings.<sup>67</sup> “Pakistan is like your shoulder that supports your RPG”, said a Taliban commander quoted by *Time Magazine*.<sup>68</sup>

Obviously Haqqani is still seen as a valuable ally by the Pakistani Taliban sympathisers within the ISI and the Frontier Corps. They repeatedly used his influence among the Pakistani Taliban to pressure them to cease attacking the country’s security forces—and attack Afghan and Western forces in Afghanistan instead.<sup>69</sup> Afghan sources also reported a meeting between representatives of Haqqani, Hekmatyar’s Hezb and Arabs in Parachinar in the early spring of 2007 that was protected by Pakistani military. In 2006, ISI requested Jalaluddin Haqqani and the famous Kandahari Taliban commander Dadullah (killed in May 2007) to mediate in bloody clashes in South Waziristan between factions of Pakistani Taliban, one of which supported militants of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) of Qari Taher Yuldushev. More than 2,000 Uzbeks, including families, were living on the Dawar tribe’s territory around Mirali alone.<sup>70</sup> This conflict reflected the rivalry about who would lead the still diverse Pakistani Taliban movement and was, at the same time, an ISI-instrumentalised tribal conflict between a part of the local Wazir tribe and the Massud tribe from outside the area. Haqqani sent in his son

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<sup>66</sup> Author’s interview, Kabul, May 2008.

<sup>67</sup> Moreau and Hosenball, “Pakistan’s Dangerous Double Game” (note 157); Mark Mazzetti and Eric Schmitt, “C.I.A. outlines Pakistan links with militants”, *New York Times*, 30 July 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/30/world/asia/30pstan.html?hp> (last access: 1 Dec. 2008).

<sup>68</sup> Ron Moreau and Michael Hirsh, “Where the Jihad Lives Now”, *Newsweek*, 29 Oct. 2007, <http://www.newsweek.com/id/57485> (last access: 27 Nov. 2008).

<sup>69</sup> Moreau/Hosenball, “Pakistan’s Dangerous Double Game” (note 157).

<sup>70</sup> Shafiq Ahmad, “The Jihad within”, *The Herald* (Pakistan), April 2007, p. 92.

Serajuddin and the former head of the Taliban Supreme Court, Nur Muhammad Saqeb.<sup>71</sup> Their involvement led to the North Waziristan peace agreement of 5 September 2006. After its conclusion, Jalaluddin Haqqani issued a declaration in the name of the Islamic Emirate (i.e. Mullah Omar) “not to fight against Pakistan, because this is in the interest of the US”. This clearly served Pakistani interests.

Behind this ISI initiative stood a broader aim: “to marshal the different tribal Taliban chieftains into a movement coherent enough to abide by a truce”.<sup>72</sup> The initiative succeeded when on 14 December 2007 the Tehrik Taliban-i-Pakistan (TTP) was founded. Its leader, Baitullah Mehsud, is a close ally of the Haqqanis. The Haqqanis gained considerably from these events. Their successful intervention strengthened their hand on all sides. They managed to save their Uzbek allies, whom Jalaluddin Haqqani had earlier asked Mehsud to harbour.<sup>73</sup> And they proved their influence on both sides of the Pakistani Taliban rivalry: on Mehsud’s TTP and on its rival, the ISI-financed splinter group of Haji Maulawi Nazir. Nazir, from the Kakakhel sub-tribe of the Ahmadzai Wazir in Waziristan, is particularly close to the Haqqanis. He owns property not only in Paktika but also in Kandahar. After a stint with Hezb-i Islami during the anti-Soviet *jihād*, he had joined the Taliban after they established their regime and fought alongside the Haqqanis.<sup>74</sup>

Another part of the Haqqanis’ Pakistan link is their involvement with Kashmiri and sectarian Punjabi Jihadis. Fighters of the Kashmiri Harkat-ul-Mujahidin (HuM) were running a training camp in Afghanistan,<sup>75</sup> most probably Yawar camp in Khost province, as early as in the mid-1980s when it initially was under the authority of Hezb-i

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<sup>71</sup> Syed Saleem Shahzad, “Global jihad splits into wars between Muslims”, *Le Monde Diplomatique* (English version), 2 July 2007, <http://mondediplo.com/2007/07/02al-qaida> (last access: 17 Sept. 2008).

<sup>72</sup> Quoted in Graham Usher, “The Pakistan Taliban”, *Middle East Report*, 13 Feb. 2007, <http://www.merip.org/mero/mero021307.html> (last access: 27 Nov. 2008).

<sup>73</sup> “Ahmadzai Wazir Tribesmen Negotiate Return of Taliban Commanders”, in: *The Jamestown Foundation: Terrorism Focus*, Vol. 5, Issue 14, 9 April 2008, [http://www.jamestown.org/programs/gta/single/?tx\\_ttnews%5Btt\\_news%5D=4838&tx\\_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=246&no\\_cache=1](http://www.jamestown.org/programs/gta/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=4838&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=246&no_cache=1) (last access: 27 Nov. 2008).

<sup>74</sup> Hassan Abbas, “South Waziristan’s Maulvi Nazir: The New Face of the Taliban”, in *The Jamestown Foundation: Terrorism Monitor* Vol. V, Issue 9, 10 May 2007, p. 8.

<sup>75</sup> Zahid Hussain, *Frontline Pakistan: The Struggle with Militant Islam*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2007, p. 68.

Islami/Khales and Jalaluddin Haqqani.<sup>76</sup> Haqqani admitted that he trained Kashmiri fighters in an interview in 1991.<sup>77</sup> This and another HuM camp were attacked by US cruise missiles in 1998 after al Qaeda commandos had bombed the US embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam. The Kashmiri-Haqqani connection still operates. It was reported in early June 2008 that about 300 fighters from Jihadi groups had secretly gathered in Rawalpindi and “agreed to resolve their differences and commit more fighters to [...] Afghanistan”. A HuM leader was quoted as saying that the *jihad* in Kashmir was “not the most important right now” but Afghanistan was “the fighting ground, with the Americans there”. According to this report, the sectarian terrorist groups Jaish-i-Muhammad and Lashkar-i-Tayba were also present at the meeting.<sup>78</sup>

Most foreign elements linked with the Haqqani network inside Afghanistan are based in Mata Khan (Paktika), the Kulalgo area of Zurmat district where they maintain a supply base and in Eastern Ghazni.<sup>79</sup> One of the last reports of Uzbek IMU fighters active inside Afghanistan came from Sarobi district in Paktika province in October 2007.<sup>80</sup> Many Arabs and Uzbeks have married local wives, bought land, settled down and learned the Pashto language. Also, the obscure Uzbek-Turkish İslami Cihad İttehadi (Islamic Jihad Union) seems to operate—at least partly—under the Haqqani network. When one of its members, Cüneyt Çiftçi, also known as Saad Abu Furkan, a German of Turkish origin, blew himself up in front of a US military installation in Sabari (Khost) on 3 March 2008, his last statement was published together with a video message from Jalaluddin Haqqani. In its statements, however, the group refers to the leading al Qaida member Abu Laith al-

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<sup>76</sup> In 1986 it was handed over directly to Harkat: K. Santhanam, Sudhir Sreedhar and Manish Saxena, *Jihadis in Jammu and Kashmir: A Portrait Gallery*, New Delhi: Sage Publications/Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, 2003, pp. 100/1, 106.

<sup>77</sup> Mike Winchester, “Terrorist U”, *Soldier of Fortune*, April 1991, quoted in Roy Gutman, *How We Missed the Story: Osama bin Laden, the Taliban, and the Hijacking of Afghanistan*, Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2008, p. 83.

<sup>78</sup> Kathy Gannon, “Pakistan militants focus on Afghanistan”, *Associated Press*, 13 July 2008, <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/25665381/> (last access: 12 Dec. 2008).

<sup>79</sup> There are also reports claiming that the foreign fighters in Mata Khan and Kulalgo belong to the Mansur network.

<sup>80</sup> “16 fighters under most wanted warlord killed in Afghan airstrikes”, *Associated Press*, 8 Oct. 2007, <http://www.wsvn.com/news/articles/world/MI64071/> (last access: 12 Dec. 2008).

Libi as its *sheikh* instead of Haqqani, so that it might be closer to al Qaida itself. Its leader is said to be an Uzbek (possibly of Tajik ethnicity), Najmiddin Jalolov.<sup>81</sup>

The Haqqani networks' links to the Arabian peninsula and to Pakistan also provide the bulk of its financial supplies. These money flows are reportedly collected in Parachinar (Pakistan) by a religious figure linked to the network. Additionally, religious taxes (*zakat* and *ushr*) are raised from businessmen, shopkeepers and also government officials in Khost and other areas. Income from the drug trade also plays a role, mainly from transit shipments originating in Southern Afghanistan.

### *The Mansur network*

The second insurgent strand in Loya Paktia is the Mansur network, which is led by members of the family of the same name. Its original leader was the late Maulawi Nasrullah Mansur, an Andar Pashtun from the small Sahak subtribe, which lives in the village of the same name in Zurmat. He received a religious education at Nur-ul-Madaris, the *madrassa* founded by the Mojaddedi family, one of the most well-known (and conservative) abodes of Muslim learning in Afghanistan, located a few kilometres outside Ghazni city in Andar district. At least two cousins, Latifullah and Bashir Mansur, as well as the three sons of Nasrullah Mansur, Saifurrahman, Seyyedurrahman and Fathurrahman, were or still are operating prominently in Loya Paktia. Latifullah Mansur's deputy reportedly is Mulla Matin.

The Mansur network is also part of the Taliban-led insurgency without organisationally being fully integrated into it. It maintains a degree of organisational

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<sup>81</sup> "Taliban release video of German who targeted US Afghan base", Deutsche Presse-Agentur (in English), 20 March 2008, [www.earthtimes.org/articles/show/193640,taliban-release-video-of-german-who-targeted-us-afghan-base.html](http://www.earthtimes.org/articles/show/193640,taliban-release-video-of-german-who-targeted-us-afghan-base.html) (last access: 12 Dec. 2008). According to one source, it "appears that the IJU is an umbrella term used to link a network of affiliated Jamaat [Tajik/Uzbek form of Jamaat—the author] groups from Central Asia, comprised of Kyrgyz, Uzbek and Kazakh radicals, linked to, but not formerly associated with, the IMU". Another source describes it as an "offshoot" of the IMU" and as "dominated by Turkish Jihadists", at least members of the German Turkish community. See: Cerwyn Moore, "Uzbek Terror Networks: Germany, Jamaat and the IJU", *The Jamestown Foundation: Terrorism Monitor*, Vol. 5, Issue 21, 8 Nov. 2007, <http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2373778> (last access: 12 Dec. 2008); Guido Steinberg, "A Turkish al-Qaeda: The Islamic Jihad Union and the Internationalization of Uzbek Jihadism", *Strategic Insights*, Monterey: Center for Contemporary Conflict, Naval Postgraduate School, <http://www.ccc.nps.navy.mil/si/2008/Jul/steinbergJul08.asp> (last access: 12 Dec. 2008). The former British Ambassador to Uzbekistan, however, believes that the IJU is a creation of the Uzbek secret service. See: "German Bomb Plot: Islamic Jihad Union", [http://www.craigmurray.org.uk/archives/2007/09/islamic\\_jihad\\_u.html](http://www.craigmurray.org.uk/archives/2007/09/islamic_jihad_u.html) (last access: 12 Dec. 2008).

autonomy from the Taliban movement. But with many of its leading representatives killed over the last few years, it has been weakened considerably and has clearly passed its heyday. Some local observers think that it has almost completely lost significance. Others maintain that although the Mansur family has been partly wiped out and has lost its best fighters, the attraction of the name still creates some cohesion. The losses have certainly diminished its autonomy from the “Kandahari” Taliban core, but the current head of the family, Abdullatif Mansur, still seems to be a member of the Taliban’s Leadership Council—which confirms that the network is still important to them.

The Mansur network, like the Haqqani one, is not active countrywide and is only of sub-regional importance. Historically, it is limited to areas in north-eastern Ghazni, south-western Paktia and pockets in Logar province. Its main operational area stretches across the so-called central corridor from Sarhauza district in Paktika and this province’s most populated areas (around its capital Sharana and the district of Mata Khan) through Zurmat to Khawar district in Logar, and also includes an area towards Paktia’s centre at Gardez. This makes it even less extended than the Haqqani network. In Zurmat and Shahikot, it overlaps with the Haqqani network’s area of influence. While the Shahikot Mountains in Zurmat constitute the Mansur network’s main base and staging area, the districts of Khawar (Logar) and Dehyak (Ghazni)—almost devoid of any even token government presence—are other safe havens. Those areas coincide almost completely with the Ghilzai Andar tribe’s territory that comprises a few districts in Ghazni province (Andar, Dehyak, Giro, Qarabagh, Waghaz, Zana Khan), parts of Zurmat and Mirzaka areas in Paktia as well as of Mata Khan in Paktika. From those areas, the networks’ fighters—operating in small groups and able to seeking shelter in surrounding villages—attack government and UN employees, and threaten, kidnap and kill Afghan government and UN employees as well as ISAF contractors.

In early 2007 there were 29 groups of 15 to 30 fighters operating in Zurmat and 150 to 200 fighters in Shahikot again.<sup>82</sup> Possibly, it was Mansur’s men in Zurmat who fired the first shot at a UN vehicle there in July 2003, nearly missing an international staff member. In late 2006/early 2007, they temporarily imposed a total ban on the use of vehicles in the same district as an answer to the governor’s attempt to forbid the

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<sup>82</sup> Not all these groups are linked to the Mansur network. Some are part of the Haqqani network.

movement of motorcycles, the insurgents' weapon of choice for assassinations. This show of force was clearly won by the insurgents although the ban—with some damage to the insurgents' image—had to be lifted after a civilian car carrying a pregnant woman to hospital ran over a mine.

Nasrullah Mansur's eldest son Saifurrahman stayed in Shahikot after the fall of the Taliban regime in November 2001. In the Taliban Emirate's time, he had commanded the Armoured Regiment No. 15 in Paktia and later the important 4<sup>th</sup> (Qargha) Division in the north-western outskirts of Kabul. In March 2002, he led the embittered resistance of over a thousand fighters, including his own men, those from the Haqqani networks, Arabs, Uzbeks, Tajiks and Chechens, against a large US military operation, codenamed Anaconda, that started on the last day of the Muslim 'Id-ul-Azha festival. During two weeks of massive fighting, his and Haqqani's forces were pushed out of the area. Jalaluddin Haqqani's brother Ibrahim Omari surrendered to Afghan troops under the command of the local Ministry of Defence representative, Gen. Gul Haidar.<sup>83</sup> This fighting forced the entire civilian population to leave the area. Four-fifths of its 2,642 families remain displaced in Pakistan to the day. With 235 civilian casualties and 2,500 houses, 21 mosques, two *madrasas* and all the infrastructure like bridges and *karez* destroyed, this operation was an early example of the excessive use of air power.

Apart from the alienation of local Pashtun populations by the US military and the activities of the Mansur network, a UN official quoted the following reasons for the instability in Zurmat in April 2007: the corruption in local government, the district's function as a major transit corridor for Taliban fighters moving from Pakistan to Ghazni province and more central Afghan areas, intra-tribal conflicts, and the strong position of conservative *ulema* in the area. "This is not the people's government: the chief of police is a thief, the *qazi* is a thief, the district governor is a thief," said a tribal elder from area, adding, "this makes it effectively a Taliban nursery".

Tribally, the area of Zurmat is highly fragmented, with a different subtribe of the Andar, Suleimankhel and others in almost every other village. The area was accessible for convoys then even so, but that situation has changed in the meantime. The Provincial

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<sup>83</sup> Kathy Gannon, "Hundreds of fighters mass at front line for final push on al-Qaida caves", *Associated Press*, 13 Feb. 2002, [http://staugustine.com/stories/031302/new\\_570286.shtml](http://staugustine.com/stories/031302/new_570286.shtml) (last access: 17 Sept. 2008).

Council's members from Zurmat were not able to attend the body's meetings in Gardez in the spring of 2008 any more; the UN has suspended all road movement in the whole region.

Furthermore, the relatively small district of Zurmat was strongly represented in the structures of the Taliban's Islamic Emirate. There were at least three ministers (Abdullatif Mansur for Agriculture, Taher Anwari for Finance and later for Economy and Amir Khan Mutaqi—whose family was originally from Zurmat but had been resettled to Kunduz—for Education), four deputy ministers (Abdulahkim Munib, from the Mamozai subtribe of the Suleimankhel, for Tribal Affairs; Maulawi Rahmatullah Wahidyar for Martyrs and Refugees; Arifullah Arif for Finance; Maulawi Rahimullah Zurmati for Information and Culture) as well as Khalilullah Firozi, a Suleimankhel, and Maulana Pir Muhammad Rohani as president of the Academy of Sciences and chancellor of Kabul University respectively. That made it possible for the area to be governed by Zurmatists themselves, not by Kandaharis, which earned it the nickname “Little Kandahar”. This situation replicated itself after the Taliban comeback to the area in late 2005. According to sources familiar with the area, there is “complete local Taliban command in Zurmat”. Local commanders get their orders from the remaining members of the Mansur family, mainly staying in Pakistan.

The Mansur network is a successor of one of the oldest Islamist groups in the country, the Khuddam ul-Forqan, or “Servants of Providence”.<sup>84</sup> It precedes the history of the Taliban movement considerably. The Khuddam ul-Forqan emerged in Afghanistan in the mid-1960s from within the *ulema* under the influence of the head of the Mojaddedi family, Ibrahim Mojaddedi.<sup>85</sup> Its spiritual centre was the Nur-ul-Madaris *madrassa*. Its main aim was to counter the rising Marxist groups of the time. In 1978 the group contributed to the formation of Harakat-e Inqilab-e Islami (HII/Movement for an Islamic Revolution) as one of the seven major Sunni *tanzim* fighting the leftist regime in Kabul and the Soviet invasion. According to participants, its founders were “mullahs with

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<sup>84</sup> The following paragraphs are based on various interviews with protagonists of these events, held in Afghanistan between 2002 and 2008.

<sup>85</sup> Edwards, *Before Taliban...*(note 168), p. 255. Dorronsoro writes that it emerged in the 1950s in Herat under Faizani and only later moved closer to the Mojaddedi family. This seems to be incorrect. Faizani, instead, kept links to Jawanan-e Muslimin. Gilles Dorronsoro, *Revolution Unending: Afghanistan: 1979 to the Present*, London: Hurst & Co., 2005, p. 69.

Khuddam-ul-Forqan links from Helmand, Kandahar, Paktia and Paktika”. They elected Maulawi Muhammad Nabi Muhammadi, an Andar Pashtun from Logar, who was the member of parliament for Marja district in Helmand in the King’s time,<sup>86</sup> as Harakat’s leader. The *raison d’être* of the new organisation was the *ulema*’s rejection of the spiritual authority of the self-proclaimed *jihad* leaders Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and Burhanuddin Rabbani to issue a *fatwa* for *jihad* against the Soviets.

In 1982 Harakat split into various factions. Most of its commanders joined the faction led by Nasrullah Mansur, officially called Harakat-e Nawin-e Inqilab-e Islami, or New Harakat, but usually known as Harakat/Mansur. Pakistan, however, refused to recognise it officially. This deprived the new group of a share of the Western and Arab countries’ military and financial aid distributed by ISI. It therefore advised its commanders to join other—recognised—*tanzim*. It also made overtures to the Iranian government and to the Northern Alliance. Tehran rejected any cooperation, most probably because Harakat/Mansur was the one *tanzim* seen to be closest to the radical, anti-Shiite Deobandi doctrine of Sunni Islam. It also was fervently anti-monarchist and opposed more moderate groups like Prof. Mojaddedi’s Jabha-e Nejat and Gailani’s Mahaz-e Melli. One of its most popular slogans read: “In Islam, moderation is *kufir* [infidel].” Also in the 1980s, Mansur’s Harakat was the main ally for Kashmiri Jihadis amongst the Afghan *mujahidin*, in particular for Harkat-ul-Mujahidin (HuM) and its successor organisation Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami (HJI), founded in 1984. Their main contacts were Maulana Rohani and commander Arsala Rahmani, a Kharoti from Sarobi in Paktika.<sup>87</sup>

The HuM/HJI fighters “constituted a significant part of the Taliban forces in Afghanistan”, known as the Punjabi Taliban. The HJI central leader Maulana Qari Saifullah Akhtar, a Pashtun from Waziristan, stayed with Mullah Omar in Kandahar up to the US attack started in October 2001. Its first leader, Maulana Ershad Ahmad, was killed fighting Soviet-backed Afghan government troops alongside Harakat in Sharana (Paktika).<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> His family had been resettled to the US-run Helmand and Arghandab Valley Authority irrigation project there.

<sup>87</sup> This is the same tribe that the Hezb-i Islami leader Hekmatyar belongs to.

<sup>88</sup> Zahid Hussain, *Frontline Pakistan...* (note 214), p. 73; Muhammad Amir Rana, *A to Z of Jehadi Organizations in Pakistan*, Lahore: Mashal Books, 2004, pp. 251, 263-4, 271-2.

In 1992, *mujahidin* Harakat's various factions reunited under Nabi Muhammadi's leadership. When the *mujahidin* took over the government from the Najibullah regime in the same year, the Mansur family re-established its grip over Zurmat and suppressed all other competing organisations, particularly Hekmatyar's Hezb which had many local members killed by Mansur's fighters, but also Pir Gailani's Mahaz. He successfully urged local tribes to block supplies from Pakistan for Hezb at the behest of his allies Rabbani and Massoud. Shortly afterwards, on 8 February 1993, Nasrullah Mansur was killed when his car hit a mine in his home Zurmat district after his return from a meeting with the Northern Alliance leader and Interim President Rabbani in Kabul. The suspicion for Mansur's killing fell on Hekmatyar's Hezb. Thereafter, Nasrullah's brother Abdullatif Mansur became the leader of the Mansur faction; he was perceived as "more of a politician, an orator not a commander".<sup>89</sup> A year later, in 1994, Harakat's student wing Tehrik-e Tulaba-ye Harakat—with many Khuddam-ul-Forqan sympathisers—took the initiative to explore the new Taliban movement. A group comprising the later Taliban foreign minister Mullah Wakil Ahmad Mutawakkil and his deputy Abdurrahman Zahed "went to Quetta to see what the Taliban were really about". Finding that "respected people" were with them, they decided to join. In late 1994, the Harakat leader Nabi Muhammadi followed with a public statement of support for the Taliban that declared his own organisation dissolved into the new movement. Khuddam-ul-Forqan, however, maintained distinctive structures even during the Taliban Emirate's time. The author encountered several Taliban officials in 2000/01, among them also young men, who identified themselves privately as Khuddam-ul-Forqan members. Some of them rose to high positions in the Taliban administration. Nasrullah Mansur's three sons—Saifurrahman, Seyyedurrahman and Fathurrahman—used the advance of the Taliban to start regaining influence in their region of origin.

Watching the decline of the Taliban even before 9/11, Harakat announced in Quetta that the movement would resume its own activities in July 2001. According to a participant in the events, its leaders wanted to avoid being dragged into an anti-US war. After the fall of the Taliban regime, many Mansur commanders associated themselves

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<sup>89</sup> According to another version, Mansur was killed by members of the Eastern Shinwari in revenge for atrocities committed against this tribe by Andar earlier in the conflict.

with the Karzai government. In some cases, this happened from a position of power: Qari Baba in Ghazni and Muhammad Ali Jalali in Paktika, who had been the governors of these provinces under the *mujahidin* government and had been pushed out by the Taliban, simply moved back into these positions. Others were Khial Muhammad, Ghazni governor for a while and now an MP, and Arsala Rahmani, who was appointed a Senator by the President. Maulawi Seyyed Ahmad Shahidkhel joined the reconciliation programme and was released from prison in May 2008. This weakened the Mansur network's firepower significantly. However, it also provided them with links into the government camp. It was assumed that some of these commanders were playing in both camps.

The Mansur network became militarily active again in Zurmat only in late 2006, after about a year of preparations. Earlier, a broad meeting of representatives of different insurgent groups—al Qaida, the Haqqani and Mansur networks, pro-Taliban tribal commanders from Pakistan, Taliban commanders from Kunar, Zabul, Kandahar and the South-Eastern region in Yargulkhel (Waziristan)—had decided to step up operations in the South-East again. Following this, Abdullatif Mansur with 35 men visited his home village of Sahak (in Zurmat), met elders of various local tribes, among them the Baramkhel and Uryakhel, and announced *jihad* against the Karzai government, arguing that it was a puppet of the US. Also in 2006, Mansur fighters re-established their base in Shahikot.<sup>90</sup> The mood of the population, however, had deteriorated much earlier and provided a fertile ground for the Mansur network's comeback. This was linked to the arrest of a prominent tribal leader from the area, commander Muhammad Naim Faruq, by US forces in January 2002, and that of Dr Hafizullah Shahidkhel, the head of the Zurmat tribal *shura*, who also had served as the first district governor under the Karzai administration, in April 2003. Both were detained in Guantánamo; Faruq was released in mid-2003. The population suspected that both fell victim to intrigues by the highly unpopular chief of police of the province, Abdullah Mujahid (who, ironically, also ended up in Guantánamo later); he was linked to Jami'at which wanted to keep control over this province. Dr Hafizullah had worked with Jalaluddin Haqqani during the *jihad* and later switched allegiance to the Mansur networks. A prominent figure locally during the

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<sup>90</sup> Interviews with members of the Paktia provincial administration, Gardez, Oct. 2007.

Taliban period, he also signalled readiness to cooperate with the new Karzai administration initially. This was abruptly ended by his detention.

In early 2008, the Mansur network suffered a serious setback when one of the sons of Nasrullah Mansur was killed. An Afghan press report from January 2008 quoted an Afghan National Directorate for Security official as saying that Saifurrahman Mansur died during sectarian clashes in Parachinar in Pakistan's Kurram Agency in December 2007.<sup>91</sup> UN analysts, however, consider these reports as not confirmed and assume that the victim was in fact Seyyedurrahman, and that the quoted Afghan report had confused the names. The youngest Mansur son, Fathurrahman, was reported inactive at the same time, after being still involved in active fighting in mid-2003.

Like the Haqqani network, the Mansur network is based on tribal affiliation in the first instance. This constitutes the substratum of its internal cohesion and solidarity, coupled with a shared political outlook which, in this case, even goes further back than the shared experience of *jihad*. Owing to the Mansur's copycat "entryism", an approach that in Afghanistan has mainly been employed by Maoist anti-Soviet groups, it has very strong links into most of the other important *mujahidin tanzim*. For example, commander Arsala Rahmani was a member of Sayyaf's Ittehad executive committee in 1987.<sup>92</sup> Last but not least, it can be assumed that ISI has infiltrated this network through the Harakat youth, which was strongly influenced by Abdullah Zakeri a.k.a. Saheb Jan Sahebzada, one of the Taliban's later chief ideologues.

### *Other Taliban*

There are, particularly in Southern Paktika, some Taliban structures that belong neither to the Haqqani or the Mansur network but are directly linked to Taliban Leadership Council. They guard the strategic crossing from Pakistan of an old *mujahidin* supply route that starts in Khama Ghar (Pakistan) and leads through Nika, Ziruk, Gayan and Spera districts to Shahikot and further on to Ghazni and Zabul areas. These groups are firmly rooted in the local tribal society dominated by the large and partly nomadic Suleimankhel tribe, which constitutes almost 100 per cent of the inhabitants of this thinly populated and

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<sup>91</sup> Hamim Jalalzai, "Taliban commander killed in Parachinar, claims official", *Pajhwok Afghan News* (Kabul), 12 Jan. 2008, <http://www.afgha.com/?q=node/5678> (last access: 12 Dec. 2008).

<sup>92</sup> He was also said to have been instrumental in an exchange of secret messages between President Karzai and the Hezb leader Hekmatyar in 2008.

isolated area, known as Southern Katawaz (with Wazakhwa and Terwa districts). Currently, their overall commander is reported to be Mullah Nawab Khan, a Suleimankhel Pashtun from the Mahmudkhel sub-tribe. He is active in Wazakhwa district.

In 2003, there still was a whole range of—sometimes well-known—Taliban commanders operating in Paktika border districts who were not integrated into the then still evolving Haqqani network. Among them were prominent former Taliban, like Maulawis Kabir and Toha. The latter was a chief of police in Laghman and Nangrahar provinces under the Taliban Emirate, and is now operating further north in his Zadran tribe's territory in Nika, Gayan and Ziruk districts, from a base in Narey-e Manzakey in Nika.<sup>93</sup> There were also a number of smaller commanders like Maula Jan (Zadran from Gayan) and Ibrahim, as well as commander Arafat, who later joined the Afghan government's reconciliation programme. According to some reports, the Zadran commanders among them, in particular, have drifted towards the Haqqani network.

Under Nawab Khan, a cluster of smaller Taliban groups were reported to be starting activities in mid-2007. Its sub-commanders are said to be Maulawi Adam Khan (with two deputies, Abdul Baset Agha and Abdul Hamid, with Muhammad Bassir Sahebzada as the head of operations), Saadullah Khadilai, the Taliban regime's district governor for Katawaz, Maulawi Hamidullah, a former member of the Taliban's Supreme Court in Kandahar and Maulawi Muhammad Gul Jega'i, originally from Khushamand. These groups are based in the Shahghra Mountains of the unofficial Terwa district (a part of Wazakhwa), close to the Pakistani border. Probably, it constitutes rather a staging and transit area for Southern Ghazni and Zabul. A group originally led by Engineer Abdul Majid Faizani (he was killed in early 2008), a former Sayyaf commander, operating in the Marzak Mountains of Sarhauza district since 2004 with some 250 fighters including Chechens, Arabs, Uzbeks and Tajiks, might be a separate structure.

Shortly before these groups started operations, Taliban emissaries had simultaneously visited mosques in the area and had usually told local teachers not to accept government money. They emphasised that they did not oppose education in general, but appealed to the people to pay the teachers themselves and to hold lessons in private houses. As a

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<sup>93</sup> According to some reports, has also has moved north, taking up responsibility for areas in Logar.

result, most Katawaz schools were closed in mid-2008. This is another example of the Taliban's *modus operandi* of sending first unarmed "propaganda" groups and then, a few weeks later, weapons and funds that are handed over to newly-won local sympathisers who then start a new front.

Thirdly, there is a Taliban network in Paktika operated by Mullah Nazir from South Waziristan (Pakistan). Organisationally, he is neither linked to the Pakistani Taliban movement nor to the Haqqani network, but allied with the latter.

For Afghanistan, the existence of the separate Southern Paktika structures illustrates the fact that there are peripheral areas where Taliban are still not consolidated and competition between various commanders and networks is continuing. These structures also might be the remnants of a formerly much broader network that was diminished as a result of the Haqqani network's expansion.

#### *Hezb-i Islami in Loya Paktia*

During the anti-Soviet war, Hekmatyar's Hezb-i Islami was only of local importance in the Afghan South-East. There were a handful of commanders, mainly in Paktika province and in Sabari. Among the better-known was Khaled Faruqi, who was a strong Hezb commander in Paktika during the *jihād*, became the first leader of a Hezb-i Islami wing that applied for registration as a legal political party in 2004, and—after a painful process of official dissociation from Hekmatyar's leadership role under pressure both from the international community and the Karzai government—was finally registered in October 2005.

Today, the influence of Hekmatyar's Hezb-i Islami in the South-East is still limited geographically to small "islands". The most important areas of influence are mountainous parts of Sabari, Bak and Terezai districts which are close to the Afghan-Pakistani border. Most of Hezb-i Islami's military operations in Loya Paktia take place here.. From there, Hezb has been expanding north more strongly in 2008, towards Zazi Maidan and Tsamkani districts, both known for political Hezb influence, and even into the hitherto stable Mangal areas. Isolated operations, however, have been reported from here earlier, like temporary checkpoints for passing cars on side-roads in the Surkhab area of Zazi Maidan district. In Seyyed Karam district, minor Hezb groups have been active even

since late 2003. These groups are led by Mullah Haji Jailani, a Tutakhel from this area, who officially joined the government's reconciliation programme in July 2005 but is reported to be continuing his anti-government activities from this shelter.

Although Hezb-i Islami was reported to have appointed a new commander for the South-Eastern region in June 2006 (his name is not known, but Abbas Khan from Zambar in Sabari district is the strongest in the region <sup>94</sup>), the party's main activity continued to be political and ideological up to 2008. This included maintaining networks of former and/or current commanders, activists and loyalists and their networks, sending in small propaganda teams, threatening government officials directly or by so-called *shabname*, and recruitment. Reports from the region speak of increasing pressure on teachers and construction companies not to cooperate with the central government and international actors. There were reports of Hezb political agents recruiting fighters to support the Sunni side during the sectarian clashes in Parachinar (Pakistan) that continued throughout most of 2007 in tribally mixed Tsamkani as well as among the Zazi and Mangal tribes. In particular after the Sabari suicide truck bomb and heavy US retaliation with air strikes, not only the Haqqani network but also Hezb-i Islami is reported to be making more inroads into the area of other tribes, among them the Terezai who had still backed President Karzai strongly during the presidential elections.<sup>95</sup> There is also known political influence of Hekmatyar's Hezb among former *mujahidin* in the towns of Khost, Gardez and elsewhere. Of late, there are reports that Hezb is creating parallel governmental structures in those areas.

Backed by elements of the Pakistani authorities, Hezb fighters have easy access to Afghanistan from safe havens in Pakistan from where they cross the border on a daily basis. Hezb-i Islami (and also Taliban) militants are reported to be still able to use the Zhawara base in Gurbuz, close to the border with neighbouring Tani district, and Spina Shega in Zadzi Aryub district. Both were famously built with Osama bin Laden's involvement in the 1980s, temporarily taken and destroyed by a spectacular Soviet

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<sup>94</sup> Abbas Khan Sabarai seems to have worked with the Karzai administration first but then was alienated by arrests in his areas.

<sup>95</sup> Their *jirga*'s public announcement that the whole tribe had to vote for Karzai, and that the houses of families acting against this decision, would be burnt down was widely reported in 2004. See: Scott Baldauf, "Afghans vote, ready or not", *Christian Science Monitor*, 8 Oct. 2004, <http://www.csmonitor.com/2004/1008/p01s04-wosc.html> (last access: 2 Oct. 2008).

operation in April 1986 and during the US Tomahawk raids in 1998, and partly rebuilt later. Zhawara, a complex of caves on a mountain slope facing east, is accessible only from the Pakistani side of the border, just 15 minutes away from Miramshah.

Hezb commanders Abbas Khan Sabarai (a.k.a. Major Abbas) lives in Pakistan and cooperates with the Haqqani network and the Taliban. Inside Afghanistan, he has a base in Zambar (Yaqubi district) not far from the border, from where he operates into Bak and Zazi Maidan districts. From the spring of 2008 onwards, Hezb-i Islami expanded its activities from its Sabari base into all the neighbouring districts of Khost and Paktia provinces, where it seems to have established some permanent presence. Earlier inroads were attributed by regional observers to relatively weak tribal structures in the affected areas (like Gurbuz),<sup>96</sup> as well as a creeping radicalisation of at least some elements of these religiously conservative but originally non-militant and rather pro-monarchy and pro-central government tribes, due to their forced migration to camps in the Pakistani tribal areas from 1978 onwards. In other areas, strong tribal structures have prevented the infiltration of insurgents into certain districts, sometimes with the help of *arbaki*. According to reports from the region, this changed in 2008. Armed Hezb activists are now even able to move freely in the territory of the highly centralised Mangal tribe. This is possibly a sign that this tribe—after years of neglect by the central government and international donors—has given the green light for more insurgent activities. Hezb has been clearly better funded than ever since 2001. Afghan security sources allege that international jihadist groups offer money to Hekmatyar in order for him to cooperate with the Haqqani network in Khost and, by that, strengthen the insurgency there as a whole.

The case of the Mangal is particularly striking as an example of the neglect of the Pashtun tribes by Kabul's post-2001 policy and the lack of understanding of tribal society by the international community. As early as 2003, the Mangal Central Shura took and implemented a decision that no poppy should be grown on the tribe's territory. This was completely ignored by the Kabul government and external donors who failed to reward the Mangal for this unilateral decision even in the slightest way. At this time, the UK-led anti-narcotics programme concentrated on the Eastern region. Later, the Mangal

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<sup>96</sup> For the discussion of the relation between tribal structures and religious/Jihadi networks, see Sébastien Trives' chapter following the present one.

committed themselves by a traditional Pashtun undertaking (*tarun*) to defend their territory against the Taliban. The Mangal also played a prominent part in the Tribal Solidarity Council which brought together Paktia and Khost's major tribes during 2003/4, an initiative that was met with the same ignorant response from Kabul.<sup>97</sup> Kabul's fateful decision to start paying *arbaki* through governors' discretionary funds in the first quarter of 2005 undermined a tribal institution that had stabilised Pashtun areas whenever there was a lack of government presence. Even the Afghan leaders apparently failed to understand its character. "In the King's time it was an honour to be member of an *arbaki*," explained a tribal elder from the region to this author in April 2007. "Its members were provided with *e'ana* [rations, weapons and ammunition] by the *jirga*." This made the *arbaki* an instrument controlled by the tribe; to pay it means to remove it from the tribal setting and renders it uncontrollable when payment stops. Even though there are some examples of South-Eastern *arbaki* that continued to carry out their duties for months without pay, this process turns tribal volunteers into pseudo-tribal militias.

Equally counterproductive is the American approach to the South-East. After the region had remained almost without resources during the first post-2001 years, Washington started to pour enormous amounts of money into it from early 2007 with the aim of making it a model of success, the "crown jewel in the American counterinsurgency".<sup>98</sup> When a new US PRT commander visited the volatile Zurmat district in April 2007 he promised projects worth US\$100 million, but it remained unclear whether the money would cover just Paktia province or the whole of the South-Eastern region that also includes Ghazni. The region was subsequently flooded with projects. Zurmat alone was reported to have received \$63 million of US aid by early 2008.<sup>99</sup> Many projects were faulty, though. Inhabitants of the region reported sub-standard school buildings and roads: there were also some "white elephants", like a specialised hospital in Khost inaugurated during a visit of the then NATO commander for Afghanistan, Gen. Karl Eikenberry, that remains largely unused. The claim that 72 of the 86 districts of the

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<sup>97</sup> As did the Zadran Unity Meeting with 2000 participants in the spring of 2007 in Dwamanda, Khost.

<sup>98</sup> Ann Marlowe, "A Counterinsurgency Grows in Khost", *The Weekly Standard*, 19 May 2008, <http://www.weeklystandard.com/Content/Public/Articles/000/000/015/080inxsb.asp> (last access: 27 Nov. 2008).

<sup>99</sup> Jon Hemming, "Longer tours, Afghan solution bring peace: U.S. troops", *Reuters*, 12 Feb. 2008, [www.reuters.com/article/newsMaps/idUSISL23193520080212](http://www.reuters.com/article/newsMaps/idUSISL23193520080212) (last access: 12 Dec. 2008).

South-Eastern region supported the central government in mid-2008<sup>100</sup> seems to be largely exaggerated.

Another factor in growing Hezb-i Islami influence is a strong political polarisation between former *mujahidin* and PDPA activists in Loya Paktia, which can be felt in meetings on the ground. Intellectuals from local tribes like the Mangal, Tani, Zadran, Ahmadzai and others were strongly represented in the party and state leaderships between the so-called Saur revolution of 1978 and President Najibullah's fall in 1992. Among them were former Interior Minister Muhammad Aslam Watanjar and Eng. Nazar Muhammad, both from Zurmat; Seyyed Muhammad Gulabzoi, also a former Interior Minister and a Zadran from Nadershahkot; Shahnawaz Tanai from Khost province, the Minister of Defence who unsuccessfully tried a coup d'état against Najibullah in 1990; former PDPA Politburo member Habib Mangal (from Musakhel/Khost) and also Khial Muhammad Katawazai (from Paktika), a former deputy foreign minister who spent many years in prison under Presidents Karmal and Najibullah. Khost town was dubbed "Little Moscow" then. But in addition Najibullah (from the rival Parcham faction), an Ahmadzai from Seyyed Karam district, was from Paktia. Many second-line as well as some first-rank PDPA activists, including many army and police officers, have played a prominent role in post-Taliban Afghanistan. Being educated, they often possess better chances of obtaining administrative posts. Former ministers and generals like Nur-ul-Haq Ulumi, Abdurrashid Aryan and Abdurrashid Jalali lead political parties; Gulabzoi and Ulumi have been elected members of parliament since 2005.

In Khost, until recently former Khalqi military officers even commanded militias, known as Khost Protection Force and Afghan Security Guards. They are paid by US Special Forces for guard duties but also accompany them during counter-insurgency operations or do patrols on their own. This foreign patronage makes them untouchable for disarmament through the DDR/DIAG process. These groups became known for their ruthlessness and human rights abuses—and for the impunity with which they can act. The prominent role played by former Khalqis created suspicions among former *mujahidin* that they or their communities are deliberately targeted by their former foes. One episode occurring against this background could have contributed to the re-emergence of the

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<sup>100</sup> Marlowe, "A Counterinsurgency..." (note 233).

insurgency in Sabari: Shahid Gul Sabarai, a Taliban commander based in Waziristan, had returned to the area with some 40 of his men in mid-2007, was integrated into the Khost police and even given training at the US-run regional police training centre, but shortly afterwards was accused by other policemen of involvement in IED attacks and arrested by US troops.<sup>101</sup> Reciprocally, the insurgents—possibly in conjunction with former *mujahidin*—target former PDPA members. In one case, the district governor of Qalandar district (Khost), Mirza Jan Nimgerai, a former PDPA member who was accused of having passed wrong information to U.S. forces, was killed in June 2008. Even former anti-Soviet activists like the late Hakim Taniwal and Merajuddin Pattan, who had become provincial governors in the South-East under Karzai, were accused of “pro-communist” leanings because they are simply Western-educated and politically liberal.

### *Conclusion*

The Haqqani and Mansur networks are clearly part of the Taliban universe. Their leaders, commanders and fighters consider Mullah Omar as their spiritual leader (*Amir-ul-momenin*) but their *modus operandi* is that of semi-independent warlords who have joined the rather heterogeneous insurgency movement for reasons of expediency. At the same time, there are clearly visible fault-lines and differences in approach, in particular between the mainstream Taliban and the Haqqani network. The increasing closeness of the Haqqanis to al Qaida, underpinned by distinct tribal features, seems to be deepening the divisions currently. But the symbiotic relationship still holds because it is mutually beneficial. The mutual benefit outweighs the shortcomings. It allows the Haqqanis to maintain organisational semi-independence and gives them access to the label of the Taliban, as the most popular insurgent organisation, while the Taliban gain access to Loya Paktia, a region that has never been a core area of their movement. This gives them the chance to present themselves as more than a purely Kandahari movement.

The Haqqani network could theoretically stand on its own feet. Its independent links to Arab financial sources, to al Qaida and to Pakistan’s ISI give it command of sufficient resources to operate autonomously of the Taliban supreme leadership. But this would also be risky. For the purposes of being full-scale warlords, the Haqqanis lack a clearly

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<sup>101</sup> Author’s interview, Khost, Oct. 2007.

defined area of control within Afghanistan. Even their own home village is not under their full control and is regularly accessed by Western and Afghan forces, even if only in heavily armoured convoys. That would not be compensated by the fact that some of the tribal territories on the Pakistani side of the border constitute a safe haven for the Haqqani network and hence a *dar-ul-islam* free from non-Muslim influence—which, according to the Wahhabi version of Islam, is a theological *conditio sine qua non* for leading a *jihad*. However, if they were only relying on foreign bases and supplies, it would make them look too much like Pakistani-handled puppets in the eyes of the very anti-Pakistani local population. Therefore, it would be realistic to speak about a “tactical alliance” between the Haqqani network and the Taliban movement which does not need to last for ever. Even the Taliban can only rent a Pashtun, never buy him.