



PUTTING IT TOGETHER IN SOUTHERN AFGHANISTAN

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Putting It Together in Southern Afghanistan

One aspect of the insurgency in southern Afghanistan that seems to escape a great deal of scrutiny is its similarity to the situation in eastern Afghanistan and the Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). It is nearly axiomatic that an insurgency having its base areas within a neighboring country's safe havens is nearly impossible to defeat and time remains the insurgent's best ally. FATA is clearly recognized as an insurgent base area. Little discussion has resulted from reviews of the similar situation found in southern Afghanistan and its border with Pakistan. It is, however, crucial to the survival of the western insurgency with its north-south infiltration routes emerging from Pakistan through a generally uncontrolled border. These follow old, established trade and nomad migration paths that allow the insurgents, as well as drug smugglers, relatively unrestrained access into central Afghanistan.

Much of the southeastern border region between Afghanistan and Pakistan is blocked by a large barrier of drifting sand. This geographic reality generally has forced insurgent infiltration routes to shift westward into southern Helmand Province. Travel is in both directions and over the last 30 years, refugees from fighting and the effects of drought have also followed the path of least resistance as they moved into Pakistan where refugee camps were available to them. This population displacement involved generally Panjpai Durrani, particularly the Ishaqzai and Noorzai tribes, who moved into long term refugee status in the lawless Chagai region.

The United Nations-supported refugee camps at Lejay Karez, Chagai, Posti, and Girdi Jungle are located in a region between the border town of Baramcha and Dalabandin.¹ Girdi Jungle is the largest of these camps and has contained as many as 30,000 people in the past² and the four camps have housed as many as 66,000 people in the recent times.³ Refugee populations in some camps have outnumbered the local population in some areas.⁴

The camps are unstable and the population is easily influenced by extremists. For example, in November 2004 camp residents rioted and destroyed health clinics after desecrated Korans were found. The following information was contained in a State Department report:

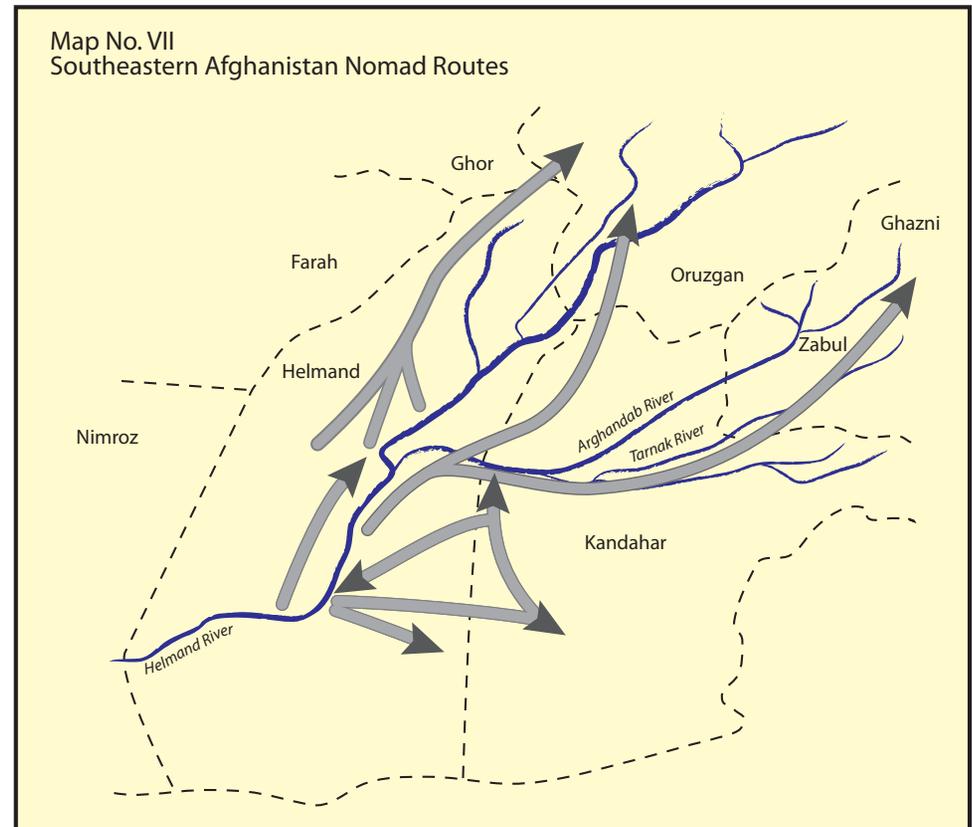


Figure 1: Approximate nomad routes in southern Afghanistan.

Source: US Agency for International Development

1. <http://www.unhcr.org/publ/PUBL/40c0a4f74.pdf>

2. <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=73433>

3. <http://www.un.org.pk/unhcr/Stories/chagai.htm>

4. Centlivres, Pierre, "A 'State of the Art Review of Research on Internally Displaced, Refugees and Returnees From and in Afghanistan, p. 16.

“In November, Afghan refugees attacked health clinics in the Girdi Jungle refugee camps run by Save the Children after desecrated Korans were found outside the buildings. *Save the Children temporarily suspended its operations in the camp until the Government provided enhanced security.*”⁵

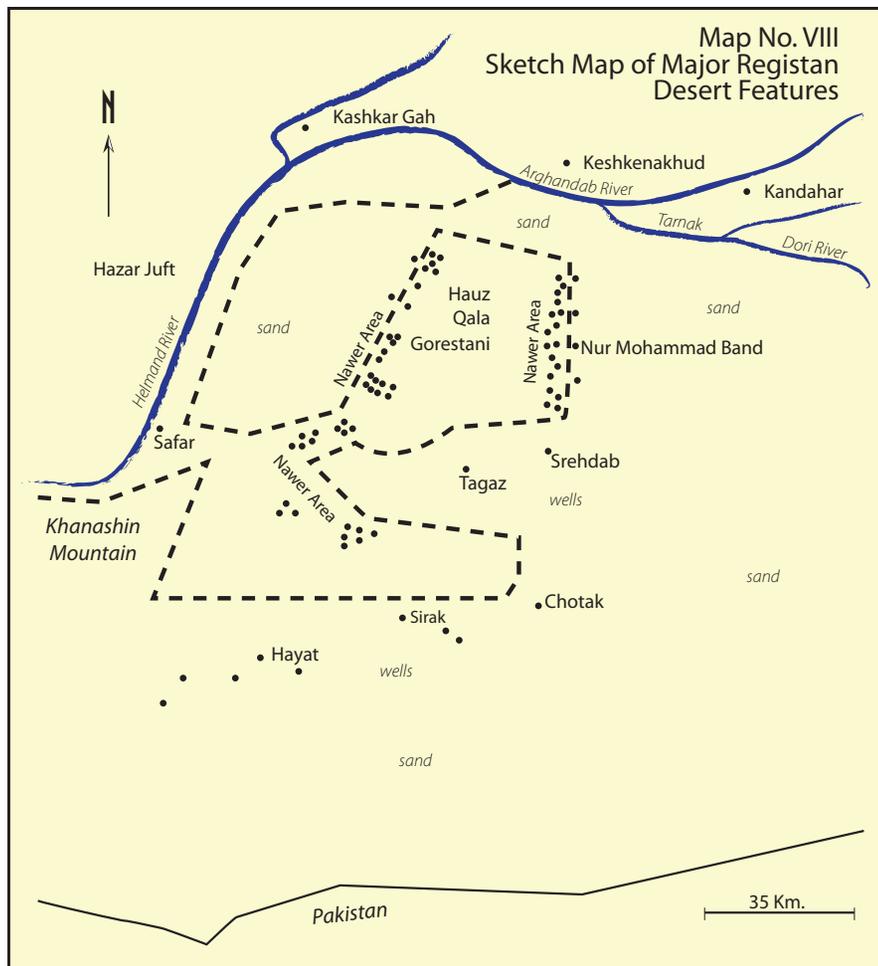


Figure 2: Graphical representation of terrain features and well locations in southern Afghanistan. Source: US Agency for International Development

The inhabitants are easily influenced by insurgent propaganda and probably serve as recruiting, training, and rest areas for infiltrating guerrillas. For example, the following report strongly suggested that The Taliban were active in the refugee areas:

“Helmand Governor Mohammed Daud told TIME he believes that Mullah Osmani, a Taliban leader, is recruiting and training fighters at the Girdi Jungle refugee camp in Pakistan’s Baluchistan province, which abuts Helmand.”⁶

Osmani’s presence was later confirmed when he was killed by a US airstrike near the border town of Baramcha during December 2006.⁷

The region has numerous madrassas⁸ that are probably supporting the insurgency. Particular attention should be paid to madrassas operated by Ishaqzai headmasters as these are the most likely to be supporting the insurgency. While some of the refugees have probably been repatriated into Afghanistan, the border camp madrassas are probably still in operation and may be sites of training and support for the Taliban. Located within Pakistan, much like the safe havens found in Pakistan’s Waziristan, these madrassas and refugee camps likely serve as base areas for the insurgents. The young, unemployed Durrani Panjpai Pashtuns found within the refugee camps may represent a third generation of Pashtuns who missed the stability of life in a village with all of its social controls through village and tribal elders. These young, unemployed men represent a constant source of recruits for the insurgency.

5. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2004/41743.htm>

6. <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1169897-2,00.html>

7. <http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1G1-156391190.html>

8. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/lifeandstyle/2008/aug/16/drugstrade.afghanistan?gusrc=rss&feed=networkfront>

The Taliban

Another aspect of the insurgency involves the misunderstanding that Helmand's Taliban Movement is a cohesive force under a unified command structure. Nothing could be further from reality. While nearly all of the Taliban are Pashtuns, they are not unified and generally reflect old tensions involving tribal disputes over land, tribal leadership, and intra-tribal competition. Additionally, they are divided according to old tribal and political animosities that developed during the chaos of the 1978 communist coup and the 1979 Soviet intervention.

Key Points:

- Helmand Province's most dominant tribe, the Durrani Alizai Pashtuns, has been split into at least three, possibly four ways. Generally, the splits have followed the Alizai hierarchy with its most prestigious subtribe, the Khalozai, following traditional khan and malik form of governance. Probably as a result of the tension with the more opportunist subtribes, such as the Hassanzai that lost khan and malik control to a religious family, they allied themselves closely with the Jamiat-i Islami political and military party of Professor Rabbani, Ahmad Shah Masood, and Ismail Khan, all Tajiks. The "traditionalist" Khalozai now seems to support the Government of Afghanistan.
- The Alizai's Hassanzai subtribe lost its khans/maliks to the intra-tribal conflict generated by the "Akhundzada" family that is now represented by Helmand Province's former governor, Sher Mohammad Akhundzada. This subtribe and its Akhundzada leadership has been heavily involved in the opium trade, fought a war in Helmand Province with Hezb-Islami (Gulbuddin), or HIG, and was allied with Mohammad Nabi Mohammadi's Harakat political and military party. Sher Mohammad is now generally allied with the Government of Afghanistan, but the Harakat party his father and uncles supported is also the source of most of the Taliban's leadership – including Mullah Omar. Former HIG members now are found occupying government positions, possibly an effort to seek Kabul's protection from their Harakat enemies.
- The Alizai tribe's Pirzai subtribe is led by Mullah Salam, a recent Taliban leader who reconciled with the Government of Afghanistan last year and is currently the Musa Qala district governor.

The members of the Taliban originating from the Alizai tribe will be equally split in their loyalties and may be enticed to reconcile with the Afghan government if approached by elders from their particular subtribe who offer safe conduct and a "tribal parole" to ensure the good behavior of the reconciles. The Alizai tribe is the dominant tribe in northern Helmand Province (see Figure 3) and any effort to "unify" them will pay dividends. The Alizai subtribes form the dominant portion of the population in Helmand Province's Baghran, Kajaki, and Musa Qala districts.



Figure 3

Nad Ali District is different than most of the other districts in Helmand Province. Because of migration and resettlement policies of past governments, some of this district's regions are populated by tribes that are not indigenous to the region and are subject to non-tribal influences.

Of the unusual populations:

- **Kharoti tribe:** This is the tribe from which Gulbuddin Hekmatyar emerged as a political leader of a “revolutionary religious party” whose goal is the imposition of a shari’a-based government in Afghanistan. Abdur Rasul Sayyaf, another “revolutionary religious party” leader is a Kharoti Pashtun and will likely have followers in Nad Ali district. HIG was sufficiently powerful in Helmand Province in the early 1990’s to challenge the Akhundzada’s control of the opium industry until they lost the final battle at Gereshk.
- **Dotani tribe:** They are also reported to be in Nad Ali.
- **Andar tribe:** They are reported by some sources to have a group living in Nad Ali. Specializing in kariz (or underground irrigation tunnels) cleaning and repair, they were reported to have remained after arriving to work on local karizes.

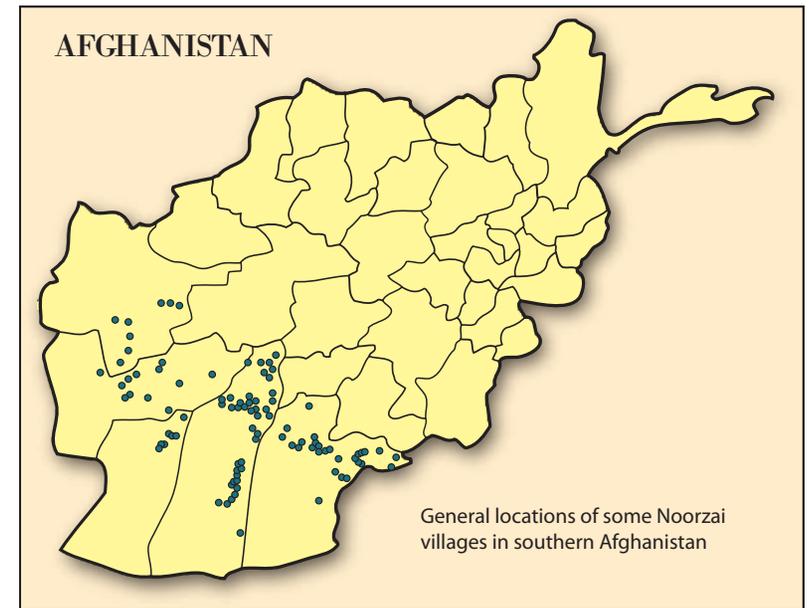


Figure 4



Figure 5

There are other Durrani Panjpai Pashtun tribes with extensive Taliban membership:

- **Noorzai:** This is a widely dispersed tribe (*see* Figure 4) that is scattered from the vicinity of Herat in the west to Spin Boldak on the border with Pakistan. Many of the Noorzai migrated into the Helmand River Valley project region to take possession of reclaimed land where its rightful owners have left as refugees due to either conflict or extended drought. Originally from southern Oruzgan Province, many of these “squatters” will be able to retain control of the land where they live if the Taliban are successful. They have no major leader with national influence other than Arif Noorzai, a member of the Afghan parliament and are represented in the Taliban leadership by Hafiz Majid, a member of the Taliban senior leadership.
- **Ishaqzai:** This is also a widely dispersed Durrani Panjpai tribe that is scattered from Badghis Province on the Afghan border with Turkmenistan through Ghowr, Helmand, Farah, and Kandahar Provinces (*see* Figure 5). Once powerful nomads, they lost much of their herd wealth in a forced migration from southern Afghanistan ordered by the Afghan king in the late 19th century. After losing their herds to drought, they were forced by circumstance to become farmers to survive and have

been denigrated as “Sogzai”, or “vegetable people” (i.e. farmers), by the other Pashtuns since then. They are not well represented in the current Afghan government and are denied development aid that comes with tribal representation and patronage in Kabul. Estranged from the national government, they are better represented in the Taliban leadership by Akhtar Mohammad Mansour (arguably the current third in the Taliban leadership hierarchy, the deceased Mullah Osmani [Taliban Kandahar Corps commander], and Abdul Rahim [currently captured, formerly the Taliban shadow governor for Helmand Province]).

Not all the Taliban are intractable enemies of the current Afghan government, particularly the Pashtuns surrounding President Hamid Karzai. The Taliban members are easily categorized by the jihadi party affiliations of their key leaders into groups that are essentially (1) Traditionalist, (2) Revolutionary, and (3) Opportunist. Knowing how these individuals tend to “cluster,” provides opportunities to work to locate fissures.

- Traditionalist parties were the generally “Sufi-oriented” political/military parties whose general goals during the Soviet period involved returning Afghanistan to its pre-1973 form of governance under a weak central government. These were the parties led by Pir Gailani, Mojdeddi, and Mohammad Nabi Mohammedi. Individuals affiliated with these parties who are now in the Taliban Movement may also be viewed generally as “Pashtun Nationalists” and might be convinced to rally to the government of Afghanistan over time – unless the national government began to appear dominated by non-Pashtun ethnic groups. These “traditionalist” parties are NIFA, IULA, and Harakat. This general assessment remains correct even though many of the Taliban leadership were Harakat.
- The “revolutionary parties” that intend to govern Afghanistan through a rigid form of shari’a law are generally led by Rabbani, Sayyaf, Khalis (deceased), and Hekmatyar. The parties that are determined to change Afghanistan’s traditional form of governance are also now split with internal divisions with Rabbani’s Jamiat (primarily Tajiks) and Sayyaf’s Pashtuns generally supporting the national government. Khalis’ party (HIK) is also split with most of the movement following Haji Din Mohammad into the national government and a smaller faction under Sayyaf’s son, Anwar-ul Haq Mujahid, coalescing into the “Tora Bora Front” that is allied with the Taliban Movement. Hekmatyar’s HIG is also split. Those mid-level insurgent commanders in southern Afghanistan may also be attracted to offers of reconciliation that are managed by tribal elders having no direct connection to the government.
- The “Opportunists” are generally Pashtun insurgents seeking to improve their social and financial standing through violence. They generally missed the tempering experience of the anti-communist and anti-Soviet jihad and grew to adulthood within refugee camps where they also missed the teaching and mentoring of village elders that taught them Pashtun lore. As a result of two generations of refugee camp experience, most of these individuals may be categorized as “neo-Pashtuns” who are best viewed as “hybridized Pashtun-Arabs.” As a result, some of these individuals are susceptible to “brainwashing,” or conditioning by key religious leaders who convert them into suicide bombers,” something unheard of during the jihad period, even though Pashtuns had more personal reasons to kill themselves while killing Russians. These insurgents will probably coalesce into bandit bands or return to support the insurgency within Pakistan once Afghanistan is stabilized. Little progress may be achieved in reconciliation attempts with these individuals. Additionally, many of them may come from “squatter” families having no deeds to the land they currently occupy and support the Taliban in hopes of retaining valuable land.

There are key individuals in Helmand Province who lie outside of the traditional governmental structures who may be helpful to stability efforts. These are:

- Abdul Wahid Rais al-Baghrani – he is the generally accepted leader of the Khalozai Alizai that occupy and control most of Baghran District. A pragmatic Pashtun nationalist, al-Baghrani has worked with Daoud’s government following the overthrow of the king, the

communists (Rais al-Baghrani translates loosely into “Director of Baghran” where he was reportedly in charge of agriculture during the early communist period), the Taliban (he probably saved the Taliban from total defeat in the 1995 Battle of Gereskh when he appeared on the battlefield to support the Pashtun Taliban who were losing a series of battles with the Tajik-dominated Northern Alliance – led by Ismail Khan), and the current government. He was personally negotiating the surrender of Kandahar with Hamid Karzai in late 2001 as the Taliban leadership retreated into Pakistan and he subsequently reconciled with the national government. Al-Baghrani returned to his tribal responsibilities while the Taliban retreated and because of this, he is widely respected by the Khalozai Alizai tribesmen. He is unsophisticated and can be expected to tell contacts what he believes they want to hear. Worked with carefully, he could probably stabilize Baghran District and could potentially be useful in stabilizing much of northern Helmand. Like all Pashtun leaders, al-Baghrani has his detractors, particularly Sher Mohammad Akhundzada who has fought al-Baghrani’s subtribe for most of a decade. He is also detracted as a “drug lord,” but most of this is probably information developed through second- and third-hand sources. His position has become increasingly complicated with the killing of one of his sons and daughter-in-law by Coalition forces in April 2009. If al-Baghrani is used as a “social indicator,” Pashtun traditionalists are probably beginning to ease their gradually improving connections to the Karzai Administration because of “collateral damage” within the Pashtun community.

- Sher Mohammad Akhundzada – a powerful leader of the Hassanzai Alizai, he was recently the governor of Helmand Province until he was dismissed following the “discovery” of 9 metric tons of opium in the Governor’s compound at Lashkargah. Sher Mohammad is not a “good guy,” but the accusations made against him are apparently unfair. The USMC Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) commander at the time of the opium discovery reported that the opium had been confiscated by the PRT and was being stored in the governor’s compound for burning when it was confiscated by DEA/British. In fairness, Sher Mohammad may be despicable, but he has demonstrated excellent skills in managing the multiple conflicting tribal interests in Helmand Province by dividing provincial government positions carefully among the competing tribes and ethnic groups. He is indirectly related to the Karzai family as he married one of Arif Noorzai’s sisters, as did Ahmad Wali Karzai. These are arranged marriages and there is no real evidence that Ahmad Wali Karzai has any close relationship with Sher Mohammad.
- Mullah Salam – a powerful leader of the Pirzai Alizai, Mullah Salam was allied with the Taliban until last year when he rallied to the national government. He is now the district governor of Musa Qala and the Taliban will try hard to kill him to intimidate any other Taliban leader from considering reconciliation.

The insurgent side of the equation also has some strong personalities:

- Abdul Rahim – an Ishaqzai and former Taliban “Shadow Governor” for Helmand Province, Rahim was arrested in Pakistan in 2008. He appears to have been well connected locally and if he is able to secure his release (through a bribery process that is commonplace in Pakistan and Afghanistan), he will probably return to Helmand Province. Educated guesses would place him back in the Taliban power structure around the Ishaqzai tribesmen and their strong connections to the opium trade and the arms, munitions, and supplies that narcotics taxes would bring.
- Naim Barech – a member of a small tribe that isn’t universally recognized as being Pashtun, Barech may not have the general support that could be available to someone like Mullah Salam and Abdul Rahim who come from local Durrani tribes.

- Rohilla Amin – While not much is available on him, Amin may emerge from the background as a powerful combat leader. He is probably Alizai and his name is derived from a tribe of Pashtun warriors in India who fought the British on multiple occasions. This may be an indication of the general xenophobia found within his family and clan.
- Bor Jan – another local leader whose “war name” is identical with that of an early Taliban army commander who led from the front and was highly respected. The current “Bor Jan” may seek to emulate the first commander to bear that name and can be expected to be aggressive as a combat commander.

There are reasons that the Durrani Panjpai tribes remain estranged from Afghanistan’s “central” government. They know from long experience that their people suffered hardship and financial reverses each time a government in Kabul attempted to control them. They experienced extreme hardship under the rule of Kabul’s “Iron Amir” during the 1880’s, suffered starvation during extreme weather in the early 1970’s as the national government did little to provide them with emergency food aid (even though stockpiles were available), and saw their religious leaders and maliks forced into exile or murdered during the communist period. Given the tribe’s experience with any “central” government in Kabul, it becomes quite apparent why they tend to oppose efforts to gain their cooperation to form a national government.

Case studies provide good examples.

The Ishaqzai tribe, a member of the Panjpai group of the Durrani Confederation, has seen its fortunes wane considerably since the Durrans came to power in Afghanistan in 1747. Their loss of power and prestige was also accompanied by loss of livestock, many lost their nomadic lifestyle, and some were also deprived of a respected status as warriors. With their loss of prestige came a derogatory name which was applied to them as many impoverished Ishaqzai nomads were forced by circumstance to become farmers. To the other Durrans, they became “Sogzai,” the “Vegetable People.” With their losses came estrangement from the government leaders in Kabul, the very Barakzai monarchs drawn from their fellow Durrans who made the decisions that cost the Ishaqzai so dearly. This estrangement continues today with more Ishaqzai leaders affiliated with the Taliban than with the Kabul administration of Hamid Karzai, a fellow Durrani. The context of the period in which the Ishaqzai suffering occurred is important to understand. It shows well that the Afghan people suffered with great tyranny long before the Soviet Union sent its troops across the Oxus River. Jonathan L. Lee describes the situation in Afghanistan during the 1880’s better than most:

“The secret history of what a senior British official termed the “Reign of Terror” contained within the India Office diaries reveal the extent to which Britain’s foreign policy ‘success’ was achieved only at the price of the blood of the peoples over whom the Amir wielded absolute and untrammelled power. During the course of twenty-one years Abd al-Rahman Khan probably had as many as 100,000 persons judicially executed, whilst hundreds of thousands more perished from hunger, forced migrations, epidemics, or died as a result of the numerous campaigns which the Amir conducted against various ethnic, tribal and sectarian interests. The fear that the Amir’s atrocities engendered was a shadow which fell across the lives of everyone in Afghanistan. From the heir apparent to the water carrier no-one was exempt from what the Kabulis called the ‘Power that walks in darkness.’

“... for the people of Afghanistan, from the Ishaqzai tribesmen of Badghis Province, ... it is the atrocities which dominate the folk memories which have survived from this era.”⁹

9. Lee, Jonathan L., *The Ancient Supremacy: Bukhara, Afghanistan, and the Battle for Balkh, 1731-1901*, p. xxiv.

But the Ishaqzai had not always been the “Vegetable People.” They were nomad maldars¹⁰ who owned large flocks that left them independent as they wandered across ancient migration routes to summer and winter grazing areas. Their men were warriors and their chiefs were respected leaders who participated in the councils of the great men of the time. One of their near legendary leaders, Musa Khan, also called Musa Dungi,¹¹ managed to escape the Persian siege of Herat to find salt and grain for his men before returning to the besieged city to share their fate. Later after the city surrendered to the Persian leader, Nadir Shah, and the captured Durrani were forced into Persian service, Musa Khan accompanied Nadir Shah in much of his remaining campaign.¹² Another sign of the relative power of the Ishaqzai tribe during this period of their history is well illustrated by the presence of Musa Khan in the council of senior Pashtuns that selected Ahmad Shah Abdali as the Durrani Confederation leader in 1747.¹³

Abd al-Rahman Khan, or Kabul’s “Iron Amir,” saw a large problem along the northwest border of Afghanistan in 1886. The area had been generally depopulated by Turkman raids that were nearly a continuous threat to the region for most of the 19th century. Nancy Tapper studied the situation carefully and wrote:

*“The once prosperous settlements north and west of Miamana were abandoned by 1880, having ‘gradually succumbed to the attacks of the Turkomans one after another, in many cases being absolutely destroyed, the people – men, women, and children – all being carried off into slavery, and the result is that no one has dared to go out to those places ever since.’”*¹⁴

With a large portion of Afghanistan’s potentially prosperous land left fallow due to depopulation, Abd al-Rahman Khan began to develop a plan to stabilize this crucial border region. In addition to depopulation, this was happening during the “Great Game” between Russia and Great Britain. The Iron Amir – and his British allies – believed that blocking Russian access to the region was still a vital strategy needing done. The British viceroy in nearby India began to provide an annual subsidy as attempts were made to place border guards into strategic locations. These attempts began to fail and the Iron Amir began to introduce large numbers of Pashtuns, his own ethnic group, into the region.¹⁵

Few of the Durrani leaders were willing to migrate with their tribe and some went to Kabul to complain in person. They felt that since their Durrani tribesmen already had land in southern Afghanistan, there was no reason to move north to obtain land. Unfortunately for the Durrani leaders, the Amir now intended to create a more comprehensive Pashtun colonization of the northwest in a move that would involve many of the Ishaqzai and Noorzai families that were living in Farah Province¹⁶.

10. Maldars are pastoralist nomads.

11. Musa Dungi is also referred to as Musa Dunki in histories prepared by regional scholars.

12. M. Hayāt Khan, *Hayāt-e Afghān*, tr. H. Priestley, *Afghanistan and Its Inhabitants*, Lahore, 1874; repr. 1981, p. 169.

13. Tate, G.P., *The Kingdom of Afghanistan*, p. 68.

14. Tapper, Nancy, The Advent of Pashtun Maldars in North-western Afghanistan, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (1973), p. 56.

15. Tapper, p. 57.

16. Farah Province was much larger during this period and included most of southern Afghanistan. Herat and Kandahar Provinces were not a part of this large province. See Adamec, vol. II, for additional information.

The key person in the Amir's plan was Taju Khan, the Ishaqzai chief who was involved in providing security for the first group of migrants into the Badghis region. With the help of Taju Khan's *sowars*¹⁷, a large group of Durrani were collected in Pusht-i Rud and forced them to march northward.¹⁸

Taju Khan, the Ishaqzai chief, was easier to convince than the Durrani leaders of southern Afghanistan. Jonathan Lee explained the reason and the Amir's tactic used to secure the cooperation of the Ishaqzais:

*“Whilst the outcome of the power struggle between the Amir and these Durrani chiefs hung in the balance, Abd al-Rahman Khan invited Taju Khan, leader of the Ishaqzai clan, who had already seen service in Badghis some years earlier, to Kabul. The Ishaqzai were nomadic maldars, or flock-owners, who already migrated to Ghor during the summer months. Although Taju Khan was regarded by the Qandahari Durrani as a person of no importance, the Amir realized that because the Khan held a very lowly position in the Durrani pecking order, he could be flattered and cajoled into spearheading the migration, whereas the tribal leaders of Qandahar had to be handled with kid gloves. The financial incentives were extremely generous, but it was the Amir's offer of a marriage alliance between Taju Khan's daughter and the heir-apparent, Habibullah Khan, that finally persuaded the Ishaqzai chief to move his tribe to Badghis. No greater compliment could have been offered to this relatively obscure Afghan chief, for by becoming the father-in-law of the future Amir of Afghanistan, Taju Khan's prestige, and that of his tribe was greatly increased and he would be able to demand, if not command, the same respect and honor as a member of the Royal Family.”*¹⁹

The induced relocation process continued and the composition of a majority of the migrants can be seen through the tribal connections of the men who were placed in charge in Badghis. Two of the senior officials were Ishaqzais and the third was a Noorzai tribesman.²⁰

But spring of 1887 was a disaster for the colonists. They entered a region the year before where there was a crop failure and the lack of spring rains resulted in failed pastures and their animals died in large numbers. The herdsmen soon found life in Badghis to be impossible and they began to return to their former lands in Pusht-i Rud. Those unable or choosing not to return to the south abandoned Badghis and moved toward Miamana and Afghanistan's Turkestan. Their leaders showed the intention of the tribe. Taju Khan and Mir Afzal Khan, the Noorzai leader, returned south.²¹

The leaders of the migrating tribes, Ishaqzai for certain and probably many Noorzai, came to believe that Abd al-Rahman had an ulterior motive as he used the migration process to destroy the traditional tribal structures while forcing the nomadic tribes into farming settlements. Their nomadic lifestyles depended on their sheep and these died in large numbers. As news of the disaster was relayed south to other migrating tribes, these turned around to return to their tribal lands.

In the end, the Amir's suspected ulterior motives worked well, whether intended or not. Those tribesmen who lost their flocks were forced to accept grain from government reserves as they settled into available valleys they claimed as their own. Predictably, violent incidents began between the original land owners and the new arrivals who were becoming settled farmers because of a lack of any other options.

17. Sowars were ordinary cavalry troopers, equivalent the Sepoys serving as infantrymen.

18. Tapper, p. 65.

19. Lee, *Ancient Supremacy*, pp. 485-486.

20. Tapper, p. 66.

21. Tapper, p. 68.

Some of the migrants remained in Badghis, probably those less able to travel due to the loss of their animals in the harsh conditions, while many of the Ishaqzai and Noorzai tribesmen attempted the return journey. From the current scattered presence of these tribes across western and central Afghanistan, it appears that many of the returning migrants gave up on their return journey.

As a result, both the Ishaqzai and Noorzai tribes were scattered, lost access to many stabilizing tribal structures, and became farmers from necessity instead of choice. Many of them emerged from the migration process as settled farmers instead of nomads with flocks of sheep.

In their minds, and possibly in reality, their losses were the responsibility of Kabul's central government and an Amir with suspected ulterior motives as the forced migrations were ordered. The resentment felt by the proud Ishaqzai tribesmen appears to have continued to this day, and they remain estranged from both the Afghan central government in Kabul and the Zirak Durrani that provided the Iron Amir as their nefarious ruler while their cousins in the Durrani Confederation began to refer to them as "Vegetable People." Their prestige and honor had slipped considerably since 1747 when Musa Dungi sat in the jirga that selected a ruler for the Durrani tribes.

Given this background and the lack of participation of the Ishaqzai within Afghanistan's national and provincial governments, there should be no surprise when it appears that this tribe is better represented within the Taliban than the national government. Added to their continued estrangement, the Taliban may be "courting" the Ishaqzai and the other Panjpai tribes as they work to split them away from the loose connections afforded them within the Durrani Confederation. Building upon their original grievance toward the central government, this would be a natural course of action for the Taliban to pursue.

Case Studies

The following pair of short case studies demonstrates the alliances the smaller Ishaqzai groups made in northwest Afghanistan after the main groups under Taju Khan withdrew to Helmand Province. Lacking Pashtun allies, these weaker, isolated Ishaqzai clans made an alliance with the Dari-speakers of the region.²² A separate study is provided on the Chakhcharan Region.

One Afghan case study involves interaction between Pashtuns who are of the Omarzai section of the Ishaqzai tribe of the Durrani division and Dari-speaking Firozkohi near Chakhcharan in the Central Hazarajat, 100 miles west of Panjaw. The Omarzai have their winter headquarters in Badghis Province, on the other side of the mountains northwest of Chakhcharan. Although they are Pashtun speakers and originally came from Kandahar, their migration pattern is in a totally opposite direction. The Omarzai have what they describe as a permanent winter village in Jawand, in Badghis Province. Many of them have farming land, some 20 percent of the Omarzai group remaining behind in the permanent village during the summer to tend the crops, while their relatives move up to the summer quarters with the herds. In addition, some Omarzai own farming land in the Firozkohi village near Chakhcharan and have Firozkohi tenants with whom the harvest is shared. This land is purchased by Omarzai only when no Firozkohi from the village wishes to purchase it. The Firozkohi have a permanent village surrounded by irrigated and rainfall farming land. In the summer, they move with their animal herds some 15 kilometers away and set up tents, forming a single great camp with the Omarzai. The Omarzai and Firozkohi are distinct ethnic groups. They have different "mother" languages, although both groups are bilingual. They form one summer camp of 40 or 50 tents from each group, although their tent types are so different as to make them immediately distinguishable.²³ The two groups represent

22. This material was drawn from: Rosman, Abraham and Rubel, Paula G., Nomad-Sedentary Interethnic Relations in Iran and Afghanistan, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 4 (Oct., 1976), pp. 545-570.

23. The Omarzai live in black tents and the Firozkohi in yurts.

the nomads and the sedentary agriculturalists, respectively, in the traditionally used categories, but in this case the nomads also farm land and own farmland and the sedentary agriculturalists move with herds of some size from their permanent village to a tent camp nearby. The significance of their living in a single community is reflected in the close relations between their political leaders who refer to each other as “brothers” and operate in terms of their common interests. The reasons for their close alliance, according to Isaqzai informants of other tribal sections, are because the Omarzai lack sufficient grazing land and because they are the only Isaqzai in their area and therefore have no Pashtun allies.

Still further west along the road that penetrates the Hazarajat is the town of Shahrak. In this region another group of Pashtuns, the Sheikhanzai, who are also of the Ishaqzai tribe, may be found in interaction with a different Dari-speaking group - the Taimani.²⁴ The Sheikhanzai are long-distance nomads who formerly wintered to the south of Shahrak near Gereshk in the vicinity of Kandahar but now spend the winter in Qades near Qala-i-naw, which is northwest of Shahrak. The Sheikhanzai, numbering some 400 households, have their traditional summer grazing land in the area around Shahrak. The land is held in common, and individual family groups, which comprise camps, have areas within the tribal land to which they go every year. They do not own farming land in the Shahrak area, but may cultivate small patches of wheat along the water courses near their camp. Some still own farming land in Gereshk in the Helmand River Valley, which was at one time their winter quarters but is no longer. The Sheikhanzai in this situation act as absentee landlords, receiving rent for the use of these irrigated lands from their Noorzai tenants. The Noorzai, a related Pashtun-speaking group, are linked in marriage to the Sheikhanzai. In their current winter quarters, the Sheikhanzai have rights to graze their animals but no permanent winter houses. Various migration routes are used in different years to move to winter or summer quarters. The migration takes two months and the Sheikhanzai purchase grass from villages along the route, paying for it preferably with money or oil or sheep. Since the migration route varies from year to year, no special relations are maintained with villagers in regard to these kinds of exchanges. Though the Taimani live in permanent villages, they often move into tent camps located close to their villages in order to escape the summer heat. They may send their animals, under the care of shepherds, to graze in the nearby mountains. The Sheikhanzai have large herds and sell animal products exclusively. Sheep are sheared in the spring before they leave their winter quarters and the wool is sold to merchants in Badghis. The sheep are sheared again in the summer quarters, but the wool obtained at that time is used for making carpets and other items for their own use. Male lambs born while the tribe is in its winter quarters are sold in Herat or at the big animal bazaar held in Chakhcharan in June.

The Barech tribe has also experienced a less than positive relationship with larger, more dominant tribes.

The small Barech²⁵ tribe has a very confused history and tracing its origins is difficult. It is widely reported that the Barech are a Durrani Pashtun tribe found in Kandahar Province's Shorawak District and that the group may not have been a Pashtun tribe, but were likely to have a Baluch origin. Careful research shows that the Barech have a Pashtun origin, but the Barech tribes were not Durrani, however. They are part of the Sharkhbun branch of the Sarban Pashtuns²⁶ and the tribe is divided into two distinct sections, Daudzai and Hussainzai. The Daudzai is subdivided into the Biswakzai, Shakarzai, Shekh, Badalzai, Chipanzai, and the Mahlizai. The Husseinzai is divided into Mandezai, Zakkozai, Basazai, Barakzai, and Mardanzai subtribes. Of these original tribes, only three are represented today; the Badalzai among the Daudzai; and the Zakozai and the Mandozai among the Hussainzai. The missing lineages might have taken part in the large migration of the Kharshban branch of the Pashtun toward the northeast where

24. The Taimani and Firozkohi, along with two other groups-Timuri and Jamshidi-are usually grouped together as the Chahar Aimaq or Aimaqs. They are all Dari speakers, in contrast to the Pashtuns.

25. The Barech are also called Berech, Berich, and Bareq.

26. According to *The Imperial Gazetteer of Baluchistan, India*, 1908, p. 28, the Sarban division is represented by the Tarins, Shiranis, Mianis, and Barech.

they lost their individuality. What is certain but not conclusive, however, is that several lineage names (for instance, Malizai and Dawlatzai) are found among both the Barech and the Yusufzai.²⁷

According to Henry Bellew in 1871, the Barech are the *Bharaecha* Cohan Agnikula Rajaput that originally inhabited the Shorawak region²⁸ between Pishin and the Sistan desert. Bellew wrote that this tribe totaled 4,000 families that had settlements at Kala-Bost, Rudbar, Pulalak, and at some locations west of the Helmand River. At the time Bellew wrote, the Barech were mostly nomadic. Bellew also reported that Barech sections were Abu, Ali, Badal, Barak, Basa, Basok, Chopan, Daud, Husen, Mahali, Mandi, Mardan, Shakar, Shekh, and Zako.²⁹

Bellew derived the tribe's Rajaput identification from the fact that the name was "well known in Hindustan where it has given its names to a considerable district of Oudh."³⁰

Bellew was probably wrong in his assessment that the Barech tribe was originally Rajaputs living in Oudh. As described above, beginning in the 15th century large numbers of Pashtuns migrated into northern India to serve as mercenaries and work as horse traders to provide cavalry mounts to the large Mughal Empire. The numbers of the new immigrants were so large that they eventually gained control of substantial portions of India, to include Delhi. The general name for these Pashtuns was "Rohilla," or "Men from the Mountains," and most of these tribesmen settling in the region of today's Uttar Pradesh state were Yusufzai and Bangash tribesmen, but many were also from the Barech tribe. The connection is shown through the leader of most of the Rohillas, Hafiz Rahmat Khan, during the war with British troops and Oudh's Shi'a Persian ruler. Rahmat Khan was a Barech tribesman. The large presence of Barech in the vicinity of the Rajaputs they probably ruled may have resulted in the misidentification by Bellew, but these people living in the vicinity of Oudh were probably Barech. These people appear to have departed the Oudh region after suffering a defeat and loss of their leader from the combined forces of the British East India Company and those of Oudh's ruler, Shah Shujah ud-Daula. Hafiz Rahmat Khan, the Rohilla leader, and two of his sons were killed in the battle that left the remaining Rohilla Pashtuns weakened and stateless.

Many of the Yusufzai and Bangash gradually returned to their former tribal lands in what is now Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province. It is equally probable that the Barech survivors – also identified as Bareq in the older literature – traveled west and settled into Yusufzai territory where three missing subtribes were probably assimilated into the Yusufzai tribe and remain in Yusufzai territory.

The majority of the Barech who live in Baluchistan are found in Chaghai, but there a few also in Zhob, Quetta-Pishin, and Kalat. A number of them live outside British territory in Shorawak and the valley of Helmand.³¹ According to one study:

"The Bareq are geographically concentrated in Shorabak (Shorawak) district where, on the eastern edge of the Regestan desert and along the middle course of the Lora river, they make up the majority of the population. According to their own traditions, they moved there during the 10th/16th [Hijra/Common Era] century from the opposite edge of the desert (*Gazetteer of Afghanistan V, pp. 92, 448f.*). This is consistent with written sources (*Hotak, English tr., p. 39; Russian tr., p.41*). Vestiges of the tribe's previous settlements, three Bareq villages survive to this day in the lower Helmand valley: one near the Bost ruins and the other two (Palalak and Landay, both occupied by Zakozi) below Deshu. Over

27. <http://www.khyber.org/pashtotribes/b/barak.shtml>

28. The Shorawak region originally encompassed more territory than just Kandahar Province's southernmost district.

29. Bellew, Henry W., *An Inquiry Into the Ethnography of Afghanistan*, p. 138.

30. Bellew, p. 169.

31. Gait, Edward A., *Census of India, 1901*, p. 90.

the centuries the rest of the tribe has kept up close contacts with these villages. On the other hand, gradual movements, reportedly during the 12th/18th century, took place from Shorabak toward the lower Lora where, around and below Nushki in Pakistani Baluchistan, one finds three Mandozi lineages (*Hughes-Bullet*, pp. 288f.) numbering about 5,000 persons in 1951 (*Scholz*, p. 36).

“Location of the Bareq at the southern extremity of Pashtun territory and at the limits of the Baluch has allowed multiple contacts with the latter and Brahui, including intermarriages, as well as linguistic or even genealogical assimilation, especially in the isolated sections of the lower Helmand and lower Lora valleys. In the 13th/19th century, Bareq mercenaries served in the army of the Khan of Kalat. Traditional relations with neighboring Pashtun tribes frequently involved conflict; Bareq territory was often raided by the Achakzi, and they competed with the Pishin Tarin for the waters of the Lora (*Gazetteer of Afghanistan V*, pp. 90f.).”³²

Despite their peaceful nature, there is bitter enmity between the tribe and the Achakzais. A significant amount of intermarriage has taken place with their Brahui neighbors.”³³

The Durrani Zirak Achakzai tribe that was once a part of the Barakzai, the tribe that ruled Afghanistan and provided its monarchs, was split off from the mainstream as the Barakzai’s khan khel, the Mohammadzai, weakened any potential rivals. Their grievance is different from those of the Ishaqzai and the Barech, but Kabul featured significantly in their loss of status. Today, they are scattered in Afghanistan while maintaining some well-defined tribal territory inside Pakistan.

The Durrani Zirak Alikozai tribe also had a negative experience with Kabul’s monarchs and, as a result, the Alikozai are very unlike the other Durrani tribes located in southern Afghanistan. There is a large concentration of this tribe within the Arghandab Valley and their generally well-defined tribal boundaries may have been responsible for them developing a high degree of independence. They seem, however, to be estranged from many of their fellow Durrans and have demonstrated their independence by affiliating with non-Pashtuns during both conflict periods and political competition. The reasons for their alienation are deeply rooted in the violent history of the Pashtun tribes. Some of these reasons have been recorded, but much of this history is not available and can only be estimated from the few factors available. Something – probably a series of “somethings” – set the Alikozai along a generally confrontational path with the other Durrans.

Tribal balance of power was clearly a factor in the intra-tribal strife that was always occurring within these competing tribes. At one time, the Alikozai tribe was a highly respected part of the Abdali tribes, a large group that would later evolve into the Durrani Confederation. Their early primacy is illustrated by the fact that an Alikozai, Abd al-Ghani Khan, led the Abdali warriors that were forced to enter Persian Nadir Shah’s service following their defeat at Herat in 1732.³⁴ As a reward for their service, according to a Pashtun historian who wrote in 1874, “...the valley of the Arghandab falling [sic] to Ghani Khan and his clan the Alikozai for distinguished service by the Abdali tribe to Nadir Shah.”³⁵ This rich valley near Kandahar remains the primary location of the Alikozai tribe.

Following Nadir Shah’s death in 1747, Ahmad Khan, a Popalzai, was given the leadership of the Abdalis that he renamed Durrans, and as he consolidated his power he worked to weaken the other tribes that might later challenge his primacy. For example, the largest of the Abdali/Durrani

32. <http://www.khyber.org/pashtotribes/b/barak.shtml>

33. Clements, Frank, *Conflict in Afghanistan*, p. 40.

34. Noelle, Christine, *State and Tribe in Nineteenth Century Afghanistan*, p. 230.

35. Hyat Khan, Muhammad, *Afghanistan and its Inhabitants*, translated by Henry Priestly, 1981, reprint of 1874 edition, p.63.

tribes, the Barakzai, was weakened when Ahmad Khan, now Ahmad Shah Durrani, ordered the tribe's Achakzai subtribe to be split from the Barakzai as a separate tribe within the Abdali/Durrani Confederacy.³⁶ It is very likely that the Alikozai received similar weakening efforts during the reign of Ahmad Shah Durrani.

Ahmad Shah's efforts were in vain, however, and the Barakzai were able to replace the Popalzai monarchs that followed him, but succession crises that followed allowed unrest to develop among the tribes. In early 1800, the Ghilzai tribes rose in rebellion and soon there were large-scale riots in Kabul between Sunni and Shia. Equal unrest developed within the Durrani tribes, but most of this is difficult to document – especially the court intrigue in Kabul in which individual Alikozai tribesmen were involved. One of them was involved in the blinding and subsequent execution of one of the Barakzai leaders in the region, Fateh Khan.³⁷

In the two decades of unrest that followed, Afghanistan was divided into three independent chieftainships ruled from Kabul, Herat, and Kandahar. This was the situation when the British placed Shah Shuja on the throne at Kabul in 1839. By 1842, Shah Shuja had been murdered and in Herat, Kamran, the region's ruler, was murdered by his Wazir, Yar Mohammad Khan, an Alikozai, who assumed control of Herat.³⁸

In Kabul, an Alikozai named Nawab Foujdar became the British agent at the Amir's court in 1857. He was described as a being loyal to the British government.³⁹

In 1856, the Alikozai ruler of Herat was ousted by one of the Sadozai leaders. The Sadozai are a leading subtribe of the Popalzai, another leading Durrani tribe. The violent politics continued in the region and as late as 1880, the Alikozai were allied with the Aimaqs and the Ishaqzai in a futile attempt to place Yar Mohammad Khan's grandson on Herat's throne.⁴⁰

More recently, the Alikozai leader, Mullah Naqib allied himself and most of the Alikozai mujahedin that fought the Soviets and Afghan communists with Jamiat-i Islami, even though this political party was dominated by Tajiks led by Burhanuddin Rabbani. Larry Goodson wrote that the Jamiat was less rigid ideologically and its commanders enjoyed much greater autonomy than was seen in the other mujahedin groups. Goodson mentioned that several of Jamiat's regional commanders, including Ahmad Shah Masood of the Panjshir Valley and Ismail Khan of Herat, rose to national prominence. Mullah Naqib was able to become very prominent locally as the principle Pashtun member of the Jamiat-i Islami.⁴¹

For some unrecorded reason, probably an event that occurred between the Durrani defeat at Herat by Nadir Shah and his Persians in 1732 and the formation of the Durrani Confederation in 1747, the Alikozai lost their primacy among these tribes. While Abd al-Ghani Khan led these tribes to the Persian victory at Daghestan and had their lost lands returned, their fortunes seem to have waned considerably since that time.

Weakened, and probably alienated, the Alikozai seem to look toward forces outside the Pashtun tribes for support against their Durrani, if not all Pashtun, antagonists. They were allied with Nadir Shah's Persians, the British were supported by Nawab Foujden, an Alikozai, the Alikozai joined forces with the Aimaqs in an attempt to regain control of Herat, and they allied themselves with the non-Pashtuns of Rabbani's Jamiat-i Islami against

36. Noelle, p. 230.

37. *Ibid*, p. 6.

38. Le Messurier, Augustus, *Kandahar in 1879*; Lumsden, Harry, *The Mission to Kandahar*, pp. 2, 3, 4.

39. Bellew, Henry, *Journal of a Political Mission to Afghanistan in 1857*, pp. 90, 96.

40. Lee, Jonathan, *The Ancient Supremacy*, p. 400.

41. Goodson, Roy, *Afghanistan's Endless War*, pp. 62-63.

the Soviets and the Afghan communists. More recently, a substantial number of Alikozai tribesmen publicly supported Tajik Yunus Qanuni against fellow Durrani Hamid Karzai in the 2004 Presidential elections.⁴²

While precise reasons for the Alikozai's independence remain unfathomable, there are discernable differences between them and many of the other tribes in the region. For example, the Alikozai's largest population concentration is in Kandahar's Arghandab District, an area northeast of Kandahar City. Having the advantage of well-defined tribal boundaries in Arghandab District – and to a lesser degree in Helmand Province's Sangin District, the Alikozai remained sufficiently strong to retain their independence of action. In this regard, they may be viewed as the probable “Keeper of the Tribal Balance of Power” in southeastern Afghanistan. They also benefited from the consistent presence of a strong, charismatic leader, Mullah Naqib, who time and again demonstrated a pragmatic nature that kept the best interests of the Alikozai foremost during his political maneuvering. His recent unfortunate death left a significant power vacuum within the Alikozai tribe as three factions tend to compete for its leadership: Khan Mohammad's group, those allied with the Wasify family, and Mullah Naqib's supporters backing his young son, Qarimullah Naqibi.

Apparently, the Taliban leadership took notice of the key political and strategic positions held by the Alikozai. There are few positions within the Taliban held by an Alikozai and only one, Mullah Obaidullah, was in a senior leadership position. He was captured by Pakistan's security services in February 2007 and the Alikozai are no longer represented in the Taliban leadership.

Events also seem to indicate that the Taliban have actively targeted Alikozai leaders:

- Haji Granai, a deputy to Khan Mohammad in both the Afghan Militia Force and Kandahar's police department, was assassinated by unknown assailants.
- Akram Khakrezwal, Kabul's police chief, was assassinated by a suicide bomber during Mullah Abdullah Fayez's funeral ceremony in a Kandahar mosque in May 2005.
- Mullah Naqib was nearly killed in a mine explosion that killed one of his sons and severely injured another.
- Abdul Hakim Jan was killed in a large bombing at a dog fight in February 2008.
- Sangin District's Dad Mohammad Khan was killed in a large mine explosion on the highway between Kandahar and Lashkargah. Apparently singled out, Dad Mohammad Khan's extended family and his closest aides have also been attacked. Three of his brothers were killed along with approximately 50 others in an attack at Sangin bazaar two years ago.

From the Taliban's likely perspective, the Alikozai may be too independent to be trusted. Some of their victims were violent men who were widely despised, but no more so than many of the other local power brokers in southern Afghanistan. But the Alikozai tribe is receiving special attention from the Taliban, and the arrest of Mullah Obaidullah left the Alikozai with few, if any, Alikozai leadership personalities in the Taliban at any level.

The apparent attack campaign may be related to Mullah Naqib's – and his Alikozai faction surrounding his son – support for Hamid Karzai, but the violence could be equally related to the Alikozai's traditional alliance with non-Pashtun power centers, this time with Rabbani, Qanuni, and their Tajik-dominated Jamiat-i Islami. The attacks may be intended to intimidate the Alikozai while producing a general power vacuum into which Taliban-leaning individuals may eventually move. Finally, the Taliban may be maneuvering to separate the Alikozai from the remainder of the Zirak

42. Researcher made these direct observations in 2004.

Durrani tribes, the Barakzai, Popalzai, and Achakzai tribes. They may believe that the Panjpai faction of the Durrani are sufficiently estranged from the mainstream Zirak and they are now concentrating their efforts to force an open split within the Zirak Durrani by focusing their efforts against the Alikozai.

The Alikozai tribe occupies a unique position in the power struggle in southern Afghanistan and their removal from their general connection to Hamid Karzai and/or to the Jamiat's Tajiks would strengthen the Taliban's position during renewed conflict or in the case of reconciliation negotiations and a political settlement of the Afghan insurgency. Either or both are very possible.⁴³

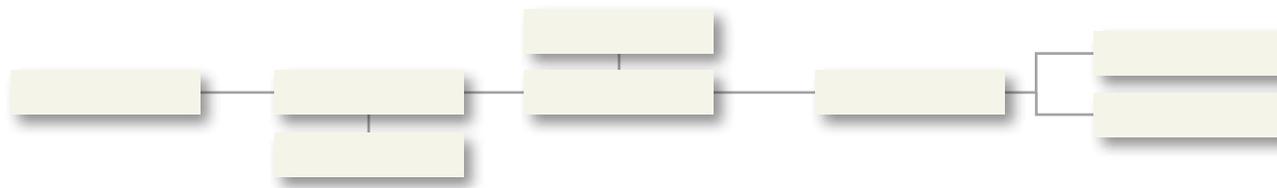
Understanding the tribes, their animosities, their alliances, and history forms a very useful analytical tool that can be utilized in making a "tribal analysis" of any group of Pashtuns. With a careful understanding of their past and present, some degree of accurate prediction can be made of their future actions under varying circumstances. For example, the model can be used to look closely at the known Taliban senior leadership in Quetta.

43. The researcher worked closely with the tribes mentioned in this study during extended trips into southern Afghanistan in 2003, 2004, and 2005.

TRIBAL ANALYSIS CENTER

Traditional anthropological research conducted among tribes inhabiting remote areas where insurgents and criminals operate has become increasingly difficult to implement. Studies carried out among people living in small-scale societies now are nearly impossible due to the physical dangers associated with the civil and religious unrest found in those areas. Swat, for example, has become so dangerous that Frederick Barth's studies only could be repeated at the risk of the investigator's life. Similar research is not feasible among Burma's Rohingya tribes located on both sides of the border with Bangladesh, as well as with the Pashtuns in Afghanistan's interior and within Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas, where even Pakistan's army enters with reluctance.

Given the difficulties of conducting direct fieldwork in conflictive areas, the Tribal Analysis Center utilizes an indirect approach. Using multidisciplinary research, we seek to collect and analyze data obtained from a wide variety of sources, both current and historical. In the absence of new ethnographic fieldwork to update our base of knowledge, the Tribal Analysis Center compiles and summarizes existing research and documents on tribal societies, combining this material with contemporary press reports and articles. We assume that much can be gleaned from well-informed observers who are not anthropologists, ranging from journalists and travelers to government officials.



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