

Power &
Politics
in
Loya
Kandahar



MARCH
2012

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Afghanistan is at a crossroads. More than a decade after the Taliban were removed from power the international community has collectively decided that it is time for Afghanistan to fend for itself. Troop and aid reductions have already begun and by 2014 the international community will no longer have troops patrolling Afghan villages or civilians working alongside district officials. As with most of the chapters in Afghanistan's history, the story that is eventually told about the success or failings of the transition will begin in Loya Kandahar.

Loya Kandahar is the region centred on Kandahar City that includes Helmand, Kandahar, Uruzgan and Zabul provinces. It is the historic home of Afghanistan's Pashtun kings, the power base of President Karzai, and the heartland of the Taliban. Its political significance is matched by its strategic importance. It is a major transit point, produces the vast majority of the world's opium supply, and shares a porous border with Pakistan.

From late 2009 onwards the international community poured in massive resources in an effort to clear Loya Kandahar of insurgents and build sub-national governance. From a security standpoint, the surge succeeded. Residents polled in Helmand, Uruzgan and Zabul report significant improvements in security, better quality of life and a weakened insurgency. However, Kandahar residents, who perceive the Taliban as a political as well as a security challenge, do not share the optimism and most do not perceive that security has improved. Many do not believe that gains are sustainable and will last through the Transition period.

Thus, an overwhelming majority of Loya Kandahar's residents are in favour of a power sharing agreement with the Taliban. Locals believe that in the shifting political environment their collective ability to project power throughout Afghanistan and remain relevant depends on southern Pashtuns first achieving internal-ethnic and tribal cohesion. Reconciliation accordingly matters more to Loya Kandahar than any other region.

The Afghan Peace and Reconciliation Programme (APRP), unfortunately, is not perceived as a viable peace process. Spoilers on the High Peace Council are seen as intent to undermine Pashtun unity. The bureaucratic-laden reintegration process is predictably ineffective and a cash cow for those who control it. Afghan Taliban have bypassed the APRP and are pursuing peace along two alternative tracks. Moderate Afghan Taliban have opened a liaison office in Qatar and are in bilateral negotiations with the United States.¹ In order to protect its interests in any peace agreement Pakistan has created a parallel political movement, the Naw-e Tehrik (New Movement), that is attempting to begin a multilateral peace process in Saudi Arabia or Turkey that would include Afghanistan and Pakistan, and possibly Iran, but would work around the US.

Despite a willingness to talk, the Taliban are by no means ready to submit. On the contrary, its senior leaders are united, it retains support from key tribes in the south that are marginalised and has a

¹ These talks are currently suspended, but neither side suggests they have ended.

clear strategy to regain territory in Loya Kandahar once coalition forces withdraw from rural areas. Moreover, the Taliban are considerably more popular than the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) which has done little to improve its reputation with the local population. The Taliban by contrast were identified in recent polling as the most popular political party in Kandahar, and popular in the other provinces as well.

The assassination of Ahmed Wali Karzai, the region's predominant powerbroker, has forced his brother, President Karzai, to devise a new strategy to protect both his own interests, as well as those of his family, the Popalzai tribe and southern Pashtuns. At the heart of his strategy is the formation of a united southern Pashtun bloc to counterbalance the Northern Alliance's United Front. A regional governor has been appointed to ensure that political power is centralised and resources more tightly controlled. This will weaken provincial governors who Karzai felt had grown too autonomous due to close relations with the resource-generous international community. Karzai is also widening his political base by fostering client-patron relations with select powerbrokers who will be expected to maintain security in their area of influence.

The final part of President Karzai's strategy is to hang as head of state. If this is not possible, exploratory steps have already been taken for his brother Qayum to step forward as the Karzai and Loya Kandahar's southern bloc presidential candidate. The Karzais are far from popular in the region, but given the choice between a Karzai and a non-Pashtun candidate local Pashtuns will back one of the Karzais. Most residents, however, hope that another strong Pashtun, preferably a southerner, will run for president.

Karzai's current strategy relies upon the support of strongmen that have a combination of a tribal patronage network, strategic connections to multiple resource providers, and/or control of security forces. These powerbrokers will be called upon to secure key terrain and transit routes and will need the continued support of coalition forces, especially technical and air assets. Abdul Raziq and Matiullah Khan, the Chiefs of Police of Kandahar and Uruzgan have already been anointed in their provinces and continue to consolidate their already considerable power. There is no clear powerbroker in Helmand, although several former powerbrokers are lurking in the shadows and awaiting the departure of Governor Mangal who is expected to leave alongside his international supporters. Hamidullah Tokhi will continue to be the dominant powerbroker in Zabul, but his reach from Kabul where he sits as a member of the Wolesi Jirga is limited and an on-going power struggle between his Tokhi tribe, considered to be the landed-elite of Zabul, and Kuchi nomads will continue to create instability.

The next two years will likely determine Loya Kandahar's governance system for the next two decades. Its citizens will not accept a return to warlord-led anarchy and will try to hold onto the modest gains in health and education that GIROA has managed to provide. Above all else, they crave stability and believe that this can best be achieved through a political accommodation with the Taliban. Whether spoilers will manage to scuttle peace remains to be seen. For now President Karzai's regional governance strategy coupled with continued international support will be sufficient to hold Loya Kandahar together. If the region is excluded from power in 2014, however, the Taliban will quickly fill a governance vacuum and realise its more than decade-long strategy to simply outwait the West.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose

To inform the United Kingdom's strategy to support more inclusive and stable politics across Afghanistan, this report provides the British Embassy Kabul (BEK) with an assessment of political dynamics in Loya Kandahar, the region comprising Kandahar, Helmand, Uruzgan, and Zabul provinces. The assessment focuses on how key powerbrokers control and exercise power, and to what extent these powerbrokers are integrated and their interests protected by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA). This assessment supports BEK's ability to:

- Provide advice to senior policy makers on progress toward achieving the objective of a sustainable and inclusive political settlement;
- Discern early warning of trends in political stability that might affect this objective and the wider strategy (including governance and security strands);
- Determine a best approach to influencing key decision-makers (Afghans and the wider international community) in pursuit of this objective.

1.2 Methodology

The methodology of this report reflects a pragmatic approach to conducting research in insecure areas where the collection of information can put individuals at risk. Numerous precautions were used to ensure the safety of field surveyors. The field research was carried out by ten surveyors, all natives of their home province, six of whom had previous field research experience. Two surveyors in each province collected data on Zabul, Uruzgan and Helmand, and four surveyors covered Kandahar. Surveyors received two days of training on interview techniques, research methods, and the four-part questionnaire (three parts qualitative and one part quantitative) that was developed for this assessment.

Surveyors spent four weeks in the field. For the qualitative data collection each surveyor interviewed between 20 and 30 local individuals. The lead international researcher conducted another 15 interviews over a three-week period in Kandahar City, for a total of between 215 and 315 total individual qualitative interviews. For the quantitative portion, 250 individuals were surveyed: 50 each from Zabul, Uruzgan, and Helmand, and 100 from Kandahar.

Each surveyor thoroughly debriefed the lead international researcher at the completion of data collection and then returned to the field to fill knowledge gaps and gather additional information. The surveyors then returned and again debriefed the lead international researcher who then conducted a further 10 interviews in Kabul and Kandahar City to verify and triangulate surveyor information. The assessment then underwent three rounds of peer review by three international researchers and a senior Afghan researcher.

1.3 Demographics and Settlement

Loya Kandahar is the region in Afghanistan surrounding the ancient and strategically important city of Kandahar. Loya or Greater Kandahar comprises the provinces of Kandahar, Helmand, Zabul and Uruzgan. At 143,799 sq. km, it accounts for 22 per cent of Afghanistan's total land area, and is slightly larger than England's total land area. It also spans 40 per cent of the Afghanistan-Pakistan (Af-Pak) border. The region's estimated 2,604,200 inhabitants constitute 10 per cent of Afghanistan's population. Loya Kandahar is overwhelmingly rural, with 82 per cent of the population residing in villages, mostly in agricultural green zones that run along the Helmand and Arghandab Rivers and their tributaries.²

Loya Kandahar is a strategic transit point that connects the Gulf ports of Karachi, Pakistan and Bandar Abbas, Iran, with greater Afghanistan via the border crossing in Spin Boldak district of Kandahar in the east, and the border crossing at Zaranj in Nimruz Province in the west. These commercial trade routes are vital to landlocked Afghanistan's economic prosperity, and make control of Loya Kandahar a priority for the central government.

Pashtuns are the majority ethnic group in Loya Kandahar, accounting for an estimated 80 to 90 per cent of the total population,³ followed by Baluch dwelling primarily in the southern Helmand districts of Khanishin and Dishu and a sizeable Hazara population in parts of Helmand and Uruzgan. National-level ethnic politicking is mostly absent in Loya Kandahar where the region's three largest ethnic groups have had historically amicable relations grounded in economic pragmatism. There is therefore less ethnic tension and conflict in Loya Kandahar than might be expected.

The Baluch are one of the most cohesive groups found in Afghanistan. They maintain firm control over unofficial border crossings in southern Helmand and control the border crossing to Iran in Zaranj of Nimruz Province, one of only two official border crossings in the region. So while they are smaller in population than the Pashtuns and inhabit peripheral areas, the Baluch are more united and play a key role in both the licit and illicit economy.

Hazara, who are predominantly Shiite Muslims, are found in Lashkargah, the provincial capital of Helmand, and are the majority population around the northern tip of Helmand and northern and eastern Uruzgan⁴, which run along the border of the Hazara-majority province of Daykundi and the Hazara territories of Ghazni Province. The Hazara play a vital role in the region's economy, especially at the intersection of Pashtun and Hazara ethnic territory in areas like northern Helmand and western Ghazni where licit and illicit goods and crops from northern Afghanistan, Central Asia, and Iran are traded.

² Afghanistan CSO Population Data 1390 (2011-12)

<http://www.afghaneic.org/Data/CSO%20Population%20Data/Afghanistan%20CSO%20population%20data%201390%20%282011%20-12%29.pdf>. (Accessed January 9, 2010)

³ Ethnic and tribal population estimates are difficult due to the absence of a census and the contentious political nature of gathering data on tribes or ethnic groups. The estimate here is based on unofficial data collected between 2005 and 2011 in Loya Kandahar on tribes and ethnic composition in every village of Zabul, Helmand, Kandahar, and Uruzgan Province.

⁴ The area now constituting Uruzgan Province was mostly Hazara until the state began settling Pashtuns in the area during the reigns of Ahmed Shah Abdali (1747-1772) and Amir Abdur Rahman Khan (1880-1901), effectively pushing the Hazara to the northern peripheries of Loya Kandahar, Quetta and Mashad (Iran).

It is the Pashtuns, however, and only a subset of Pashtuns, that have traditionally ruled the region. The majority of the region's Pashtuns are from the Durrani confederation, with the exception of Ghilzai-majority Zabul province. Indeed, Zabul is generally considered the dividing line between Ghilzai-majority Loya Paktia and the Durrani heartland that stretches through Loya Kandahar to Farah and southern Herat.

The Durrani Pashtuns are divided into two sub-confederations: the Zirak (Popalzai, Achekzai, Barakzai, Mohammedzai, Alkozai) and the Panjpai (Nurzai, Ishaqzai, Alizai, Khogiani, Maku). The Popalzai and Mohammedzai tribes of the Zirak Durrani branch are the traditional rulers of both Loya Kandahar and Afghanistan. The more populous Achekzai and Alkozai tribes of the Zirak Durrani confederation have historically been the 'militia tribes' that provided the military backing for the Popalzai and Mohammedzai rulers; a dynamic that can still be seen today. The Ghilzai are the majority in Zabul and found in smaller numbers, often scattered in villages among larger Durrani communities in the other three provinces of the region.

There is a greater mixing of tribes in the broad valleys and deserts of Loya Kandahar than in eastern Afghanistan where natural boundaries often define tribal territory. Post-2001 there has been a further blurring of tribal territories with an increase in rural-to-urban displacement due to conflict, shifting areas of government and insurgent control, as well as Afghan refugees returning from Pakistan. In general families associated with the insurgency have sought refuge outside Afghanistan, in Chaman, Quetta, Karachi and the Gerdi Jangal settlement in Baluchistan. Families associated with the government have tended to relocate from rural districts to the protected provincial capitals of Lashkargah and Kandahar City, or to either Kabul or Herat.⁵ Despite historical and contemporary intermixing and migration, there are still clearly identifiable tribal territories in southern Afghanistan. Generally, however, the degree of tribal solidarity in Loya Kandahar has decreased and is much less than amongst Eastern Pashtuns. An overview of these territories is found in Annex B.

1.4 History

From a historical, spiritual, and politically-strategic standpoint Loya Kandahar is Afghanistan's most important region. Kandahar City is Afghanistan's traditional capital where Ahmed Shah Durrani was crowned King in 1747, beginning two and a half centuries of rule by Pashtuns from the Zirak Durrani tribal confederation. The centrality of Pashtun elites to the Afghan State was only upended with the 1978 communist coup that sought to subvert the traditional position of landed Pashtun elite as leaders of the State. The Communist coup triggered a jihad led in Loya Kandahar by a mixture of the landed elite, rural religious leaders, and what would become a new social group of "achieved-status" military leaders from outside the tribal elite. Many of Loya Kandahar's current communal divisions, as well as the breakdown in cohesive tribal leadership, can be traced to the 1980s when different factions competed for power and resources. This included both *mujahideen* factions and the

⁵ It is important to stress that this is a generalisation, by no means are all migrants in Quetta or Chaman, insurgent supporters, in many cases these are individuals who have moved for economic reasons or for general security reasons rather than specific insurgent affiliation.

communist-government-backed militias used to maintain freedom of movement on arterials and to protect southern capitals and a handful of besieged district centres.⁶

When the communist government fell in 1992, the most powerful *mujahideen* commanders descended on Kandahar City, occupied land, and then battled each other to maintain or expand control. In Lashkargah three different *mujahideen* factions traded control of the capital in the first year and a half of *mujahideen* rule. The infighting resulted in the breakdown of rule of law and a state of anarchy. This eventually affected trade as the important transit routes that run through Kandahar became increasingly insecure. When a religious movement of rural clerics and their students (*taliban*) with roots in present day Zhari, Panjwai, and Maywand districts of Kandahar coalesced in 1994, the ISI pulled support for the *mujahideen* and decided it would back, and to a certain extent control, the nascent Taliban movement.

Among other things, the Taliban's rise to power repositioned Kandahar as the capital of Afghanistan and returned Loya Kandahar to its position of primacy for the ruling regime. What changed, however, were the ruling class and tribe. Whereas previously the Zirk Durrani tribes⁷ controlled the government, the Taliban instituted a detribalised system built around a community of believers, led predominately by rural mullahs and Pashtuns from tribes such as the Ishaqzai, Achekzai, and the Nurzai, as well as minority Ghilzai tribes like the Hotak, the tribe of Taliban leader Mullah Mohammed Omar. Kuchi (nomads) also played an important role as military commanders in the Taliban regime.

Post-2001, many of the *mujahideen* strongmen and Zirk Durrani elite who fled the Taliban in 1994 returned to positions of power in Loya Kandahar. Former elite *mujahideen* commanders and tribal strongmen such as Gul Agha Sherzai (Barakzai), Mullah Sher Mohammed (Alizai) and Jan Mohammed Khan (Popalzai) became the governors of Kandahar, Helmand, and Uruzgan respectively. And of course, Hamid Karzai (Popalzai), a native of central Kandahar and a

Post-2001 Power Shifts

2002-2004: The Afghan Transitional Authority (ATA) was a period characterised by stability, though not the infrastructure improvements that many had expected.

2004-2006: During the early years of the GIRA corruption and predation by government actors increased drastically and the insurgency roared back with early communal support.

2006-2009: The insurgency establishes effective control in many areas of Loya Kandahar as the government and its supporters retreat to major cities.

2009-2012: CF/ANSF offensives re-establish government control, blunting an insurgency that remains defiant, well supported and still in control of the rural periphery (northern Helmand, eastern Farah, western Kandahar) and well-resourced from ISI-protected areas such as Chaman and Gerdi Jangal.

⁶ The militias included local forces such as Esmat Muslim (Achekzai) or current Helmand MP Jabar Kamaran (Nurzai) as well as Uzbek militias linked to General Dostum from northern Afghanistan.

⁷ Namely the Popalzai (1747-1826) and the Barakzai/Mohammedzai (1826-1978)

member of *the* elite Popalzai family of Loya Kandahar during the Zahir Shah government, would become Afghanistan's President.

On a national level, however, Loya Kandahar declined in political importance. This decline was principally due to the emergence of United Front political networks that were based in northern and central regions of Afghanistan – the areas that had most ardently opposed the presence of the Pashtun-dominated Taliban. United Front leaders had been quick to align with Coalition Forces in 2001 and were the best represented in the early international political conferences that shaped the emerging state.⁸ The shift in power also saw the capital and base of government move back to Kabul, with United Front political and military networks dominating here.

In Loya Kandahar itself, the Afghanistan Transitional Authority (ATA) years were relatively stable but non-inclusive. The strongmen governors of Kandahar, Helmand and Uruzgan were able to keep the insurgency in check through the development of patron-client networks that were unofficially sanctioned by the state but did little to extend the legitimacy of GIRoA. The former *mujahideen* leaders that dominated the early post-Taliban years would eventually be pushed out of their positions in 2005 and 2006 as a precondition for NATO/ISAF expansion (Jan Mohammed Khan, Mullah Sher Mohammed) or due to local power rivalries (Gul Agha Sherzai). Government control and stability declined, as the insurgency exploited the absence of these powerbrokers to build insurgent support networks especially in the rural areas of Loya Kandahar.

By 2006 the insurgency was active throughout Loya Kandahar. By mid-2009 most districts in Loya Kandahar were under partial government control⁹ and Loya Kandahar's peripheries were firmly controlled by the Taliban. From late 2009 onwards the international community devoted significant resources and surged into the region in an attempt to break the back of the insurgency. By early 2011, joint Afghanistan National Security Force (ANSF) and Coalition Force (CF) operations throughout Loya Kandahar had succeeded in pushing insurgents out of their strongholds; however, the Taliban still controlled peripheral safe zones, retained the capacity to carry out attacks in all areas, and continued to receive support from Iran and Pakistan.

⁸ United Front rise to power was a result of their centrality to the US aerial campaign to oust the Taliban. The United Front's capture of Kabul broke one of the conditions that Mullah Omar laid out for the peaceful surrender of Kandahar in late 2001.

⁹ Notable exceptions include: in Uruzgan, Deh Rawud, which had been under insurgent control in 2007 but had been retaken by GIRoA, Chenartu, and Hazara areas of Khas Uruzgan and Gizab; in Kandahar, parts of Spin Boldak, Nesh and Dand districts; in Helmand, Lashkargah and parts of Grishk district.

2. ACTOR ANALYSIS

In this section the nine most significant powerbrokers in Loya Kandahar as of March 2012 are profiled. The profiled powerbrokers are grouped according to the province they are most active in or in which they were born. The order is not a ranking. The backgrounds of the men profiled differ greatly. What they have in common is the ability to draw upon three overarching sources of power:

- **Patronage Networks:** The most powerful actors in the south all have tribal or ethnic constituencies that serve as their base of support. These constituencies provide the necessary political, economic and military manpower and in return the powerbroker redistributes resources. Historically powerbrokers in Loya Kandahar have come from the most populous or elite tribes. This remains true today, but *only* if the tribal leader also possesses at least one of the two additional sources of power listed below. The need to have a durable local constituency is crucial and is why government officials from outside the area are not considered to be powerful in the region, unless they have strong backing from the central government and international military forces. However, even in these cases, the actor's power is considered to be transient given the uncertain future of both the central government and international military commitments in Loya Kandahar.
- **Access to means of violence:** control over state security forces and/or paramilitary forces. Two of the most powerful individuals identified in this assessment, Gen. Abdul Raziq of Kandahar and Matiullah Khan of Uruzgan, control formal Afghan National Police (ANP) *and* paramilitary forces. The latter serve as personal enforcement arms. This allows these actors to project power and grow rich; Raziq by controlling the Af-Pak border from Zabul to Helmand, Matiullah by controlling the Kandahar-Tirin Kot Highway.
- **Connection to GIRoA, CF/International Funds, Taliban:** powerbrokers are those who are connected to more than one resource—i.e., GIRoA + ISAF/US Coalition and Special Forces + Taliban—though linkages to each of these resources are not equally strong. Connection to multiple resources lets the actor navigate the multi-polar environment, spread the risks of investments, act as communication channels between different actors and safeguards him from being arrested/imprisoned by GIRoA or assassinated by the insurgency. These connections often determine an actor's ability to project power through violence by 'legitimising' their actions under the government, or directing ISAF/NATO towards enemies (though this is less of a problem in 2012 than in years past).

Far from resisting the possible strictures of holding an official position, strongmen covet formal political or security positions. For instance, the already considerable informal power of Ahmed Wali Karzai and Matiullah Khan only increased after they were legitimised as Kandahar Provincial Council Head (2005) and Uruzgan Provincial Chief of Police (2011), respectively. Their power increased, because they retained the ability to use force and informal influence in the same extra-legal manner as before, but now with formal cover. Further, sub-national government appointments in provinces with larger foreign military contingents provide actors with direct access to or influence over the

distribution of donor assistance and contracts. However, the most powerful actors in the South also have direct links to the central government, especially president Karzai or cabinet ministers. These links allow them to circumvent and undermine provincial competitors for the spoils of international military contracting and aid.

2.1 Powerbroker Profiles

The nine individuals profiled in this section are considered the key powerbrokers in Loya Kandahar based upon the above criteria. What these powerbrokers have in common are strong, though often narrow, communal patronage networks, government or Taliban leadership positions, *and* a direct line to external resources, either by way of connections to CF and international funds, or Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). Given the still-volatile security environment in Loya Kandahar, it is unsurprising that two of the most powerful individuals are martial strongmen—Kandahar and Uruzgan Chiefs of Police, Matiullah Khan and Abdul Raziq. Both of whom have risen to power Post-2001 because, and not despite, the continued insurgency and their alliance with international military forces and GIRoA. However, the reliance on external resources coupled with the volatile political situation dictates that the strength of each of the powerbrokers is precarious and far from assured in the long- or even medium-term. Given the shifts occurring in Loya Kandahar due to transition the ability of powerbrokers to adapt to future resource shifts will become increasingly important in maintaining, or continuing to build, their power.

Some other notable characteristics of actors profiled:

- All but two of these individuals, Qayum Karzai and Taliban Senior Leader Mullah Mohammed Akhtar Mansoor, hold official GIRoA or ANSF positions;
- All individuals have a tribal/ethnic constituency in Loya Kandahar, with the exception of Assadullah Khalid, a Ghazni native whose place on this list depends principally on connections to international military forces and President Karzai;
- All of the individuals except for Khalid were born and raised in Loya Kandahar, however, only two currently live in Loya Kandahar on a full time basis: Kandahar and Uruzgan Chiefs of Police Abdul Raziq and Matiullah Khan. While not technically in Loya Kandahar, Nimruz Governor Karim Brahawi is based in a neighbouring province and exerts significant influence throughout the region.¹⁰
- Of the six individuals who currently reside outside of Loya Kandahar, three are based primarily in Kabul (Arif Khan Nurzai, Hamidullah Tokhi, Assadullah Khalid), one is in Jalalabad (Gul Agha Sherzai), one is in Quetta and/or Karachi (Akhtar Mansoor) and one travels between the US, Kabul and Kandahar (Qayum Karzai). Of these six, only Akhtar Mansoor does not visit Loya Kandahar at least once a year; while Assadullah Khalid and Qayum Karzai now travel most frequently to the region.

¹⁰Nimruz technically falls outside Loya Kandahar but is included given the strategic importance of the province to licit and illicit trade in Loya Kandahar and the level of control Karim Brahawi currently exerts over both his Baluch/Brahui ethnic group and the border economy.

- Unlike in Uruzgan and Zabul, where residents consistently pointed to the same individuals who exercised power in terms of government and international connections, tribal constituencies, and ability to provide security, there was no consensus on who exercised the most power along these lines in Helmand. In the broader context of Loya Kandahar, power is more fragmented in Helmand and there are accordingly no individuals from Helmand or operating in Helmand identified as Loya Kandahar powerbrokers. (For a full discussion of power dynamics and key actors in Helmand see section 3.3).

Quantitative data gathered on public opinions of which type of actors are the most powerful in their respective province, confirms the criteria-based qualitative analysis above (see Figure 1). In two provinces, Zabul and Uruzgan, there is a clear dominant powerbroker who holds an official GIRoA or ANSF position. In Zabul it is MP Hamidullah Tokhi and in Uruzgan it is Chief of Police (CoP) Matiullah Khan, both of whom are profiled powerbrokers. In Helmand and Kandahar, however, power is much more diffuse and there is no single dominant powerbroker. This is particularly interesting in the case of Kandahar as CoP Abdul Raziq's power has risen dramatically in recent years and he has a dominant position in the security sector in the province. Nonetheless he has not risen to the level of Ahmed Wali Karzai, which may indicate that his support base is still narrowly concentrated amongst his Achekzai tribe and in the border districts. This also indicates that the vacuum of political leadership in Kandahar has not been filled.

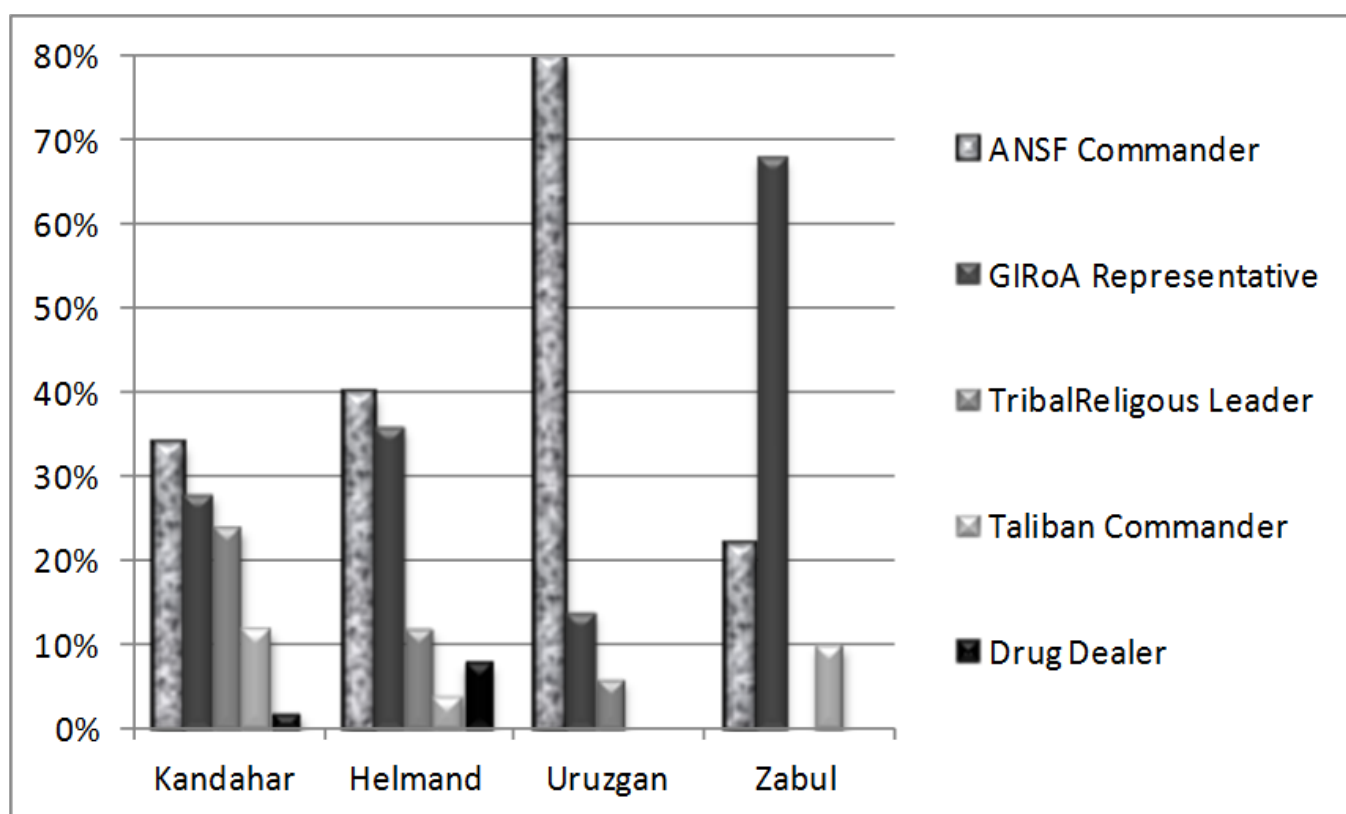


Figure 1: Perception of which types of actors are the most powerful in each province

2.1.1 Brigadier General Abdul Raziq (Achekezai/Adozai)



KANDAHAR ACTING CHIEF OF POLICE; DE FACTO CONTROLLER OF SPIN BOLDAK DISTRICT AND AF-PAK BORDER FROM ZABUL TO HELMAND

SOURCES OF POWER: Security Provision (informal and state): Since the death of Ahmed Wali Karzai, Abdul Raziq has become the most powerful man in Kandahar due to his control of the Afghan Uniformed Police (AUP), Afghan Border Police (ABP), and a private militia. The ABP are extremely loyal to Raziq and are considered his personal paramilitary force that has free reign to conduct clearance operations, often in partnership with US Special Forces. When Kandahar CoP Khan Mohammed Mujahid (Alkozai) was killed in April 2011, Raziq was appointed acting CoP on 29 May 2011. Raziq retains control of a private (mostly Achekezai) militia force comprised of the sons and brothers of those families whose business and security interest he ensures, and which are easily and often confused with ABP forces. Though Raziq is no longer the 4th Zone ABP Commander, he can use these ABP at will. Raziq's power significantly increased from mid-2010 onward when his forces partnered with US Special Forces to lead clearance operations throughout Kandahar.

Business: Raziq has a range of income-earning enterprises and owns property in at least five countries. He traffics narcotics across the Wesh/Chaman border using a 300-truck transport company he co-owns. He owns a private security company based in Spin Boldak that escorts CF supply convoys, reportedly earning 8,000 USD/truck on top of the 200,000 PKR (2,202USD) he receives from each commercial vehicle crossing into Afghanistan. He owns a construction company based in Spin Boldak, managed by his brother, which implements development projects funded by international organizations. Raziq owns 100 jeribs (20 ha) of land in Nawi Kalay, one market in Wesh with approximately 100 shops, 10 houses in the Karzai brothers' Aino Mena housing development in Kandahar City, another house in central Kandahar City, two houses in Kabul, a building in Dubai co-owned by, Gen. Abdul Raziq Sherzai (Gul Agha Sherzai's brother) and one house each in India and Tajikistan. His estimated monthly income is 5 million USD. Kandahar residents also believe that Raziq is paid directly by CF for conducting clearance operations.

Tribal Leadership: Abdul Raziq was named the leader of the Achekezai tribe shortly following the fall of the Taliban. His stature in this position has only grown since then, and extends to both sides of the Af-Pak border.

AREA OF INFLUENCE: The Af-Pak border running from Zabul, where the ABP are referred to simply as "Raziq's Boys", through Kandahar and into Helmand. His strongest areas of influence are the border districts of Spin Boldak, Arghistan, Maruf, Shorabak, Registan and his tribal homeland of Takhta Pul, as well as Chaman, Pakistan. Raziq's support base was initially concentrated amongst the Achekezai of Spin Boldak and Takhta Pul, but he effectively expanded this base by filling the ABP with internally displaced persons (IDP) living in the Nawi Kalay at the border with Pakistan, and by including non-Achekezai in ABP leadership positions. Moving away from the border areas, Raziq's influence decreases although Kandahar residents acknowledge that his personal militia and connections to CF – as opposed to his position as CoP – provide him with the capability to impact security in all districts of Kandahar.

RIVAL(S): General tribal rivalry with the Nurzai, a latent anti-Raziq bloc includes the following Nurzai power holders: ANP Zone commanders Younus Nurzai and Mirwais Nurzai, and Kandahar Provincial Council members Haji Ehsan and Neamat Khan.

BACKGROUND: Abdul Raziq was born in Ghar village of Daman district in 1980 and raised in Folad Kawel¹¹ village in neighbouring Spin Boldak. His uncle Mansoor was a sub commander of Ismat Muslim (Achekezai/Adozai) the leader of Fedayin-e Islami, an Achekezai militia that ranged between Spin Boldak and Kandahar City, later joined the PDPA Government and earned a reputation as one of the most predatory and feared forces in the region. Mansoor's militia clashed with Taliban forces and he was one of the first *mujahideen* commanders killed by the Taliban in 1994 when he was publicly hanged from the barrel of a tank. As the Taliban took control of Kandahar, Raziq and his family fled to Quetta where he allegedly began to smuggle narcotics and weapons in the Af-Pak border areas of Baluchistan, a business that he inherited from his uncle Mansoor.¹² With the fall of the Taliban, Raziq returned to the Spin Boldak/Takhta Pul area and was appointed head of the 4th ABP Corps by then Kandahar Governor Gul Agha Sherzai (Barakzai). Sherzai was also instrumental in elevating Raziq to the position of Achekezai tribal leader of Kandahar Province.

2.1.2 Mullah Mohammed Akhtar Mansoor (Ishaqzai)



AFGHAN TALIBAN CHIEF OF OPERATIONS AND OVERALL SECOND IN COMMAND

SOURCES OF POWER: Taliban Leadership: Though the Taliban's leadership structure is purposely oblique, Akhtar Mansoor is considered the second in command after Mullah Mohammed Omar. Mansoor is the head of the Afghan Taliban's shadow governance structure. He makes more day-to-day decisions and has more non-symbolic power than anyone else in the movement. Mansoor is affiliated with three internationally-funded Taliban madrassas in Karachi – Ashrafiya¹³, Ulum Islami, and Akhtar State – which are considered the top Taliban insurgent-producing institutions in Baluchistan.

Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI): While other Taliban leaders have been imprisoned, put under house arrest or 'disappeared' by the ISI, Mansoor remains a favoured son because he is in step with ISI policy and is a link between the Haqqani Network of Waziristan and the Afghan Taliban of Baluchistan. He allegedly has better relations with the ISI than Mullah Omar.

AREA OF INFLUENCE: Outside of Baluchistan, Akhtar Mansoor's area of influence extends to Farah, Helmand, Uruzgan, Kandahar, and Kabul where he appoints and controls the shadow governors of each of these provinces including, Mullah Naem (Helmand), Mullah Rasool (Farah), Shafiq Agha (Uruzgan), Rashid Munib (Kandahar) and Mullah Hayatullah (Kabul). Mansoor's deputy is Mullah Janan (Barakzai) of Shah Wali Kot, who is the head of logistics for the insurgency in Kandahar.¹⁴

¹¹ Folad Kawel is today considered his primary residence and family home

¹² The Achekezai are important stakeholders in both the illicit and licit transport business between Karachi and Kandahar.

¹³ Ashrafiya has at least one branch in Kandahar

¹⁴ Janan's brother, Haji Maen, is a businessman living in Kandahar City (see Annex A)

RIVAL(S): Afghan Taliban who are seeking reconciliation or advocating for a more moderate stance.

BACKGROUND: Akhtar Mansoor was born and raised in Band-e Timor manteqa of Maywand district in Kandahar. He was schooled at the Akhora Khatak Madrassa outside Peshawar during the PDPA and Mujahideen governments.¹⁵ He had moved back to Baluchistan by 1993 and was one of the key organizers of the Taliban movement in its earliest days. He was instrumental in linking emerging Afghan leaders like Mullah Omar with the ISI. When the Taliban took control of Kandahar in 1994, Mansoor was made Minister of Aviation, serving from Kandahar for the length of the regime. When the Taliban collapsed he fled to Pishin District of Baluchistan where he owns property. He now reportedly operates mainly in Quetta and Karachi.

2.1.3 Assadullah Khalid (Taraki/Mulkhail)



MINISTER OF TRIBAL AND BORDER AFFAIRS, UNOFFICIAL REGIONAL GOVERNOR OF LOYA KANDAHAR

SOURCES OF POWER: **President Karzai:** Assadullah Khalid is the only profiled powerbroker who does not have a tribal base in the South. In the minds of Kandaharis, Khalid's power comes from his connections to CF and President Karzai.

GIROA: In the fall of 2011, Khalid, the Minister of Tribal and Border Affairs, was sent to Kandahar by President Karzai to serve as the *rais-e tanzima* (regional governor) of Loya Kandahar, an unofficial but well recognized post that gives him power over the provincial governors of Loya Kandahar. This was designed to stave off a security vacuum following the deaths of Ahmed Wali Karzai and Kandahar CoP Khan Mohammed Mujahid (Alkozai), and to oversee the President Karzai's interests during the transition period.

Business: Khalid's main source of income is custom revenue he is splitting with CoP Abdul Raziq. It is also possible that he is moving to replace Ahmed Wali Karzai as the high level protector for several narcotics traffickers.

AREA OF INFLUENCE: Khalid has an unofficial mandate to govern the provinces of Zabul, Kandahar, Uruzgan, and Helmand. However, Khalid's position in the south is far from assured: he has no tribal base, is not well liked or respected, and his power rests on connections to a now withdrawing CF. Khalid would likely beat a hasty retreat from the region if someone from the Karzai camp is not elected in 2014.

RIVAL(S): The Andar *ulema* of Ghazni Province, which he previously targeted. Loya Kandahar powerbrokers who view him as a threat to their control. Though a Hamid Karzai protégé, Khalid's relations with the late Ahmed Wali Karzai was, if not outwardly hostile, strained due to a

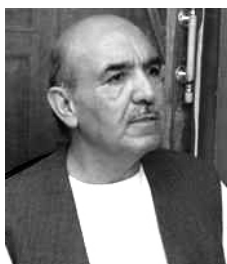
¹⁵ Akora Khatak was one of the main recruiting centres for *mujahideen* fighting against the Soviets. Many important religious figures particularly from eastern Afghanistan were educated at Akora Khatak. The madrassa continues to be a hotbed of Taliban supporters. The Taliban's Qatar spokesman Tayeb Agha (Naser) was Akhtar Mansoor's classmate.

competition over the revenue from protecting the same pool of narcotics traffickers, district governors, private security firms, etc.

BACKGROUND: A native of Nawa district in Ghazni, Khalid's father was an Ittehad-e Islami commander. Khalid was studying Political Science at Kabul University when the Taliban came to power. Khalid joined the United Front, but spent a good deal of the Taliban years in the United States. He is considered in the same class of Americanised Afghans as the extended Karzai Clan, Zalmay Khalizad, et al.

Three months after the Taliban fell, President Karzai named Khalid governor of Ghazni (2002-2005). As governor, he targeted former Taliban regime members, especially among the influential *Andar ulema*. Arbitrary imprisonment and allegations of human rights abuses against security forces under his command led to growing community resentment and popular support for the insurgency. During this time Khalid also developed excellent working relations with CF, was able to keep the insurgency somewhat in check, and worked with the powerful Katawazai family of Paktika to keep the highway connecting Kandahar to Ghazni to Loya Paktia open for commercial traffic. Allegations of torture and extra-judicial imprisonment followed him to his next governorship in Kandahar (2005-2008). During this time the insurgency and general lawlessness (banditry, kidnappings) in Kandahar expanded rapidly.

2.1.4 Qayum Karzai (Popalzai)



PRESIDENTIAL ADVISOR; RESTAURANTEUR

SOURCES OF POWER: President: Post-2001, Hamid Karzai's older brother has remained mostly in the US, though when he has come to Afghanistan it is as the President's most trusted advisor and highest level – albeit informal – representative. In 2003, Qayum played a key role in the Constitutional Loya Jirga, and was the principal behind-the-scenes proponent of the presidential system that emerged. In 2005, he ran successfully for parliament for Kandahar, but resigned in 2008 after his poor attendance record was publicised. More recently he has represented the President in talks with Taliban leaders in Saudi Arabia and was involved in talks with Afghan Taliban in Qatar. He is widely regarded as an honest and intelligent broker and serves as one of the main contact points between a range of individuals, from Abdu Rasul Sayyaf to Mullah Zaeef, and the President. He is also the point of communication between the President and regional governor Assadullah Khalid.

Tribal Leadership: Qayum's younger brother, Shah Wali Karzai was publicly named the new Popalzai tribal leader following the death of his brother Ahmed Wali Karzai in 2011. Nonetheless, Kandahari insiders say Qayum provides guidance and direction to Shah Wali and is the behind-the-scenes leader of the Popalzai in Loya Kandahar.¹⁶

Media Control: While other Karzai brothers control business and security, Qayum quietly controls the media. In 2009, he returned to Kabul from the US before the presidential elections and quickly

¹⁶ For instance, following the death of Uruzgan Popalzai leader Jan Mohammed Khan in 2011, Qayum travelled to Tirin Kot to direct a *jirga* which named JMK's son Mohammed Qasim as the tribal leader of the Popalzai.

established an effective media/lobbying entity. He also acted as his brother's campaign manager and advisor. Qayum has used his international connections to secure foreign capital for approximately ten Kabul-based newspapers, which some suggest has given him a measure of editorial control. In Kandahar Qayum secured international funding for Hewad Television and Afghan Azad Radio, both of which are run out of Aino Mena and considered under Qayum's overall control.

AREA OF INFLUENCE: Qayum is very influential within his own family. Although not the oldest of the Karzai brothers he is considered to be the leader of the family, even more so than Hamid. Extending outward, Qayum is influential within the Popalzai of Loya Kandahar, particularly those found in Kandahar and Uruzgan provinces. His power throughout Loya Kandahar has increased following the death of his brother Ahmed Wali and the appointment of Assadullah Khalid as regional governor over whom he has direct influence. US citizenship and time living in Virginia has given him a wide range of connections to international funding resources and made him influential among a range of diaspora Afghans for whom he has helped secure government posts and business capital. Talk on the Kandahar Street, as well as in Loya Paktia, is that Qayum is the most likely of the other Karzai brothers to run for President in 2014. Some suggest, however, that he would be best used by the Karzai family as an election strategist, campaigner and horse-trader.

RIVAL(S): No known individual rivals; general Popalzai rivalry with the Barakzai for ultimate political control of Kandahar post-2001; general Popalzai rivalry with the Alkozai of Kandahar.

BACKGROUND: Qayum Karzai was born in the village of Karz in Dand district of Kandahar. He is the second of Abdul Ahad Karzai's seven sons. Abdul Ahad was a member of Zahir Shah's National Council, a district governor of Arghandab and widely regarded as the head of the Popalzai in Loya Kandahar. Following the 1978 Saur Revolution, the Karzai family relocated to Quetta where Abdul Ahad became the leading southern political and organizational figure for Jabha-e Nejat-ye Milli Afghanistan, a royalist *mujahideen* party led by Sibghatullah Mojaddidi.¹⁷ In the early 1980s, Qayum and all of his brothers except for Hamid, relocated to the United States. In the US, Qayum was naturalized, earned a degree from the American University in Washington DC, married an American woman, raised a family in suburban Virginia, and opened several restaurants in Baltimore.

2.1.5 Gul Agha Sherzai (Barakzai)



GOVERNOR OF NANGARHAR, INFLUENTIAL BARAKZAI LEADER OF KANDAHAR PROVINCE

SOURCES OF POWER: **GIRoA:** Gul Agha Sherzai is Governor of Nangarhar Province, one of the most strategic border provinces in Afghanistan and home to an official commercial Af-Pak border crossing at Torkham. He has been effectively used by President Karzai to build an alternate source of power to the Arsala family in Nangarhar Province, and thus increase central government

¹⁷ Jabha-ye Nejat-e Milli Afghanistan (Front for the National Salvation of Afghanistan), was founded in Mecca in 1978 by Hazrat Sibghatullah Mojaddidi a friend of the Durrani monarchy. Mojaddidi became the first president of the Mujahideen government, and is the current the speaker of the Meshrano Jirga and chairman of the National Commission for Peace in Afghanistan. The other royalist *mujahideen* party was Mahaz-e Milli, led by Pir Sayed Gailani and backed by Gul Agha Sherzai's family in Kandahar.

control. He is also a three time former Governor of Kandahar.

Tribal Leadership: Though Gul Agha Sherzai has lived outside of Loya Kandahar since 2005, he still maintains a strong (though not necessarily broad) tribal following among the Barakzai of Kandahar, who continue to seek out Sherzai to settle their disputes. Gul Agha Sherzai is frequently mentioned as a possible governor of Kandahar, given his tribal constituency and experience as a provincial governor.

Business: In addition to controlling the Torkham “Reconstruction Fund”, which gives him a measure of control over border revenues in Nangarhar, he also maintains business and security concerns in Kandahar via his brother Gen. Abdul Raziq Sherzai, the head of the Kandahar Air Wing and one of the largest Kandahar Airfield (KAF) contractors.

AREA OF INFLUENCE: Nangarhar, Kandahar

RIVAL(S): Post-2001 Gul Agha Sherzai’s biggest rival for control of Kandahar was Ahmed Wali Karzai and AWK’s death perhaps paves the way for Gul Agha to return to the South. During his time as governor of Kandahar the Barakzai were locked in a tribal rivalry with the Alkozai led by Mullah Naqibullah Akhund. This rivalry continues but is non-violent and non-confrontational. It is possible that the Alkozai community would seek to prevent a return of Gul Agha Sherzai to the governor’s palace in Kandahar.

BACKGROUND: Gul Agha Sherzai was born in Rorubat village of Dand District in Kandahar. He is the son of the famous *mujahideen* commander Haji Abdul Latif who commanded fighters from the royalist Mahaz-e Milli faction, which was closely aligned with Jabh-e Nejat, the other royalist faction supported by the Karzai family and many of Kandahar’s traditional ruling elite. Sherzai has served as governor of Kandahar three times: during the *mujahideen* government (1992-94), and twice after the fall of the Taliban (Jan 2002 - Sept 2003; Dec 2004 – June 2005). In June 2005 he was appointed Governor of Nangarhar. Sending Gul Agha Sherzai to Nangarhar in 2005 served two purposes for President Karzai: to break down the power of the Arsala family, Nangarhar’s main ruling clan since 2003, and to weaken Sherzai and his Barakzai base in Kandahar and thus increase the power of his brother Ahmed Wali Karzai and the Popalzai. In Nangarhar Sherzai has done well to build a strong local constituency, including powerbrokers, tribal leaders and the business community by cracking down on illegal and arbitrary taxations. He also proved to be very effective in using selective poppy eradication as a way of gaining favour in rural areas and weakening communities linked to the Arsala family. However, after a strong first few years, local residents note that he has now become less effective as a result of strong resistance by provincial powerbrokers, the provincial council and Wolesi Jirga members linked to the Arsala family.

2.1.6 Arif Khan Nurzai (Nurzai/Madizai)



ADVISOR TO THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR; NURZAI TRIBAL LEADER

SOURCES OF POWER: Tribal Leadership: The most prominent Nurzai in the nation, Arif Khan Nurzai is an under-the-radar powerbroker with perhaps the most comprehensive network of any of the individuals profiled in this report.

He is involved in politics, decision-making, and business among his Nurzai tribe, arguably the largest Pashtun tribe in southern Afghanistan. He has strategically extended his network through the marriage of his sisters to various powerbrokers including the deceased Ahmed Wali Karzai and a high-ranking Pakistani military officer in Baluchistan.

GIRoA: Arif Nurzai has held a string of cabinet posts in Kabul and is the former Speaker of the Wolesi Jirga. He did not seek re-election in 2010. He is now serving as an advisor to the Ministry of Interior (MoI) and reports directly to President Karzai. He is also connected to a number of powerful ANSF and GIRoA figures operating in the south, including an impressive array of family members that hold prominent political and security positions.¹⁸

Business: Arif Nurzai hails from one of the largest landowning and narcotics trafficking families in Loya Kandahar. However, his direct involvement in the narcotics trade is uncertain, and likely limited to high-level protection for smugglers.¹⁹

AREA OF INFLUENCE: Among the Nurzai of Helmand and Kandahar, with lesser influence among the Nurzai in Farah and Herat. He is also influential in Baluchistan and has significant political influence in Kabul.

RIVAL(S): Minister of Water and Energy, and Herat powerbroker, Ismael Khan due to Arif Nurzai's support of Amanullah (Nurzai) a former Ismael Khan sub-commander in Shindand who turned on his old boss and helped push Ismael Khan from Herat circa 2005.

BACKGROUND: Arif Khan Nurzai was born in Kandahar City but hails from a landed elite Nurzai family from Washer district in Helmand Province, which also has considerable agricultural landholdings in Zhari and Maywand districts of Kandahar. He received a BA in Commerce in India and returned to study agriculture at Kabul University until the 1978 Saur Revolution interrupted his studies. He was initially affiliated with the Royalist Mahaz-e Milli faction but later switched to Jamiat-e Islami and finally Ettihad-e Islami. He commanded 50-60 fighters in the Pashmul manteqa of Zhari district. In the Mujahideen Government he became commander of the 7th Corps based at Kandahar Airport. He fled Kandahar when the Taliban captured the province, settled briefly in Iran and Pakistan and eventually joined the United Front. His extended family resettled primarily in Germany.

¹⁸This includes his uncle, General Mohammed Younus, an ABP commander in Helmand; his brother Mirwais Nurzai, ANP Kandahar Zone Commander; cousin Omar Nangyalai, an MP from Kandahar; uncle Abdul Qadir Nurzai, head of the Human Rights Commission for the south-western region living in Kandahar, and Haji Ehsan deputy Kandahar provincial council chairman, and a possible successor to AWK.

¹⁹AKN's brother Hamid and his father Musa Jan were two of the leading narcotics smugglers in the nation during the Jihad Era. Many of the narcotics traffickers operating under AWK's protection (including Sangin trader Haji Lal Jan) were introduced to AWK by AKN following AWK's marriage to AKN's sister. AKN was believed to have been protecting Grishk smuggler Hai Bahwauddin (Nurzai) who was quietly arrested in mid-February at the Lashkargah airport en route from Kabul.

2.1.7 Matiullah Khan (Popalzai)



URUZGAN COP, COMMANDER OF KANDAK AMNIAT URUZGAN (KAU) FORCES

SOURCES OF POWER: **Security Provision:** During the transitional government Matiullah was appointed head of the Afghan Highway Police (AHP) in Uruzgan. When the AHP was disbanded and incorporated into the ANP in 2006, Matiullah retained the core of his AHP fighting force. This force, the Kandak-e Amniat-e Uruzgan (KAU), remained *de facto* independent from the provincial AUP and by his own and other insiders' accounts he can mobilise up to 3,000 men from the KAU, which is 50-70 per cent Popalzai.²⁰ The KAU is used primarily as a private security force to protect convoys on the Tirin Kot-Kandahar Highway but also controls arterials inside Tirin Kot, and serves as an attack force that is often partnered with US Special Forces conducting clearance operations. Like his Kandahar counterpart Abdul Raziq, he has developed a close relationship with US Special Forces which consider him to be an imperfect but indispensable operational partner. Matiullah was appointed Uruzgan's CoP in mid-2011 and he thereby gained control of 650-1,000 AUP, as well as becoming the overall commander of Afghan Local Police (ALP) in the province. However, his level of command over ALP varies greatly and depends on tribal and patron-client connections.

Business: Matiullah has three main revenue streams: the Rahimi Construction Company²¹ that has won the bulk of internationally-funded infrastructure contracts in Uruzgan, protection fees charged to narcotics smugglers, and – the real money maker – his KAU that serves as an (unregistered) private security company responsible for securing CF convoys and commercial vehicles travelling the Tirin Kot-Kandahar Highway. One estimate puts his daily profits for securing this section of the road at \$400,000 USD per day. On average, the road is secured four days per month, although since late November when Pakistan blocked the Karachi-Quetta-Spin Boldak supply line, Matiullah has been securing the road only about twice a month.

AREA OF INFLUENCE: Matiullah has influence in each district of Uruzgan, especially in Tirin Kot, Chenartu (a Popalzai-majority district), and Khas Uruzgan where he maintains good relations with the Hazara population. In Deh Rawud he is influential in Popalzai areas, but is not well liked by sections of the Nurzai. Matiullah's power also crosses into Shah Wali Kot district of Kandahar Province where the Tirin Kot-Kandahar Highway secured by his forces runs through.

RIVAL(S): Uruzgan Governor Omar Sherzad. Nurzai of Deh Rawud including District CoP Omar Khan. Segments of the Barakzai and Achekzai tribes marginalised or persecuted by the late Jan Mohammed Khan. A possible emerging power rivalry for Popalzai leadership with Jan Mohammed Khan's son Mohammed Qasim.

²⁰ Though this 3,000-man private security force was paid from funds earned guarding convoys (250USD/month/man), militia men were wearing ANP uniforms, travelling in MoI vehicles and in some cases using MoI firearms. The security force was put in ANP uniforms before Matiullah became PCoP at the urging of ISAF who were concerned about friendly fire incidents; however the free use of MoI equipment did not happen until Matiullah was appointed PCoP.

²¹ This is managed by his brother Haji Rahimullah.

BACKGROUND: His power was attained thanks to ties to his father's cousin, Uruzgan's former powerbroker, the late Jan Mohammed Khan, who played a critical role in mobilising support and fighters for Hamid Karzai's drive against the Taliban in late 2001. Matiullah was one of a handful of field commanders who participated in this operation and earned the trust and support of the President. He was subsequently named the head of the now defunct Afghan Highway Police. Despite this trust, President Karzai had much better relations with Jan Mohammed Khan and seems to consider Matiullah more of a security tool than a tribal equal.

2.1.8 Hamidullah Tokhi (Tokhi)



WOLESI JIRGA MEMBER, ZABUL

SOURCES OF POWER: **Tribal Leadership:** Hamidullah Tokhi is the most powerful actor in Zabul because he is the recognised leader of the Tokhi, the largest tribe in the province, and the largest landholders.

GIROA: Tokhi is a two-term Wolesi Jirga member for Zabul and former Governor of Zabul (2002-2003). His political network reaches back to Zabul via his brother, Haji Aziz²², the head of the Provincial Council. In both 2004 and 2009 Tokhi campaigned against President Karzai and he remains a backer of Abdullah Abdullah. He was initially disqualified in the 2010 Wolesi Jirga elections, but eventually seated with eight other Parliamentarians in September 2011 after a year-long legal battle. His relationship with President Karzai has been somewhat repaired by his reinstatement in the Wolesi Jirga.

Business: He is the owner of Haroun Tokhi Company, which is managed by his son Asef²³, a construction and security firm that implements the vast majority of all internationally-funded development projects in Zabul and also guards CF convoys on Highway 1. He owns approximately 60 jeribs (12 ha) of land in the villages of Sharan, Maghlezi and Shahdo²⁴ of Qalat district in Zabul. He has two houses in the Kart-e Parwan neighbourhood of Kabul and a gas station in Qalat.

AREA OF INFLUENCE: Hamidullah Tokhi's influence is mostly limited to Tokhi majority areas of Shah Joy, Arghandab and Qalat – especially his home area of Omaki manteqa north of the provincial capital. He has no influence in Taraki-majority Day Chopan and Khak-e Afghan, or in Hotak-majority Shinkai. However within Tokhi areas he has influence across a wide range of actors, including several Tokhi Taliban commanders (see section 3.4.1 for a full network analysis).

RIVAL(S): Mawin Sardar Mohammed, the second most powerful Tokhi leader in the province; historic rivalries between the settled Tokhi and Ghilzai Kuchi tribes of Zabul (Taraki, Andar, Suleiman Khail) continues today with the Tokhi well represented in GIROA and Kuchi in the Taliban.

²² Haji Aziz was a HIG subcommander with Hamidullah during the 1980s and has served as his right hand man in all political endeavours since 2001. In 2009 he was elected to the Provincial Council of which he is now the chairman.

²³ Asef has run the family business since 2008. In 2011 he was also made an ANP commander responsible for five checkpoints in Shah Joy and Shar-e Safa. He did not undergo any training or induction for this position.

²⁴ He has been locked in a land disputes since 2010 with Mohammed Daud (Tokhi) over his purchase of land in Shahdo. The conflict is currently in the Zabul Provincial Court.

BACKGROUND: Hamidullah Tokhi was born to a poor family in Jarullah village, in Qalat district. He received no formal schooling and is illiterate. He gained prominence after being introduced to Gulbuddin Hekmatyar through provincial Hizb-e Islami (HIG) commander Haji Sayed Hashim (Wardak). Given the relative majority of the Tokhi tribe in Zabul, Hekmatyar was interested in building HIG support among the tribe and Hamidullah Tokhi soon rose to command 100 HIG fighters in Omaki manteqa a strategic area 11 km outside the provincial centre. By the late 1980s he was one of the most powerful *mujahideen* commanders in the province. When the Najibullah government fell, Hamidullah Tokhi briefly clashed with Jamiat-e Islami commander Sardar Mohammed (Tokhi) for control of the provincial centre. A *mujahideen shura* was formed, but a power sharing formula was never agreed upon and from 1992-1994 Hamidullah Tokhi clashed with Mullah Madad (Taraki) of Harakat-e Inqilab (a conflict which continues today). When the Taliban arrived, Hamidullah Tokhi fled to Quetta and ran a restaurant until 2001 when he returned to Zabul as Taliban forces clung to Kandahar.

2.1.9 Karim Brahawi (Brahui/Shagzai)



GOVERNOR OF NIMRUZ PROVINCE, GATEKEEPER OF ZARANJ AND BARAMCHA/CHOTO TRAFFICKING ROUTES

SOURCES OF POWER: **Ethnic Leadership:** Karim Brahawi is the leader of the Baluch/Brahui community of south-western Afghanistan, arguably the most cohesive ethnic group in the nation. He is the only Provincial Governor in the southern region with a strong ethnic/tribal backing. Though Nimruz falls outside of Loya Kandahar, Brahawi has considerable influence in southern Helmand and

is a major economic actor.

GIROA: Brahawi has served as governor of Nimruz during the *mujahideen* government and twice in the Post-2001 period. He has also served as the head of two Cabinet Ministries.

Security: Despite being Nimruz's Governor, Brahawi is also regarded as the head of ANSF in Nimruz. He has a reputation for maintaining tight command and control over these forces, which has had the positive effect of decreasing predation by ANSF toward the local population, and in turn increased public confidence in GIROA. Brahawi has a personal security force of 50-100 men.

Business: Brahawi controls the licit and illicit border trade with Iran and parts of Pakistan. He is widely considered to provide top-level cover for some of the largest volume narcotics traffickers in Afghanistan.

AREA OF INFLUENCE: Nimruz border districts of Chaharburjak, Zaranj and Kang, as well as the Baluch/Brahui majority districts of southern Helmand (Khanishin, Dishu). He has less influence in Pashtun-majority districts of Nimruz, such as Khashrud and Deleram.

RIVAL(S): Sardar Malek Abdul Rahman Khan, a Baluch tribal and business leader who the Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG) proposed as Nimruz Governor in 2009, with the backing of Vice President Fahim, but was rejected by President Karzai.

BACKGROUND: A native of Chaharburjak district in southern Nimruz, Brahawi graduated from the Kabul Military Academy in 1977 with a degree in weapons technology. An early member of the Maoist Shule Jawid party, he went on to command Jabha-e Nimruz (Nimruz Front), the military wing of Shule Jawid which, though rooted in Marxism-Leninism, fought against the PDPA with support from Iran during the 1980s. When the Najibullah government fell in 1992, Brahawi became both the Provincial Governor and head of the Provincial Border Force during the Mujahideen Government. When the Taliban arrived, Brahawi joined forces with Ismael Khan and was able to push the Taliban out of Nimruz, only to retreat again when Ismael Khan's forces were defeated in Farah. Throughout the 1990s he led a low-level anti-Taliban insurgency in Chaharburjak with future Helmand CoP Abdul Rahman Jan (Nurzai). The Taliban were never able to control Chaharburjak district and were forced to transfer the Provincial capital from Zaranj to the Pashtun-majority district of Khashrud closer to Farah. Brahawi served as governor of Nimruz immediately following the fall of Taliban until late December 2004 when he was appointed Minister of Borders and Tribal Affairs. He then served as Minister of Refugees and Repatriation from February 2009, until August of 2010 when he was again appointed Governor of Nimruz.

3. CONFLICT DYNAMICS

The major conflict line in Loya Kandahar is between the Taliban and the international community-backed GIRoA. Below the surface, however, there are many underlying conflict dynamics at play throughout Loya Kandahar. This section explores the major regional conflict dynamics, power relations, and alliances that largely revolve around powerbroker competition for resources and political control within each of Loya Kandahar's four provinces. These power struggles are larger than the provinces in which they occur, and are in many respects conflicts over the very shape the Afghan State will take as international support fades. Two distinct approaches are often evident. On one side is the merit- and performance-based system at the centre of which are institutions; on the other is the patron-client system dependent on individuals.

In Uruzgan this is evident in the power struggle between CoP Matiullah Khan and Governor Omar Sherzad for overall control. While in Helmand similar dynamics are in play as former Governor Mullah Sher Mohammed and CoP Abdul Rahman Jan are maintaining networks and positioning themselves for the possible departure of current Governor Gulab Mangal. Both of these intra-government struggles are clashes between governors that are not from the region who rely on a technocratic/bureaucratic approach and pursue a “de-tribalised” system, and local powerbrokers who favour a government based on patron-client relations that often relies upon the direct manipulation of tribal dynamics as a means of gaining and consolidating power.

At a regional level, President Karzai appears intent on re-creating Loya Kandahar as a cohesive regional entity. This is most evident in the appointment of a Karzai protégé to the unofficial position of regional governor. This could signal that GIRoA is moving (at least in the South) toward a more overt regional patron-client strategy, which would give the central government greater control over the periphery through the appointment of specific clients to positions of power. In theory as aid is centralized and ISAF withdraws, these sub-national clients would be more beholden to the central government, and thus more responsive.

However, if GIRoA installs some of the same powerbrokers that ruled the South prior to ISAF/NATO expansion, and then allows them to rule in their former manner, this could further increase the already broad levels of exclusion that many communities currently feel, and perpetuate and exacerbate instability. The central government, and particularly President Karzai, is in a difficult position in Loya Kandahar. A return of the old powerbrokers and their exclusionary networks could be a signal that the state perceives its immediate survival to be under threat, and is willing to sacrifice the medium- and long-term stability that an inclusive politics and a focus on institution-building could bring, in return for the short-term stability that exclusionary (and brutal) powerbrokers could provide.

3.1 Kandahar

3.1.1 GIRoA Southern Transition: The Regional Governor Approach

President Karzai appointed Assadullah Khalid regional governor of Loya Kandahar in the fall of 2011. This position, known as *rais-e tanzima*, formally existed until the end of the PDPA regime and was

also used by the Taliban.²⁵ The Afghan Constitution, however, does not include the position and it has not been used in other parts of Afghanistan.²⁶

Though it is not an official GIRoA post, residents' familiarity with the *rais-e tanzima* position, combined with the fact that Khalid's presence and duties have been broadcast in the local media, means that Kandahar residents accept Khalid's authority. Provincial powerbrokers and government officials likewise recognise Khalid's position (while also pointing out that he has a shallow powerbase outside of CF and the President). A power sharing agreement that splits border revenues (customs) between Khalid and CoP Abdul Raziq was reached in October/November 2011, which further signalled the support from the Province's chief security provider.

Khalid now sits under the direction of Qayum Karzai who provides guidance and delivers messages from the President to Khalid, who in turn relays instructions to the governors of Helmand, Zabul, Uruzgan, and Kandahar (see Figure 2). Though still serving as the Minister of Tribal and Border Affairs, throughout late 2011 and early 2012 Khalid has been spending weeks at a time in Mandigak Palace in Kandahar City, accompanying ISAF commanders on battle field tours and ran the Province when Kandahar Governor Tooryalai Wesa (Mohammedzai) went to Kabul to in mid-March. Khalid's actual power over the region's governors is difficult to gauge, although generally it appears that his influence is steadily increasing in Kandahar, but remains limited in the other three provinces.

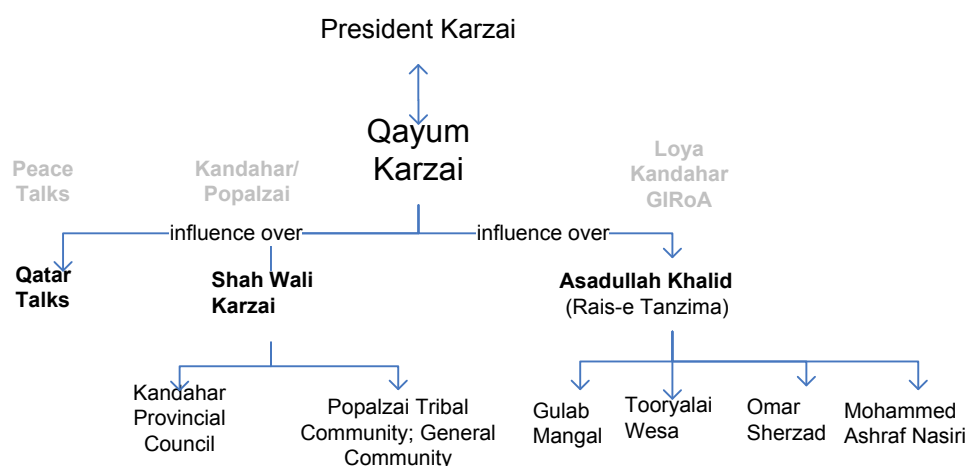


Figure 2: Qayum Karzai and Assadullah Khalid influence diagram (note: diagram depicts governance/politics in practice rather than in formal structure).

This governing strategy is premised around President Karzai's desire to form his political base in the southern Durrani heartland provinces into a more coherent and easily controllable regional bloc. It is in many ways a response to the death of Ahmed Wali Karzai, the impending draw down of ISAF forces in the South and to restore centralized authority over southern governors. Indeed, President Karzai is reportedly of the view that due to their close relations with the respective lead nations in the South the governors became empowered and were able to operate autonomously from the

²⁵ Sardar Akhram, the current Deputy Minister of Defense, was the Loya Kandahar *rais-e tanzima* during the PDPA.

²⁶ ANSF command structure is divided along regional, rather than provincial, lines.

central government.²⁷ In a sense, the *rais-e tanzima* structure represents the state's unofficial transition strategy for the South.

Interestingly, while internationals tend to view power as being too centralised in the hands of the President, many residents of Loya Kandahar actually think that President Karzai has very little influence or control over the South. The *rais-e tanzima* is thus commonly seen as the way for the central government, and particularly President Karzai, to regain control over the South.

More specifically this regional governing strategy has four goals:

1. To create a southern Pashtun bloc—a “Southern Alliance”—as a political counterweight to the Northern Alliance (United Front);
2. To prepare Loya Kandahar for the impending decline and re-centralisation of aid and security;
3. To enable the central government to eventually assert control over peripheral revenue, particularly border customs from Wesh/Chaman, which will become increasingly important as external aid declines;
4. To ensure that a Karzai, or Karzai protégé, is elected president in 2014.

To achieve these goals, the following objectives are being pursued:

1. Breaking down the direct links that provincial governors have with international civil-military actors by inserting the regional governor, Khalid, into the picture,²⁸ which in turn breaks down the autonomy of the provinces and marks a return to a more traditional patron-client, centre-periphery politics;
2. Re-establishing Kandahar as the regional capital by regularly summoning provincial governors to Mandigak where they receive directives from the regional governor;
3. Installing Karzai clients in provincial-level positions of power within the GIRoA and ANSF.²⁹

As of February 2012, the third objective was being pursued most aggressively in Kandahar. Assadullah Khalid had Essa Mohammed (Suleiman Khail) of Kandahar City appointed as head of the Kandahar NDS, replacing Gen. Momin (Achekezai) of Arghandab who was seen as too autonomous. Khalid was also working to have Maj. Gen. Mohammed Qayum Katawazai (Suleiman Khail), the Deputy National NDS Chief appointed as the new Provincial Governor of Kandahar, replacing Tooryalai Wesa (Mohammedzai). Qayum Katawazai is a native of Paktika Province and has been the deputy director of the national NDS since 2009. His relations with Assadullah Khalid were formed during his time as Provincial NDS chief in Kandahar and Ghazni when Khalid was PG. The Kandahar deputy provincial governor, Qadri (Tokhi) has also recently been sacked and replaced with Abdul Kadim (Alkozai). Following Mayor Ghulam Haidar Hamidi's assassination in July 2011, the new Mayor, Qazi Omar (Alizai) of Helmand, a former head of Hewad Television, is viewed as a “servant”

²⁷ This problem reaches down to the district level, with DG's operating with greater autonomy from PG's as a result of the surge resources at their disposal.

²⁸ For instance, it was Assadullah Khalid and not Tooryalai Wesa who accompanied ISAF on a tour of recently cleared Ghorak district during the second week of March 2012.

of the Karzai family and is not pursuing the same tough policy on reclaiming government land as his predecessor.

3.1.2 The Death of Ahmed Wali Karzai

The death of Ahmed Wali Karzai, the President's brother and the region's all-powerful powerbroker has altered tribal dynamics, but has not produced the kind of drastic security changes or instability – for better or worse – that many speculated his departure from the South would trigger. Some residents of Kandahar claim that, paradoxically or not, petty corruption has increased slightly. The loss of the Popalzai tribal leader, head of the Provincial Council and undisputed most powerful man, has created a governance vacuum and removed an individual who could resolve communal disputes. As one resident said: “Ahmed Wali was not perfect but his was a door the community could knock on if they had complaints or problems. Right now they are unsure where to take their problems.”

The most immediate impact of his death has been to deadlock the Provincial Council over a replacement chairman. In early February the council members announced plans to hold a vote for a new chairman, but Shah Wali Karzai asked for the vote to be postponed. It was widely rumoured that the council was set to choose Haji Ehsan Nurzai, the former deputy chairman and current acting chairman.³⁰ The Karzai family wants to ensure that a Popalzai remains head of the Provincial Council and are reportedly intent on ensuring that Haji Sayed Jan Khakrezwal, a landed-elite from Khakrez district, and a council member since 2005, becomes the chairman.

On a tribal level, Ahmed Wali's death has resulted in an easing of tensions between the Alkozai and the Popalzai, especially in Khakrez and Ghorak districts where the Alkozai say they are now, “breathing easier.”³¹

The narcotics trade has changed somewhat as a number of key traders lost their high level protection and forced them to alter their smuggling routes.³² However, it has not triggered violence, possibly due to the fact that many of Ahmed Wali's former associates have taken up protection duties for his old clients or simply because in the larger scheme of the southern Afghanistan drug trade – despite his apparent predominant power – he was only one of many significant players.

3.1.3 Barakzai Intra-Tribal Dynamics

One of the constants of Kandahar politics was the heated rivalry between Gul Agha Sherzai and Ahmed Wali Karzai, the two men that have dominated Kandahar politics over the last decade. If

³¹ The Alkozai and Popalzai are historic allies, with the populous Alkozai serving as important backers of the Popalzai rulers throughout history. Post-2001 Ghorak and especially Khakrez districts have been flashpoints for tribal conflicts that in some cases fueled the rise of the insurgency. A political power sharing deal in Khakrez has been in place for the last few years, in which an Alkozai is DCoP and a Popalzai is DG. Alkozai from Khakrez interviewed for this report claim that AWK's death will not alter this agreement. It is also important to note that the Alkozai have overall lost power following the death of Alkozai CoP Khan Mohammed Mujahid in April 2011, and his replacement by Abdul Raziq (Achekezai), which has resulted in an increase of Achekezai into the AUP, especially mid-level command positions in/around Kandahar City, according to the Alkozai.

³² Smugglers for example are no longer plying the route along Highway 1 from Helmand to Kandahar and the Wesh/Chaman in conspicuous Land Cruisers.

anyone could step into the vacuum left by Ahmed Wali it is Gul Agha Sherzai, who remains the predominant Barakzai. The death of Ahmed Wali accordingly reverberates and will impact the Barakzai in several ways explored below.

For one thing, the death of Ahmed Wali eased the rivalry between two of the most powerful Barakzai families in Kandahar: the brothers Gul Agha Sherzai and Maj. Gen. Abdul Raziq, the commander of the Kandahar Air Wing, and the brothers Sayed Mahmed, a Kandahar MP, and Gen. Gulalai, Garrison Commander at Kandahar Airfield (see Figure 3).

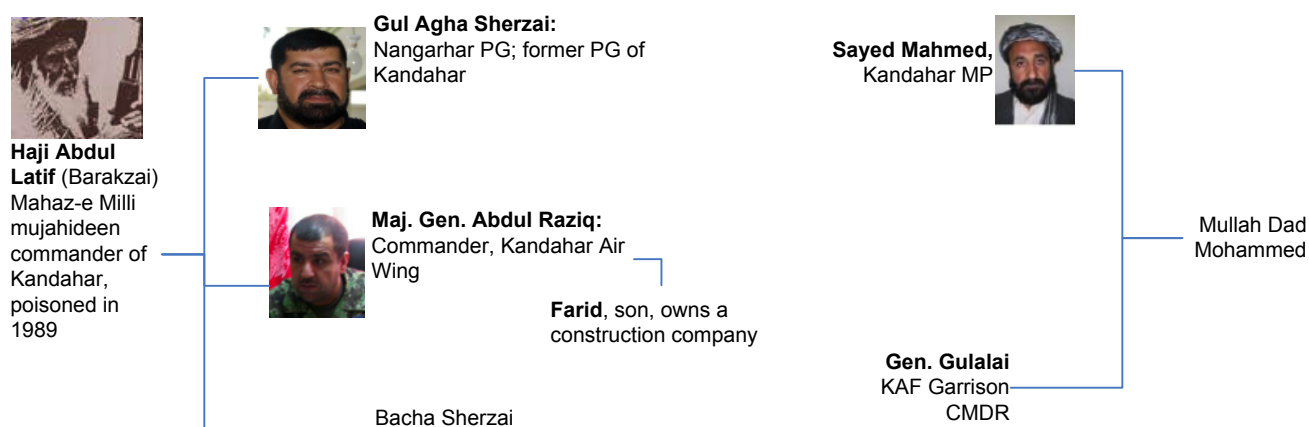


Figure 3: Barakzai Power Families of Kandahar

From 2001 to 2005, Gen. Gulalai and Gen. Abdul Raziq Sherzai worked together to shut out other contractors from bidding on the significant international military contracts coming out of Kandahar Airfield (KAF), the hub of ISAF in the South. The two generals, however, began squabbling over control of KAF contracts around 2006 when the stakes rose alongside ISAF's presence in the South. Raziq sought out his brother, Gul Agha Sherzai, while Gulalai allied himself with Ahmed Wali Karzai. When Gul Agha Sherzai left the province in 2005, Gulalai and his brother, Kandahar MP Sayed Mahmed, gained power due to their connections with Ahmed Wali, and gained greater control over KAF contracts.

Ahmed Wali's death combined with Gul Agha Sherzai's continued absence has moved both families onto a more even footing in Kandahar. It remains to be seen what this means politically on a provincial level for the Barakzai as the true tribal base of both of these families is confined to Dand and the lucrative world of international military contracting.

The death of Ahmed Wali also removes an obstacle to the long-rumoured return of Gul Agha Sherzai to Kandahar; whether such a move is within the best interests of President Karzai remains to be seen. Gul Agha's return would alter both intra-Barakzai tribal dynamics, could re-ignite the power struggle between the Popalzai and Barakzai that flared in 2002-2005, and could complicate GIRoA's relations with the Alkozai tribe.³³ The prominence of Gul Agha also dictates that his return could undermine the *rais-e tanzima* structure that President Karzai is erecting and seems central to his transition strategy. For these reasons it appears unlikely that President Karzai would benefit from

³³ Gul Agha Sherzai and the Barakzai have had hostile relations with the Alkozai since the end of the Mujahideen Government and continued during his tenure as governor post-2001.

transferring Gul Agha from Nangarhar back to Kandahar, without first laying out a well-defined (though informal) power sharing deal.

3.2 Uruzgan

Uruzgan Chief of Police Matiullah Khan has more control over his province than any other powerbroker has over their respective province in Loya Kandahar. While Matiullah has enemies within all of the province's tribes, he has also managed to form key alliances within each of these tribes, and has thus been able to establish government control with overall less reliance on ISAF than in Helmand or Kandahar, for example. On one hand this security dynamic means that Transition will be smoother than surrounding provinces. On the other hand, the security environment will remain inherently precarious because stability and GIRoA control are so overwhelmingly concentrated in the hands of a single powerbroker. If Matiullah Khan were to be assassinated the province would face an immediate and serious security vacuum.

Matiullah Khan steadily took steps to become the dominant powerbroker in Uruzgan from the mid-2000s onward. However, it was the death of his second cousin, then Uruzgan's dominant powerbroker and former Governor, Jan Mohammad Khan in July 2011 and other local leaders such as Daoud Khan that finally paved the way for his ascent.³⁴ Matiullah already commanded a powerful paramilitary militia but his power was consolidated and legitimised when he was appointed as Uruzgan's Chief of Police in August 2011. Matiullah Khan had been lobbying for this position for some time, but locals say that it took a severe deterioration in security in Tirin Kot – which some conspiratorially attributed to Matiullah – to push his appointment through.

The appointment came at a time when the insurgency was putting pressure on Uruzgan and Loya Kandahar more generally through a successful assassination campaign targeting GIRoA officials and pro-GIRoA individuals. In this context, President Karzai was forced to make a choice in order to restore faith in GIRoA's ability to reign in the insurgency and protect pro-government elites. Thus, rather than following the standard protocol of allowing the Ministry of Interior to appoint candidates based upon official criteria and prior service, the President circumvented the process to ensure that the most practically qualified individual – and fellow Popalzai and client³⁵ – was installed.

When Matiullah Khan was appointed CoP his rivals were left with the choice of opposing a militarily-powerful strongman who now was legitimised and face exclusion from the illicit and licit economies

³⁴ Jan Mohammed Khan was killed on 17 July 2011 in his house in Kabul with Uruzgan MP Mohammed Hashim Watanwal. He was serving as an advisor to President Karzai at the time of his death. By the time of his death, relations between Jan Mohammed Khan and his second cousin Matiullah Khan had grown tense as JMK was wary of Matiullah's rise to power and had allegedly been instrumental in blocking Matiullah from becoming chief of police. Thus, while JMK was often viewed as an ally of Matiullah given their tribal and family relations, he ultimately viewed Matiullah with trepidation and as a threat to his own power. Daud Khan was killed on 30 October 2011 by a body guard. He was the former district governor of Chora and the late son of provincial tribal elder Rozi Khan.

³⁵ President Karzai and Matiullah Khan have a relationship that dates back to the late 2001, when he provided direct support for Karzai's armed uprising against the Taliban from the mountains of south-western Uruzgan. Others who took up the cause included the late Rozi Khan, Malem Rahmatullah, Sultan Mohamed, Haji Zaher Khan, Saifullah Khan and Haji Mohamed Hashim Khan.

or recognise Matiullah's authority and align with him. Given the choice, most, including several long-time rivals, have reconciled and aligned with Matiullah.³⁶

As Matiullah gained support from key elders and proved his ability to establish government control in strategic areas of historic insurgent support such as Mehrebad, or in peripheral Taliban safe zones like Gizab and Char China, he was left with only one real rival in Uruzgan: Provincial Governor Omar Sherzad.

The conflict between Omar Sherzad and Matiullah Khan was a classic political power struggle, over who would have greater influence over provincial affairs and who would control government revenues. In short, who would direct all government programmes in the province, including everything from the Afghan Peace and Reintegration Programme (APRP), poppy eradication, to the appointment of district level government officials. The dispute between the two also epitomised the clash between the new versus old approach of governance. Sherzad's drive to institute a meritocracy ran up against Matiullah's desire to install his clients in positions of power. Someone like Omar Sherzad, from the minor Khogiani tribe in Kandahar with a smaller tribal base in Uruzgan, can only rise and hold onto power in a meritocracy. Such a system, however, is antithetical to how pro-government strongmen like Matiullah Khan, and former governor and provincial powerbroker Jan Mohammed Khan before him, ruled Uruzgan since the fall of the Taliban. For these men a meritocracy, with a strong emphasis on institutions over individuals, is a direct threat to their power.

Matiullah's quest to rid himself of his rival began in mid-January 2012 when he sent a delegation led by provincial councilman Amanullah Hotaki, and composed of members of the Barakzai and Achekzai tribes to petition President Karzai to remove Governor Sherzad. The delegation arrived about a month and a half after some of the very same elders had praised the Governor in a meeting with President Karzai following the Traditional Loya Jirga in late November 2011. Karzai reportedly interpreted the about face of the elders not as an indication of a sudden drop in the performance of the Governor, but as the result of pressure by Matiullah, who was increasingly threatened by Sherzad's growing power and popular support. Indeed, by most local accounts Sherzad was a transparent and pro-active governor.

In late March Governor Sherzad was summoned to Kabul and rumours immediately began swirling in Kabul and throughout Uruzgan that Karzai had removed Sherzad from his post. As of the last week of March, Omar Sherzad remained in Kabul and no official announcement had been made.

The conflict between Matiullah and Sherzad, and any future decision President Karzai takes to either remove or keep Sherzad in place could provide insights into the President's *de facto* policy on political and security issues in Loya Kandahar during the Transition period. Sherzad's removal would

³⁶ Long-time rival, and a powerful tribal elder of Uruzgan, Mohammed Nabi Khan (Tokhi), reconciled with Matiullah in December 2011. The alliance of these two men has potential security implications, as it may now pave the way for ANSF clearance of the West Darafshan area, which is populated by Mohammed Nabi Khan's Tokhi tribe. Some Uruzgan residents predict that Darafshan will be a key terrain area during the 2012 fighting season as the Taliban pushed out of Mehrebad have regrouped here and can launch attacks on Tirin Kot.

signal moving away from efficient ‘technocrats’, regardless of their performance record in favour of clients who can, above all else, advance or maintain security gains, and ensure the central government’s control over the provinces of Loya Kandahar. This would be a setback for those who worked to build sub-national governance institutions, but it may be the best way to prevent the Taliban from reversing government gains made within the last two years. Consolidating power in one man, however, is risky given the cornerstone of the Afghan Taliban’s strategy for 2012 is the assassination of key government and pro-government leaders.

3.3 Helmand

Unlike in Uruzgan and Kandahar where residents consistently pointed to two men - CoP Matiullah Khan and CoP Abdul Raziq—as the most powerful individuals in terms of government and international connections, tribal constituencies, and ability to provide security, there was no overarching consensus on who exercised the most power along these lines in Helmand (see Figure 4). Despite the lack of a dominant powerbroker, Governor Mangal remains powerful, although his power is locally viewed as tenuous because it depends on his connections to the soon-to-depart ISAF. Nonetheless he has managed to capably govern the province in part through an arrangement that places former communists as district governors, while former *mujahideen* commanders serve as district CoPs. All the while former provincial powerbrokers lurk in the background hoping for a return to a tribally-based patronage system that would return them to power.

There are several possible reasons that explain why power is more diffuse in Helmand. First, power in Helmand has been historically fragmented. There is no history of a dominant or ruling tribe in the province. Helmand’s history of settlement has made it one of the tribally most diverse provinces, with social divisions between local tribes, old and new settlers. The territories of the largest native tribes are, with the exception of the Alizai in northern Helmand, not contiguous but dispersed. Second, the effects of 30 years of war have exacerbated historic divisions. Political and social fragmentation has occurred between different *mujahideen* factions, between *mujahideen* and PDPA factions or tribal militias, and between *mujahideen* and the Taliban.

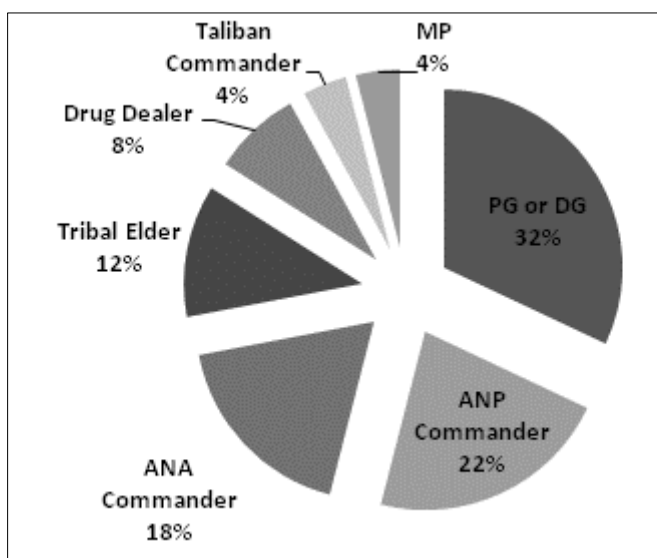


Figure 4: Opinion on who wields the most power in Helmand

While such divisions exist in most Afghan provinces, they have fragmented power more sharply in Helmand than elsewhere in Loya Kandahar. The only tribe that has a large contiguous tribal territory, the Alizai, was engaged in violent intra-tribal/factional/poppy conflicts in the 1980s which weakened the tribe internally. The PDPA, which focused much of its early rural outreach in Helmand rather than in neighbouring Kandahar, continues to have an important constituency in the province.

During the 1990s the bulk of the Taliban army was drawn from Helmand, a factor which caused an undercurrent of resentment towards Kandahar Province, as Helmandis felt they were being used by the regime while also being relegated to second tier status behind Kandahar and even Uruzgan. Nonetheless, the fall of the Taliban resulted in disempowerment for a large section of Helmand: particular sub tribes of the divided Alizai, the Ishaqzai, and sections of the Nurzai. But whereas in Kandahar the Barakzai and the Popalzai naturally filled the leadership role post-2001, the Popalzai of Helmand are scattered and relatively few in number and not particularly well-connected to the ruling clique of central Kandahar, and thus have never been the “natural” political leaders of the Province. The same can be said for the Barakzai, who are not well-connected to Barakzai/Mohammedzai ruling elite in Kandahar City/Dand.³⁷

As a result, rule in Helmand has often been a coalition affair. For instance, after the fall of the Taliban, it was a coalition of strongmen from Helmand’s largest tribes³⁸ that ruled the province, Governor Mullah Sher Mohammed (Alizai), CoP Abdul Rahman Jan (Nurzai), NDS Chief Amir Dado (Alkozai), and Afghan Military Force (AMF) Corp commander Malim Mir Wali (Barakzai). However, the power of these strongmen was based on a client base within their tribes, rather than on broad popular support among their tribes.³⁹ The rule of these men, however, was short-lived and most were forced out due to predatory behaviour or allegations of abuse.

Helmand’s current governor, Gulab Mangal, a native of Loya Paktia, and a former PDPA Khalqi party member, has successfully built up a network based upon former communist connections. Residents indicate that the government under Mangal’s leadership is doing a better job delivering basic services and is more accountable than the tribally-based patronage system pursued by his predecessors described above. Interestingly, the presence of former PDPA in positions of power also has the effect of somewhat mollifying Taliban insurgents who see former communists as less threatening government officials, in part because former communists generally have a smaller tribal base and some have a history of working with the Taliban Regime.⁴⁰

While the majority of district governors and some key provincial security positions are filled by individuals from Mangal’s communist network, District Chief of Police (DCoP) positions are mainly in the hands of former *mujahideen* commanders. ALP commanders are likewise almost all former

³⁷ This is partly because during the last thirty years the Helmandi Barakzai have been linked to the PDPA or HIG while the leadership in Dand was closer to the royalist Mahaz-e Milli/Jabha-e Nejat.

³⁸ With the notable exception of the Ishaqzai. A similar coalition was formed during the Mujahideen Government years of 1993-1995.

³⁹ For instance, the influence of former provincial governor Mullah Sher Mohammed never extended much beyond his own sub tribe, the Hassanzai, due to historic Alizai internal divisions that he, and his extended family, created, and continued to aggravate post-2001. The Alkozai Amir Dado and his family used their position within the NDS for predatory behaviour targeting rivalling poppy networks, including among the Alkozai but specifically targeting the Ishaqzai, which created backlashes and blood feuds. The family was subsequently hunted down and killed by the Taliban and/or tribal/economic rivals. Barakzai leader Malim Mir Wali, was neutralised when his Afghan Military Force division was demobilized in 2005, causing a large number of his militiamen to join with HIG insurgent networks that now operate under Taliban command. The Nurzai strongman Abdul Rahman Jan was stripped of his command as provincial chief of police; his support quickly waned as he had relied too much on terror methods to rule effectively within and beyond his tribe.

⁴⁰ For instance in the early years of the Taliban government, it was former communists who were tasked with helping the largely clueless Taliban provincial and district government officials erect some semblance of a bureaucracy.

mujahideen or relatives of former *mujahideen*. This essentially amounts to a power sharing agreement between former PDPA members and former *mujahideen*. Residents acknowledged that this was an adequate system given that *mujahideen*, on the whole, made bad governors and were more suited to commanding small forces in their villages as they had done during the Jihad Era.

Governor Mangal's power is locally attributed to his relations with international actors, but this source of power was viewed as tenuous due to the coming draw down of ISAF and the questionable support that Mangal has from President Karzai, who mistrusts Mangal's relationship with international actors – a relationship that provides the governor protection and resources to act with greater autonomy from the central government than Karzai is comfortable with.

There was a consensus among interviewees that Gulab Mangal's chief rivals for control are Abdul Rahman Jan and Mullah Sher Mohammed. Most, however, added that they felt that both men had so thoroughly discredited themselves during the ATA and early GIRoA periods, that the return of either or both to positions of power in the province would trigger violence from their ardent enemies.

It is unclear what level of cooperation Abdul Rahman Jan and Mullah Sher Mohammed currently have in pursuing their shared desire of ousting Gulab Mangal and reclaiming control over the province, though several interviewees claimed that both have visited President Karzai together to lobby for Mangal's removal. The most direct confrontation has come from ARJ's son, former MP, Wali Jan Sabri, who has confronted Mangal during public meetings in Marjah and got into an altercation at the provincial governor's compound when he was not allowed to enter the premises armed. Mangal has attempted to reconcile with both men by sending a delegation of tribal elders to arrange a *jirga*. Both MSM and ARJ reportedly refused to participate and the *jirga* never took place.

Though Mullah Sher Mohammed has been living full time in Kabul since he took a seat on the Meshrano Jirga in 2005, he maintains an active network inside Helmand that spans business, politics, and security sectors. MSM's chief informal representative in Helmand is his brother-in-law, provincial council member Mullah Fazel Bari (Alizai). In Kajaki his network includes two cousins: district governor Mullah Abdul Karim and ANP commander Mullah Faizullah. MSM also maintains communications with Musa Qala powerbroker, Koka, and could count on his future backing according to residents in the area. On a provincial-level, MSM is connected to two Wolesi Jirga members, his brother Mullah Abdul Hai, elected in 2010, and Mohammed Wali (Alizai), a former Jihad Era driver for MSM's deceased father, Rasul Akhundzada. At the national level, MSM's other brother, Mullah Amir Mohammed, the de facto ruler of northern Helmand during the ATA, is currently the Deputy Minister of Tribal and Border Affairs. MSM also maintains good relations with the family of Arif Khan Nurzai (AKN) as MSM's sister is married to AKN's brother, Mirwais Nurzai, ANP Kandahar Zone Commander.

Despite these extended networks, Mullah Sher Mohammed's appointment to PG would be resisted by key tribal elders from the most populous Zirk Durrani tribes in Helmand, including the Achekzai, Barakzai, Alkozai and Popalzai. Mullah Sher Mohammed would have support among segments of the Nurzai, in part because he would likely seek to empower his former CoP Abdul Rahman Jan in some capacity—even if unofficial—which would boost support among ARJ's Nurzai tribe.

Unlike MSM, former CoP Abdul Rahman Jan spends the majority of his time in Helmand (living in a house behind the Bost Hotel in Lashkargah). Like MSM, ARJ maintains a network of individuals in

Helmand but is not well liked by the majority of provincial residents especially among the Ishaqzai, due to a past history of human rights abuses. Though a native of Naw Zad, ARJ is influential mainly in Marjah, primarily among residents in Haji Baba, Blocks 5D, and E (also known as Tank Block); these are the areas where ARJ grabbed land and then distributed it to his client base during the Mujahideen Government.

Unlike MSM, ARJ's network is mainly confined to the security sector, especially after his son Wali Jan Sabri failed to win a second term in the Wolesi Jirga in 2010. However, this security network is assessed by locals to be strong given that it is based on durable family ties. As one ARJ associate noted: "These are mostly close relatives and they are still considered his people, even if he does not exercise direct control over them right now." ARJ's "people" include: Haji Gran (Nurzai) originally from Deh Rawud district of Uruzgan, an ANP commander in Safian manteqa of Lashkargah who is married to ARJ's daughter (and ARJ is married to Haji Gran's sister); Kalamyar (Achekezai) of Marjah, a police commander in Nahiya Two of Lashkargah City with approx. 50 ANP under his control who is ARJ's second wife's father. Other relatives and former sub commanders include: Haji Baran (Nurzai), commanding two ANP check posts in Nad Ali; Haji Lal Jan (Nurzai) commanding five or six check posts and 60 fighters in two ALP groups in Nad Ali; Mir Dil (Nurzai) the DCoP of Washer; Ismael (Nurzai) of Marjah, an ABP commander linked with narco-traffickers and occasionally transporting small quantities of opium or heroin from central Helmand to the border regions.

If the recent moves throughout Loya Kandahar of President Karzai to solidify his provincial client base are any indication, Gulab Mangal may be removed from the governor's post in favour of a local who falls within President Karzai's client base. Residents of Helmand are pragmatic: they see that Gulab Mangal is not a long-term option, especially once ISAF begins to draw down, but they also reject having Mullah Sher Mohammed and/or Abdul Rahman Jan forced upon them by the central government. Instead, most of those interviewed recommended that a *jirga* be held with representatives from Helmand's largest and traditional power holding tribes (Alizai, Nurzai, Barakzai, Ishaqzai, Alkozai) and representatives from the naqilin community; and that this *jirga* be empowered to negotiate the division of key government posts (principally, PG, CoP, NDS Chief, ABP commander) among the major tribes.

3.4 Zabul

There are two fairly clear poles of power in Zabul. The first pole is the Tokhi⁴¹, the largest tribe in the Province. The Tokhi see themselves as the traditional landowning elite within the Ghilzai tribal establishment of Zabul. The Tokhi have the best representation in the provincial government and dominate the international reconstruction, transport/logistics, and security businesses of Zabul. The second pole is a loose coalition of the Kuchi sections of the Taraki, Andar, and Suleiman Khail tribes, all of which have been traditionally un- or under-represented within the provincial government, were mostly landless or owned little land until they began to settle, are strong within provincial insurgent ranks and leadership positions, have cross border networks in Pakistan, and are able to greatly influence security in Zabul. Between these two poles of power, are the Hotak, the second largest tribe in the province and, given their landholdings and strategic position to the east of Qalat,

⁴¹ Provincial population estimates for selected tribes based upon a 2008 village survey. Ghilzai confederation: Tokhi (35%), Hotak (14%); Taraki (9%), Suleiman Khail (7%), Kharoti (5%), Andar (4%); Durrani confederation Alkozai (5%), Popalzai (2%).

are considered the second most powerful single tribe in the province after the Tokhi. At present, the Hotak are attempting to remain unaligned as they have come under renewed threat from the insurgency after initial steps by certain Hotak leaders to more closely ally with the government.

3.4.1 The Tokhi

Though individuals like former MP Mullah Abdul Salam Rocketi grab the headlines, Hamidullah Tokhi is the only individual with central government contacts *and* the provincial- and district-level client base to influence politics and security in Zabul (see Figure 5). Tokhi's influence is not contested by either the governor or the CoP, both of whom are outsiders. Governor Mohammed Ashraf Nasiri (Totakhail) of Paktia has served for two years and is considered weak and ineffective. CoP Sherzad is competent but his influence is limited, one example being his lack of real control on recently constituted Afghan Local Police (ALP) units in three districts of the province.

Until late 2011, the Tokhi benefited from some upper level coverage within the insurgency via Quetta-based old-garde Taliban leader Qari Saifulah Fateh, a Tokhi tribesman. Fateh was a Taliban regime northern front commander during the 90s. With a high level of religious learning, Qari Saifullah was a Taliban commander in the 1990s and is well respected for his religious knowledge. He was a well-respected (if not terribly influential) member of the Quetta Shura until he split from the Taliban in October 2011 in protest of the killing of a teenager by Kuchi insurgents on charges of prostitution, but also over a general falling out with Zabul insurgent leader Amir Khan Haqqani (Taraki) whose radical methods the relatively moderate Saifullah disagreed with.

Tokhi presence in the insurgency is now down to a few district-level commanders including Mullah Fahizullah, Mullah Zaidullah, and Mullah Dadullah, all of which are second cousins to Hamidullah Tokhi. Hamidullah Tokhi has influence over all of these individuals, including via his nephew, Habib, a narcotics and weapons trader who has business dealings with the insurgents.⁴²

Today the Tokhi are aligned with the Alkozai, which despite only representing five per cent of the province's population are an important pro-government Zirak Durrani ally. Zabul's other Zirak Durrani tribes, the Popalzai and the Barakzai, are also considered to be pro-government. Stereotypically, the Zirak Durrani are all reported to have better relations with President Karzai. The Zirak Durrani tribes, however, have little power in Zabul and it would be difficult for these minority tribes to move into positions of power over the Tokhi – or any Ghilzai tribe – without causing a backlash.

⁴² Habib was detained in early 2011 by CF but released after two months following Hamidullah Tokhi's intervention.

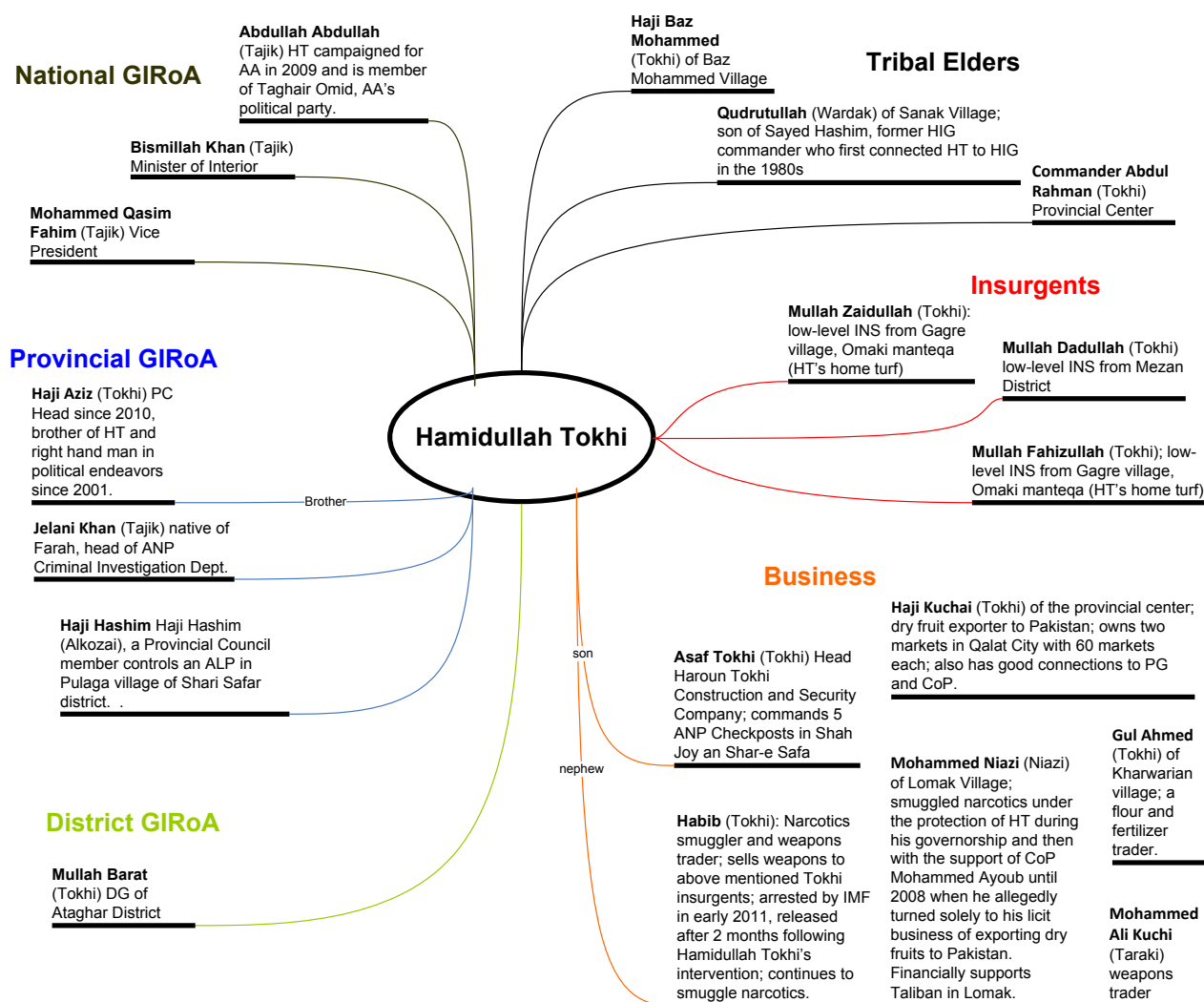


Figure 5: Hamidullah Tokhi's Network

3.4.2 The Kuchi (Taraki, Andar, Suleiman Khail tribes)

The other pole of power in Zabul is an insurgency led by Kuchi from the Taraki, Andar, and Suleiman Khail tribes.⁴³ When compared to other Loya Kandahar provinces, Kuchi in Zabul represent a larger portion of the population and have a greater influence on security because they dominate provincial Taliban leadership positions and have the best cross-border networks with Pakistan. Additionally, Kuchi leaders often have influence that spans across provinces given their nomadic lifestyle. There are structural causes behind Kuchi support for the insurgency that are rooted in a mixture of livelihood insecurity, protection of property issues, insecurity and a lack of political representation (for a full discussion of structural factors see 4.2).

The Taraki Kuchi had a number of important Taliban military commanders who were harassed in the current government.⁴⁴ The Andar are well known for their strong religious leaders and their

⁴³ Though all of the Ghilzai tribes in the Province have a Kuchi section, the Taraki have the largest Kuchi population, followed by the Andar, Suleiman Khail and Kharoti.

⁴⁴ For instance, this occurred in Zhari Dasht of Kandahar.

madrassas in Ghazni where proto-Taliban movements existed in the early 1990s, which later merged with the Taliban movement of Kandahar.

Zabul's historical power shifts also play a role in defining contemporary allegiances. Two of the most powerful Taliban commanders were former Harakat-e Inqilab *mujahideen* who had opposed the Tokhi-dominated HIG party led by Hamidullah Tokhi, rose to power during the Taliban regime, and then were forced to flee to Quetta Post-2001. The leading insurgents of Zabul Province, all with mobile kuchi forces at their disposal, are Amir Khan Haqqani (Taraki), Mohammad Alam (Andar), Mullah Murad Khan Kamel (Suleiman Khail).

3.4.3 The Hotak

The swing tribe is the Hotak, the second largest and most powerful tribe in Zabul. Hotak support is key for the insurgency not just because of the tribe's size and strategic location in Shinkai district, but because of its historic place in the Taliban movement.⁴⁵ The Hotak are the tribe of Mullah Omar and one of the Taliban's traditional base tribes.⁴⁶ The potential loss of Hotak support is symbolically damaging to the insurgency as it amounts to a vote of no confidence that other tribes and communities take note of.⁴⁷

As areas of Zabul, including Hotak areas, came back under GIRoA control in 2010/11, influential Hotak began to speak openly against the Taliban and join provincial GIRoA. In late June or early July of 2011, Suleiman Khail insurgents from Shinkai abducted five of the most outspoken Hotak elders, and beheaded four of them, one of which was the brother of PC member Abdul Rahman Hotak. Following this incident, residents in Qalat say that none of the six Hotak provincial GIRoA employees had abandoned their posts.

A future shift in top-level Taliban leadership from the Taraki, Andar and Suleiman Khail tribes back to the Hotak would offer an indication that at least portions of the Hotak are now re-aligned with the insurgency and have been rewarded with leadership positions. For now, however, the Hotak remain on the fence, seemingly unwilling to back away from GIRoA, but no longer as vociferous in their anti-Taliban rhetoric.

⁴⁵ Taliban leader Mullah Mohammed Omar (Hotak) was born and raised in Deh Rawud district of Uruzgan Province, but his father was born in Suri *manteqa* of Shinkai district in Zabul. Mirwais Hotak, the last of the Ghilzai kings to control Kandahar (1709-1715) before the reign of Ahmed Shah Durrani (1747-1772) was born in Zabul. One popular southern myth is that Mullah Mohammed Omar is the reincarnation of Mirwais Hotak, returning to reclaim Ghilzai control of Kandahar three centuries later.

⁴⁶ The highest ranking Hotak insurgent is Maulawi Abdul Jabar from Omarzai village of Shinkai district. He has remained in Quetta since the fall of the Taliban and is a member of the military *shura* based in Quetta and no longer comes to Zabul due to night raids.

⁴⁷ The Ishaqzai, Naser, and Kakar can also be considered Taliban "base" tribes

4. Who is excluded from GIRoA

As is seen throughout this report, tribal dynamics and allegiances play a key role in Loya Kandahar's formal governance and security structures. There is clear benefit in controlling GIRoA and ANSF positions, as is evident in the machinations of senior officials to ensure certain tribes dominate key positions. Not surprisingly, certain tribes are necessarily excluded from power. Some have tried to circumvent the tribal-centric focus by working to create a meritocratic system. Others that are left out, however, are susceptible to insurgent influence and sometimes turn to the insurgency as the rationale protector of their interests. This section focuses on the general broad-based exclusion that is felt throughout Loya Kandahar, and the particular exclusion of the Ishaqzai and the Kuchi, two groups that have often responded by lending their support to the insurgency.

Residents of Loya Kandahar do not consider that certain tribes have benefited from the State and certain have not. It is not as simple as pointing to groups of winners and losers. Rather, residents of the region believe that exclusion is broad-based and that sizeable sections of all tribes – even the traditional elite Zirk Durrani tribes – have been excluded. Put otherwise, the view is that the beneficiaries of the Karzai government have been extremely narrow. This view has helped fan the considerable violence that has occurred throughout Loya Kandahar. It has also fuelled resentment in the population that recalls the sweeping promises that Hamid Karzai made to the South in late 2001 that have never been fulfilled. Many residents now feel that they were simply used as tools to oust the Taliban and nothing more.

The feeling of broad-based exclusion does not necessarily drive active insurgent support, but it is leading to a general lack of support for the government, even among traditionally pro-government tribes. The lack of government support undermines the counter-insurgency strategy of the international community, which cannot unilaterally win the local population over to the Afghan State.

In Loya Kandahar the depth of the exclusion will perhaps manifest itself in the 2014 elections if relations among the Pashtun tribes have deteriorated to such an extent that the southern "Pashtun Vote" is split. To date the Pashtuns have remained united, as evident by the fact that President Karzai handily won all four provinces in the 2004 and 2009 elections (see 5.2 for more on the past and future presidential elections).

The Taliban will also likely seek to exploit this discontent if they attempt to re-establish control of territory surrendered since mid-2009. In fact, many residents pointed to exclusion or marginalisation from GIRoA political and resources as *the* reason why the Taliban could quickly regain power, especially in rural areas, once external security forces have withdrawn.

In addition to the broad exclusion described above, the Ishaqzai and the Kuchi are particularly absent from GIRoA and ANSF structures. Both are well-represented within Taliban leadership structures (the Ishaqzai) and the Taliban fighting ranks (the Kuchi) just as they were during the Taliban regime. Continued lack of political representation, combined with livelihood insecurity and vulnerability directly contributes to their support for the insurgency. In turn, their support for the insurgency provides them with a source of power. Both of these groups are now well placed if the Taliban is to return to power in the South and would likely be rewarded for their support. The Ishaqzai would likely receive top leadership positions and perhaps a greater share of the narco-

economy. The Kuchi could expect direct support for their efforts to access pastureland in the Hazarajat and recognition of ownership over lands they have attempted to settle during the last decade.

4.1 Ishaqzai

The Ishaqzai are found in large concentrations in central Kandahar (Panjwai, Maywand) and northern and southern Helmand (Sangin, Naw Zad, Garamsir, Khanishin, Dishu). Though accurate tribal population figures are contentious, the Ishaqzai are among the top seven or eight largest tribes in Loya Kandahar. However, per capita the Ishaqzai are perhaps the least represented tribe within the government. There is one Ishaqzai Provincial Council member in Helmand and no members of the Wolesi Jirga. In Kandahar there have been no Ishaqzai elected to either the Provincial Council or the Wolesi Jirga. In Helmand, where ALP in places such as Garamsir and Marjah have successfully included the Nurzai (another Panjpai tribe strong among the insurgency), a survey of ALP in five districts revealed that there was not a single force under the command of an Ishaqzai or active in any Ishaqzai-majority villages. In the Ishaqzai heartland of Maywand and Panjwai none of the newly established ALP units in any of these districts are under the command of an Ishaqzai.

By contrast, the Ishaqzai occupy top positions within Taliban leadership structures, most notably Mullah Omar's deputy and southern region political commander Mullah Mohamed Akhtar Mansoor (see profile 2.1.2). The Ishaqzai provide the insurgency with leaders, fighters and zones of support (e.g., Greater Panjwai, Sangin). They also likely provide the insurgency with a larger share of indigenous funding than any other tribe in the south, due to a combination of agricultural taxes and large protection fees paid to safeguard narco-trafficking interests.⁴⁸ The tribe is thus excluded from the government, but has alternative sources of power. This complicates their potential incorporation into the government, as simply offering them senior GIRoA positions may not be a sufficient incentive for the tribe to turn away from the Taliban.

Ishaqzai support for the Taliban is not a new phenomenon, nor is it purely a matter of economic protection. Ishaqzai are concentrated along Arghandab River Valley in central Kandahar where the Taliban movement first began. The Ishaqzai were early supporters of the Taliban and were rewarded with national level leadership positions. Ishaqzai support was not surprising given that the tribe is well known to have a higher number of prominent spiritual and religious figures than any other tribe in the south, except the Sayed tribe. Many of these religious leaders were transformed into Taliban leaders and then subsequently marginalised or hunted down post-2011.

⁴⁸ Ishaqzai have been involved in the narco-economy of southern Afghanistan since the Daud Khan government and they are uniquely suited to the trade given that they are the only tribe which has a sizeable population in poppy producing (Maywand, Naw Zad), trading (Sangin), and cross border smuggling (Dishu, Khanishin) districts. Ishaqzai gained an even greater share of the narco-pie during the Taliban regime when their newfound political power led to deals whereby the Regime directly facilitated their farm to market process in return for direct funding. Narcotics traders interviewed for this report, said that during the last year of the Regime, the Taliban tipped off the Ishaqzai about the forthcoming poppy ban, which led the tribe to stockpile its harvest and then reap massive profits as prices soared the following year.

The years of GIRoA and its international backers hunting down Ishaqzai leaders and generally excluding the tribe has created a trust deficit that will be difficult to mend. The Ishaqzai depend upon narco-trafficking and will do what it takes to protect their main economic resource. The tribe also takes pride in being one of the leading religious tribes in the region. GIRoA could attempt to bring in the Ishaqzai by offering them government positions, including prominent positions with the Ministry of Hajj and Religious Affairs, as well as agreeing to turn a blind eye to the cultivation and trade of opium for several years. Given the gulf that exists, however, it does not appear that this would be sufficient to pull the Ishaqzai in at a time when GIRoA is vulnerable.

4.2 Kuchi

Kuchi populations are found in all provinces of Loya Kandahar, but per capita their largest concentration is in Zabul.⁴⁹ Kuchi have traditionally filled the economic niche of selling livestock and related produce to the settled, agrarian populations. Their nomadic way of life also makes Kuchi adept at smuggling and they often participate in the region's thriving illicit economic. The Kuchi do not belong to one tribe, but are instead members of several tribes that usually fall within the Ghilzai confederacy.

The Kuchi are arguably the most vulnerable group in Loya Kandahar and perhaps all of Afghanistan. They have suffered greatly due to drought and associated loss of livestock, war, and ethnic tensions. Post-2001 Kuchi livelihoods have only grown more precarious as they have been shut out of their traditional summer pastureland in the Hazarajat.⁵⁰ Access to this pastureland would increase Kuchi herds, improve livelihoods, and decrease (though not eliminate) motives for aligning with the insurgency. As Kuchi nomadic livelihoods have grown more precarious many have settled, often on tracts of uninhabited land along migratory routes, in particular along Highway 1. This has led to disputes with settled populations in Loya Kandahar. In these disputes the Kuchi are at a disadvantage due to the lack of political representation.

The Kuchi as a group have no real structural ties to the government. Those individual Kuchi who do have ties within the government mainly come from a very select group of Kuchi tribes and a subset of families found mostly in the east, or are from families which chose to settle long ago. These Kuchi 'leaders' do not represent the group as a whole, have grown rich off of what amounts to government hush money designed to keep Kuchi from challenging land use rights with the Hazara.

Continued livelihood and land rights vulnerability combined with an absence of political representation and recourse to address these vulnerabilities has pushed many Kuchi to ally with the insurgency as a source of power and protection. One national Kuchi leader estimates that up to 50 per cent of the insurgency's manpower across the nation now comes from Kuchi fighters. Kuchi are instrumental insurgent foot soldiers in Nangarhar, Loya Paktia, Zabul, Ghor, and Badghis. Kuchi are especially useful to the insurgency because their mobility allows them to carry out attacks without facing communal repercussions. The lack of fixed physical property to defend also enables the Kuchi to be constantly on the offensive, while winter grazing grounds in Pakistani border areas provides

⁴⁹ Central Helmand, Uruzgan and Kandahar are important winter grazing areas for Kuchi who pass through these provinces on their way to summer pasturelands in Ghor Province. Kuchi who spend their winters in central Helmand and Kandahar also travel northeast following Highway 1 through Zabul to Ghazni.

⁵⁰ However, this is not a clear-cut ethnic issue, as Kuchi have also been locked out of pastureland in Pashtun Kandahar and Helmand.

them unimpeded contact with command and control centres in Pakistan and makes them ideal narcotics, arms and IED smugglers.⁵¹

Support for the insurgency is a rational decision by some Kuchi communities based upon a need to protect their interests within a system that offers no such protection. Kuchi insurgent support is also a long-term strategy, as many are now willing to trade the immediate danger inherent in actively supporting the insurgency, in return for the possible future benefits, such as a return to pasturelands in the Hazarajat and secure land tenure for those attempting to settle, that Taliban control would bring.

⁵¹ This was true during the Jihad Era as well, when Kuchi *mahaz* were among the strongest and most feared fighting fronts in Nangarhar and Khost. In Khost in particular, kuchi forces were instrumental in pushing the PDPA from the province.

5. ISSUES and ATTITUDES

The following section provides information on current local perceptions of residents of Loya Kandahar. It also provides insight into the actions of both powerbrokers and residents in Loya Kandahar on four key issues: Transition; the 2014 Elections; Reconciliation; and the Insurgency. All of these issues are interlinked, and all will influence the biggest issue of all—the viability of the Afghan State.

5.1 Transition

This is not a government, it's a business.

Arghandab District Resident, March 2012

History demonstrates that the Afghan State itself is resilient and will endure. The viability of Afghanistan's governing regimes, however, seems to rest upon the ability to access and then redistribute external resources to clients throughout the country. The Najibullah government, for example, endured from the time the Soviet 40th Army withdrew in 1989 until 1992 by becoming less reliant on the physical presence of the Soviets and proactively protecting its interests through a national reconciliation programme and the creation of tribal militias, both of which sapped *mujahideen* strength by dividing communal support bases. However, when the external resource tap ran dry as the Soviet Union collapsed, the government lost its ability to redistribute funds to tribal militias and its own security institutions. The loss of funding caused alliances to shift and militias adopted rent-seeking, predatory behaviour and quickly began to operate outside the control of the state. The Najibullah government was left with no cards to play and then folded.

Many residents of Loya Kandahar believe that history is repeating itself and that the country is fast approaching a 1989-like situation. While they do not believe that the collapse of the Government is a foregone conclusion, they nonetheless consider that GIRoA is in an overall weaker position than Najibullah's regime was in the late 1980s. This is not attributed to the strength of the insurgency; on the contrary residents think

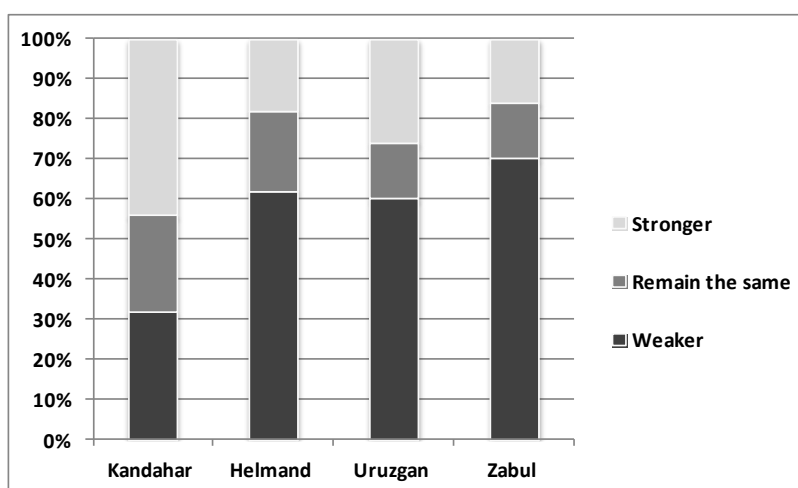


Figure 6: Perceptions on Insurgent Strength since 2009

that the current insurgency is weaker than the *mujahideen* of the early 1990s, and has weakened considerably since 2009 in all districts except for Kandahar (see Figure 6). Rather the weakness of GIRoA is directly attributed to its own internal divisions and general ineffectiveness.

Perceptions of continued insurgent strength in Kandahar, despite the clearance of large swathes of Taliban controlled territory in Zhari, Panjwai, and Maywand during 2010-2011, seems to reflect the fact that residents in Kandahar see the Taliban as more of a political issue, rather than a simple security issue. Thus security gains alone do not obscure that the continued lack of a political power sharing agreement or viable reconciliation programme renders the Taliban a continued threat whether or not the insurgency ‘holds’ territory. These views may also represent the fact that security in Kandahar province is often tied to perceptions of security in Kandahar City, where the Taliban’s all-too effective assassination campaign has arguably had more of an impact than anywhere else in Afghanistan.

In some cases the government simply lacks presence, but even where GIRoA is present there is an overall low level of confidence in the government as it currently exists. While GIRoA has gotten better at service delivery and in many areas of Loya Kandahar is considered less corrupt than it was a few years ago, it remains fundamentally unstable. Locals see their government as militarily and economically dependent on the international community, and understand that the withdrawal of CF and attendant revenue streams will reduce the power of men like Abdul Raziq and Matiullah Khan who rely on the existence of a “rentier” state system, and not purely on military backing provided by coalition forces. Thus, locals understand Transition to encompass much more than force draw downs and security hand over, but a possible restructuring of power relations in general and, by extension, a restructuring of GIRoA leadership.

The politically-astute residents of Loya Kandahar understand all too clearly that without a real framework for reconciliation or the brute strength to impose public order, the State will be able to hold onto provincial centres and arterials as long as external funding continues, but will not be able to sustain itself if external assistance falls off as sharply as it did in 1992. For this reason, the majority of those surveyed in Kandahar, Helmand and Uruzgan felt that the withdrawal of CF would have a negative impact on the security situation (see

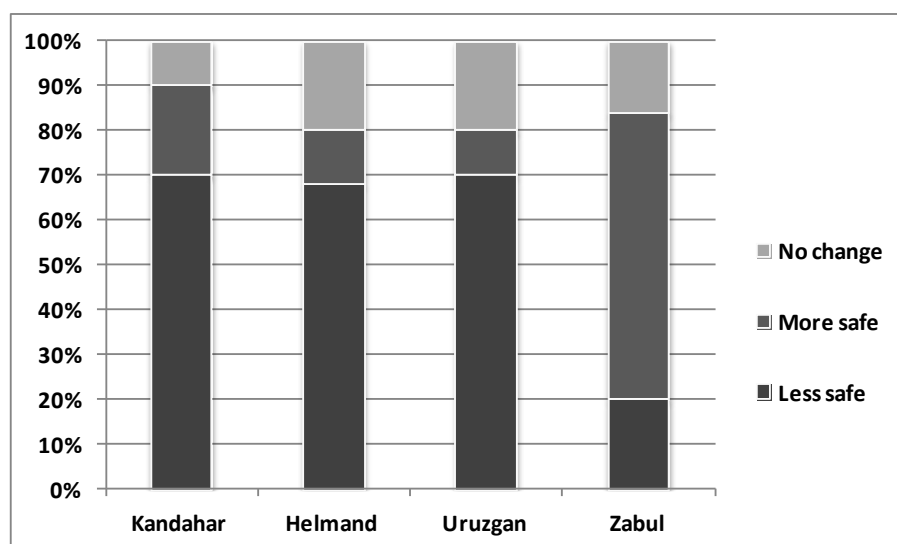


Figure 7: Perceptions of CF Withdrawal on Security Environment

Figure 7), despite the diminished strength of the insurgency.⁵²

⁵² Perceptions in Zabul seemed to reflect a feeling that ISAF presence has often been strong enough to incite insurgents to violence, but has not been robust enough to clear and hold territory on the magnitude of operations launched in Helmand, Kandahar and Uruzgan since mid-2009, and therefore the departure may

How power will shift remains open to debate. The following four sub-sections analyse the Transition period beginning with possible **scenarios** of how power and the manner in which it is accumulated may shift in the coming years; the basic **options** available to those powerbrokers who find themselves on the wrong side of future power shifts; economic **exit signs** which may signal impending political and security instability; and the current **strategies** powerbrokers and average citizens are employing, and possible future strategies they may employ, to cope with Transition.

5.1.1 Scenarios

Following the 2014 withdrawal timeline agreed upon at Lisbon and the proposed 2014 presidential elections, many actors in the South are now operating under the assumption that resource channels are changing with less direct access to ISAF and international aid. Residents in the south see three broad scenarios for how power relations will change during the Transition period. These scenarios are premised on local belief that “Transition” has already begun and that the Transition period will actually last past 2014. As the scenarios themselves detail, none are mutually exclusive.

Scenario 1: The Taliban Re-establish Control of Loya Kandahar

The withdrawal of coalition forces and the reduction in aid and contracting results in the Taliban establishing a durable presence, including functioning courts and ‘policing’ in rural areas throughout Loya Kandahar. ANSF that take over security from ISAF come under immediate threat and are soon confined to provincial and district capitals. By the spring of 2013, the Taliban have as much territory under their ‘control’ as they had circa 2008. By mid-2014 the Taliban have taken control of Kandahar militarily or through negotiated agreement. This scenario would represent a drastic change as individuals or groups currently associated with, or members of, the Taliban insurgency would gain power. This may include, but not be limited to, sections of tribes or groups such as the Ishaqzai and the Kuchi who are strong within insurgency leadership and/or have played a key role in providing monetary or military support for the insurgency. The patron-client system linked to the central government and coalition forces still operates in areas where GIRoA has control, but in Taliban controlled areas this no longer applies.

Scenario 2: GIRoA Remains Intact and under Southern Pashtun Control

The already stiff competition between strongmen to garner external resources would grow fiercer as external funding and military support is drawn down and/or re-routed through the central government. As resource flows alter (or dry up), new alliances and power dynamics would emerge and the 2012-2014 period would be characterized by growing instability in the near term as strongman militias grew more predatory with at least two possible developments. On the one hand, the situation in the South could become more volatile because many of the unresolved conflicts—including, Nurzai vs. Achekzai in Spin Boldak, Nurzai vs. Popalzai in western Uruzgan, intra-Alizai in northern Helmand, etc.—could re-ignite as alliances and power dynamics shift. This volatility could provide the opening by which the Taliban were able to build and consolidate their power; thus Scenario 2 has the potential to devolve into Scenario 1 in which the Taliban re-establish control. On the other hand, barring a Taliban take over, in the medium-term resource competition would grow less fierce in Scenario 2 as competitors were driven from the market or into subservient alliances

have a net stabilizing impact, though many ‘stable’ areas may be those which come under more unipolar Taliban control.

with the principle powerbrokers. The strengthening of alliances would result in a stronger anti-Taliban front and the insurgency would be marginalized. In this scenario, the draw down and/or centralization of aid would ultimately have a net stabilizing effect.

Scenario 3: GIRoA Remains Intact but Comes Under Different Leadership:

Provided the draw down and centralization of aid would have a net stabilizing effect but the state is re-ordered under different leadership—be it non-Pashtun or even non-southern Pashtun—the centre would still rely upon some of the same government or pro-government peripheral actors to provide security, maintain border control, etc. However, the change in central patrons would likely result in (at least some) change in peripheral clients. This could result in some of the very same conflict dynamics—i.e., the resumption of disputes over resources and political control—as Scenario 2 above, and could pave the way for an eventual return of the Taliban as those cut out of the power structure sought out the insurgency as a source of power. However, some among the disenfranchised of Loya Kandahar have argued that if a non-southern Pashtun or a non-Pashtun comes to power, this may cause greater parity between the tribes of the south as no single tribe will be favoured as the ‘ruling’ tribe, which would, in the medium-term, result in greater stability.

5.1.2 Options

For the minority of strongmen and their client bases now serving as the backbone of the state in places like Uruzgan and Kandahar, as well as the powerful businessmen protected by these political patrons, a power shift, especially one which entails a return to power of the Taliban, will leave them with a limited number of options:

- **Submit/Join:** stay in the area, accept a loss of power and with it a loss in income. When the Taliban Regime gained power in 1994/5 the Loya Kandahar, *mujahideen* strongmen who decided to remain in the area did not retain any power, but were instead forced to accept Taliban authority. Most were given little or no power within the Taliban ruling structure, and relied primarily on agricultural landholdings to earn a living.
- **Fight:** As militarily strong as Matiullah Khan and Abdul Raziq are, the various forces at their disposal would not be able to unilaterally hold off the Taliban. If – as is expected – they continue to enjoy the support of US Special Forces and associated air support they will be able to postpone their own collapse and maintain islands and veins of control, such as main arterials, district centres and their home villages where their support structures are the strongest. But, in continuing absence of broader effective national or regional political-security stabilization strategy they will eventually be surrounded and isolated. As one Afghan analyst interviewed for this report noted: “Matiullah’s backers have to think about their future—if the Taliban begins to gain strength with the US withdrawal, these individuals will have to safeguard their own interests and may switch not necessarily to the Taliban, but will become neutral, which will in turn erode the power of their strongman patrons. In some cases the Taliban will probably seek to hasten their departure by buying out key supporters of people like Raziq and Matiullah.” At a certain point, these powerbrokers will then seek exile abroad. Most are well prepared for this contingency and have built up external support networks and transferred the necessary resources.

- **Leave:** Abroad they will still seek to influence actions inside Afghanistan by backing supporters who remain behind in the country and may, if certain areas of the south come under Taliban control, relocate to the north where a “fighting space” is secured. It is important to recall that when power changed hands when the Taliban took Kandahar in 1994, there were two rounds of displacement: the immediate flight of some of the most notorious *mujahideen* and their extended families, and then a more general exodus starting about a year and half into the Regime when residents who initially welcomed the respite in violence began to understand the costs of stability (e.g., draconian social policing, mandatory service in the Taliban army) and opted for exile abroad.

5.1.3 Economic Exit Signs

The collection of economic data was not within the scope of this study. Nonetheless, the research team discerned a clear trend that within the last year Loya Kandahar residents, particularly among the well-off minority, may be hedging against a renewed cycle of violence or a power shift. Residents’ perceptions of the prevailing economic climate include:

- **Loya Kandahar, and particularly Kandahar Province, is still a good place to make money but not to invest earnings.** A greater portion of wealth earned in Loya Kandahar is now invested abroad, either directly across the border in Quetta or in Dubai, India and Central Asia.
- **Property values are falling.** Last year a self-described “small-time” local real estate developer said he could sink \$200,000 into the construction of a house or compound and sell, within an average of month, at \$300,000. Since late 2011 the developer has not been able to sell similar properties for \$220,000 even after six months on the market.⁵³ Nouveau riche businessmen are no longer throwing around money as they were even a year ago, which has driven prices down. Even as the housing market has settled, buyers are still wary, which may simply be an indication that the market has not yet reached bottom.
- **Imports and sales of luxury goods are declining.** A further sign that individuals lack confidence is the decline in purchases of permanent items, such as household furnishings, televisions, refrigerators, etc.

As noted, these are anecdotal findings, and some of Kandahar’s “1 per cent” continue to invest, most notably the Karzai brothers, who have purchased and are plotting a second Aino Mena (large luxury housing complex) scheme adjacent to the first.

5.1.4 Strategies

This section outlines the various strategies that both powerbrokers and average citizens are now employing, or may use in the future, to mitigate possible adverse impacts of Transition.

5.1.4.1 Consolidating Power

Powerbrokers are reacting to the decline of external security forces and the uncertain future of the Afghan State by solidifying their respective bases. One of the first signs of this trend was the return of Karim Brahawi to the Nimruz governor post from his cabinet ministry position in 2010. Physically

⁵³ The same scenario is playing out in Kabul where the price of a *biswa* (1/20 jerib) in Wazir Akbar Khan has fallen from \$90,000 in early 2011 to \$60,000 in early in 2012.

returning to his power base puts him closer to his ethnic constituency and provides him with greater control over the local economy. His consolidation of local power has made him more resistant to future shocks in the central government.

As early as 2010 Gul Agha Sherzai expressed a desire to depart Nangarhar, where his power rests primarily on his GIROA post. Like Brahawi, he wants to return to his home province of Kandahar where he maintains a tribal and business base that offers him security in the face of possible future power shifts. Former Helmand CoP Abdul Rahman Jan, who had been spending much time in Kabul, is now back in Lashkargah on a full-time basis, a repositioning which puts him closer to his extended family security networks in the province.

President Karzai, the biggest powerbroker of them all, similarly appears to be concentrating on his base through his *rais-e tanzima* strategy, as well as the increasingly frequent presence of both Mahmoud and Qayum Karzai in Kandahar. President Karzai is also working to solidify his tribal base by repeatedly attempting to secure the release of fellow Popalzai tribesman and former Taliban regime member Mullah Khairullah Kherkwa from Guantanamo Bay. Karzai's overall pursuit of reconciliation with the predominately southern Pashtun Afghan Taliban is yet another example of an attempt to consolidate and secure power bases, even at the highest levels.

These actions signal a trend of enhanced cohesion within social groups that is the result of uncertainty about the future. Increased solidarity within groups – primarily at the clan and tribal level – may also mean more rigid lines of division between groups. The unknown at this stage, is how broad or narrow the social group cohesion will be. On one end of the spectrum, is a return to a 1992-1994 scenario in which the family or clan constituted the largest cohesive unit and the result was a level of fragmentation that resulted in chaos and paved the way for the Taliban Regime's emergence. On the other end of the spectrum is ethnic cohesion, or at least geographic ethnic cohesion that would see united Southern Pashtuns forming a cohesive group to confront the outside threat of "The North" or "The Tajiks" gaining even greater control of the central government.

5.1.4.2 The Taliban as a Transition Strategy

In the absence of a high-level political deal that ends the insurgency, the Afghan Taliban will play a role on both ends of the spectrum described above. If Loya Kandahar fragments, the Taliban will position itself as protectors of communities from immediate external threats – e.g., neighbouring warlords, oppressive government or tribal strongmen, etc. On this end of the spectrum the Taliban will become a Transition strategy for communities seeking the measure of stability that Taliban control has brought in the past. However, if Loya Kandahar or "Southern Pashtuns" are to achieve a level of group cohesion that allows them to meet potential outside threats, true reconciliation and political power sharing with the Taliban – especially old garde regime leaders—must be reached. This is the main reason why reconciliation matters more to Loya Kandahar than any other region in the nation, and why local residents continually stress that reconciliation here is not a choice but a necessity.

5.1.4.3 Security Resources without Oversight

Among southern security providers the departure of ISAF from villages and districts is not a concern as long as sufficient resources are provided to increase the numbers and strength of ANP, and

provided that technical resources (e.g., mine clearance, surveillance) and air support remain available. In many respects, this would represent a return to the pre-ISAF expansion security dynamic in Loya Kandahar in which government strongmen had greater autonomy in the districts and villages with less oversight by ISAF, but with the ability to use international military forces in a surgical manner.

President Karzai's demand in mid-March that ISAF speed its withdrawal from village outposts and district-level forward operating bases is a first step in recreating this security dynamic – which many southern powerbrokers perceive to be to their advantage. This attitude also belies an underlying powerbroker fear that the ANA cannot or will not provide adequate defence against the insurgency. Among the general public there is widespread satisfaction with ANA performance, but also doubts about how seriously a force comprised mostly of Tajiks, Hazaras, Uzbeks, and eastern Pashtuns will fight the Taliban – a fight that could be especially bloody given that the ANA are dug into key terrain positions and are fairly well armed, while the Taliban are also well armed and would have the human terrain advantage.

5.1.4.4 Afghan Local Police

Attitudes regarding the Afghan Local Police – local-level militias that are paid for by US Special Forces and nominally fall under the direction of the MoI – as a Transition strategy ranged from ambivalent to mistrustful. Both CoP Matiullah Khan and CoP Abdul Raziq are mistrustful of ALP because while some units fall within their sphere of influence, many are beyond their control (regardless of formal MoI command and control structures). Ironically, these two men perhaps understand better than most the power of these types of militias, given that the rise of both Matiullah and Raziq depended on their own government-sanctioned militias that operated beyond the control of ANSF.

The potential absence of international military 'minders' will increase the potential for these ALP to operate outside of ANSF and, more to the point, outside Matiullah Khan and Abdul Raziq's control. These attitudes underscore that even Chiefs of Police understand – though may not publicly admit – that state security institutions remain weak even as the number of government security forces expand, a dynamic that could undermine state stability from within. This would represent a return to the early 1990s when Najibullah's tribal militias allowed the state to cling to power, but ultimately contributed to its downfall.

Community perceptions of ALP as a transition strategy are mixed. The ALP programme is seen as more effective than the various 'arbakai' programmes that preceded it over the last several years. Residents, however, remain concerned about the ability of the ALP to effectively resist the "better-trained and better-armed" insurgency as village-level ISAF support such as daily foot patrols decline. Many residents also are developing negative perceptions of the ALP due to their poor treatment of citizens and increasing predatory behaviour. Many residents are fearful that once international oversight for the programme decreases, ALP units will leave their villages and devolve into rent-seeking militias and foment instability.

5.2 2014 Elections

The Americans will bring a president in 2014 that is more loyal to them—maybe a guy like [Zalmai] Khalizad, maybe a different Karzai family member. Everything is in international hands.

Kandahar City Resident, March 2012

The Karzai Family has lost the trust of the Pashtuns because the Pashtun Families have suffered the most since 2001.

Lashkargah Resident, March 2012

Given that political positions are widely recognised as a primary means for individuals to accumulate both wealth and power, the presidential and Provincial Council elections of 2014 will be fiercely contested throughout Loya Kandahar. While the presidential elections get most of the attention, the Provincial Council seats are the only elected positions at the provincial level and quite significant in terms of tribal dynamics.⁵⁴ Campaigns will be more costly, will begin earlier, and given the decrease in international oversight will likely be much more fraudulent, than previous elections. There is also early anecdotal evidence that southern voters may be more divided than in previous years when president Karzai carried all four Loya Kandahar Provinces with absolute majority wins.

The 2014 elections will also have an impact on the security situation, as actors seek to either limit voting in secure areas by creating insecurity, or facilitate voting in insecure areas by improving security. Presidential and provincial council candidates may also rely more heavily upon the illegal economy as a source of campaign funds given the expected drop in external funding sources tied to international contracting and security provision that many candidates have drawn on in the past. Barring an improbable successful poppy ban within the next two years, high-level narcotics traffickers will make significant political contributions in return for future protection.

5.2.1 Presidential Campaigning in the South

By March 2010 a few potential candidates had taken exploratory steps to gauge possible Loya Kandahar support in advance of the 2014 presidential elections. This has generally included potential candidates meeting with selected elders, reaching out to potential provincial campaign managers, and opening political offices. No one, however, has officially announced an intention to run in 2014.

One of the potential candidates is Hashmat Karzai, the president's cousin. As far back as eight months ago he allegedly phoned several Lashkargah elders to announce that he planned on running for President and asked if he could count on their support. More recently, in late February he travelled to Helmand and met with deputy heads of various *shuras* in Lashkargah. Hashmat did not directly broach the 2014 elections, but he did ask each of the *shuras* to provide him with a membership list that included the names and information on each of their members. In February Hashmat also opened up a political office in Kandahar City. Interestingly, this office is outside of the

⁵⁴ Under or lack of representation for most tribes on the Provincial Council is a significant grievance. The importance of the Provincial Council can also be witnessed in the current machinations of the Karzais to ensure that the Chairmanship of the Kandahar Provincial Council stays in the hands of a Popalzai.

Karzai family compound in Aino Mena which could signal that Hashmat's initiative does not have the support of President Karzai or his brothers. Since opening his office, Hashmat has held several meetings with provincial elders from the Popalzai tribe and members of the Provincial Council. During these meetings Hashmat discussed establishing both a Popalzai and new tribal *shura* in the near future. The establishment of *shuras* in advance of elections was used as a campaign tool in Kandahar in 2004 and 2009.

What exactly Hashmat is up to is difficult to ascertain. While these actions appear to be an initial step in an election campaign, it remains unclear who exactly Hashmat is campaigning for: President Karzai, himself, or a third party. Given tensions within the extended Karzai family (see below) it is possible that Hashmat intends to play the spoiler in the 2014 elections by showcasing Karzai family disunity by running himself, or by backing a candidate running against the family.

Though he has made no official announcements, Qayum Karzai has met with elders in Kandahar City and has reached out to elders in Loya Paktia through a representative to gauge the opinions of decision-makers and tribal leaders about his possible future run. Abdullah Abdullah has a political office in Kandahar City run by Abdul Khaliq (Alkozai), a former Jamiat-e Islami commander from Arghandab district.

A politically active Helmand resident indicated that in March he was approached by the head of Zalmay Khalilzad's election team and asked to run his campaign office in Lashkargah. As of mid-March Khalilzad had not opened political offices in Kandahar or Helmand according to locals.

However, thus far the serious southern politicking in Loya Kandahar has not yet begun. As another Helmandi noted: "The key leaders among the Barakzai, Alizai and Nurzai [the Province's most populous tribes] have not announced who they are supporting in 2014 because none of the possible candidates have started throwing money around."

5.2.2 Possible Vote Outcomes in Loya Kandahar

Loya Kandahar residents identified three categories of possible 2014 presidential candidates:

A Karzai: Even among those who understand President Karzai is not constitutionally able to seek a third term as President, it was still believed that he could remain head of state. Many residents speculate that Karzai will convene a Loya Jirga to amend the constitution to allow him to run for a third term. However, it is important to note that Hamid Karzai's popularity across Loya Kandahar has diminished since 2009, even among his Durrani base who supported him in 2004 and 2009.

If Hamid Karzai does not or cannot run in 2014, the most likely candidate to be put forward by the family is Qayum, not Hashmat. Hashmat has been a political liability to President Karzai for years due to negative press from alleged honour and revenge killings and Hashmat's involvement in the murky world of Afghan private security companies. In fact, though they are cousins, the relationship between Hashmat and Hamid is characterised by mistrust and competition.⁵⁵

Qayum is the most likely candidate mainly because he is, quite simply, the *only* viable candidate from the immediate Karzai family. Other immediate Karzai family members have either been tainted

⁵⁵ This fits the stereotypical Pashtun cousin rivalry (*taboorwali*) dynamic, and differentiates Hashmat from President Karzai's full brother Mahmoud, also a political liability in recent years, but definitely in line with "The Family" in regards to the 2014 elections.

by scandal (Mahmoud, Jamil), killed (Ahmed Wali), or seem content to remain out of the spotlight (Abdul Ahmad, Abdul Ali).

In a choice between Hamid, Qayum and Hashmat, residents seemed generally inclined to prefer Qayum because he is a new and possibly better leader than his brother and is seen as wiser, less tainted, and more polished than Hashmat. However, Qayum has little experience as a statesman and is perhaps better positioned as a backdoor dealmaker, campaign manager, and unofficial diplomat. If the early speculation proves true and Qayum is put forward by the family, the question then turns to whether the Karzai name will be a help or a hindrance in 2014.

There are clear divisions within the extended Karzai family about the upcoming elections. This also points to the broader divisions within the Popalzai tribe, which has long been considered one of the most cohesive tribes in the south. Whether it would get to a point where two Karzai run for president is doubtful, but in these early days camps seem to be forming over who will represent the Karzai family, and more generally the Popalzai and perhaps even all of Loya Kandahar.

A “Northerner”: The non-Pashtun candidate with the best chance of carrying the vote in Loya Kandahar is still Abdullah Abdullah. He is able to tap into diminished, though still relevant, Jamiat-e Islami networks⁵⁶ and is respected due to his *mujahideen* credentials. Abdullah would likely do especially well in Zabul province, where the Zirk Durrani are a minority and Hamidullah Tokhi, MP and leader of the largest tribe in the province supported him in 2009 and is a prominent member of Abdullah’s Taghair Omid party.

As noted, Abdullah has a political office in Kandahar City. He also has the support of Nur ul Haq Ulumi, a former communist governor of Kandahar, who remains one of the most influential Barakzai in the province and could bring in votes for Abdullah both from his tribal and former communist base.⁵⁷

Opinions are divided over what an Abdullah Abdullah, or any non-Pashtun, presidency would mean for the south. Residents that feel cut out of the current power structure argue that a non-Pashtun president would automatically create more parity between the tribes because he would need to actively maintain balance between the tribes—through equal apportionment of political and economic resources—or face a revolt by a coalition of tribes.

However, the overriding fear among many Pashtuns in Loya Kandahar is that a Tajik or a “Northerner” would take revenge on the south for the abuses committed by the Taliban during the 1990s. Revenge in this case may just mean neglect, but the fear remains nonetheless. As a result, it remains likely that Loya Kandahar voters will by default choose one of their own over an outsider. For instance, when ten interviewees were given the following hypothetical: if the elections were held tomorrow and the only two names on the ballot were Abdullah Abdullah, a Tajik, and Hamid Karzai, who would you vote for? Seven of ten, grudgingly chose Karzai, with a long explanation that

⁵⁶ These networks are most prominent among the populous Alkozai tribe of Arghandab district. However, residents say that Abdullah has been careful to use Jamiat networks without making them a selling point because Jamiat, like other former *mujahideen* parties, has “lost trust” in the south in the words of one Kandahari.

⁵⁷ Under this scenario the former communists and Afghan Millat party members in Loya Kandahar would likely play significant role in any future Abdullah Abdullah government. This could have far reaching consequences for political appointments across the south, if it meant a shift away from Karzai patron-client tribalism to former communist networks and something closer, perhaps, to an institution driven system.

though he was the figure head of a corrupt government, he was still a Pashtun and at the end of the day would better represent southern Pashtun interests.

The mistrust of Loya Kandahar residents is recognised by Abdullah Abdullah. His proponents in the south say he was prepared to assuage these fears if he had won in 2009 by appointing Nur ul Haq Ulumi as either Minister of Defence or Minister of Interior, to ensure that if a Tajik was running the state, a Pashtun was at least in control of the state's security.⁵⁸ However, even with this assurance and with the already high level of dissatisfaction with the Karzai government in 2009 (the high-water mark as far as insurgency control in many areas of Loya Kandahar) Abdullah Abdullah got no higher than 12.7 per cent of the vote in any of Loya Kandahar province, while Karzai got no lower than 60.9 per cent.

Another Pashtun: What Loya Kandahar residents want is a Pashtun candidate, preferably a southerner that is not from the Karzai family. The three rumoured non-Karzai Pashtun contenders at this point are Ashraf Ghani, an Ahmadzai from Logar, Zalmay Khalizad, a Suleiman Khail born in Mazar-e Sharif to a family with roots in Laghman, and Farooq Wardak of Wardak Province. Though the Suleiman Khail, Ahmadzai, and Wardak tribes are considered among the most influential non-Durrani tribes in the nation in terms of political power, size, and traditional standing among the Ghilzai, all three are nonetheless outside the southern Durrani elite.

Of these, Zalmay Khalizad⁵⁹ has so far been the most pro-active possible candidate given that Ashraf Ghani is currently President Karzai's senior advisor on Transition and Farooq Wardak is the Minister of Education. While Khalilzad has yet to make any official announcement, in late 2011 he established The Khalilzad Foundation, a charitable organisation that also serves as a front for a nascent political party and possibly a presidential campaign. Khalilzad has also reportedly been approached by Ahmed Zia Masood and members of the Karzai opposition about the possibility of forming a coalition.

Khalizad is a former United States Ambassador to Afghanistan, Iraq and the United Nations with strong connections to the Republican Party in the US. His US political connections far exceed those of the other candidates and would seem to be a liability in the current climate. Loya Kandahar residents, however, believe that these connections either are not a liability, or will in the end help Khalizad secure victory. As one Kandahari put it: "Khalilzad has the backing of the US so he will win no matter what."

Of the other two potential candidates, Farooq Wardak has a stronger tribal base and is seen as more of an Afghan insider when compared to Ashraf Ghani, an Americanised technocrat. Several tribal elders in Tirin Kot, claim that president Karzai himself endorsed Farooq Wardak in a meeting with them in the fall of 2011 and asked for the tribe to support Wardak in 2014.

5.2.3 Taliban Candidates

There was a consensus across the south that if the Taliban put up candidates for elections, such as the 2014 Provincial Council elections, these candidates would do very well. By all accounts Taliban appointees to district level positions would also be welcomed. "In all the Pashtun areas of the south, no one would win except for Taliban candidates," one resident of rural Kandahar noted. He then

⁵⁸ In essence an inversion of the current Pashtun-led but Tajik-secured state.

⁵⁹ In 2012, President Karzai is said to have offered Khalizad a number of cabinet seats to not run for president.

went on, “If we compare this government with the Taliban Regime, we can see that whatever the Taliban did is nothing compared to the crimes committed by this government – Taliban did bad things, yes – but in this government tribalism grew and houses were bombarded. There is no source where to go to complain; it would make a difference to have a place to go to complain, to get justice. This is why people would vote for Taliban.”

Other interviewees noted that Taliban candidates – not necessarily Taliban commanders, but community members with Taliban backing – would be selected simply because they represented something new, something untried, and essentially would be “worth a shot” when compared to the slate of expected options, who are mostly viewed as corrupt in fact or corrupt by association. It should be noted, that the views expressed by interviewees was not influenced by the new moderate rhetoric coming out of Quetta in the last six months. Rather the support for the Taliban was expressed with the full acknowledgment that there is no framework in place to guard against a return to the aggressive social conservatism of the Taliban regime years.

Quantitative data collected for this report shows that residents of Kandahar Province clearly identified the Taliban as the most powerful political party, despite the fact that the Afghan Taliban have advanced little or no political agenda (Figure 8). In Helmand, the Taliban ranked relatively equal to former PDPA networks and Jamiat-e Islami as a political force, but below HIG, which is currently active as both a political and insurgent group in Helmand, and has a history of strong support among the Barakzai of Grishk and Lashkargah City where the majority of polling for the Helmand survey was carried out (Figure 9). More generally, data below shows that the Taliban is still considered as a legitimate—though in many cases not well liked due to current and past abuses—socio-political party (or movement), especially in their historic capital of Kandahar. The data also illustrates what communities have been articulating anecdotally—namely, that reconciling and re-integrating Taliban commanders is only one part of a peace process that is destined to fail without a corresponding part for political reintegration and power sharing (see 5.3 for data on community perceptions of power sharing with the Taliban).

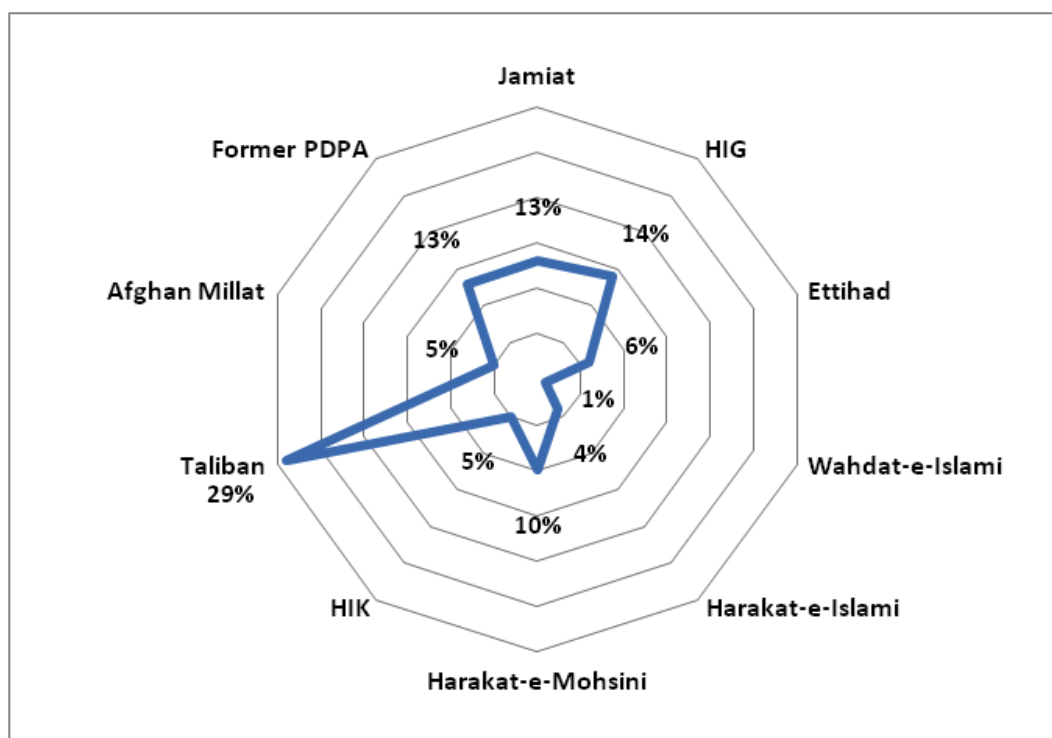


Figure 8: Most Powerful Political Party/Movements in Kandahar

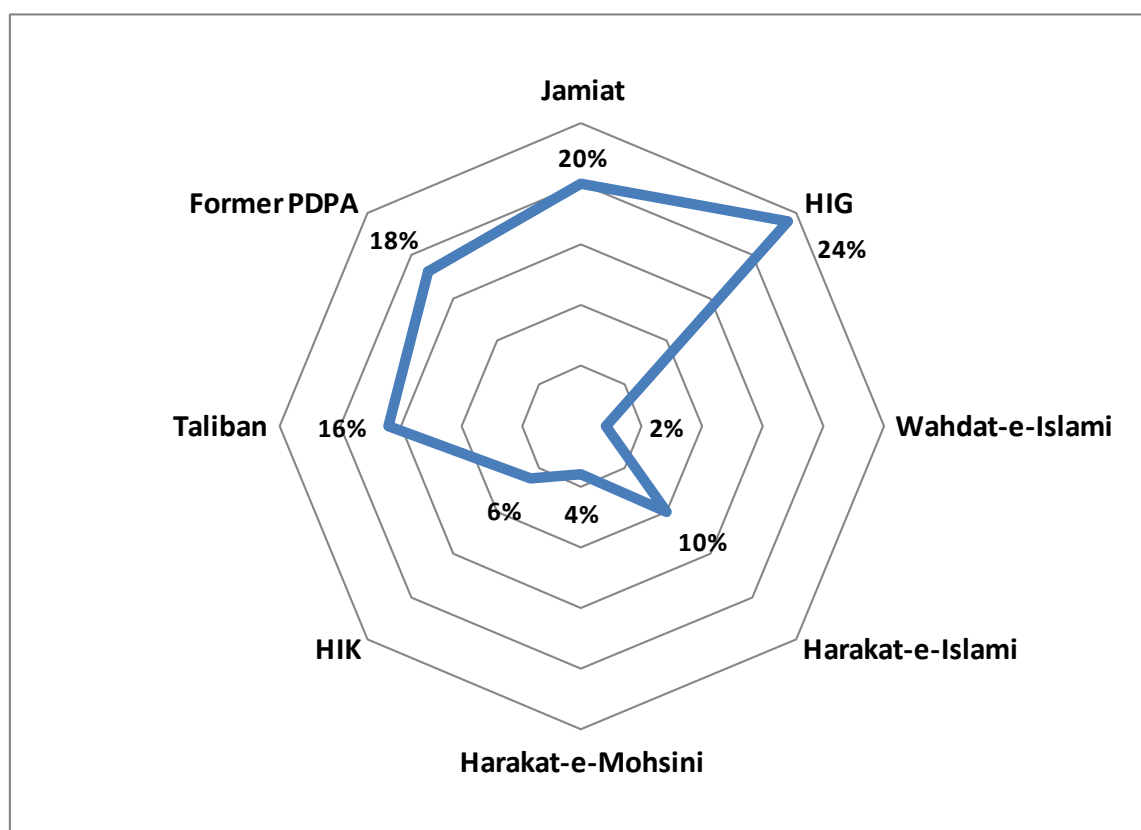


Figure 9: Most Powerful Political Party/Movement in Helmand

5.3 Afghan Peace and Reconciliation Program

The main challenge [for the APRP] exists within the Afghan system itself, we are fighting against people who do not really want peace—the warlords who have no intention of ceding power, and the anti-Taliban faction of the HPC.

APRP Official, Kandahar February 2012

While there are definite challenges to the functioning of the Afghan Peace and Reintegration Programme (APRP) at the provincial level, the programme's problems start at the top.

First, even moderately informed residents of Loya Kandahar were well aware that high-level talks were running on two tracks: the official talks being held in Qatar and a second group within the Afghan Taliban working at the behest of the ISI to open up another channel of talks in either Saudi Arabia or Turkey. Pakistan and Afghanistan, though mistrustful of one another, are both concerned that they have been side-lined by the bilateral Qatar talks. In response they are now seeking a parallel venue in Saudi Arabia or Turkey where they could hold direct talks.⁶⁰ According to cross border sources, as of February Taliban Senior Leader Agha Mohammed Mutassim (Sayed)⁶¹ and a handful of former Taliban Regime leaders had formed a political commission within the Afghan Taliban that was pursuing alternate talks to those that had been held in Qatar (see 5.4.1).

Second, Kandahar Peace Secretariat officials say they are receiving insufficient support from Kabul, and that reconciliation funds were not flowing from the centre to the Province.⁶² The lack of funds flowing to the sub-national level from the centre is in part attributed to an inefficient bureaucracy that has been further slowed following the hospitalisation of National Peace Secretariat head Masoom Stanikzai. In Kandahar, however, the problem is clearly seen as one of will rather than inefficient bureaucracy. Kandahar officials say that funds are not flowing because High Peace Council members do not want the Taliban to be reconciled and are more generally mistrustful of Kandahar due to its centrality to the former Taliban regime. As one official stated: "The main challenge [for the APRP] exists within the Afghan system itself, we are fighting against people who do not really want peace—the warlords who have no intention of ceding power, and the anti-Taliban faction of the HPC. Many of the Taliban I am talking to right now are saying: 'The Afghan Government is not reliable, we want American protection from the Afghan Government.'"

Third, re-integration efforts have been deliberately undermined by Pakistani arrests of mid- and high-level Taliban and their immediate families. Possible re-integrees are under house in Baluchistan, have 'disappeared', or died in Pakistani custody.

At the Provincial level, residents were either sceptical or ignorant of the peace process: "Reconciliation means nothing, it is only getting a political deal which matters" and "Reconciliation is a business," were common refrains. While the Kandahar Peace Secretariat was functioning well, the Provincial Peace Council (PPC) was widely seen as having been subverted by Ahmed Wali Karzai's strongmen on the council who have shown limited ability to bring in potential re-integrees: "The

⁶⁰ If Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran are finally pushed into a real discussion about regional security then the Qatar Talks will have served their purpose. Indeed, this outcome may be the best case scenario.

⁶¹ Native of Nalgaham manteqa of present-day Zhari District; son-in-law of Mullah Mohammed Omar, former Taliban regime ambassador to the UAE and Finance Minister; he is today considered to carry a similar foreign affairs/spokesperson portfolio as Tayeb Agha.

⁶² See Annex C for a case study of APRP in Kandahar Province.

people on the provincial peace council are not influential within the community and they don't represent the community, they are just working for money." PPC Head, Atta Mohammed Ahmadi⁶³ was viewed as a benign force: "He is not respected by the Durrani or the Ghilzai ... but his main problem is he doesn't have close contacts among the Taliban," one Kandahar City resident noted.

There is a disconnect in Uruzgan between the PPC and CoP Matiullah Khan, who has been pursuing his own ad hoc, local re-integration initiative. For instance, in mid-2011 an insurgent from Khas Uruzgan was formally reconciled, but without Matiullah's approval – which is not required. The potential re-integree was subsequently arrested and imprisoned by Matiullah. A similar incident occurred in Tirin Kot where an insurgent who went through the reintegration process re-joined the insurgency after being threatened by one of Matiullah's sub commanders.⁶⁴

Notwithstanding the challenges to the APRP, residents of Loya Kandahar are nonetheless supportive of the peace process and power sharing (see Figure 10). A clear majority of the 250 individuals polled in all four Loya Kandahar provinces favoured political power sharing with current and former Taliban Regime members from the district to central government levels. "It's not a matter of wanting to share power or not," one resident of Arghandab district in Kandahar noted, "we have to share power – but we would be sharing power with Pakistan, and this is not what people want." The mistrust of Pakistan runs deep and represents a larger structural problem that supersedes the problem of insurgent reconciliation, as another residents noted: "Even if the real Taliban reconciled, Pakistan would create a new 'Taliban.'"

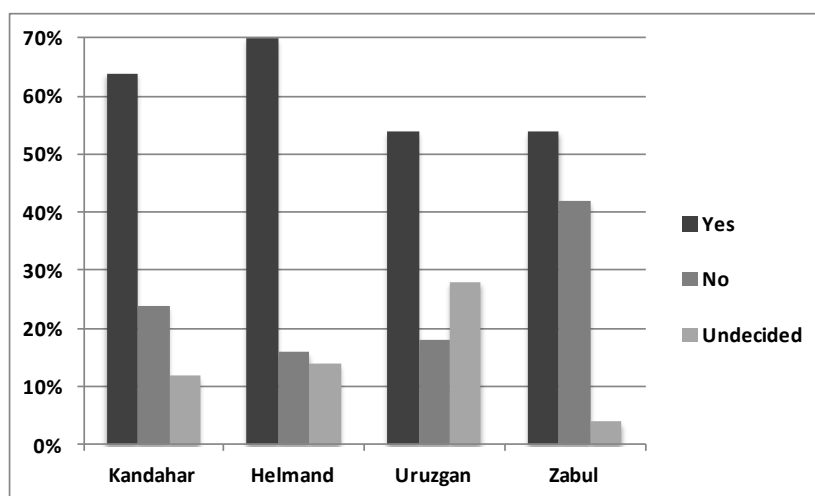


Figure 100: Perceptions of Political Power Sharing with the Taliban

⁶³ He is an Alkozai, the brother of Arghandab DG Haji Shah Mohammed, and head of the provincial Mujahideen Veteran's Shura.

⁶⁴ Following the second incident Matiullah attended a PPC meeting, the first he had attended the year since the council was established. During the meeting he was reproached by council members, and told to keep his officers in line and directed to act in accordance with the APRP process. Matiullah has not attended a meeting since this. It appears that he views the PPC – which has less real power than either his own Eslahi Shura or the Provincial Council – as a transitory and easily circumvented body.

5.4 The Insurgency

The three events that arguably had the greatest impact on the insurgency in 2011 were the US operation that killed Osama bin Laden on Pakistani soil, the 26 November 2011 ISAF airstrike on a border post that killed 24 Pakistani soldiers, and the opening of the Taliban political office in Qatar. These first two events were important because for the first time in years the Afghan Taliban began to question Pakistan's strength and ability to protect them and their families. The opening of the Qatar office was the most visible sign of division within the Afghan Taliban leadership in years. On one side are those that favour reconciliation or at least want to sit down and discuss peace with the US. On the other are those that oppose the Qatar talks or any action not strictly approved by the ISI.

Pakistan reacted strongly to its perceived weakness by blockading ISAF supply lines and through the creation of a joint *shura* composed of three Pakistani Taliban, two Haqqani network representatives, and symbolically headed by Mullah Mohammed Omar. These actions were designed to project Pakistani power and re-enforce its sovereignty, while also signalling that ISI remains in control of its various insurgencies.

5.4.1 Creation of Parallel Political Group

The ISI also established an Afghan Taliban-led parallel political group known as Naw-e Tehrik (New Movement).⁶⁵ This group is meant to counterbalance the group of Afghan Taliban leading the Qatar talks and ensure that Pakistan's interests are well represented in any future peace talks. It also suggests an existing general trust deficit between the ISI and the Afghan Taliban.

The Naw-e Tehrik is currently attempting to establish a Taliban political office in either Saudi Arabia or Turkey. Though this information could not be properly triangulated, individuals with access to Taliban senior leadership claim that Naw-e Tehrik is headed by Abdul Razaq (Achekezai) of Spin Boldak district, Taliban Regime Minister of Interior and a leading member of the Quetta Shura's military commission. Other members of Naw-e Tehrik include, Mullah Sahasudin (Barakzai) of Nesh, Taliban Regime Minister of Public Affairs; Mullah Abdul Haq (Barakzai) of Nesh, Taliban Regime Provincial Governor of Herat; and Rauf Khadim (Alizai), a mid-level regime member in northern Helmand and post-2001 shadow governor of Kajaki district. Two other figures who are expected to figure prominently in any new talks are Mullah Abbas Akhund (Achekezai) of Khas Uruzgan, Taliban Regime Minister of Public Health who will reportedly serve as the Taliban's primary spokesperson at any future talks in Saudi Arabia or Turkey, and Mullah Mutassim who seems to be functioning as a link between Naw-e Tehrik, the ISI, and contacts in Saudi Arabia and/or Turkey. Naw-e Tehrik has the full support of the ISI. It was not possible to confirm how much control Mullah Omar has over the group, although some interviewees suggested that he has little to no control.

It is equally unclear where the leading proponents of the Qatar talks – including spokesperson Tayeb Agha – stand in relation to Naw-e Tehrik, the ISI, or future peace talks. Splits within the Taliban that became visible as the Qatar talks materialised still exist, however, what these splits mean in practice is hard to discern because many moderate Taliban are now under house arrest, in prison, or have 'disappeared', and the most influential senior Taliban leaders are those who consistently toe the ISI line. In fact the old garde vs. new garde Taliban is an outdated dichotomy. The principle division is now between those insurgents who are favoured by ISI and those who are out of the circle of trust.

Some old garde members have favoured positions within the insurgency (Akhtar Mansoor) while some are outside; many new garde members are favoured by Pakistan because they are the most active inside Afghanistan, though some of these have also have fallen out of favour. These splits break down between those Taliban who are willing to help Pakistan execute its strategy in Afghanistan in return for positions of power in the current Taliban insurgency, and those who actually want to reconcile, are tired of Pakistani control and living a life of exile under house arrest. As one individual who speaks directly with Quetta-based Taliban remarked: “Even though the majority of the Afghan Taliban want peace, the minority are the ones with all the power because they are the ones who receive all the support from Pakistan.”

5.4.2 Haqqani Expansion in the South?

Over the last half of 2011, multiple sources reported apparent initial attempts by the Haqqani Network to play a more active role in southern Afghanistan. The possibility that Pakistan is promoting greater Haqqani involvement in the South because it is easier to control – the Haqqanis are known to micro-manage field commanders while the Taliban have a more decentralized operational structure – would be further evidence of an emerging trust deficit between the ISI and Afghan Taliban. It is believed that this arrangement had its genesis when Helmand shadow governor Mullah Naem was introduced to Haqqani leaders in Waziristan by Taliban senior leader Mullah Mohammed Akhtar Mansoor, which resulted in more Helmandi recruits travelling to training camps in Waziristan.⁶⁶ This could provide the Haqqanis with the means to gain influence in Loya Kandahar without directly assuming leadership roles in the south,⁶⁷ a move that would be unacceptable to the Afghan Taliban. Past attempts by Haqqani Network operatives or “Waziris” to act outside of advisory or technical support roles in the south have resulted in communal backlashes, most notably in Deh Rawud district in 2007.⁶⁸

5.4.3 Strategy Moving Forward

Regardless of where the Afghan Taliban internally stand on peace talks or in relation to the ISI and the Haqqanis, the core of their high-level old garde leadership remains intact as does their commitment to continue fighting in Loya Kandahar. The united front was on full display in late February when senior military leaders as well as shadow provincial and district governors from across the south held separate week-long meetings in Quetta. These meetings resulted in a shuffling of numerous shadow district governors throughout Loya Kandahar and the appointment of a new shadow deputy governor for Helmand, who was explicitly ordered to remain inside the province.

Residents in some districts say that the new shadow district governors are more hard-line than previous shadow DGs, another sign that the more moderate Afghan Taliban leadership has been

⁶⁶ Though many are still trained in Chaman and Zhob

⁶⁷ Right now the Haqqanis' geographical reach extends no further south than Ghazni; though unconfirmed reports stated that Durukhan, a Haqqani network commander in Ghazni, is now operating mainly in Daykundi—though it is unclear what command and control role he plays in Daykundi, or if he is simply moving weapons.

⁶⁸ The presence and brutal tactics, including the murder of women and a respected Sayed, of foreign fighters identified as “Waziris” led to a popular backlash against the Taliban. The local community formed a *lashkar* (tribal army) and, with coalition forces assistance, expelled both the foreign insurgents and many of the local Taliban leaders from the district. Since this time, Deh Rawud has been one of the most insurgent-free districts in Southern Afghanistan.

marginalised. Overall, Taliban attitudes in the February meetings were reported to be upbeat, despite leadership and territory losses incurred in the previous years. “They seemed content, confident, and well-funded,” recalled one individual inside the Taliban’s Quetta office at the time of the meetings.

The meetings also addressed strategy. “The strategy,” one attendee remarked, “is to kill the Afghan supporters of the Americans. Without Afghan support the Americans can’t see; the strategy is to pull out their eyes.” In addition to a continued assassination campaign, the insurgency is expected to continue to fight asymmetrically: relying on IEDs and hit and run attacks, essentially biding its time while ISAF draws down. Once the foreign forces are out of the picture the Taliban will pursue a more direct strategy to retake, hold and then govern territory, working from the periphery toward provincial centres.

6. Conclusion

Insurgent violence, which has anecdotally dropped in other areas of the country after ISAF has withdrawn, can be expected to increase in the Afghan Taliban's southern heartland during the Transition period. Whether or not the insurgency's goal is to retake Kabul, the Taliban will need to re-establish itself inside Afghanistan and the place it will look to do this is Loya Kandahar. Locals, who form the core of the Taliban support network believe that ANSF are not collectively strong enough to withstand a renewed wave of insurgent pressure, especially in rural areas, once international forces have withdrawn and external funding declines.

As reconstruction and security-related funding ebbs in the south, the government or pro-government strongmen who rely upon the war economy to fund their personal militias will begin to search for other sources of funding. This resource competition could foster instability and a consolidation of the number of powerbrokers in the South and, possibly, a contraction of areas under government control. Continued external funding and direct military support in the form of allied Special Forces and air support, will allow chosen powerbrokers to hold main supply arterials, provincial centres and possibly selected district centres in the name of GIRoA.

Understanding the likelihood of the above scenario, Loya Kandahar's powerbrokers, including President Karzai, are now speeding efforts to strengthen their client networks. In the process they are deliberately moving away from an institution-based governance system led by technocrats, to tribal patronage networks led by pro-government powerbrokers. These select powerbrokers will be counted on to continue fighting the insurgency, securing the periphery for the centre, and protecting their patron's interests vis-à-vis other powerbrokers, tribes or groups.

If GIRoA deliberately abandons 'western style' governance in the name of self-preservation, it need not necessarily mark a return to warlord politics. Loya Kandahar's population, in fact, will simply not stand for a return to the anarchy that characterised the 1992 era in Loya Kandahar. If the population senses that this system is returning they would likely chose the Taliban as the best worst option for stability. Between these options, however, locals see room for a return to a more decentralised form of governance in which provincial – and perhaps even regional – leaders are chosen from the community, by the community, in traditional decision-making fora such as tribal *jirgas*.

If the international community takes a realistic view of Transition and accepts that a decentralised system in which patron-client relations rather than institutions define the political and security environment, then it needs to immediately find ways to influence, rather than fight, this inevitability. For policy makers this may mean a conscious step away from pushing aid down to the lowest levels, where a multitude of external resources is preventing the power relations from moving toward a more 'natural order'.

7. Ways Forward & Continued Research

The next two years (2012-2014) will be a period of tremendous political flux as the international community begins the transition process. The environment in Afghanistan, and the South in particular, will remain volatile both politically as well as on the security front. As the South has always been Afghanistan's power base, and holds a symbolic significance for the insurgency, the ability to track internal and external dynamics in this region will be key for policy makers in Kabul. However, more than just periodic updates policy makers will need a continued flow of **targeted thematic research papers**. Though the topics of these papers would be formulated during direct discussions with BEK, some possible topics include:

- **An assessment of the Karzai family/network and their strategy for transition** in Loya Kandahar and beyond (here one would need to include other parts of Afghanistan as well). Deeper profiles of the dominant families of Loya Kandahar, including the Karzais, will be especially important given the past history of these families as national rulers. Furthermore, given the insurgency's strategy of assassinating key leaders, especially those seen crucial for the Karzai government, it is feasible that key actors may be killed in the coming months or years, which will require a re-assessment of the local situation as power is re-aligned.
- **Security Transition in the South:** Assessment of the ability of ANSF to take over from CF in 2014; or how they are performing in transition districts; exploring the ways in which security transition is happening in practice, including the formation of powerbroker militias which fall outside of ANSF command but may be tacitly sanctioned by GIRoA
- The role of **media/communication** in the south; by what means are messages spread; key media institutions and the personalities behind them.
- The **structure of the Afghan Taliban** in the South, their strategy/strengths/splits and their links to AQ and/or other insurgent groups (e.g. the Haqqani Network, HIG).
- **Shaping reconciliation in Loya Kandahar:** Public perceptions about who to negotiate with, as well as identification of red lines and how to pursue the process
- Profiling of **marginalized communities in the South**, especially the Kuchi, but also growing internal displacement and the role (and implications) of the insurgency in providing protection in the absence of the Afghan government and international actors
- The **political-economy of the South**, looking more closely at the income of key actors and alternative income bases after a drawdown in 2014 (especially as many key actors have built their wealth on international military in the form of security contracts); how will the economy change and what impact will this have on the security situation
- The practical role of **political parties and former mujahideen parties** in the South; including perceptions of the Afghan Taliban as a viable political party and/or social movement in Loya Kandahar

- **Conflict Analysis of the potentially most destabilising tribal/resource conflicts** in Loya Kandahar; their escalation potential; powerbroker and insurgency involvement; possible avenues for resolution
- **Regional dimensions influencing Loya Kandahar**; looking at Loya Kandahar in relation to Loya Paktia and Loya Herat; economic, political and tribal linkages

Other areas for future collaboration include:

- **Chatham House Meetings** with BEK (and other key policy makers) focused around the topics of thematic research papers. Presentations would cover the content of these reports and allow for discussion about findings and recommendations and a general sharing of ideas on how effective policy could be crafted given present constraints.
- **Quarterly Regional Updates** that monitor political developments in Loya Kandahar and other regional hubs of Afghanistan, concentrating on gathering information that BEK identifies as lacking from their own, or publicly available resources.

Annex A: Kandahar Business Leaders

Haji Abdullah Saraf (Barakzai) Nahiya 2, Kandahar City; Founder, Afghan United Bank and New Ansari exchange. Haji Abdullah Saraf (Saraf literally means teller, as in bank teller) controlled the Kandahar provincial finance office for Gul Agha Sherzai during the Mujahideen Government, and then began to cultivate and trade narcotics during the Taliban Regime. As his business expanded past the Afghan borders, he began to open hawala exchanges at first as a front for his narco-trafficking. His hawala business, the New Ansari Money Exchange, and, presumably, his narcotics trafficking, expanded to Pakistan, Iran, UAE, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkey, Russia and Germany. In 2007, he founded Afghan United Bank, which now has 15 branches in Kabul, Nangarhar, Kandahar, Mazar-e Sharif, Herat and Nimruz. In February 2011, Haji Abdullah Saraf and the New Ansari Money Exchange was placed on the US Treasuries Office of Foreign Assets Control Sanctions list for New Ansari's alleged role in transferring narcotics profits out of Afghanistan. New Ansari's clients included two of the most prolific smugglers in the nation, Haji Juma Khan (Brahui/Mohammedhasni), now imprisoned in the United States, and Haji Azizullah (Alizai/Hassanzai). New Ansari was also a central player in the Kabul Bank fiasco after it came to light that the Exchange was transferring money out of the country for Bank co-owners. In July 2011 ownership of Afghan United Bank changed to Javid Jaihoon of Javid Jaihoon Limited, a trader and supplier of aircraft fuel, diesel and petrol in central Asia and Afghanistan. As of March 2012, the status of the New Ansari Exchange was unclear, the business is rumoured to have been broken up amongst its partners. In 2011, Hashmat Karzai reportedly arranged a meeting with US officials in Kabul in an attempt to get Haji Abdullah removed from the Treasury Department's sanctions list. As of 2012 he remains on the list and is currently living in Kandahar City.

Haji Maien (Barakzai) living in Kandahar City, native of Arghandab; Market-owner and large scale narcotics trafficker. Considered one of the wealthiest actors in Kandahar he owns three markets in Kandahar City, one on 80 jeribs of land with 90 shops and the other two on 60 jeribs of land with around 50 shops and a handful of restaurants. Haji Maien accrued wealth from narcotics cultivation (he is a large landowner in Arghandab district) and trade which he began during the Taliban Regime. He remains today one of the biggest narco-traders in the south, and has good connections with eastern and northern traffickers.

Haji Ghulam (Nurzai) Spin Boldak, Vehicle Importer. Haji Ghulam has been importing cars and car tyres, mainly from Japan, since the PDPA government. He also owns a market in Hazarat Jee Baba area of Kandahar City, which has around 200 shops. He owns five houses in Kandahar, two in Wazir Akbar Khan in Kabul, three in Quetta and at least one in Dubai and Japan. He has good connections with provincial authorities.

Haji Nader: Fuel importer, developer. Haji Nader has grown wealthy post-2001 importing fuel for ISAF through Pakistan. In late 2011 he was forced to alter his business with the Pakistani blockade of ISAF material, and began importing fuel for GIRoA through Iran. He is reported to be a partner in the Aino Mena II housing scheme with Mahmoud and Shah Wali Karzai.