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The Networks of Kunduz

A History of Conflict and Their Actors, from 1992 to 2001

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY¹

Status, reputation, alliances and behaviour of most individual actors and organizational groups that make up Kunduz' post-2001 power architecture cannot be explained without examining the province's history of conflict. Between 1992 and 2001, the history of Kunduz province was marked by heavy fighting, atrocities, expulsions, looting and shifts of alliances as the region was a major battleground of the civil war.

During the rule of the mujahedin that lasted until 1997 in that province, the local power structures of Kunduz were highly fragmented. In fact, the province reflected the national-level conflict constellations in a smaller dimension, as nearly all relevant national actors had a social or ethnic base there. However, in 1993 local commanders in Kunduz formed alliances and fought each other in contradiction to the national-level conflict formation. Basically, alliance formation among the mujahedin parties followed a power-political calculus and was purposive.

¹ This paper is based on relevant published material, key informant interviews and personal observations of the author over the past five years, both in Kabul, Afghan provinces and abroad. The author thanks the Kabul Centre - American Institute of Afghanistan Studies for the logistical support during the field research. The paper exclusively reflects the author's personal perceptions.

Between 1997 and 2001, Kunduz province was the Taliban movement's major stronghold in northern Afghanistan and its rule over Kunduz was marked by Pashtun domination of the provincial administration. The province still has a strong potential of support for the Taliban.

Commanders² were the key figures in Kunduz' local politics between 1992 and 2001. Often they had to make sure, however, to get the support of some relevant religious or secular dignitaries, in order to legitimise their policies or actions. The personal backgrounds of individual actors – for example, their ethnicity, tribal affiliation, level of religious education, party affiliation during the 1978–92 jihad, reputation as a 'warrior', etc. – are of great importance for understanding Kunduz province's micro politics.

The collapse of the Taliban administration in Kunduz province in November 2001 had at first led to a vacuum of power, out of which strongly fragmented, informal power structures emerged in

² The author adopts Gilles Dorronsoro's definition of the term 'commander': 'In response to the violence of the state, and afterwards to invasion by a foreign power, the population rose up in revolt and embarked on a Holy War, a jihad. The mobilisation of the countryside took place in the context of local solidarity networks, organised around 'commanders'. The social backgrounds of these leaders provide an explanation of the different kinds of organisation which were set up.' Gilles Dorronsoro, *Revolution unending. Afghanistan: 1979 to the present*, New York, Columbia University Press 2005, 93.

the following years. These were encountered by German soldiers and development workers when they came to northeastern Afghanistan in 2003 in Phase 1 of the ISAF extension from Kabul to the provinces. The power structures by this time mainly reflected the situation as it stood between 1992 and 1997, when Jamiat-e Islami, Jombesh-e Melli, Hezb-e Islami and Ittehad-e Islami dominated the area.

The organisations participating in the Kunduz insurgency since 2007 mainly correspond to the actors that fought in northeastern Afghanistan between 1998 and 2001 and finally found themselves surrounded in the pocket of Kunduz in November 2001: the Taliban (including partly autonomous Haqqani linked commanders), the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and al-Qaeda. All of them could fall back on existent networks that had persisted over time when they re-emerged in Kunduz province.

Conflicts about land distribution, water rights, accession to resources and political representation occurred as a result of immigration waves throughout the last two centuries. Until today, these fields of conflict have aroused prejudices and caused tensions between the ethnic groups of northeastern Afghanistan, particularly Kunduz province.³ This was an important pre-condition that allowed the parties fighting in Kunduz province to mobilise supporters along ethnic lines.

2 INTRODUCTION

'If you want to die, go to Kunduz,'⁴ an Afghan proverb states that dates back to the Pashtun emigration to northeastern Afghanistan between the late nineteenth and the mid twentieth century. At that time it referred to the catastrophic living conditions of Pashtun settlers, who came to the fertile but malarial swamps of the Kunduz river

³ For a detailed report of the colonization of Kataghan, refer to Erwin Grötzbach, 'Kulturgeographischer Wandel in Nordost-Afghanistan seit dem 19. Jahrhundert', *Afghanische Studien Band 4*, Meisenheim am Glan 1972. For a comprehensive analysis of ethnic conflicts in northern Afghanistan, refer to Conrad Schetter, *Ethnizität und ethnische Konflikte in Afghanistan*, Berlin, Reimer 2003.

⁴ Thomas J. Barfield, 'The Impact of Pashtun Immigration on Nomadic Pastoralism in North-eastern Afghanistan', in *Ethnic Processes and Inter-group Relations in Contemporary Afghanistan*, ed by Jon W. Anderson & Richard F. Strand, New York (Occasional paper No. 15 of the Afghan Council of the Asia Society. Papers presented at the 11th Annual Meeting of the Middle East Studies Association at New York City, 10 November 1977), 29.

valley to drain and cultivate the land. The proverb enjoyed a renaissance when Kunduz province became one of the major hotspots of the Afghan civil war between 1992 and 2001.⁵

Only a few years later – in summer 2003, when politicians in Berlin were considering deploying German soldiers outside the Afghan capital Kabul – the Chairman of the NATO Military Committee, the German general Harald Kujat, gave the following advice to the German Minister of Defence, Peter Struck: 'I recommend you to raise your hand, if the question of providing soldiers for a Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Kunduz arises.'⁶ On 24 October 2003, the Bundestag, Germany's parliament, voted by an overwhelming majority in favour of deploying German troops to Kunduz. The very same day an entry force of the German Federal Armed Forces, the Bundeswehr, consisting of 27 soldiers set off for northern Afghanistan. Now, nine years later, more than 2,500 ISAF soldiers, about half of them German, are serving in Kunduz province, and since 2007 they have been in the midst of a highly complex insurgency.

In the course of the civil war, between 1992 and 2001, Kunduz city was encircled months at a time and changed hands five times. This resulted in frequent looting of the conurbation and atrocities against the province's civilian population. The peak in that latest period of conflict was the tragic event that took place in late November 2001, when Kunduz province became the scene of the 'bloodiest battle'⁷ in the US-led military intervention in Afghanistan. In the aftermath of the battle, atrocities against Pashtun inhabitants resulted in conflicts over land and internal displacement.⁸ (In fact, those Pashtuns had to pay for atrocities the Taliban had committed against non-Pashtuns earlier.) However, what received more attention in the western media than these atrocities was the slaughter of thousands of Taliban fighters captured in Kunduz. Later it was labelled the 'Qala-ye Jangi massacre' and 'Convoy

⁵ Interviews conducted in Kabul as well as in the provinces in 2011 and 2012 revealed that the proverb is still well-known among Afghans especially those that originate from the northeast. However, the younger generation gives it a different connotation, relating it to the heavy fighting in and around Kunduz province especially during the 1990s.

⁶ Marco Seliger, 'Kunduz – was läuft falsch?' *Loyal. Magazin für Sicherheitspolitik*, Bonn, January 2010, 18.

⁷ 'B-52 Bombers Attack Kunduz', *The Guardian*, 20 November 2001, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2001/nov/20/afghanistan.terrorism7>.

⁸ 'Paying for the Taliban's Crimes: Abuses against Ethnic Pashtuns in Northern Afghanistan', *Human Rights Watch*, Vol. 14, 2 (April 2002).

of Death', a term introduced by a 2002 documentary film.⁹ This renowned documentary, which dealt with the fate of thousands of Taleban and foreign fighters who had surrendered in Kunduz province, was not only shown in the Reichstag building (of the German Bundestag) on 12 June 2002, but also in the European Parliament.¹⁰

The September 2003 Afghanistan manifesto of the German government shows why the decision to deploy German soldiers in Kunduz had finally been made despite the warning indicators presented above.

'In the course of investigating different potential locations (especially Herat, Charikar and Ghazni) an inter-ministerial fact-finding mission led by the BMVg [Ministry of Defence] and further including the AA [Foreign Ministry], the BMZ [Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development] and the BMI [Interior Ministry] has visited Kunduz area between August 19 and 24, 2003 . . . The fact finding mission conducted investigations on the general conditions, the current and expected security situation, the need for development aid and reconstruction, the acceptance of German soldiers, policemen and civilian actors as well as the preconditions already established by the American PRT. . . . The security situation both in Kunduz and in the entire German area

of operations has been assessed by the fact-finding mission as largely calm and still fairly stable. The result of this is a low to average threat situation towards the Provincial Reconstruction Team.'¹¹

At the same time, German Minister of Defence Peter Struck and other members of the ruling coalition pointed towards the impending challenges of a mission in northern Afghanistan and stressed the potential threat that some Afghan warlords' particular interests could pose to the German soldiers.¹² What was never taken into account by the German decision-makers was the extremely heterogeneous and alternating local power-structure in Kunduz province with its potential for further violence. Furthermore, they did not recognize the 'special importance' of this province for several key actors of the civil war, which derived from its central strategic position in northern Afghanistan. Besides the major mujahedin parties like Jamiat-e Islami, Hezb-e Islami, Ittehad-e Islami, Harakat-e Inqilab-e Islami and Mahaz-e Melli those key actors included the major ethnic Uzbek party of Jombesh-e Melli, the Taleban movement, transnational networks and foreign players, notably Pakistan and Iran.¹³

Very few decision-makers in Berlin were aware of the immense importance of the latest history of conflict in northeastern Afghanistan – especially the years between 1992 and 2001 – regarding the further development of the security situation in

⁹ The term 'Qala-ye Jangi massacre' (Qala-ye Jangi literally means battle fortress) or 'Qala-ye Jangi uprising' refers to the mysterious killings of several hundred, mostly foreign, fighters at the Uzbek warlord Rashid Dostum's important Qala-ye Jangi fortress (that served him as a military base and ammunitions depot) between 25 November and 1 December 2001. Dostum, to whom most of the Afghan Taleban and foreign fighters of the November 2001 Kunduz battle had finally surrendered, is supposed to have ordered the deportation of the bulk of the Afghan Taleban fighters (allegedly up to 7,000) from an area west of Kunduz city to the city of Sheberghan starting on 25 November 2001. Half way, huge numbers of the prisoners were probably thrown into containers to let them die of thirst. Later on, mass graves were discovered at the outskirts of Sheberghan in a wasteland area called 'Dasht-e Leili', where vast numbers of those prisoners who made the 'convoy of death' supposedly ended up. Jamie Doran, the Irish film maker who made the 2002 documentary claimed that up to 3,000 Taleban fighters had been killed during the 'convoy'. However, these figures have not yet been confirmed. See Jamie Doran, *Afghan Massacre: The Convoy of Death*, 2002 and Andy Worthington, *The Guantanamo Files. The Stories of the 774 Detainees in America's Illegal Prison*, London, Pluto Press, October 2007.

¹⁰ Deutscher Bundestag, Plenarprotokoll 14/243 vom 14.06.2002, 24474.

¹¹ Quoted from BMVg, AA, BMZ, BMI, 'Das Afghanistan-Konzept der Bundesregierung', 1 September 2003, 5.

¹² It was widely assumed that the then Afghan defense minister and powerful warlord Muhammad Qasem Fahim would play a decisive role in the further development of Kunduz province's security situation. This was assessed as problematic by some decision-makers, because they feared the German presence could lead to a confrontation with Fahim. On the other hand, some saw an advantage in his assumed key role in Kunduz, as they regarded him as pro-German. However, both supporters and sceptics of the mission were alarmed by the possibility that German soldiers could get in the way of the local drug economy's key figures and become involved in their conflicts. Accordingly, the responsible politicians often assured that the security situation to be expected in Kunduz had been comprehensively analysed. Furthermore, they affirmed that the mission had been thoroughly prepared and the personnel to be deployed had received the best possible training and equipment. See Deutscher Bundestag, Plenarprotokoll 15/70 vom 24.10.2003, 5989ff and 6004.

¹³ The glossary as well as section 5, which deals with the fall of the communist regime and the first months of the mujahedin rule, will introduce the main actors (parties, organizations and individuals) of the 1990s civil war.

Kunduz area.¹⁴ The Afghan proverb mentioned at the beginning of this paper reflects the historical perceptions of Kunduz province by parts of the Afghan population. In this case, the Afghan perception differs fundamentally from the perceptions and assessments by German officials responsible for planning the mission.

All this leads to the basic questions, which will be analysed and discussed in this research paper: What did the distribution of power in Kunduz look like and how did it change throughout the course of the civil war, between 1992 and 2001? Where did the lines of conflict in Kunduz area actually run? What made up the 'special importance' of Kunduz province for key actors of the civil war? Who were the relevant networks, parties and strongmen in Kunduz province, when German officials discussed the situation there in the summer of 2003?

Based on and in accordance with these questions, the main argument to be underlined throughout this analysis states that status, coalitions and behaviour of most actors and power structures in post-2001 Kunduz cannot be explained without examining the conflict's history between 1992 and 2001.

Meanwhile, numerous western politicians, including the ones who have been quoted above, admitted that they had

underestimated the dimensions and challenges of the Afghanistan mission. However, this does not change the fact in any way that strategic mistakes

were made during the very first phase of the mission. They still have a great negative impact on the current situation. One major failure is, as General Stanley McChrystal stated, that 'even now the military lacked sufficient local knowledge to bring the conflict to an end.'¹⁵ Furthermore he admitted that 'we didn't know enough and we still don't know enough. Most of us, me included, had a very superficial understanding of the situation and history, and we had a frighteningly simplistic view of recent history, the last 50 years.'¹⁶ The following section includes a paragraph dealing with available sources and literature on the history of Kunduz and also briefly assesses the few booklets and other information material German soldiers or civilian personnel receive when preparing for a mission in Afghanistan's northeast.



Kunduz, northern eastern

¹⁴ For example, a member of parliament of the then main opposition party (the Christian Democratic Union), Willy Wimmer, addressed two open letters (on 25 August and 10 September 2003) to Minister of Defense Struck. Regarding the alleged importance of the drug economy for the situation in Kunduz province as well as the perceived role of Qasem Fahim Khan in it, Wimmer's argumentation was partly based on wrong assumptions – as was the argumentation of most other above-quoted politicians. Nevertheless, Wimmer pointed to the tragic events of November 2001 and their potential future effect on the development of the security situation in Kunduz province.

¹⁵ Declan Walsh, 'US Had 'Frighteningly Simplistic' View of Afghanistan, Says McChrystal', *The Guardian*, 7 October 2011, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/oct/07/us-frighteningly-simplistic-afghanistan-mcchrystal>.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

3 ANALYTICAL APPROACH, DEFINITIONS AND SOURCES

3.1 Structure

The paper consists of ten sections. While sections 1 and 2 introduce the topic, discuss the relevance of the presented information and sum up the essential findings, sections 3 and 4 set the ground for the main part of the analysis in sections 5 to 9. Here, the history of Kunduz province between 1992 and 2001 will be reconstructed chronologically by sub-dividing each section in a short, introductory part and a subsequent, focal part. The first part of each of these sections recapitulates the crucial events at the national level of Afghanistan, to set the scene for the in-depth analysis on Kunduz province and its regional impact on northeastern Afghanistan. Sections 5, 7 and 9 focus solely on a short period of time (weeks or at utmost a few months) of the years 1992 (section 5), 1997 (section 7) and 2001 (section 9) to find out how local power structures in Kunduz province evolved and changed and additionally to what extent they were affected by events related to the national level. The time period in between these turning points will be analysed in sections 6 (1992 to 1997) and 8 (1997 to 2001). These sections reconstruct the course of the fighting among the mujahedin parties, specifically between the Taleban and the Northern Alliance.¹⁷

3.2 Method and focus of the study

The local power structures of Kunduz always incorporated different types of power brokers or strongmen with regard to their function within and their legitimation by local communities. Historically, the main division between local strongmen or influential figures – whether they held an official position in the state's administration or not – could be drawn between religious (*ulama* and other religious dignitaries, e.g., *sufis*) and secular figures (mainly landowners and elders of a tribe or community). At the beginning of the 1980s jihad, a third group, the commanders (who sometimes became warlords),¹⁸

emerged and soon became the most powerful class of strongmen in Kunduz province. Of course, these distinctions are to a certain degree artificial and sometimes too simplistic.¹⁹ Also, these groups sometimes overlap or are interconnected with the Afghan state's administrative structures, besides the fact that these were very weak or inoperative during the last 30 years of the twentieth century. Nevertheless, as a working model, one could imagine three different layers or foils (without a specific hierarchy) that made up the multifaceted local power structures in Kunduz province.

Although they often had to get the support of some relevant religious or secular dignitaries, to legitimise their policies or actions, commanders were the key figures in Kunduz' local politics during the period of time examined here.²⁰ Given this, as well as the fact that commanders and warlords benefited from a unique standing within the war-prone Afghan culture, it is only logical that they received much more attention than other actors, like non-fighting elders, landowners or religious dignitaries. Hence both in external observers' (e.g., academics or journalists) reports and the mainly orally transmitted stories told by local Afghans, commanders are the dominant figures, while information on the other groups is lacking.

The central role of the commanders in Kunduz province is reflected in the wide range of available reports, articles and stories as well as in Kunduz' 1990s oral history. While reconstructing the conflict history and changing alliances in Kunduz province, special attention will be given to the role of key commanders and their personal backgrounds whenever possible. This approach of focusing on individuals while tracing the paths of Kunduz' history, offers deeper insights. The individual actors' personal backgrounds – for example, ethnicity, tribal association, level of religious education, party affiliation during the jihad, reputation as a 'warrior', etc. – are of great importance for understanding Kunduz province's micro politics. Section 9 will pick up on most of the mentioned figures and networks and briefly show their roles within Kunduz politics after 2001.

¹⁷ An alliance of anti-Taleban mujahedin factions, the official name being United Islamic Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan, but better known as Northern Alliance.

¹⁸ For an analysis of the term 'warlordism' in relation to Afghanistan, see Conrad Schetter et al., 'Beyond Warlordism. The Local Security Architecture in Afghanistan', *International Politics and Security*, Issue 2 (June 2007). For an Afghanistan related concept regarding different types of commanders, refer to Dorronsoro, *Revolution Unending*, 111–36 [see FN 2].

¹⁹ In fact there are examples of elders, landowners or religious dignitaries that commanded militias in Kunduz area or there are former commanders, who later became elders or landowners.

²⁰ The two main functions that commanders provided were the redistribution of resources coming from factional networks and legitimacy from organising armed resistance to an invading army and a government considered to be illegitimate.

3.3 Sources

Regarding the existing literature and sources, a concise history of Kunduz province or northeastern Afghanistan, much less a 'who is who' of key players at the local level, is still not available. After nine years of German engagement in Kunduz province and the northeast of the country, this is one of the many failures General McChrystal is referring to, when mentioning that 'we' did not and still do not know enough, especially about Afghan history.²¹ Neither the ministries involved in the mission²² nor those few German or international academics that have access to information on Kunduz' historical and current micro politics have provided a useful and detailed guidebook or compendium that covers district level politics that could guide the military and civilian personnel during their mission.²³

²¹ For a comprehensive analysis of the German Army's perception of the security situation in northeastern Afghanistan and a profound criticism of the German military intelligence system and the training of its personnel, refer to Philipp Münch, 'Freund oder Feind? Zur Einschätzung von Sicherheitsbedrohungen in Friedensmissionen am Beispiel der Bundeswehr in Afghanistan', Arbeitspapier der Forschungsstelle Kriege, Rüstung und Entwicklung, Arbeitspapier Nr.4/2009, Universität Hamburg 2009; Philipp Münch, 'Wahrnehmung und Analyse der Taliban durch die Bundeswehr', in Conrad Schetter et al., *Der Taliban-Komplex. Zwischen Aufstandsbewegung und Militäreinsatz*, Frankfurt a.M., Campus 2011, 229–44.

²² Four German ministries have been involved in the conduct of the country's Afghanistan mission: The Federal Ministry of Defense, the Federal Foreign Office, the Federal Ministry of the Interior and the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development.

²³ In recent years, three booklets were distributed among German soldiers as a preparation for the Afghanistan mission. The Military History Research Institute provides a publically available guide to history on Afghanistan, which is a sound introductory collection of essays covering religion, culture and history. It does not focus specifically on Kunduz province and thus lacks a profound analysis of the relevant actors on the provincial or district level.

In addition, the German Federal Armed Forces issued a kind of political geography of Afghanistan (Militärlandeskundliche Unterlage Afghanistan) which is a general introduction.

The now-dissolved Bundeswehr Military Intelligence Centre published a manual on Afghanistan (Leitfaden für Bundeswehrkontingente Afghanistan), which lacked an in-depth analysis of provincial-level actors and in addition contained a lot of mistakes. For example, in its spring 2007 issue on page 137 it introduces Kunduz province as 'a former centre of the anti-Taliban movement' and concludes that the Taliban are lacking substantial support from the local population. None of the mentioned booklets is applicable or appropriate for

Nevertheless, there are in-depth empirical studies and academic journal articles dealing with specific economic, political or cultural topics that briefly touch upon Kunduz' 1990s history in an introductory or background chapter.

The most valuable works dealing with northeastern Afghanistan and Kunduz in particular include articles by Conrad Schetter, Rainer Glassner, Katja Mielke, Jan Köhler, Antonio Giustozzi and Christoph Reuter.²⁴ To reconstruct Kunduz' history throughout the 1990s this paper takes into account the information provided by these authors as well as some standard works on Afghanistan referring to that particular period of time, for example Barnett Rubin's *The fragmentation of Afghanistan*, William Maley's *The Afghan Wars* and Gilles Dorronsoro's *Revolution Unending*. However, the most important sources consist of newspaper articles taken from both the online archives of western news agencies and the print archives of Pakistani, Iranian and Afghan newspapers that were later (partly) digitalized and made available for example by the Afghanistan Centre at Kabul University (ACKU). With regard to the material provided by western agencies, the translations of Dari and Pashto sources (especially the pro-Rabbani *Radio Afghanistan* and the Taliban controlled radio *Voice of Sharia*) by the BBC monitoring service South-Asia are of great value. Furthermore local papers, in particular the mujahedin parties' newspapers like Jamiat-e Islami's *AFGHANews* are very useful as some of them include battlefield reports or a *Who is who in the mujahedin* column.²⁵ Besides this, the *Afghan Information Centre* (AIC),²⁶ a Pakistan-based non-profit organization, and the *Afghanistan News*

the training of specialists like intelligence personnel, officers or commanders involved in engaging representatives of the local Afghan community. The latter two sources are not publically available.

²⁴ The works I refer to here will be all quoted throughout the following sections.

²⁵ For example *AFGHANews* Vol. 8, No. 8 of April 15, 1992 includes a detailed biography of Commander Mir Alam Khan, still one of the most important powerbrokers in Kunduz province, whose activities have been a key concern of the German PRT since 2003. Despite the fact that Mir Alam was consulted frequently by military or civilian German representatives, his personal background remained a mystery for them at least until 2009 (interview with a senior German staff officer who served in PRT Kunduz in 2009). The biography not only includes information concerning his former party affiliations but also details about his social background.

²⁶ The AIC Bulletin was issued between 1980 and January 1993. The Afghanistan Centre at Kabul University (ACKU) has a number, but not all, of the issues available.

Clipping Services (ANCS)²⁷ both issued a monthly bulletin falling back on sources from inside the region and covering the political, military and social developments in Afghanistan. The *Agency Coordinating Body of Afghan Relief* (ACBAR)²⁸ published a yearly *News Summary on Afghanistan* including sections on political developments, military developments and security matters. The additional material included comprises, among others, some sources in Dari and Arabic, releases of the US Ministry of Defence and Department of State as well as some of the Guantanamo files made available by *Wikileaks*. Finally, various qualitative interviews carried out in Germany as well as in Afghanistan throughout 2010, 2011 and 2012 contributed to the task of putting together the numerous but scattered pieces of information to small biographies of some relevant figures.

4 SETTING THE SCENE: HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY, DEMOGRAPHICS AND SOCIAL STRUCTURES

According to *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* the term *Kunduz*, which currently labels a town and a river as well as a district and a province, derives from the Persian word *kohan-dezh* (literally 'fortress').²⁹ The earliest references of the town of Kunduz date back to the Timurid period in the second half of the fourteenth century.³⁰ The town is situated at the banks of the Kunduz river about 20 kilometres southeast of its confluence with the Khanabad river at an altitude of 400 meters in a region generally known as Kataghan.³¹

During the second half of the eighteenth century the area located between the Hindukush mountains and the Amu Darya river fell under the rule of Ahmad Shah Durrani and was roughly

divided into three territories, Afghan Turkestan,³² Kataghan and Badakhshan. However, the successors of Ahmad Shah Durrani lost control over the territory north of the Hindukush mountains later on, and Kataghan was ruled by different Uzbek and Turkmen Khans.³³ Between 1854 and 1888 the rulers in Kabul launched a series of military offensives and regained control of northeastern Afghanistan.³⁴ Since then, the province of Kataghan-Badakhshan has been ruled by a single governor. In 1963 Badakhshan became a separate province and a year later the three provinces of Baghlan, Kunduz and Takhar were created out of the territory of Kataghan.

Historically, the territory of Kataghan was sparsely populated. The majority of the population was Uzbek farmers and semi-nomads as well as Tajiks, Arab nomads and, in smaller numbers, Turkmen, Hazara and Aimaq.³⁵ However, between the 1850s and the early 1970s the region of today's Kunduz province was the destination of several immigration waves triggered by the Russian conquest of Central Asia and the Pashtunisation policy of the Afghan central government. The first minor immigration of Pashtuns to Kunduz region occurred during the 1850s when families of the Naseri tribe settled in the region of today's Aliabad district.³⁶ Two decades later thousands of Central Asian Arabs fled the Khanate of Bukhara when it was conquered by Russia and settled in Kataghan.³⁷ The first major phase of Pashtun settlement in Kataghan occurred between 1880 and 1933; it culminated during the reign of Amir Abdur Rahman (1880–1901).³⁸ This ruler encouraged and sometimes forced Pashtun families inhabiting areas south of the Hindukush mountains to move to the north.

The second phase of Pashtun immigration to northeastern Afghanistan coincided with industrialisation efforts of the government and lasted from the 1930s to the 1970s.³⁹ While non-

²⁷ The ANCS Bulletin was launched in 1990. The Afghanistan Centre at Kabul University (ACKU) has made available Issues 01 to 120, from July 1990 until June 2000.

²⁸ The ACBAR News Summary on Afghanistan covers the period between mid-1991 and October 2001. All issues are available at the Afghanistan Centre at Kabul University (ACKU).

²⁹ *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, New Edition, Vol. V, Leiden 1986, 388. We adapted the transcription to that used by AAN. The consonant 'zh' is similar to the French 'j' (like in 'jour').

³⁰ *Ibid*, 389.

³¹ Also 'Qataghan'. This is in fact the name of an Uzbek clan that dominated the region throughout the 19th century. See Barfield, 'The Impact of Pashtun Immigration, 26 [see FN 4].

³² Afghan Turkestan comprised the territory of today's Balkh, Jawzjan, Samangan, and Faryab provinces.

³³ *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 389 [see FN 29].

³⁴ Erwin Grötzbach, *Afghanistan. Eine geographische Landeskunde*, Darmstadt 1990, 262.

³⁵ Barfield, 'The impact of Pashtun Immigration, 26 [see FN 4].

³⁶ Interview with researchers of the Kabul based The Liaison Office (TLO), July 2012.

³⁷ Barfield, 'The Impact of Pashtun Immigration, 26 [see FN 4].

³⁸ Rainer Glassner et al., *EZ-Kontextanalysen mit Fokus auf Akteure, Netzwerke und Institutionen in Nordostafghanistan (Kunduz, Takhar) und Südostafghanistan (Paktia, Khost)*, Bonn 2008, 27.

³⁹ *Ibid*, 27.

Pashtun settlers from inside Afghanistan such as Tajiks, Hazara or Baluch people moved to Kataghan during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century as well, the most considerable wave of non-Pashtun immigration to the northeast occurred in the 1920s. By this time between one- and two-hundred thousand Tajiks and Uzbeks fled the conquest of their homelands by the Soviet Red Army and settled in northern Afghanistan.⁴⁰ As a result of the different immigration waves, conflicts about land distribution, water rights, accession to resources and political representation occurred. Until today, those fields of conflict have aroused prejudices and caused tensions between the ethnic groups within Kataghan.⁴¹

Currently the population of Kunduz is estimated to number about one million.⁴² According to *The Liaison Office* the ethnic composition of Kunduz province is as follows: 34 per cent Pashtun, 27 per cent Uzbek, 20 per cent Tajik, 9.4 per cent Turkmen, 4.6 per cent Arab, 3.5 per cent Hazara plus a few very small groups including Baluch, Pashai and Nuristani.⁴³ The administrative structure of northeastern Afghanistan has changed several times throughout history. When Kunduz province was formed in 1964, it bordered the Soviet Union (since 1991 Tajikistan) in the north, Takhar province in the east, Baghlan province in the south and Samangan province in the west. Instead of Samangan, since the early 2000s Kunduz borders Balkh province in the west as Khulm district was attached to the latter as a result of administrative reform. Kunduz province today comprises of seven districts – Imam Saheb, Dasht-e Archi, Khanabad, Aliabad, Chahrdara, Qala-ye Zal and Kunduz; the latter includes the territory surrounding the Kunduz conurbation.

Today the city of Kunduz houses approximately 250,000 inhabitants.⁴⁴ The current cityscape is the result of the de facto refounding of Kunduz city in 1934. In 1933, Kataghan province had been connected with the Panjshir valley and the heavily populated areas around the capital city of Kabul by a mountain pass.⁴⁵ Subsequently, the energetic

governor Sher Khan Nashir (an influential Pashtun leader of the Kharoti-Ghilzai), supported by some Afghan financiers and the newly founded Bank-e Melli (National Bank of Afghanistan), launched an industrialisation campaign and major urban development and construction programmes.⁴⁶ In the mid 1930s, the swamps of the Kunduz river valley were drained and a large industrial complex including a cotton company, administrative buildings and a housing estate for the workers was built to the west of Kunduz bazaar.⁴⁷ The industrial enterprises were run by the newly established, privately owned Spinzar Company,⁴⁸ which founded subsidiaries in several parts of the country and employed about 5,000 full-time workers by the mid-twentieth century.⁴⁹ In 1957 Kunduz city became the capital of Kataghan province and the provincial administration was transferred there (from the town of Khanabad), giving the town an additional economic boost. Prior to the Afghan war beginning in 1979, Kunduz province was said to be one of the wealthiest and one of the most developed within the country.

However, during the 1980s, northeastern Afghanistan became a major battleground of the war between the forces of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (DRA) and the Soviet Union on the one side and several mujahedin organisations on the other side. Among the numerous mujahedin groups present in Kunduz province, Jamiat-e Islami and Hezb-e Islami probably attracted the bulk of supporters and were in consequence the most active opponents of the government's forces. However, there has been a strong rivalry between the two parties since the early days of their existence that often led to fighting between associated mujahedin groups already during the 1980s. The most serious and far-reaching incident occurred in July 1989 in Farkhar district of Takhar province but was primarily related to commanders from Kunduz province.⁵⁰

⁴⁰ Christian Bleuer, 'State-Building, Migration and Economic Development on the Frontiers of Northern Afghanistan and Southern Tajikistan', *Journal of Eurasian Studies* 3 (2012): 75–7.

⁴¹ For a detailed report of the colonization of Kataghan refer to Grötzbach, 'Kulturgeographischer', [see FN 4]. For a comprehensive analysis of ethnic conflicts in northern Afghanistan refer to Schetter, *Ethnizität* [see FN 4].

⁴² Glassner et al., 'EZ-Kontextanalysen', 28 [see FN 39].

⁴³ Interview with researchers of the Kabul-based The Liaison Office (TLO), July 2012.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Grötzbach, *Afghanistan*, 263 [see FN 34].

⁴⁶ Ibid, 263.

⁴⁷ Erwin Grötzbach, *Städte und Basare in Afghanistan. Eine stadtgeographische Untersuchung*, Wiesbaden 1979, 78.

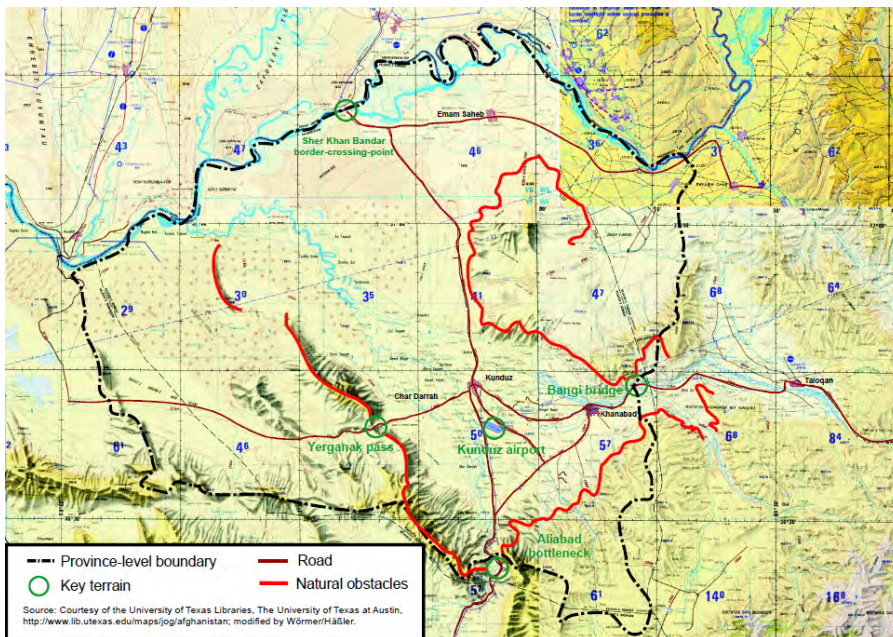
⁴⁸ The Spinzar Cotton Company was nationalized in 1973.

⁴⁹ On the history of the Spinzar Company, see Louis Dupree, *Afghanistan*, Oxford 1973 (Fourth Impression 2005, Karachi), 471–4.

⁵⁰ A defector of Hezb-e Islami who had joined Ahmad Shah Massud got knowledge of an imminent Shura-ye Nazar operation against Hezb-e Islami forces. Thus he warned his old comrades and Hekmatyar allegedly ordered an ambush that killed about 30 Jamiat commanders in a narrow gorge of the Farkhar river valley on 9 July 1989. Massud ordered a counter-

Regarding the Soviet forces, Kunduz province became a major logistical base during the 1980s due to its proximity to the Soviets' transport infrastructure in their Central Asian republics. The Soviet Army established one of their five main weapons and munitions depots inside Afghanistan in Kunduz city, extended the airfield and based one motorized infantry division in the area.⁵¹

In August 1988, in the course of the Soviet withdrawal, DRA forces did not take up their positions in Kunduz city early enough to replace the leaving soldiers whereby mujahedin groups of different parties captured the town. For about three days Kunduz city was under mujahedin control, until DRA troops supported by Soviet forces recaptured the city. During their brief occupation of a major city for the first time ever, the mujahedin reportedly looted, pillaged and ravished.⁵² However, this appeared to be nothing more than a foretaste in regard to what was to happen in Kunduz province during the 1990s.



Kunduz terrain, key areas

operation and publicly hanged some of the involved Hezb-e Islami commanders in Taloqan and killed a large number of Hekmatyar's fighters. The story is being told in Kunduz and Takhar province in a number of different versions. However, the incident still determines the relationships between local Jamiat and Hezb-e Islami followers that were already active in 1989. See Michael Pohly, *Krieg und Widerstand in Afghanistan. Ursachen, Verlauf und Folgen seit 1978*, Berlin, Das Arabische Buch 1992, 368; Mohammed Yousaf and Mark Adkin, *Die Bärenfalle*, Düsseldorf, Baret-Verlag 1992, 125.

⁵¹ Pohly, *Krieg und Widerstand*, 278 [see FN 50].

⁵² *Ibid*, 323 [see FN 50].

5 APRIL 1992: THE MUJAHEDIN TAKE POWER IN KUNDUZ

5.1 National level

The first months of 1992 marked the successive, but rapid downfall of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan's (PDPA)⁵³ regime under President Najibullah, who had been put in place by the Kremlin in 1986. The Soviet Union, which had already withdrawn all its military forces from Afghan soil by March 1989, finally terminated the logistical support for its Kabul ally in December 1991 (and had itself ceased to exist by that time). When Najibullah failed to suppress the revolt of one of his generals at the strategically important Hairatan garrison (a river port on the border to Uzbekistan) in January 1992, several high-ranking military commanders in the Afghan north began to doubt their president's ability to survive without Soviet support and switched sides. The decisive blow to Najibullah's

reign came in March, when formerly pro-government Uzbek and Ismaili militias in the north of the country as well as government forces under the command of General Abdurrashid Dostum joined forces with local mujahedin groups.⁵⁴

While the ex-communist officers and their new allies, the commanders of the mujahedin, immediately established an alliance called *Movement of the North*,⁵⁵ one garrison after another defected

⁵³ By then renamed Hezb-e Watan (Homeland Party).

⁵⁴ For a full account of the renowned mutiny at Hairatan, the policy of Muhammad Najibullah during his last days and the deals between northern Afghan officers and local mujahedin commanders, see Schetter, *Ethnicität*, 473ff [see FN 4]; William Maley, *The Afghanistan Wars*, Second Edition, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan 2009, 154–61.

⁵⁵ On the formation of The Movement of the North and its transformation into Jombesh-e Melli just a couple of months later, see Antonio Giustozzi, 'The Ethnicisation of an Afghan Faction: Jombesh-i-Milli from Its Origins to the Presidential Elections', Crisis States Research Centre, working paper no. 67, September 2005, 1ff; Robert Peszkowski, 'Jombesh on the Winding Road of Internal Reform', AAN Briefing paper 03/2012 (forthcoming 2012).

from the Kabul government. On 14 April the town of Charikar, just fifty kilometres north of Kabul, fell to the mujahedin. The day after, the important nearby air base of Bagram followed and on 18 April, Herat in the west and Kunduz in the northeast surrendered to the mujahedin. After the fall of Kandahar on 19 April the garrisons of most other urban centres in the country gave up within days, thus by the 23rd, only Kabul and the major eastern city of Jalalabad remained under governmental control; negotiations about the capitulation of the two cities, however, already had begun by this time. Surprisingly for most observers, who had expected bloodshed whenever the mujahedin seized cities, no fighting erupted in most cases and the structures of the old regime simply disintegrated.

As fast as the communist government descended, tensions among the different mujahedin parties' leaders, who in some cases had already been bitter rivals for years, heated up. In spring 1992, the Afghan resistance mainly consisted of the so-called 'Peshawar Seven' at its strongest and the former 'Tehran Eight', which had merged into Hezb-e Wahdat in 1990, as a minor pillar, while with the just-formed Movement of the North that was to become Jombesh-e Melli⁵⁶ in June 1992, a third force had just emerged. While the political leaders of the Peshawar-based 'Seven' had not yet entered Afghanistan and were still negotiating the terms for establishing an interim government, street fights broke out in Kabul on 24 April. At that time, due to its ethnic composition of Pashtun, Tajik and Hazara communities, Kabul was surrounded by Jamiat and Jombesh forces in the north and northeast, Hezb-e Wahdat forces in the west and the Hezb-e Islami forces in the south. When Hekmatyar's force seized parts of the city centre, fighters of Jamiat and Jombesh moved into Kabul, clashed with the Hezb-e Islami units and finally drove them back to the southern suburbs. These first clashes in April 1992 proved to be just a foretaste of what was to happen in the following years.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ For the different organisations mentioned in this paragraph, refer to the glossary at the end of the report.

⁵⁷ For a comprehensive analysis of the military and diplomatic struggle for Kabul in spring and summer 1992, see Maley, *The Afghanistan Wars*, 162–81 [see FN 54]; Dorronsoro, *Revolution unending*, 237–240 [see FN 2].

5.2 Regional level⁵⁸

On 18 April 1992, the PDPA regime's garrison of Kunduz surrendered after a deal with local mujahedin commanders was brokered. At that time, Kunduz was one of the main garrison cities in Afghanistan, accommodating both the headquarters of the 6th Army Corps,⁵⁹ which comprised of three divisions (20th, 54th and 80th Divisions), and the divisional command of the 54th Division. While senior Pashtun officers within the 6th Army Corps command arranged a deal with Pashtun commanders of Hezb-e Islami and Ittehad-e Islami, the divisional commander of the 54th Division, also an ethnic Pashtun, handed over his entire base to the overall military leader of Ittehad in Kunduz area, Commander Amir Chughay.⁶⁰ Thus

⁵⁸ Instead of 'Provincial level', the term 'Regional' level was chosen for this paper to define a sub-national level providing a wider focus than just the area defined by the provincial borders. While Kunduz province is clearly the focal point of this study, incidents and developments in adjacent areas (mainly of the provinces of Takhar and Baghlan) have to be taken into account frequently to explain the micro politics there.

⁵⁹ As of spring 1992, the Afghan army consisted of five corps commands (1st Corps/Jalalabad, 2nd Corps/Kandahar, 3rd Corps/Gardez, 4th Corps/Herat and 6th Corps/Kunduz) as well as five operations groups of smaller size and less-developed command structure and logistics. After the Soviet withdrawal, those had been established in Kabul, Sarobi, Mazar-e Sharif and Khost as well as in Charikar, which was the army's 5th Corps until it was downgraded. The military formations stationed in the Pashtun belt (1st, 2nd and 3rd Corps as well as the operational groups Sarobi and Khost, that had already been overrun in March 1991) nearly completely disintegrated in 1992. The units based in and around Kabul joined different mujahedin militias while the forces based in the north and the west of the country remained intact to a certain degree. Those were taken over by the three main military leaders then loyal to president Rabbani: Ismael Khan, General Dostum and Ahmad Shah Massud. See Anthony Davis, 'The Afghan Army', *Jane's Intelligence Review*, March 1993.

⁶⁰ Amir Muhammad Chughay, also known as (General) Amir Muhammad Khan was a Ghilzai Pashtun, supposedly of the Zandikhel sub-tribe (other sources say he was a Stanikzai) and originated from one of the Chugha villages located east of Khanabad city close to the main route connecting Kunduz city and the neighbouring province's capital, Taloqan. Amir Chughay (an Ittehad supporter from the beginning) was one of the key mujahedin commanders in Kunduz province and the most powerful figure in his long-established stronghold, the Khanabad district. He cooperated with Ahmad Shah Massud's Shura-ye Nazar (a military coordination council associated with Jamiat) and participated in the final liberation of Khanabad city from PDPA forces in 1989. His area of influence stretched beyond Khanabad district to the east into Bangi district

the weapons and equipment of the corps' arsenal were divided up among numerous mujahedin commanders favouring those of Hezb and Ittehad, whereas the latter completely took over the immense stockpile of 54th Division's arsenal. A few days later an official capitulation was repeated in front of Jamiat commanders, as Jamiat claimed the power in Kunduz province and officially announced its conquest. By doing so, Jamiat pointed to its overall strength in northeastern Afghanistan and claimed to have been the strongest and most active mujahedin party in Kunduz province during the struggle against the Soviet troops. In fact, though, Jamiat had to accept a power sharing in Kunduz province.

Following the dramatic events that took place in April 1992, Ittehad, represented by its powerful local commander Amir Chughay, took control of most parts of Khanabad district, parts of Kunduz district, including the majority of the garrison's facilities, and parts of Takhar province's adjacent Bangi district, where the strategically important Bangi Bridge is located.⁶¹ Chahrdara and Imam Saheb districts nearly entirely fell under the rule of local commanders of Hezb-e Islami, who also established a significant presence in Aliabad and Dasht-e Archi districts. The overall Hezb-e Islami commander in Kunduz province was Sayed Hamidullah Amir, a long-standing follower and close confidant of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. In Chahrdara district, however, Hezb-e Islami's local commander, Arbab Mohammad Hashem,⁶² an

of Takhar province and to the west into Kunduz district, where he controlled the city's garrison from its surrender in April 1992 until his death on 7 October 1994. At the time of his death, he was said to be the most powerful field commander of Ittehad all over Afghanistan. Amir Chughay was well-known for his strong fundamentalist beliefs and received direct funding from private Saudi-Arabian donors. See Annika Janson, 'General Report Cmc Monitoring Mission #5 Takhar, Kunduz, Baghlan, and Kapisa Provinces', The Coordination of Medical Committees (CMC), University Town, Peshawar, September 1989, 13 and 34; ACBAR News Summary on Afghanistan 1994, Agency Coordinating Body For Afghan Relief, University Town Peshawar, February 1995, 26; Steve LeVine, 'Afghan, Arab Muslim Militants Back Rebels in Ex-Soviet State', *The Washington Post*, 27 April 1993.

⁶¹ The Bangi Bridge is part of the connecting road between Kunduz city and Taloqan and crosses a tributary of the Khanabad River. It is located at the border of Kunduz province's Khanabad district and Bangi district, which belongs to Takhar province. To the north and to the south of the river valley there are chains of hills that act as a natural barrier and restrict the movements of military forces.

⁶² Commander Arbab Mohammad Hashem was a long-standing Hezb-e Islami affiliate and veteran commander

ethnic Pashtun, rose to power in the shadow of Hamidullah. He acted as his right-hand man and consolidated the supremacy in one of the party's firmest strongholds ever since. Imam Saheb district, in which the home village of Hezb-e Islami's leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar is located, was taken over by the Ibrahim family,⁶³ a powerful ethnic Uzbek clan that also was affiliated with Hezb-e Islami. Among the Pashtun population of Imam Saheb district, Mahaz-e Melli possessed significant influence.⁶⁴ In Dasht-e Archi district, another local family clan that cooperated with Hezb-e Islami, the Pashtun Obaidis,⁶⁵ rose to power and became the most

of the 1980s jihad. He belonged to the Popalzai tribe of the Durrani confederation and was regarded as one of the most influential Pashtun tribal leaders of Kunduz province. He played a decisive role during both falls of Kunduz city, in 1997 to the Taleban and in 2001 to the Northern Alliance (see below). Arbab Hashem died in November 2001 under mysterious circumstances together with Mirza Muhammad Naseri in a helicopter crash in Farkhar district (Takhar province) and was buried in his home village in Chahrdara district. Arbab Hashem had several wives and numerous descendants. His family was and still is very influential, especially in Chahrdara district, where brothers, nephews or sons of Arbab Hashem took positions after 2001 both in the official Afghan administration as well as in the insurgency. The fact that his home village is still called 'Arbab Hashem Village' and persons that belong to his wider family network are often still dubbed 'men of Arbab Hashem', even if he was killed approximately ten years ago, indicate the significant role he played at least within the Pashtun community of Kunduz.

⁶³ The Uzbek Ibrahim family clan belongs to the old landowning class of historical Kataghan province and is said to have settled in Kunduz province already before the major immigration of Uzbek families began in the first half of the 20th century. The Ibrahim family rose to political power during the 1980s when some of their members became prominent mujahedin commanders within Hezb-e Islami. The most prominent member of the Ibrahim family during the 1990s was 'Amir' Abdul Latif Ibrahim (born 1957) who in fact ruled over Imam Saheb district between 1992 and the arrival of the Taleban. After having defected to the Taleban at first, Abdul Latif Ibrahim later joined the 'Northern Alliance'. By this time he was always supported by his brothers Haji Raouf Ibrahim and Abdul Qayum Ibrahim. Besides their affiliation with Hezb-e Islami and temporary alliances with the Taleban and Shura-ye Nazar, the Ibrahim family clan is said to have always maintained close ties to Jombesh-e Melli. See Glassner et al., 'EZ-Kontextanalysen', 32 and 45–6 [see FN 38]; interview with Afghan author Assadullah Walwalji in Kabul in March 2011.

⁶⁴ Dorransoro, *Revolution Unending*, 163 [see FN 2].

⁶⁵ The Pashtun Obaidi family clan originates from Kandahar province where they lived as nomads in the past. The Obaidis immigrated to Archi district in the early 20th century and belonged to the first Pashtun settlers

dominant force in that remote area. The strategically important harbour and border post of Sher Khan Bandar, located in the very north of Imam Saheb district at Amu Darya River, the border to Tajikistan, was taken over by Rahim Pahlawan,⁶⁶ a Turkmen commander loyal to General Dostum. Pahlawan and several other local Turkmen militia commanders affiliated with Jombesh-e Melli also partly controlled Kunduz province's westernmost district, Qala-ye Zal, and thereby ensured at least a minor presence of Dostum's party in that province. Jamiat's main area of influence was Kunduz city and the adjacent areas mainly to the south and to the east stretching into the western parts of Khanabad and the northern parts of Aliabad. In fact, these areas were the strongholds of Jamiat's most prominent militia commanders, Muhammad Aref Khan⁶⁷ and Mir Alam Khan.⁶⁸

to move to Kunduz province. During the 1970s, the Obaidis were well represented in the political administration of northeastern Afghanistan and with Sayed Abdul Razeq Obaidi even provided the governor of Kunduz province by this time. After Babrak Karmal was installed as president of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union in December 1979, the Obaidi family members lost their political positions and some were imprisoned or even killed. Hence the clan joined the anti-Soviet jihad and allied with Hezb-e Islami. Throughout most of the 1980s, only the district centre of Archi district was under control of the government, while Hezb-e Islami had a strong presence in the surrounding areas. Commander Abdul Hamid Obaidi (born 1947) and his brother Commander Jalad Obaidi were two of the most prominent mujahedin commanders in Archi district by this time. See Ludwig W. Adamec, *Historical and Political Who's Who of Afghanistan*, Graz, Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt 1975, 343; interview with Afghan author Assadullah Walwalji in Kabul in March 2011.

⁶⁶ Rahim Pahlawan was commander of a predominantly Turkmen militia that fought alongside PDPA forces against the mujahedin. He mainly operated and recruited in Kunduz province's Qala-ye Zal district. When General Dostum switched sides in March 1992, Pahlawan followed and secured him an important foothold in Kunduz province. See Rahimullah Yusufzai, 'Dostum's Position Weakens after Loss of Stronghold', *The News International*, 13 November 1993.

⁶⁷ Commander (Haji) Muhammad Aref Khan also known as General Aref Khan, born in approximately 1955, was a longstanding affiliate of Jamiat and one of its most famous field commanders in northern Afghanistan. In Jamiat's party newspapers, Aref Khan was frequently mentioned as Jamiat's key commander in Kunduz province and the overall commander of the operation that led to the fall of Kunduz city on 18 April 1992. He was a Mohmand Pashtun of the Zakhel sub-tribe and originated from one of the Zakhel villages located just south of Kunduz city. The well-situated family of Aref Khan owned land in Kunduz and Chahrdara districts and

Regarding the key positions in Kunduz' post-Najibullah mujahedin administration the position of provincial governor was briefly assumed by Mawlawi Muhammad Omar⁶⁹ of Harakat-e Inqilab and then by Commander Qari Rahmatullah⁷⁰ of Jamiat. However, both were nothing more than puppets of a powerful *shura*⁷¹ that actually ruled the province. The *shura* included at least five parties (Jamiat, Hezb, Ittehad, Mahaz, Harakat-e Inqilab and possibly Jombesh)⁷² that were mainly

properties in Kunduz city, allegedly including shares of Kunduz' famous Spinzar Cotton Company, of which Aref Khan was the reported chief. Aref Khan became the most influential leader of Kunduz' Pashtuns after the death of Commander Amir Chughay in October 1994. He later joined the Taleban and served as Kunduz governor from the fall of the city in 1997 until his mysterious death in Peshawar in April 2000. See Afghan Information Centre, Nos. 132–135, 11th Year, March-June 1992, 29 and AFGHANews Vol. 8, No. 8 of 15 April 1992, 2.

⁶⁸ Commander Mir Alam Khan son of Haji Ghulam Qadir, an ethnic Tajik, born in Kunduz City approximately 1953, served as a commander of Harakat-e Inqilab-e Islami until he joined Jamiat in 1989. As his father was a successful trader, Mir Alam originates from a well-off family, which enabled him to finish the 11th class at school before working as a mechanic and later joining the mujahedin. During the 1980s he operated mainly in Nahrin and Burka districts of Baghlan province from where his forces occasionally executed raids into Kunduz province. Since 1989 his main base was located northeast of Kunduz city and included about forty villages at the road towards Khanabad city. See AFGHANews Vol. 8, No. 8, 15 April 1992, 5 and 8.

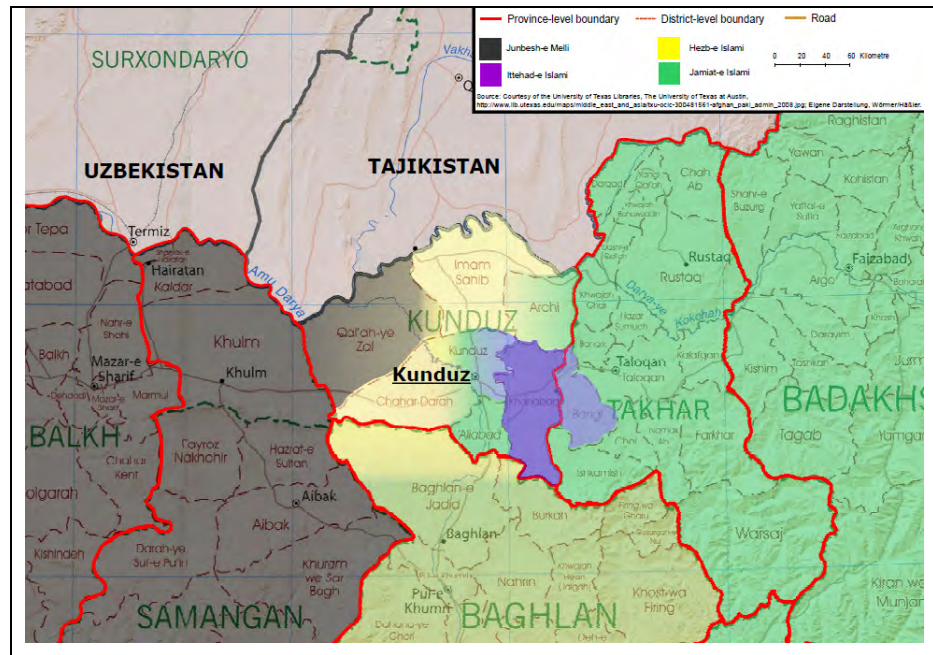
⁶⁹ Mawlawi Muhammad Omar of Harakat-e Inqilab had been reported in the March-June 1992 bulletin of AIC in a small article summing up the assignment of key positions to the different mujahedin parties to have assumed office as Kunduz governor. Beginning in the second half of 1993 Qari Rahmatullah had been frequently reported to have served as Kunduz governor. One single source, a Guardian article of 20 August 1993, reports a Mawlawi Abdul Zahir of Jamiat as the governor of Kunduz. See Afghan Information Centre, Nos. 132–135, 11th Year, March-June 1992, 29; John Rettie, 'A Sort Of Life for Tajik refugees', *The Guardian*, 20 August 1993.

⁷⁰ Commander Qari Rahmatullah, an ethnic Tajik from Kunduz province, participated in the 1980s jihad. He was affiliated to Jamiat from the beginning and rose to a commander in his home province, where his forces mainly operated. In 1993 he was chosen as the first Jamiat governor of Kunduz province. When Jamiat's forces fought for Kunduz city in 1994 and 1995 against Jombesh and Hezb-e Islami and later against the Taleban, Qari Rahmatullah reassumed command of frontline units.

⁷¹ Between 1992 and 1997, the main duty of Kunduz' governors was to chair the mujahedin shura of Kunduz where the de facto rulers of Kunduz' districts discussed their disputes.

⁷² An article of *The Guardian* reports seven active mujahedin parties in Kunduz province by this time.

represented by their militia commanders, while elders and dignitaries are said to have played a trivial role. The position of Chief of Police of Kunduz province was assigned to Mirza Mohammad Naseri of Mahaz-e Melli, while the Defence Ministry in Kabul appointed Amir Chughay as commander of 54th Division and Aref Khan as deputy commander of 54th Division in late 1992.⁷³



To sum up the situation as it was in summer 1992, Kunduz, 1992, spheres of influence

Kunduz province was located exactly in between the coherent areas that made up General Dostum's Jombesh fiefdom to the west and Ahmad Shah Massud's Shura-ye Nazar/Jamiat fiefdom to the east and southeast. Nevertheless, these two most powerful factions in northern Afghanistan played only a modest role in Kunduz province as regards Jombesh and a contested role as regards Jamiat, which was dependent on an alliance with other parties to exert power in that particular area. The most important Jamiat ally in Kunduz was Ittehad⁷⁴

followed by parties less influential in northeastern Afghanistan, like Mahaz and Harakat-e Inqilab. The strong presence of Ittehad and Hezb-e Islami reflected the Pashtun dominance within Kunduz' ethnic composition. As both parties had just a few areas completely under their control throughout the country, their Khanabad (respectively Chahar Dara and Imam Saheb) bastions symbolised some of the key strongholds of Ittehad and Hezb-e Islami Afghanistan-wide.⁷⁵

6 KUNDUZ AS A HOTSPOT OF THE CIVIL WAR, 1992–97

6.1 National Level

On 26 April 1992 the party leaders announced the 'Peshawar Accord', a power-sharing agreement that installed Sebghatullah Mujaddedi as interim president for two months and assigned the key ministries of the new government to the 'Peshawar Seven'. Jamiat leader Burhanuddin Rabbani was chosen to succeed Mujaddedi as interim president for another four months. Jamiat's military commander, Ahmad Shah Massud, took the position of defence minister and Hezb-e Islami leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, despite the fact that

However, according to interviewees originating from the area, the above-mentioned parties participated in the governing shura of the province. See Rettie, 'A Sort Of Life' [see FN 69].

⁷³ As the 20th and 80th division in Baghlan were incorporated in General Dostum's military structures, he re-established a 6th army command headquartered in Baghlan's capital town of Pol-e Khumri and transferred the command to Sayed Jafar Naderi, the son of the Afghan Ismaili community's spiritual leader, Mansur Naderi. The Kunduz' corps structures ceased to exist, whereas remnants of the 54th division structure survived until 2001. See Davis, 'The Afghan Army' [see FN 59]. For the appointments, see AFGHANews Vol. 8, No. 24 of 15 December 1992, 8.

⁷⁴ On the national level, the alliance between the predominantly Tajik Jamiat and the Pashtun Ittehad can be mainly explained by the close personal relationship of Burhanuddin Rabbani and Abdur Rabb ar-Rasul Sayyaf, ideological closeness and their common enmity towards Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and his Hezb-e Islami. Besides this, in Kunduz province, Jamiat's key commander (Aref Khan) was a Pashtun, which probably made it even less complicated to establish alliances with other Pashtun parties.

⁷⁵ Hezb-e Islami was particularly strong in the area of Kabul, the provinces of Kapisa, Kunar and Nuristan as well as in northeastern Afghanistan. Ittehad's main bases comprised Paghman district in the east of Kabul as well as areas in Kunar and Nangarhar provinces. See Schetter, *Ethnizität*, 429–31, 433 [see FN 3].

he rejected the Peshawar Accords and the new government, briefly served as its prime minister in summer 1992. The main split within the mujahedin parties during the first phase of the evolving civil war was between Jamiat and Hezb-e Islami. Jamiat, supported by Jombesh, Ittehad and Harakat-e Inqilab, represented the government of the newly established (and internationally recognized) Islamic State of Afghanistan and controlled its official security forces. Hezb-e Islami did not recognise the government and became the main opposition party, while Wahdat, for different reasons, stayed out of the government as well.⁷⁶

As all party leaders regarded capturing the capital, or parts of it, as a precondition to gaining power or influence within the newly established Islamic State of Afghanistan, more and more militia forces penetrated the urban areas of the city.⁷⁷ For the next four years, Kabul became the main scene of the civil war. Other parts of the country disintegrated into three cohesive, de facto autonomous territories: the west controlled by Ismail Khan of Jamiat, the northwest ruled by Abdurrashid Dostum of Jombesh and the northeast administered by Ahmad Shah Massud and Shura-ye Nazar. The Pashtun belt, stretching from the areas east of Kabul alongside the Pakistani border to the south and then westwards to the Iranian border, was ruled by numerous smaller local power brokers on the basis of tribal and religious networks. Like Kabul on the national level, Kunduz province occupied a strategic location exactly between Dostum's territory to the west and Massud's territory to the east and south. Therefore, and because Kunduz was ethnically heterogeneous and thus disputed between several parties, the province became a major battleground of the civil war besides the Kabul area.⁷⁸

However, on the national level, alliances of the mujahedin parties periodically changed. According to Dorronsoro, three phases could be distinguished between 1992 and the emergence of the Taliban.⁷⁹ During the first months after the collapse of the Najibullah regime, Jamiat was in a coalition with Jombesh and Wahdat. This alliance broke apart in autumn 1992 when forces of Jamiat and Wahdat clashed in Kabul. Immediately after Wahdat had left the government coalition,

Harakat-e Inqilab and Ittehad joined the remaining Jamiat and Jombesh. Following the formation of this coalition, the second phase was hallmarked by the extension of Rabbani's term as president of the Islamic State of Afghanistan for eighteen months in December 1992.⁸⁰ This resulted in fierce fighting in Kabul's urban areas and a new diplomatic initiative by Pakistan, Saudi-Arabia and Iran, which finally led to the ratification of the 'Islamabad Accord' in March 1993. In fact, the new agreement was short-lived and fighting went on.⁸¹ During autumn 1993, Jombesh and Hezb-e Islami approached each other and finally created a new alliance named Shura-ye Ali-ye Hamahangi (High/Supreme Coordination Council) in January 1994. The withdrawal of Jombesh from the government coalition marked the beginning of the third phase of the mujahedin's civil war. This phase came to an end when first Hezb-e Islami in spring 1996 and later Jombesh in autumn 1996 reconciled with Jamiat again to face the common threat, emanating from a new political and military actor in the power struggle – the Taliban movement.⁸²

6.2 Regional level

6.2.1 1992 and 1993 – Turf battle and the impact of the civil war in Tajikistan

The first time heavy fighting erupted in Kunduz province was in the second half of June 1992 when forces of Jombesh unsuccessfully tried to expel Hezb-e Islami militias from their positions.⁸³ The party of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar managed to preserve their areas of control in Kunduz province throughout 1992, despite severe military setbacks in other parts of the country.⁸⁴ At the beginning of 1993, despite their rivalry on the national level, Hezb-e Islami and Jamiat commanders in Kunduz province joined forces against Jombesh, which

⁷⁶ Hezb-e Wahdat rejected the Peshawar Accords, as the Shiite core demand for 25 per cent of the ministerial positions was not met. See Dorronsoro, *Revolution Unending*, 239 [see FN 2].

⁷⁷ Schetter, *Ethnizität*, 486 [see FN 3].

⁷⁸ Dorronsoro, *Revolution Unending*, 240–50 [see FN 2]; Schetter, *Ethnizität*, 476–86 [see FN 2].

⁷⁹ Dorronsoro, *Revolution Unending*, 242–3 [see FN 2].

⁸⁰ Rabbani extended his period through the Shura-ye Hal-o-Aqd (Council of Supreme Popular Settlement) convened in Kabul, handpicked by him and boycotted even by most of his own allies.

⁸¹ Maley, *The Afghanistan Wars*, 162–81 [see FN 54].

⁸² For a comprehensive analysis of the mujahedin's civil war, their formation of alliances and the course of the fighting in Kabul area see Schetter, *Ethnizität*, 486–508 [see FN 3]; Maley, *The Afghanistan Wars*, 162–81 [see FN 54]; Dorronsoro, *Revolution Unending*, 240–50 [see FN 2].

⁸³ 'Reports of Serious Fighting in Northern Afghanistan Reach Kabul', *AFP*, 21 June 1992.

⁸⁴ 'Hezb-i-Islami Reported under Pressure on the Battlefield', *AFP*, 26 August 1992.

again led to fighting.⁸⁵ Nevertheless, besides these clashes, the situation in the province remained calm to a large extent during 1993.⁸⁶ The governor of Kunduz attributed this to the province's well-functioning shura system. In August that year he mentioned that seven mujahedin parties were operating in Kunduz province, exerting authority with the help of traditional shuras.⁸⁷ Whereas the number of different mujahedin parties reflects the grave fragmentation of power, their occupation and use of the traditional elites' main governing and decision-making body indicates the dominant role of commanders. Anyway, the almost-peaceful situation in Kunduz province in spring and summer of 1993 (some observers saw it as a model for a future Afghanistan) did not last very long and turned out to be an illusion.⁸⁸

In November 1993, temporary but heavy fighting broke out again in Kunduz province. Forces of Ittehad, Jamiat, Hezb-e Islami and Mahaz under the overall command of Amir Chughay succeeded in capturing Sher Khan Bandar, the easternmost stronghold of Jombesh's coherent area of control.⁸⁹ Commanders Aref Khan (Jamiat), Sayed Amirullah Agha (Hezb-e Islami) and Mirza Muhammad Naseri (Mahaz) reportedly participated in the coordinated offensive that included the use of tanks, heavy artillery, mortars and rocket-launchers. They finally forced Commander Rahim Pahlawan of Jombesh to retreat into Qala-ye Zal district.⁹⁰ Three generals, among them General Begi, one of Dostum's most senior military leaders, fled to neighbouring Tajikistan while Ittehad captured a huge amount of light and heavy weapons from Jombesh.⁹¹ After Dostum's forces launched a counter-attack and recaptured some areas around the town, Sher Khan Bandar was finally handed back peacefully to Jombesh as the result of negotiations. The agreement that led to the return of this vital

border-crossing point to Jombesh at the end of 1993 had been brokered by President Burhanuddin Rabbani, who was still in an alliance with General Dostum on the national level, when local forces of his own Jamiat party and allied forces of Ittehad launched the offensive against Jombesh at the beginning of November.⁹² The main reason local Jamiat, Ittehad, Mahaz and Hezb-e Islami commanders launched an offensive against Sher Khan Bandar, which contrasted with the actual national-level conflict formations by far, had less to do with anyone's rivalry with Jombesh, but with the strategic importance of the border-crossing point. In 1993 the border town and river port was not only a transport, trading and smuggling hub, but one of the main entry points to Afghanistan for refugees of the war in neighbouring Tajikistan, too.

The Tajik civil war⁹³ and the Tajik refugees who fled to northern Afghanistan during the first phase of the war in late 1992 and the first half of 1993 heavily affected the political situation in Kunduz province. The number of Tajik refugees who found shelter in northern Afghanistan has been estimated at 95,000, out of which about 40,000 stayed in Kunduz province, where they became a bone of contention for the different mujahedin commanders.⁹⁴ As the latter saw the refugees as a potential vehicle to attract UN assistance for their zones of control, they competed with commanders loyal to General Dostum further to the west in collecting arriving Tajiks in the border area of northern Kunduz province. Dostum, who openly supported the regime of the ex-communists in Dushanbe, had declared that all Tajik refugees in his areas of influence would be disarmed and nobody would

⁸⁵ Gerald Bourke, 'Hundreds Dead in Afghan Infighting', *The Guardian*, 4 February 1993 and N.N. (Islamabad), AFP, 4 February 1993.

⁸⁶ 'Afghanistan's Peaceful North', *The Economist*, 2 October 1993.

⁸⁷ The seven mujahedin parties that were allegedly represented in the main Kunduz shuras in summer 1993 were not explicitly mentioned by the source. It can be assumed that they definitely included Jamiat, Hezb-e Islami, Ittehad and Mahaz-e Melli, probably Jombesh and Harakat-e Inqilab and possibly Wahdat or Harakat-e Islami. See Rettie, 'A Sort Of Life' [see FN 69].

⁸⁸ Ibid; 'Afghanistan's Peaceful North' [see FN 86].

⁸⁹ James Kyngge, 'Regional Sources Report Fall of Afghan Town', *Reuters*, 8 November 1993.

⁹⁰ Yusufzai, 'Dostum's Position Weakens' [see FN 66].

⁹¹ 'Afghan Warlord Retakes Part of Tajik Border Port', *Reuters*, 13 November 1993.

⁹² 'Afghan River Port Handed to Dostam Forces', *AFP*, 25 December 1993.

⁹³ The Tajik civil war lasted from 1991 until 1997. The main belligerents were the communist Popular Front (PF) that seized power in Dushanbe in summer 1992 and the Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP), the central faction among several democratic and Islamist opposition groups. The IRP had been militarily defeated in parts of Tajikistan during the first phase of the civil war and had to operate out of the country's mountainous regions as well as from Afghan soil. IRP established its headquarters in Taloqan, the capital of Takhar province. While IRP was supported by the Afghan government of Burhanuddin Rabbani and his Jamiat-e Islami, PF received support from Dostum's Jombesh, which was aimed at limiting the Islamist's influence. See Anna Matveeva, 'The Perils of Emerging Statehood: Civil War and State Reconstruction in Tajikistan', Crisis States Research Centre, working paper no. 46, March 2009.

⁹⁴ Ahmed Rashid, 'Point of Conflict: Russia and Islamic Militants in Tajik Proxy War', *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 03 June 1993; 'Afghanistan's Peaceful North' [see FN 86].

receive military training and be sent back to Tajikistan to join the resistance. On the contrary, Kunduz' mujahedin commanders wanted to exploit the situation to increase their political and military influence in the province.⁹⁵ Thus, from the very beginning of the civil war in Tajikistan they actively supported the Islamist opposition in the country by sending their own Afghan fighters,⁹⁶ setting up training camps and recruiting new fighters from the refugees, making them recipients of financial support from abroad.

Hezb-e Islami was reported to have set up training camps to train Tajik nationals in Kunduz province's Imam Saheb district as early as late summer 1992.⁹⁷ Additional training facilities were established by Ittehad in Kunduz province's central areas and by Jamiat in the area of Taloqan in neighbouring Takhar province.⁹⁸ Besides Afghan veteran mujahedin fighters, the instructors of the training camps included personnel of Pakistan's military intelligence agency, retired Pakistani Army officers as well as members of Pakistan's Islamist party Jamaat-e-Islami.⁹⁹ The refugee camps in Kunduz province were mainly taken care of by Arab and Pakistani non-governmental organisations as the mujahedin authorities in these provinces obstructed the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) from fully taking control of the refugees. State and private sources in Saudi-Arabia, the smaller Arab Gulf countries and probably Libya and Iran funnelled money to Kunduz and Takhar to support the recruitment, training and equipping of fighters for the Islamist opposition in Tajikistan. Amir Chughay was reportedly directly sponsored and favoured by private Wahhabi groups in Saudi-Arabia and Kuwait due to his affiliation with Ittehad, the one mujahedin party clearly in line with Wahhabi thought and strongly affiliated with Arab Islamist networks since the first days of the Afghan jihad.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁵ David McDonald, 'Tajik Refugees become Afghan Political Football', *Reuters*, 17 January 1993.

⁹⁶ In 1992, Abdurrashid Dostum sent about 600 ethnic Uzbek fighters to Tajikistan to support his fellow ex-communists in Dushanbe, while a similar number of ethnic Afghan Tajik fighters was sent by Jamiat-e Islami to join the opposition. See Matveeva, 'The Perils of Emerging Statehood', 22 [see FN 93].

⁹⁷ Chris Bowers, 'Islamic Republic 'Not an Option' for Country', *The Guardian*, 10 September 1992.

⁹⁸ Rashid, 'Point of Conflict' [see FN 94]; Matveeva, 'The Perils of Emerging Statehood', 24 [see FN 93].

⁹⁹ Rashid, 'Point of Conflict' [see FN 94].

¹⁰⁰ Wahhabi groups are reported to have been penetrating pious regions within Tajikistan, like the Fergana Valley, since the second half of the 1970s, to promote their version of Islam. Thus a strong mujahedin

6.2.2 1994 – First, second and third Jombesh offensive

The conflicting policies in regard to the Tajik civil war with Dostum on one side and the majority of Islamist commanders that controlled Kunduz province on the other side, as well as their competition for the control over the Tajik refugees, explain to a large extent the occasional fighting in Kunduz province in 1992 and 1993. However, in January 1994, a shake-up of alliances on the national level took place, when Jombesh, Hezb-e Islami and Wahdat joined forces under the Shura-ye Ali-ye Hamahangi against the Jamiat government of President Rabbani and his main allies, Ittehad and Harakat-e Inqilab.¹⁰¹ After Ahmad Shah Massud had repelled the first major offensive of Hekmatyar's and Dostum's forces at the Kabul front at the beginning of 1994, Dostum temporarily shifted his centre of gravity to the north and prepared his forces for an attack against Kunduz province, which still marked the boundary of Jamiat's and Jombesh's zones of control.¹⁰²

When Dostum's forces were advancing on Kunduz province from the west in mid February 1994,¹⁰³ Jamiat and Ittehad, which still jointly controlled the urban areas of the province, preventively attacked positions of Jombesh's new ally, Hezb-e Islami. After some initial success, the forces loyal to president Rabbani faced a full-scale joint Hezb-e Islami and Jombesh offensive.¹⁰⁴ Led by Juma Khan Hamdard,¹⁰⁵ one of Hezb-e Islami's most experienced field commanders, the offensive

commander just on the other side of the border (Amir Chughay), who was regarded as a follower of Wahhabi Islam and had already been on the payroll of Islamic charities from Saudi-Arabia since the mid 1980s, seemed to be a perfect vehicle for ensuring Wahhabi influence on the Islamist cause in Tajikistan. See Matveeva, 'The Perils of Emerging Statehood', 9 and 24 [see FN 93].

¹⁰¹ Schetter, *Ethnizität*, 468f [see FN 3].

¹⁰² 'A Government Victory in Afghanistan', *The Economist*, 26 March 1994.

¹⁰³ Terence White, 'Uneasy Calm Prevails in Kabul amid Minor Fighting', *AFP*, 19 February 1994.

¹⁰⁴ 'Hekmatyar's Forces Capture Afghan Kunduz Province: Hezb', *AFP*, 28 February 1994.

¹⁰⁵ Juma Khan Hamdard is said to have played a decisive role in arbitrating between Hekmatyar and Dostum, to forge the newly established Shura-ye Hamahangi. Born in 1954 in Mazar-e Sharif, he is a Pashtun of the Wardak tribe from Balkh province. He fought as a commander for Hezb-e Islami until 1993 when he joined Jombesh. After having allegedly supported the Taleban during their campaign in northern Afghanistan, he renewed his alliance with Dostum and has since been an opponent of the student militia. Currently, he is governor of Paktia province. See Glassner et al., 'EZ-Kontextanalysen', 41 [see FN 38].

began during the early hours of 28 February 1994 and led to the capture of key terrain and positions in and around Kunduz city, including the airport, the garrison and the historical fort (Bala Hissar).¹⁰⁶ On 2 March, a spokesperson of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar announced the capture of Kunduz city by Hezb-e Islami and allied forces. He proclaimed the establishment of a new administration in Kunduz made up of 27 commanders and named Hezb-e Islami's local commanders, Sayed Hamidullah and Arbab Muhammad Hashem, as new governor and new commander of the garrison. After this, Jamiat confirmed the heavy fighting in and around Kunduz city and admitted that at least parts of Kunduz province were under control of enemy forces.¹⁰⁷

A few days later, however, Jamiat units under the overall command of Ahmad Shah Massud launched a counter-offensive to retake Kunduz city and most parts of the province. Khanabad town, located about 25 kilometres to the east of Kunduz at the connecting road to Taloqan, was recaptured by Jamiat forces only two days after they had lost it to Jombesh.¹⁰⁸ In the following days, Massud succeeded in pushing back the mainly Uzbek forces of General Dostum. He brought key positions in and around Kunduz city under his control again, including the high plateau with the airport and the Bala Hissar fort. On 9 March, Jamiat and allied fighters eventually forced the remaining Jombesh units out of the city centre, after local civilians and local Hezb-e Islami fighters staged an uprising and attacked Dostum's soldiers at the rear.¹⁰⁹ The revolt that was highly praised in Jamiat's propaganda had been triggered by lootings and atrocities reportedly committed by Jombesh soldiers after they had captured the city centre earlier.¹¹⁰ In the course of their counter-offensive, Massud's forces not only secured Khanabad and Kunduz city for the government, but cleared most parts of Imam Saheb and Qala-ye Zal districts from opposing forces. Furthermore they captured Sher Khan Bandar as well as the strategically important small towns of Dushi and Khenjan in Baghlan province.¹¹¹ As a result, nearly the entire important connecting road leading from Kabul via the Salang

Pass to the Tajik border was under the control of Jamiat and its allies, at least temporarily.¹¹²

During 1994, Kunduz province remained one of the hotspots of the Afghan civil war. The frequent fighting, the extensive use of heavy artillery, mortars and rocket launchers as well as repeated bombardments by Dostum's air force resulted in heavy losses on both sides and claimed many victims among the civilian population.¹¹³ Throughout spring and summer 1994, intense fighting took place, primarily in the districts of Chahrdara to the west and Aliabad to the south of Kunduz city,¹¹⁴ while in May Jamiat and allied militias repulsed another Jombesh and Hezb-e Islami offensive directed to the city centre.¹¹⁵ Until the end of the year, neither alliance succeeded in bringing the entire province under its control. However, after some early setbacks in September,¹¹⁶ Jombesh's autumn offensive led to the capture of about half of the province's territory, including some suburbs of Kunduz city, until December 1994.¹¹⁷ Additionally, the defenders' morale had received a major blow during this fighting, when Commander Amir Chughay, the prominent Ittehad commander and one of the key figures loyal to the Rabbani government in Kunduz province, was killed in early October.¹¹⁸ Until the end of January 1995, the

¹¹² Ibid; White, 'Strategic Northern Capital' [see FN 109].

¹¹³ Jane Macartney, 'Afghan Warlord Ready to Discuss Any Peace Plan', Reuters, 16 April 1994; William Reeve, 'Afghan President's Rights Advance', Reuters, 26 June 1994; 'Uzbek Jets Bomb Afghan Province, Kabul Says', Reuters, 30 September 1994.

¹¹⁴ Terence White, 'At Least 60 Civilians Wounded in Kabul Clashes', AFP, 12 May 1994.

¹¹⁵ William Reeve, 'Fierce Fighting in Afghan North, Many Dead', Reuters, 17 May 1994.

¹¹⁶ 'Uzbek Jets' [see FN 113].

¹¹⁷ Mostafa Danesch, 'Einkesselung der Hauptstadt Afghanistans', *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 30 November 1994.

¹¹⁸ Commander Amir Chughay died on 7 October 1994 at the frontlines in Chahrdara district near the Yerganak pass. While western media reported he had been killed during an air attack of Jombesh jets, the official announcement of his death by Rabbani-controlled Radio Kabul claimed that he had been killed during face-to-face fighting with enemy ground forces. A third version provided by several Afghan sources indicates that Amir Chughay had become the victim of a targeted killing by perpetrators loyal to General Dostum. These sources fall back on eye-witnesses, who reported that General Dostum personally offered his condolences to the family of Amir Chughay and praised him as a great man of the time, which they interpreted as an implicit confession. Anyhow, the death of Amir Chughay meant a severe loss for the government forces in Kunduz province and for Ittehad in particular. Some of Amir Chughay's responsibilities were taken over by one of his younger brothers, Amir Muhammad Ghulam, who was

¹⁰⁶ 'Afghan President's Foes Report Taking Airport', *Reuters*, 28 February 1994.

¹⁰⁷ Terence White, 'Conflicting Claims of Control over Strategic Kunduz', AFP, 2 March 1994.

¹⁰⁸ Terence White, 'Masood Claims Military Gains against Uzbeks in Kunduz', AFP, 8 March 1994.

¹⁰⁹ Terence White, 'Strategic Northern Capital Kunduz Recaptured, Announces Kabul', AFP, 9 March 1994.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Kathy Gannon, 'President's Men Claim Advances, Hundreds Killed, in North', AP, 17 March 1994.

fighting in Kunduz and Baghlan provinces subsided and no major military operations were executed in northeastern Afghanistan. On 14 December 1994, UNHCR even managed to get through the first aid convoy to Kunduz city in 22 months, to supply 12,000 Tajik and Afghan refugees that were still holding out in the province.¹¹⁹

6.2.3 1995 – Fourth Jombesh offensive and decline of Hezb-e Islami

On 24 and 25 January 1995, positions of government forces in Kunduz city were heavily bombarded by jets of General Dostum's air force in preparation of a new major two-pronged ground offensive that began at 10 A.M. on 26 January.¹²⁰ Jombesh infantry forces backed by local Hezb-e Islami units attacked from Yerganak pass at the province's western border and from the area south of Aliabad towards Kunduz city.¹²¹ After the district centre of Aliabad, 25 kilometres south of Kunduz city, had changed hands several times and Jombesh finally captured the bridge crossing the Kunduz River between Chahrdara and Kunduz districts,¹²² fierce fighting started in the city's suburbs on 30 January.¹²³ Here, the defenders, whose main force still was 54th Division, held their lines for about a week. Then, on 6 February, Massud's forces withdrew from the city centre towards Khanabad, and both sides announced the handover of the city without bloodshed. Previous to the withdrawal of the government's forces, about 500 men of a local militia, up to that time loyal to the Rabbani government, switched sides, which weakened the defence of the city crucially. During the two weeks of the offensive, Kunduz city was constantly bombed by aircraft and rockets and

reported to have replaced him as commander of 54th division. Yet, Amir Muhammad Ghulam could not completely fill the power vacuum created by his brother's death. Among the Pashtuns of Kunduz and within the governing commanders' shura in Kunduz province other figures, particularly Aref Khan, benefited from Amir Chughay's death and gained more influence. See N.N., 'Afghan General Killed in Fighting, Radio Says', Reuters, 8 October 1994; 'Afghan Loyalists Say Uzbekistan Aids Rebels', *Washington Times*, 9 October 1994.

¹¹⁹ 'UNO-Hilfskonvoi erreicht Nordafghanistan', *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 13 December 1994.

¹²⁰ Terence White, 'Heavy Bombing Reported on Kunduz in Northern Afghanistan', *AFP*, 25 January 1995.

¹²¹ Peter Greste, 'Afghan Warlord Invades Northern Town, Kabul Says', *Reuters*, 26 January 1995.

¹²² Terence White, 'Kunduz Under Firm Afghan Government Control, Says Official', *AFP*, 31 January 1995

¹²³ Raja Ashgar, 'Afghan Faction Claims Taking Town, Kabul Denies', *Reuters*, 29 January 1995; 'Kabul Says 100 Opposition Militia Killed in North', *Reuters*, 30 January 1995.

pounded from artillery.¹²⁴ While Jombesh and Hezb-e Islami stressed the defection of local militias and Jamiat commanders as one reason for their success,¹²⁵ Jamiat admitted the loss of the city and instantaneously announced that a counter-offensive was imminent.¹²⁶ Indeed, only days after their retreat, the 54th Division attacked the city from three sides on 9 February and succeeded in regaining the city centre of Kunduz after heavy fighting on 14 February.¹²⁷ The field commanders who led the three attacking units were Jamiat's Kunduz governor Qari Rahmatullah, Amir Muhammad Ghulam and Engineer Muhammad Omar¹²⁸ of Ittehad.¹²⁹ In a second phase of the offensive, Massud's forces captured Sher Khan Bandar from Jombesh and took about 200 prisoners.¹³⁰ Chahar Dara and Aliabad districts were only partly recaptured by 54th Division, as Jombesh forces maintained key positions at the western and southern edge of the province, for the time being.¹³¹

On the national level, a major shift in the mujahedin parties' balance of power was created, when a new political-military actor, the Taleban,¹³²

¹²⁴ Tim Johnston, 'Government Loses Key Northern Town to Opposition', *AP*, 6 February 1995.

¹²⁵ 'Afghan President Loses Control of Provincial Capital', *AFP*, 6 February 1995.

¹²⁶ Peter Greste, 'Strategic Northern Town Falls to Afghan Opposition', *Reuters*, 6 February 1995.

¹²⁷ 'President's Forces Claim Recapture of Northern city', *AFP*, 14 February 1995.

¹²⁸ Engineer Muhammad Omar Sulaimani, an ethnic Andar Pashtun born in Baharak district of Takhar province, was the key commander of Ittehad in his home province. His area of influence included the Baharak and Bangi districts as well as parts of Taloqan district. This was exactly the territory to the east of Ittehad's Kunduz fiefdom in Khanabad district. When the mujahedin captured Taloqan in 1991 he became mayor of the city and a few years later he assumed the office of deputy provincial governor of Takhar province. Until he temporarily defected to the Taleban at a crucial point of time in 1998, he was one of very few Pashtun commanders closely linked to the senior figures of Shura-ye Nazar. See Mohammad Bashir, '100 Dead, 120 Injured in Russian Bombing in Afghanistan', *AFP*, 14 April 1995; Bakhtar news agency, Kabul, 'Infighting between Alliance Commanders – Taleban Agency', *BBC Monitoring*, 8 December 2000.

¹²⁹ Radio Afghanistan, Kabul, 'Government Recaptures Kunduz', *BBC Monitoring*, 16 February 1995.

¹³⁰ 'Massood Claims Victories in Northern Afghanistan: Radio Kabul', *AFP*, 22 February 1995.

¹³¹ 'Kunduz Said to Be in Rabbani Hands', *AFP*, 22 February 1995.

¹³² Neamatollah Nojumi, 'The Rise and the Fall of the Taliban', in ed. Robert D. Crews and Amin Tarzi, *The Taliban and the Crisis of Afghanistan*, London, Harvard University Press 2008, 90–117.

entered the political stage of Afghanistan in autumn 1994 and intervened in the battle for Kabul in February 1995. The Taliban movement, coming from the area around the old Afghan capital city of Kandahar, had already brought eight Afghan provinces south of Kabul under their control, when they launched an offensive against Hezb-e Islami positions to the west and south of Kabul city during the first half of February 1995. On 14 February, they overran Hezb-e Islami's headquarters in Chahrasayab, 15 kilometres south of Kabul, and forced Hekmatyar and his staff to flee to the small town of Sarobi further north, 60 kilometres east of Kabul, where he set up his new main base.¹³³ As Hezb-e Islami was taken by surprise and its military forces at the Kabul front partly fled in chaos, instead of retreating in an orderly way, heavy losses of personnel, weaponry and equipment resulted. Hekmatyar gathered his remaining forces from all over the country in the eastern provinces of Kunar, Laghman and Nangarhar, to regroup. Thus, General Dostum's Jombesh forces lost their key ally in the north during a decisive phase in the battle for Kunduz province. Most Hezb-e Islami units followed the order of Hekmatyar and withdrew from Kunduz province in mid February 1995.¹³⁴

6.2.4 1995 – Government alliance infighting and fifth Jombesh offensive

Owing to the high losses of personnel and equipment on both sides and due to the uncertain overall situation regarding Hezb-e Islami, the Kunduz front remained relatively quiet between the end of February and the beginning of June 1995.¹³⁵ In March of that year some commanders of Jombesh switched sides with their men and equipment and strengthened the local pro-Rabbani coalition.¹³⁶ In April and May, brief clashes between different commanders loyal to the government erupted in the province. Finally, fighting broke out between Jamiat's two most influential commanders at the Kunduz front, Aref Khan and Mir Alam Khan. According to radio reports, many dead and injured were the result.¹³⁷

¹³³ Peter Greste, 'Afghan Student Militia Captures Hekmatyar's Base', *Reuters*, 14 February 1995.

¹³⁴ 'Kunduz Said to be in Rabbani hands' [see FN 131].

¹³⁵ Mohammad Bashir, 'Government Sees Chance for Peace with Northern Rival', *AFP*, 27 May 1995.

¹³⁶ The total number of reported defectors was 100. This could be an exaggeration, as the report was provided by a government source. See 'Five Commanders Defect to Government Side in Kunduz', *BBC*, 24 March 1995.

¹³⁷ 'Clash between Two Jamiat Groups in Kunduz', *BBC*, 25 April 1995.

At the beginning of May, Jamiat and Ittehad units reportedly clashed frequently, raising the death toll again. The alleged reason for the heavy fighting was that Shura-ye Nazar had stopped paying Ittehad's commanders and had tried to buy over some of them.¹³⁸

In late May 1995 President Rabbani signalled his readiness to negotiate the terms of a cease-fire agreement with General Dostum and some reports indicated that secret talks were already underway.¹³⁹ Nevertheless, about ten days later, fierce fighting broke out in northern and northeastern Afghanistan again, when Jombesh militias launched a renewed offensive against positions of Jamiat and its allies in Kunduz' Aliabad district as well as in neighbouring Baghlan province.¹⁴⁰ During the following days, Jombesh concentrated its efforts on the district centre of Aliabad and simultaneously launched an offensive to the east of Kunduz city, in Khanabad district.¹⁴¹ However, despite supporting the offensives with a large number of fighters and despite the extensive use of equipment and weaponry and new air attacks against the city centre of Kunduz,¹⁴² Jombesh's vigorous attacks were repulsed and Dostum's forces proved unable to break through the defenders lines and recapture the town. As a result of heavy losses on both sides, especially for the attacking forces of Jombesh, the fighting died down during the last days of June 1995.¹⁴³

During the course of that year, minor engagements between Jombesh's forces on the one side and militias of Jamiat, Ittehad and their allies on the other took place again and again in Kunduz province.¹⁴⁴ Besides this conflict line, fighting among different groups of fighters loyal to the government erupted again in Kunduz and Imam Saheb cities between December 1995 and February 1996. At first, forces loyal to Mahaz commander Mirza Muhammad Naseri clashed with

¹³⁸ 'Fighting between the Supervisory Council and Ettehad-e Islami in Kunduz', *BBC*, 10 May 1995.

¹³⁹ Bashir, 'Government Sees Chance' [see FN 135].

¹⁴⁰ 'Government Forces Repulse Militia Attack on Kunduz', *BBC*, 8 June 1995.

¹⁴¹ 'Opposition Forces Reportedly Advancing on Kondoz City', *BBC*, 13 June 1995.

¹⁴² Peter Greste, 'Afghanistan's Opposition Jets Bomb Kabul, Kunduz', *Reuters*, 16 June 1995.

¹⁴³ 'Fighting Reported in Northern Afghanistan', *AFP*, 15 June 1995; 'Militia Positions Captured in Baghlan and Bamian; Heavy Fighting in Jowzjan, Kunduz', *BBC*, 16 June 1995.

¹⁴⁴ 'Government Forces Shoot Down Two Enemy Jets', *BBC*, 11 September 1995; 'Radio Pakistan Reports Government Troops under Pressure on Northern and Kabul Fronts', *BBC Monitoring*, 4 November 1995.

forces of Jamiat general Mir Alam Khan that were supported by Ittehad fighters in Kunduz' city centre between 27 and 30 December 1995. Both sides used heavy weapons and caused severe casualties among fighters and civilians.¹⁴⁵ About two weeks later, fierce battles erupted again in the cities of Kunduz and Imam Saheb, this time mainly between commanders of Ittehad and Jamiat.¹⁴⁶ Around 7 February 1996, clashes between Mahaz and Jamiat were reported again, this time from Imam Saheb.¹⁴⁷ Furthermore, during February, new infighting within Jamiat broke out in Kunduz city, when followers of President Rabbani clashed with supporters of Ahmad Shah Massud. These clashes reflected the split between the organizational structures of pro-Rabbani Jamiat and Massud-controlled Shura-ye Nazar.¹⁴⁸ Reports from Kunduz indicated that the city centre was looted once more and shopkeepers had to close down their businesses, while civilians fled from the street battles. Besides several killed and injured civilians, a high-ranking commander of 54th Division was reported among the dead as well as Kunduz' first post-Najibullah governor, Mulla Muhammad Omar. Another senior commander of 54th Division was reported to have fled to Tajikistan carrying with him the salaries of the division's staff.¹⁴⁹

6.2.5 1996 – Disintegration of Shura-ye Hamahangi

In March 1996, conflicts among and within parties that made up Shura-ye Hamahangi also resulted in clashes. At the beginning of the month, fighting broke out in Pul-e Khumri, the capital city of Baghlan province, following the killing of a senior Hezb-e Islami commander. Hezb-e Islami blamed Ismaili militia forces commanded by Sayed Jafar Naderi, that time allied with Jombesh, for the murder and attacked their positions. A week of heavy clashes between the two groups resulted in several hundred people dead or wounded. Thousands fled the area to the north, partly to Kunduz.¹⁵⁰ After a few days, a cease-fire and further negotiations were brokered by

intermediaries of General Dostum, which finally led to a settlement of the conflict.¹⁵¹

Likewise, conflicts broke out in Mazar-e Sharif at the beginning of March between rival commanders within Jombesh. Rasul Pahlawan, an ethnic Uzbek and deputy of General Dostum, strongly sympathized with Hezb-e Islami and supported Hekmatyar's militias fighting the forces of Dostum's ally, Sayed Jafar Naderi, in Pul-e Khumri area. Inside Jombesh's stronghold, Mazar-e Sharif, this led to confrontations between commanders supporting Rasul Pahlawan and those loyal to General Dostum.¹⁵² The main reason for these developments was a slow rapprochement between Hezb-e Islami and Jamiat on the national level. First, exploratory talks between the two parties had already been held in February 1996 and dealt with a possible return of Hezb-e Islami into the government's camp.¹⁵³ However, in winter 1996, General Dostum completely rejected talks about a rapprochement with the government, whereas his deputy Rasul Pahlawan welcomed the initiative of Hezb-e Islami. After Hezb-e Islami had quit the Shura-ye Hamahangi alliance and rejoined the Rabbani alliance in summer 1996, Dostum allegedly ordered the assassination of Rasul Pahlawan.¹⁵⁴

7 MAY 1997: THE CAPTURE OF KUNDUZ CITY BY TALEBAN FORCES

7.1 National level

On 26 June 1996, President Rabbani reappointed Hekmatyar as prime minister of Afghanistan and assigned the ministries of defence and finance to Hezb-e Islami after the party broke up with Shura-ye Hamahangi.¹⁵⁵ However, the turnaround of Hekmatyar, whose militias had joined the forces of Massud in defending the capital in early June 1996,¹⁵⁶ could not avoid the capture of Kabul by the Taleban movement. A short time after the fall of the capital on 27 September 1996, Jombesh

¹⁴⁵ 'Fighting between factions in Kunduz province', BBC, 30 December 1995.

¹⁴⁶ 'Commanders Reportedly Clash with Each Other in Kunduz Province', BBC, 15 January 1996.

¹⁴⁷ 'Government Forces Clash with Mahaz-e Melli Faction; 40 Soldiers killed', BBC, 9 February 1996.

¹⁴⁸ For reasons for the 'Shura-ye Nazar/ Jamiat split' refer to glossary at the end of the report.

¹⁴⁹ 'Opposition Radio Reports Kunduz Residents in Flight', BBC, 29 February 1996.

¹⁵⁰ Alan Pearce, 'Thousands Flee Northern Afghan Fighting', Reuters, 3 March 1996.

¹⁵¹ Alan Pearce, 'Ceasefire Takes Effect in North Afghan Town', Reuters, 4 March 1996.

¹⁵² 'Tense Situation Reported in Northern City of Mazar-e Sharif', BBC, 5 March 1996.

¹⁵³ Pearce, 'Ceasefire' [see 151].

¹⁵⁴ Maley, *The Afghanistan Wars*, 192 [see FN 54].

¹⁵⁵ Raja Ashgar, 'Weakened Hekmatyar back in Afghan Government Fold', Reuters, 26 June 1996.

¹⁵⁶ 'Over 3,000 Hezb Troops Fighting Taliban near Kabul: Commander', AFP, 2 June 1996.

started to slowly re-approach Jamiat as well.¹⁵⁷ In October 1996, Burhanuddin Rabbani was still the de jure president of Afghanistan. Following the fall of Kabul, he and other members of his cabinet, among them Hekmatyar, primarily stayed in the cities of Kunduz and Taloqan in northeastern Afghanistan. At this point, the forces and militias loyal to the government and still under the overall command of Ahmad Shah Massud fully controlled the provinces of Badakhshan, Takhar and Kunduz as well as parts of Baghlan, Parwan and Kapisa. General Dostum's area of influence still comprised the six northern provinces of Balkh, Samangan, Jowzjan, Sar-e Pol, Faryab and Badghis. When Dostum and Rabbani met for the first time after a long period in Mazar-e Sharif on 8 October 1996, both behaved ostentatiously affectionate and the Jombesh leader assured his support in the fight against the Taliban.¹⁵⁸ During a meeting in the town of Khenjan in Baghlan province on 10 October, Rabbani, Massud, the leader of Wahdat Karim Khalili and General Dostum established a council called Shura-ye Ali bara-ye Defa az Watan (Supreme Council for the Defence of the Motherland), to coordinate the struggle of the remaining anti-Taliban forces in Afghanistan.¹⁵⁹ Nine months later, the council merged with a new alliance established on 13 June 1997 under the name Jabha-ye Muttahed-e Islami bara-ye Nejat-e Afghanistan (United Islamic Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan) and became known as the 'Northern Alliance'.¹⁶⁰

For the time being, the major political and strategic changes on the national level in the summer and autumn of 1996 did not affect the regional power structure in the northeast. However, the overall political and military position of Hezb-e Islami was considerably weakened at the end of 1996, which would significantly influence the conflict situation in Kunduz province in spring 1997. In contrast to Wahdat (in central Afghanistan), Jombesh (in the northwest and central north) and Jamiat (in the northeast), Hekmatyar's party did not have a coherent territory under its command, but had a share in power on the local level in areas under control of Jombesh or Jamiat. In the south and the southeast as well as in the Kabul area, Hezb-e Islami had suffered heavy losses both in personnel and material. During the course of the year,

¹⁵⁷ 'Negotiations under Way with Dostam in North', *AFP*, 27 September 1996.

¹⁵⁸ B. Imhasly, 'Neuanlauf Rabbanis in Nordafghanistan', *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 9 Oktober 1996.

¹⁵⁹ Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban: Islam, Oil and the New Great Game in Central Asia*, London, IB Tauris 2002, 52–3.

¹⁶⁰ For 'Northern Alliance' refer to glossary at the end of the report.

numerous units had switched sides and joined the Taliban. The weakness of Hekmatyar was reflected by his role within the new anti-Taliban alliance. While he had been awarded important ministerial posts when he was reinstated as prime minister in June 1996, his party did not get any key positions in the June 1997 alliance.¹⁶¹

Early in November 1996, the deputy foreign minister of Iran, Alaeddin Boroujerdi, met Hekmatyar in Kunduz and Dostum in Sheberghan to initiate a new round of peace negotiations including all major factions.¹⁶² A month later, the UN special envoy to Afghanistan, Norbert Holl, tried to arbitrate between the Taliban and militia leaders allied against them. On 8 December 1996, he met Ahmad Shah Massud in Kunduz to explore the possibilities of a cease fire.¹⁶³ The negotiations did not lead to any results and were accompanied by heavy fighting at the frontline north of Kabul. This is where the Taliban tried to occupy several mountain valleys to lay the ground for a push towards northern Afghanistan. On 16 December, a senior representative of Hezb-e Islami stated that Hekmatyar had not yet decided whether he would join Massud, Dostum and Khalili in fighting the Taliban. In explanation he expressed Hekmatyar's dissatisfaction with his role in the newly formed alliance.¹⁶⁴ Late in January 1997, senior representatives of the council that was to become the Northern Alliance and leaders of other mujahedin parties met in Teheran to hold peace talks. Hekmatyar, who had travelled to Iran together with Rabbani,¹⁶⁵ did not return to northern Afghanistan after the conference, but underwent medical treatment for an ostensible leg injury.¹⁶⁶ From March 1997 on, he controlled the

¹⁶¹ The key Hezb-e Islami player in the Northern Alliance was Wahidullah Sabawun, Hekmatyar's longtime companion and former intelligence chief of the organization. While Hekmatyar hesitated to support the Northern Alliance and stayed in exile in Iran since early 1997, Sabawun led the Hezb-e Islami splinter group that stayed with the Rabbani government until 2001 and named this faction Hezb-e Muttahed-e Islami-ye Afghanistan. Sabawun served as the Northern Alliance's finance minister between 1997 and late 2001. Interviews with officials of the Abdul Hadi Arghandiwal and the Wahidullah Sabawun factions of Hezb-e Islami, Kabul, April and May 2012.

¹⁶² 'Iranian Official Meets Former Premier Hekmatyar, Northern Leader Dostum', *BBC*, 12 November 1996.

¹⁶³ 'U.N. Envoy Meets Masood in Northern Afghan Town', *Reuters*, 8 December 1996.

¹⁶⁴ Stefan Smith, [no headline], *AFP*, 16 December 1996.

¹⁶⁵ 'Afghan Mujahedeen Leaders Arrive for Tehran Peace Talks', *AFP*, 24 January 1997.

¹⁶⁶ 'Hekmatyar Asks Pakistan to Review Its Policy on Afghanistan . . .', *AFP*, 5 March 1997.

fate of his party from Teheran. He only returned from Iranian exile to Afghanistan in early 2002.

7.2 Regional level

7.2.1 Spring 1997 – Distribution of power in Kunduz province

Besides minor conflicts between local commanders, Kunduz province was spared from fighting during the early months of 1997.¹⁶⁷ The two allied party leaders Rabbani and Sayyaf occasionally resided in Kunduz city, conducted councils of dignitaries from northeastern Afghanistan¹⁶⁸ and installed a new provincial council in March 1997.¹⁶⁹

It is difficult to create an exact picture of the distribution of power within Kunduz province from the available sources with regard to this phase of the civil war, the period between the fall of Kabul and the capture of Kunduz city by Taleban forces. It appears certain that Qari Rahmatullah still served as provincial governor and Jamiat-controlled Kunduz district as well as parts of several other districts.¹⁷⁰ Ittehad ruled, at least in Khanabad district, while Hezb-e Islami exerted power over Chahrdara and Imam Saheb. However, due to Hekmatyar's and Sayyaf's weakened overall position, the loyalty of their commanders, who mainly controlled the Pashtun areas in Kunduz and Baghlan provinces, was already doubtful.¹⁷¹ This became more and more apparent when Kunduz province again gained the centre stage of the conflict in spring 1997. Concerning Jombesh, the northwestern edge of Imam Saheb district including the strategic port and town of Sher Khan Bandar as well as western areas of Qala-ye Zal district were apparently still in Dostum's sphere of influence. Whether and to what extent Mahaz and Harakat-e Inqilab still played a role in Kunduz province from 1997 onwards can hardly be assessed.

May 1997 – The Taleban's Mazar-e Sharif debacle and its consequences

On 19 May 1997, General Malek Pahlawan, General Dostum's deputy, switched sides and joined the Taleban, as he considered the Jombesh

leader responsible for the killing of his brother, Rasul Pahlawan in June 1996. Besides, he had been offered a senior position in the Taleban administration. By this time, Malek Pahlawan commanded forces in Badghis province where he defended the connecting road between Mazar-e Sharif and the already Taleban-controlled western Afghan city of Herat.¹⁷² Following his defection, the Taleban captured Mazar-e Sharif on 24 May 1997 with a force of about 5,000 soldiers. General Dostum fled to Turkey via Uzbekistan with some of his close aides.¹⁷³

A simultaneous foray of Taleban troops from the area north of Kabul to the Salang pass and further north towards Baghlan and Kunduz resulted in a delicate situation for the remaining forces of the Northern Alliance. However, what looked like a signal of victory at first glance turned into a serious catastrophe for the Taleban just a few days later. The commanders of the Taleban forces in Mazar-e Sharif did not stick to the agreement to share power with Malek Pahlawan and immediately introduced Sharia law in the city instead. The Taleban soldiers closed the city's schools as well as the university and tried to completely disarm all Northern Alliance militias, including Malek's. When some Wahdat units resisted, an uprising against the Taleban broke out in one of the Hazara quarters and quickly seized the entire city. On 29 May, 1,000 to 1,500 Taleban soldiers were killed and nearly 3,000 captured.¹⁷⁴ General Malek switched sides again and, while commanding forces of Jombesh and Wahdat, in short order recaptured those northwestern provinces (Faryab, Jowzjan, Sar-e Pul) that had been lost earlier. For the time being, General Malek took Dostum's place. At the same time Jamiat and Wahdat militias recaptured the strategic Salang pass on the road between Kabul and Baghlan provinces. Those Taleban forces already deployed to Pul-e Khumri area, north to the pass, were trapped and forced to continue moving north.¹⁷⁵

7.2.2 June 1997 – The defection of Kunduz' commanders and the fall of the city

Approximately 3,000 Taleban soldiers, separated from their main forces south of the Hindukush mountains, fled to the border area of Baghlan and Kunduz provinces in early June 1997. Already in late May, after it became known that the Taleban had captured Mazar-e Sharif, their white flags were

¹⁶⁷ Terence White, 'Arms Bazaar of Khanabad: A Wild West in North Afghanistan . . .', *AFP*, 29 April 1997.

¹⁶⁸ 'Deposed President Rabbani Takes Part in a Meeting of Commanders', *BBC*, 24 February 1997.

¹⁶⁹ 'Former President Takes Part in Opening Ceremony of Kunduz Council', *BBC*, 10 March 1997.

¹⁷⁰ 'Heavy Fighting Reported in Northern Afghanistan', *Frontier Post*, 20 June 1997.

¹⁷¹ Terence White, 'Can Anti-Taliban Opposition Alliance Survive in North Afghanistan?', *AFP*, 14 March 1997.

¹⁷² B. Imhasly, 'Aufstand gegen General Dostom in Afghanistan', *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 21 May 1997.

¹⁷³ Schetter, *Ethnizität*, 534 [see FN 3].

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

flying in many places in Kunduz province, even without a Taliban presence.¹⁷⁶ Most notably in the Pashtun areas, the majority of the population was open-minded concerning the Taliban movement. When the Taliban soldiers, after their defeat at the mountain passes, reached the Pashtun areas of northern Baghlan and Kunduz province – obviously more in retreat than in an offensive – the fighters of Hezb-e Islami in particular, but also those of Ittehad, fraternized with them. Initially, Bashir Khan Baghlani, a senior Hezb-e Islami commander and long-time supporter of Hekmatyar, switched sides. He had just been appointed governor of Baghlan province by high-ranking Northern Alliance commanders of Jombesh and Hezb-e Islami in early June 1997 and succeeded Dostum's ally Abdul Jaffar Naderi.¹⁷⁷ By joining the Taliban, Bashir Khan Baghlani paved the way for their advance into Kunduz province. On 17 June 1997, Kunduz' key commanders, Aref Khan of Jamiat, Arbab Muhammad Hashem of Hezb-e Islami, Arbab Muhammad Ghulam of Ittehad and Mirza Muhammad Naseri of Mahaz, as well as the units under their command defected to the Taliban almost en bloc.¹⁷⁸ As a matter of fact, the Taliban had no possibility at this time to bring their own troops to Kunduz in sufficient number.¹⁷⁹ After brief engagements, that mainly focussed on the strategically important airport of Kunduz,¹⁸⁰ the Taliban forces and their new militia allies brought the southern parts of Kunduz province under their control, including the entire city region and the high plateau with the airport. The only remaining key commander of the Northern Alliance in the Kunduz area, General Mir Alam Khan, was forced to regroup the battered forces loyal to the government and withdraw towards the Tajik border.¹⁸¹ It is not clear whether Jamiat's Kunduz governor Qari Rahmatullah retreated together with the forces of Mir Alam or defected to the Taliban as well.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁶ Jean-Claude Chapon, 'Fresh Fighting in Mazar-i-Sharif . . .', *AFP*, 27 May 1997.

¹⁷⁷ 'Hezb-e Islami Commander Appointed Baghlan Governor', *BBC*, 14 June 1997.

¹⁷⁸ Sayed Salahuddin, 'Taliban and Allies Seize Northern Afghan City', *Reuters*, 18 June 1997.

¹⁷⁹ 'Taliban Seize Several Areas in Key Northern Province: Report . . .', *AFP*, 17 June 1997.

¹⁸⁰ 'Taliban – Kämpfe um Kunduz in Nord-Afghanistan', *Reuters*, 17 June 1997.

¹⁸¹ Salahuddin, 'Taliban and Allies' [see FN 178]; 'Heavy Fighting' [see FN 170].

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

7.2.3 Summer 1997 – Shura-ye Nazar counter-attacks fail

After the fall of Kunduz city, the remaining forces of the Northern Alliance succeeded in stabilizing their positions in some of the districts outside the provincial centre within a couple of days so that they did not lose the entire province. The forces of Jombesh, under the command of General Malek Pahlawan, brought most of Chahrdara district under their control and approached Kunduz city region from the west. The forces that had remained loyal to Ahmad Shah Massud (mainly Jamiat militias) took up positions north of the city centre and established a new frontline east of Kunduz city along the provincial boundary with Takhar.¹⁸³

At first Rabbani's and Massud's commanders tried to persuade the defectors to switch sides again.¹⁸⁴ Following some serious negotiations, a spokesperson for Rabbani announced on 21 June 1997 that Kunduz province was under full control of the government again. Obviously Aref Khan had promised to rejoin the anti-Taliban coalition. The Taliban movement immediately denied having lost Kunduz to Jamiat and its allies, and three days later Rabbani's spokesperson acknowledged that Kunduz was in Taliban hands. Furthermore, he admitted that Aref Khan, who had allegedly promised to persuade the Taliban in Kunduz city to surrender, was not on the side of Northern Alliance any longer.¹⁸⁵

Shortly after the negotiations with Aref about a possible return of Kunduz city to Jamiat and its allies had failed, the forces of Ahmad Shah Massud launched their counter-offensive. The militias of the Northern Alliance succeeded in cutting the connecting road between Kunduz and Baghlan provinces and in completely encircling Kunduz city, but any advances into the city itself were repulsed by Taliban forces.¹⁸⁶ Prior to the first attempt to push into the urban areas of Kunduz, Ittehad's commander, Arbab Muhammad Ghulam, revised his defection and rejoined the Rabbani coalition.¹⁸⁷ Arbab Muhammad Ghulam, one of the key commanders of Sayyaf's Ittehad, continued to

¹⁸³ Terence White, 'Afghan Opposition Tries to Woo Back Kunduz Commanders . . .', *AFP*, 21 June 1997.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁵ 'Afghan Rivals Claim Northern Town', *Reuters*, 21 June 1997; Terence White, 'Afghan Opposition Concede Kunduz City to Taliban, Negotiate for . . .', *AFP*, 24 June 1997.

¹⁸⁶ 'Taliban Claim Repulsing Five Opposition Attacks in Kunduz: Report . . .', *AFP*, 28 June 1997.

¹⁸⁷ Terence White, 'Opposition Forces Close Net on Taliban Enclave in Northern . . .', *AFP*, 28 June 1997.

control the strategically important Khanabad district. The identically named district capital is located at the road connecting the capitals of Kunduz and Takhar provinces. During this phase of the war, Khanabad district was of outstanding importance for Ahmad Shah Massud as supplies for Jamiat's forces were transported from Tajikistan via Badakhshan or from Takhar province through Khanabad to the Kunduz frontline or even further south. To attack Kunduz city from the north, east or south, Massud had to control Khanabad district as a precondition. For the Taleban forces the seizure of this district was a necessary condition for any further advance into Takhar province.

Jamiat's forces suffered a heavy setback in their efforts to recapture Kunduz city when Arbab Muhammad Ghulam switched sides for a third time within a month and thereby enabled the Taleban to push through Khanabad district on 1 July 1997 and advance on Takhar province's capital city of Taloqan.¹⁸⁸ As a result, on 1 and 2 July 1997, heavy fighting between Taleban and Jamiat forces in Bangi district, southwest of Taloqan, broke out. The Taleban proclaimed the capture of Taloqan – obviously for propaganda reasons – but in fact only reached its outskirts for a short time. The threat of a full collapse of the Northern Alliance frontline was so imminent that both party leaders, Rabbani and Sayyaf, fled from their headquarters in Taloqan by helicopter.¹⁸⁹ Within a few days, however, Massud succeeded in stabilizing the frontline and recapturing Khanabad district again. The Taleban militias, including their inconstant new ally, Arbab Muhammad Ghulam, were forced to retreat to the Kunduz city area. Massud's forces seized a considerable amount of small arms, ammunition and heavy weapons including tanks and rocket launchers when they captured Ittehad's former stronghold and the main base of Commander Ghulam in Chugha village near the town of Khanabad.¹⁹⁰

As early as one week after the near fall of Taloqan, the allied forces of the Northern Alliance launched a fresh offensive towards the city centre of Kunduz whereupon Taleban jets bombarded the attacker's positions. Aside from the fact that Massud's soldiers captured a few villages at the northern and western outskirts of Kunduz city, the offensive did not lead to a decisive breakthrough and a

recapture of the embattled town.¹⁹¹ In mid July 1997 the Taleban, for their part, launched an offensive again. This time, however, they did not attack in the east towards Khanabad and Takhar, but tried to gain ground in Chahrdara in the west and thus to consolidate their position in Kunduz city. The Taleban were able to push back the Jamiat forces under the command of Mir Alam Khan and his allied Jombesh troops to the Yerganak pass, where fierce fighting erupted.¹⁹²

7.2.4 Summer 1997 – The Taleban consolidate their power

On 19 July 1997, Taleban soldiers captured the town of Imam Saheb, located in Kunduz' northern-most district of the same name, and raised their movement's white flag there in a ceremony.¹⁹³ Some days earlier the key commander and strongman in Imam Saheb district, Abdul Latif Ibrahim of Hezb-e Islami, had defected to the Taleban. With him, some other militia commanders operating in the northern parts of Kunduz province, including the local commander of Imam Saheb city, Sufi Abdul Manan, switched sides. Resulting from these defections of Rabbani allies, the Taleban seized the three districts of Imam Saheb, Archi and Qala-ye Zal without fighting. This not only meant that Mulla Omar's movement had reached the Tajik border for the first time and controlled the river port of Sher Khan Bandar,¹⁹⁴ but they controlled nearly the entire province of Kunduz. By the end of July 1997, engagements were reported from the very western edge of Chahrdara district, where the Taleban also controlled the heights of the Yerganak pass meanwhile, and from the border area to Takhar in Khanabad district.¹⁹⁵ Already on 21 July 1997, the Taleban had reported to redeploy about 3,000 additional troops from Baghlan to Kunduz province. These reinforcements, under the command of Commanders Haji Nezamuddin and Abdulhai, were to support the nearly all around defence of Kunduz province and to participate in a possible offensive aiming at the capture of Takhar province.¹⁹⁶ Throughout 1997, the Taleban were

¹⁸⁸ Terence White, 'Afghan Opposition Forces Claim to Secure Provincial Border . . .', *AFP*, 3 July 1997.

¹⁸⁹ 'Afghan Foes in Rival Claims on North Town', *Reuters*, 2 July 1997.

¹⁹⁰ White, 'Afghan Opposition Forces Claim' [see FN 188].

¹⁹¹ Abdullah Zaheeruddin, 'Forces Attack Islamic Militia's Northern Foothold in Afghanistan', *AP*, 8 July 1997.

¹⁹² Terence White, 'Afghan Taliban Fights Rivals in Kunduz over Strategic Pass . . .', *AFP*, 15 July 1997.

¹⁹³ Terence White, 'Taliban Press Initiative in North Afghanistan, Capture Imam Sahib . . .', *AFP*, 19 July 1997.

¹⁹⁴ 'Taleban Gain "Full Control" of Kunduz Province', *BBC*, 16 July 1997.

¹⁹⁵ 'Taliban Gains Full Control of Kunduz', *Asian Political News*, 21 July 1997; Terence White, 'Hundreds Killed in Dramatic Setback to Taliban in North of Kabul . . .', *AFP*, 20 July 1997.

¹⁹⁶ 'Taleban Send 3,000 Mojahedin to Kunduz', *BBC*, 23 July 1997.

able to supply their encircled forces inside the Kunduz enclave by air transport, as Jamiat's or Jombesh's troops were unable to regain control of Kunduz airport at any time.

The next Taliban offensive against Takhar province began on 23 July 1997 with a push from Khanabad into Bangi district.¹⁹⁷ According to Rabbani government sources, the attacking force included about 450 fighters and 13 tanks. Despite the enhanced use of personnel and equipment, however, the offensive was repulsed by Jamiat troops. Massud succeeded in pushing back the attackers to their positions in Khanabad district so that the eastern frontline of the Taliban's Kunduz enclave ran approximately along the district boundary between Khanabad and Bangi districts, with the Bangi Bridge at its centre.¹⁹⁸

On 24 July, it transpired that Mulla Muhammad Ghaus, the Taliban's foreign minister, had managed to battle his way to Kunduz province together with a few Taliban soldiers. Ghaus had travelled to Mazar-e Sharif in late May by plane and was taken by surprise when the Taliban's control over the northern Afghan cultural centre abruptly ended after days.¹⁹⁹ He was imprisoned together with some other senior representatives of the Taliban movement by General Malek. How and when exactly he escaped remained unclear. Just a few days after his successful escape from Jombesh captivity, however, Mulla Muhammad Ibrahim Akhund, a member of the Taliban's governing council and commander of the Herat corps, also reached Kunduz, where meanwhile a number of high-ranking Taliban figures had assembled.²⁰⁰ Mulla Amir Khan Muttaqi, the Taliban's information minister, already stayed in Kunduz province since the end of May and personally commanded about 1,000 fighters.²⁰¹

Related to UN mediation efforts early in August 1997, General Malek rejected the Taliban's demand to release further senior representatives and soldiers that had been captured in Mazar-e Sharif. Shortly afterwards, Commander Aref Khan, who had been appointed governor of Kunduz province by the Taliban meanwhile, gave an interview to a Pakistani news agency via satellite

phone in which he called upon Ahmad Shah Massud to withdraw his forces and announced a new offensive against Mazar-e Sharif.²⁰²

8 ENCLAVE AND STRONGHOLD OF THE TALEBAN: KUNDUZ, FROM 1997 TO 2001

8.1 National level

The years following the fall of Kabul in September 1996 and the capture of Kunduz in June 1997 were marked by the Taliban's struggle for completing control over northern Afghanistan. The overall conflict situation had developed from an all-against-all war into a two-party confrontation between the Taliban and the Northern Alliance. Hezb-e Islami had been marginalized by the events of 1995 and 1996 and Hekmatyar's decision to go into exile in early 1997. The Taliban had nearly absorbed the fighting forces of the other Pashtun mujahedin parties, too, even if some of their leaders, like Mojaddedi of Jabha or Sayyaf of Ittehad, formally were part of the Northern Alliance.²⁰³

The Taliban senior leadership ruled the country from the movement's stronghold in Kandahar and established a subordinate, supervisory shura in Kabul (Shura-ye Sarparast) to maintain the ministerial bureaucracy and the public administration.²⁰⁴ After capturing Kabul, the Taliban's main aim was to gain recognition as the legitimate government of Afghanistan and to take over the country's seat in the UN General Assembly that was still held by Rabbani's government. Until the collapse of their regime in late 2001, neither of these demands was met.²⁰⁵ The only three states that recognized the Taliban regime were Pakistan, Saudi-Arabia and the United

²⁰² 'Afghan Northern Warlord Rejects Taliban Demand for Release of Prisoners', *BBC*, 8 August 1997.

²⁰³ For an analysis of the Taliban's rise to power by mobilizing the Pashtuns and absorbing the fighters of several mujahedin organizations, see Abdulkader Sinno, 'Explaining the Taliban's Ability to Mobilize the Pashtuns', in Robert Crews and Amin Tarzi, *The Taliban and the Crisis of Afghanistan*, London, Harvard University Press 2008, 59–89.

²⁰⁴ For a comprehensive analysis of the Taliban's rule, their administrative structures and the organization of their command-and-control process between 1996 and 2001, see Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban. Afghanistans Gotteskämpfer und der neue Krieg am Hindukusch*, München, Beck 2010, 54–167.

²⁰⁵ Maley, *The Afghanistan Wars*, 203–4 [see FN 54].

¹⁹⁷ Tim Johnston, 'Afghan Opposition Steps Up Pressure on Taliban', *Reuters*, 23 July 1997.

¹⁹⁸ 'Radio Iran Interviews Opposition Spokesman on Situation in Takhar', *BBC*, 26 July 1997.

¹⁹⁹ 'Taliban Foreign Minister Ghaus Joins Taliban: Report ...', *AFP*, 24 July 1997.

²⁰⁰ 'Afghan Taliban Says Foes Killing its Prisoners', *Reuters*, 3 August 1997; 'Commander of Taliban Forces in Herat Escapes from North', *BBC*, 7 August 1997.

²⁰¹ 'Taliban Foreign Minister' [see FN 199].

Arab Emirates in May 1997.²⁰⁶ The Credentials Committee of the UN General Assembly confirmed the status quo in 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000 and 2001, leaving the Rabbani government with what, according to Maley, was 'a valuable symbolic asset'.²⁰⁷ The legal basis of most government's attitude was the assumption that as long as a civil war or a revolution is ongoing and the lawful government remains within the state's territory, 'it is presumed to represent the State as a whole'.²⁰⁸ Consequently the Taleban spared no effort to completely eliminate the Northern Alliance on the battlefield. Here they gained substantial successes when they decisively defeated Jombesh in August 1998 and Hezb-e Wahdat in spring 1999.

Ahmad Shah Massud, the de facto strong man of the Northern Alliance, became the archenemy of Mulla Omar's Taleban movement. His forces, while officially representing the Afghan government of president Rabbani, were able to defend two pieces of Afghanistan territory until late summer 2001. Parts of Takhar and Badakhshan provinces as well as the Panjshir valley and areas of the adjacent Shomali plain never fell under Taleban control.²⁰⁹ However, less than 10 per cent of the Afghan population lived in the territories held by Massud's forces, and the Northern Alliance did not control any major town except Faizabad in Badakhshan after the loss of Taloqan in September 2000. Massud had to fight on two separate frontlines between which he manoeuvred with his force of about 6,000 fighters²¹⁰ by using mountain paths. Supplies were delivered mostly from Tajikistan through Badakhshan and Takhar. As the air space was

controlled by the Taleban, supplies were mainly procured from Tajikistan and delivered by land.

While Iran, India, Russia, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan financially and/or logistically supported the Northern Alliance, the Taleban's main ally was Pakistan. Besides this, the Taleban built relations with numerous non-state actors, with al-Qaeda leading the way. Furthermore the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), pushed out of Central Asia, took shelter with the Taleban, developing into an ally and new player in northern Afghanistan. (For the role of al-Qaeda and the IMU in northeastern Afghanistan, see sections 8.2.12 and 8.2.13)

8.2 Regional level

8.2.1 September 1997 – Taleban's second Mazar-e Sharif offensive

After the Taleban had failed to achieve any substantial success at the eastern front of their Kunduz enclave during July and August, they launched a major offensive in the west on 7 September. The Taleban's interior minister Khairullah Khairkhwa led the operation aiming at the capture of Mazar-e Sharif, and it followed common patterns.²¹¹ Just prior to the launch of their offensive, the Taleban had persuaded some local commanders of Jombesh and Hezb-e Islami in Samangan province to defect.²¹² Therefore the province bordering Kunduz to the southwest, including its capital of Tashkurgan (also known as Aibak), was captured by the Taleban forces at a low cost of life.²¹³ The capture of the important trade and transport hub of Tashkurgan, just 50 kilometres to the east of Mazar-e Sharif, was the precondition for both an advance towards the strategically important border town of Hairatan and an encirclement of Mazar-e Sharif from the east. On 8 September 1997 from Kandahar, Taleban leader Mulla Omar ordered his forces to halt their advance and called on the Northern Alliance commanders to surrender. In a phone interview with the Pakistan-based news agency Afghan Islamic Press (AIP), Mulla Omar explained that he wanted to avoid further bloodshed, but also stressed his willingness to fight in case the Northern Alliance forces would not surrender.²¹⁴

²⁰⁶ The United Arab Emirates withdrew their recognition of the Taleban regime on 22 September 2001 and was followed by Saudi-Arabia a couple of days later. Both countries gave the protection of al-Qaeda and the unwillingness of the Taleban leadership to handover Usama bin Laden as the main reason for their diplomatic step. Pakistan cut its diplomatic ties with the Taleban on 22 November 2001 when it closed the Taleban embassy in Islamabad and several consulates in Pakistani cities. See 'Pakistan Closes Taliban Embassy', *CNN*, 22 November 2001.

²⁰⁷ Maley, *The Afghanistan Wars*, 204 [see FN 54].

²⁰⁸ Quotation taken from Hersch Lauterpacht, *Recognition in International Law*, Cambridge University Press 1948, 93, cited in Maley, *The Afghanistan Wars*, 204 [see FN 54].

²⁰⁹ There also were some islands of resistance, like Dara-e Suf (Samangan province).

²¹⁰ Dorransoro estimates Massud's troop strength at about 6,000; however, Rashid assesses the strength of his forces at 12–15,000. See Dorransoro, *Revolution unending*, 255 [see FN 2]; Rashid, *Taliban. Afghanistans Gotteskämpfer*, 161 [see FN 204].

²¹¹ 'Afghan Taleban Claim Advance in Northern Province', *Reuters*, 7 September 1997.

²¹² 'Taliban Chief Claims Mazar-i-Sharif Besieged, Calls Rival to . . .', *AFP*, 8 September 1997.

²¹³ Alistair Lyon, 'Afghan Taleban Say They Capture Northern Town', *Reuters*, 8 September 1997.

²¹⁴ Quoted in Raja Ashgar, 'Afghan Taleban Demand Surrender after Town Falls', *Reuters*, 8 September 1997.

The Taliban leader obviously intended to circumvent a second debacle in Mazar-e Sharif and tried to prevent his troops from precipitately moving into a confusing major city once again.

When Mulla Omar's call passed unheeded, the Taliban forces proceeded with their advance on Mazar-e Sharif. Here, too, the Taliban had prepared their attack thoroughly. Between 7 and 11 September, numerous local Pashtun commanders of Hezb-e Islami in the Pashtun exclaves to the south and west of Mazar-e Sharif switched sides and filled the ranks of the Taliban with their militias.²¹⁵ By mid September the Taliban had completed the encirclement of the city and occupied its airport, where fierce fighting broke out again and again.²¹⁶ Furthermore, they had captured the port of Hairatan just 30 kilometres north of Mazar-e Sharif at the Uzbek border by this time.²¹⁷

During this phase of the war, Kunduz province was of even greater strategic importance for both conflicting parties. For the Taliban movement, Kunduz served as the base for an offensive that led to the capture of Samangan and Balkh provinces and brought the student movement to the gates of Mazar-e Sharif again. The bulk of equipment and the necessary supplies for the units participating in this offensive were transported from Kabul to Kunduz by air,²¹⁸ as the Northern Alliance forces still cut off the supply lines between northern Afghanistan and the rest of the country at the Salang pass (Massud fully controlled Parwan and partly Baghlan provinces by this time).²¹⁹ To disrupt the Taliban's air supply to the north, the forces of Ahmad Shah Massud shelled Kabul airport and simultaneously launched a diversionary

offensive at the Takhar frontline.²²⁰ Thus, during the height of the second battle of Mazar-e Sharif, the Taliban supreme command had to reinforce the frontlines in Khanabad and Bangi with 400 soldiers who had just been transported from Kabul to Kunduz and were originally earmarked to support the offensive further to the west.²²¹ Furthermore the Taliban were forced to pull out one of their most talented field commanders, Mulla Dadullah Akhund, from the frontlines in Mazar-e Sharif and send him to Kunduz province to stabilize the defence there and boost the defenders' morale.²²²

8.2.2 October 1997 – Northern Alliance counter-offensive

At the end of September 1997, the tide began to turn temporarily again in northern Afghanistan. On 17 September 1997, representatives of all parties participating in the Northern Alliance gathered in Pul-e Khumri. The delegates included Burhanuddin Rabbani, Ahmad Shah Massud and Yunus Qanuni of Jamiat/Shura-ye Nazar, Karim Khalili of Hezb-e Wahdat, General Abdul Malek of Jombesh, the Ismaili leader of Baghlan province Sayed Mansur Naderi as well as the chairman of the central council of Harakat-e Islami-ye Afghanistan, a smaller Shia party, Sayed Muhammad Ali Jawid. The meeting, chaired by de jure president Rabbani, aimed at settling disputes within Jombesh (between Dostum and Malek) and between Jombesh and Wahdat as well as coordinating the military efforts of all anti-Taliban forces in northern Afghanistan.²²³ Subsequently the Northern Alliance militias gradually regained territory lost in the previous weeks. During mid September the forces of Massud had managed to break through the Taliban lines at the Takhar front several times, capturing parts of Khanabad district and approaching Kunduz airport.²²⁴ On 4 October, Northern Alliance units recaptured the airport of Mazar-e Sharif and broke the Taliban lines infiltrating the city for about three weeks.²²⁵ On 7

²¹⁵ Stefan Smith, 'Northern Afghan Warlord Reported Ousted in Coup, Taliban Pushed . . .', *AFP*, 9 September 1997; Stefan Smith, 'Taliban Gains Ground near Chaotic Northern City . . .', *AFP*, 11 September 1997.

²¹⁶ Tim Johnston, 'Rival Afghan Factions Battle for Northern City', *Reuters*, 11 September 1997.

²¹⁷ Tim Johnston, 'Afghan Taliban Says Beats Big North Counter-Attack', *Reuters*, 12 September 1997.

²¹⁸ 'Opposition Troops Flush Out Taliban from Mazar-i-Sharif Airport . . .', *AFP*, 4 October 1997.

²¹⁹ Mulla Abdul Salam Zaeef, the Taliban's acting minister of defence by the time of the Kunduz siege, explained that the city was supplied by air on a weekly basis. However, he pointed out that pilots refused to fly to Kunduz, because the airfield was under permanent attack by Massud's forces and many pilots had to perform emergency landings or crashed. Mulla Zaeef mentions that nearly 6,000 Taliban fighters were trapped in Kunduz area and adds that sometimes supplies were transported overland by bribing their way through the frontlines. See Abdul Salam Zaeef, *My life with the Taliban*, London, Hurst 2010, 85–6.

²²⁰ Smith, 'Taliban Gains Ground [see FN 215]; 'Opposition Forces Launch Offensive on Konduz Province', *BBC*, 19 September 1997.

²²¹ Johnston, 'Rival Afghan Factions' [see FN 216].

²²² 'Iranian Radio Reports Fighting on Different Fronts', *BBC*, 13 September 1997.

²²³ 'Fighting Continues in Mazar-e Sharif; Opposition Alliance Meets in Pol-e Khomri', *BBC*, 20 September 1997.

²²⁴ 'Iranian Radio Reports Fighting' [see FN 222]; 'Opposition Forces Take Control of Large Areas in North', *BBC*, 15 September 1997; 'Opposition Forces Launch Offensive' [see FN 220].

²²⁵ 'Opposition Troops Flush Out' [see FN 218].

October, the Taliban lost Hairatan²²⁶ and on 11 October their units were forced to withdraw from Tashkurgan under great cost of life.²²⁷ On 12 October, the Taliban forces started to build up a new frontline at the Yerganak pass,²²⁸ to avoid being pushed back further into Kunduz province.

8.2.3 Autumn 1997 – Dostum and Massud attack the Taliban's Kunduz bastion

Despite some initial success, the Taliban had to accept defeat at their second attempt to capture Mazar-e Sharif and huge parts of northern Afghanistan, even if in October 1997 they were spared from a debacle like they sustained in May of the same year. By the end of October, the Taliban attackers had nearly completely withdrawn to their original positions in Kunduz province.²²⁹ Due to the Taliban's quick advance on Mazar-e Sharif and the consequent precarious military situation for the Northern Alliance, new conflicts emerged within Jombesh. Supporters of General Dostum temporarily expelled General Malek from Mazar-e Sharif to Faryab province and the former Jombesh leader, who had fled to Turkey in May, returned to the country. Dostum moved into Mazar-e Sharif in mid October 1997 and forced Malek to flee to Iran and later into exile in the US after a weeks-long power struggle.²³⁰ Wahdat, that meanwhile controlled some areas of Dostum's former sphere of influence, especially benefited from the power struggle within Jombesh and the resulting decrease of the party's strength. Control over the city region of Mazar-e Sharif was henceforth divided more evenly between Jombesh and Wahdat and, to a smaller extent, Hezb-e Islami.²³¹

While Dostum stated in late October that his priority objective was to clear Kunduz province from the Taliban,²³² Ahmad Shah Massud was the first to launch two major offensives, mainly focussing on Khanabad district, in October and November, to shrink the Taliban's enclave. However, neither he nor Dostum were able to

²²⁶ 'Opposition Take Northern Border Town – Agency', *Reuters*, 7 October 1997.

²²⁷ 'FOCUS-Afghan Taliban Said to Lose Key Town', *Reuters*, 11 October 1997.

²²⁸ 'Anti-Taliban Alliance Gains Ground Close to Stronghold . . .', *AFP*, 12 October 1997.

²²⁹ 'Fighting Erupts near Northern Afghan City . . .', *AFP*, 20 October 1997.

²³⁰ Antonio Giustozzi, *Empires of Mud. Wars and Warlords in Afghanistan*, London, Hurst 2009, 116.

²³¹ Schetter, *Ethnizität*, 535 [see FN 3].

²³² 'Dostam Back at the Helm of Afghan Anti-Taliban Alliance . . .', *AFP*, 18 October 1997.

seriously threaten the Taliban's defences in Kunduz province then. According to the Taliban, their Kunduz commander, Amir Khan Haqqani, had about 4,000 soldiers under his command in the province by this time.

8.2.4 Winter 1998 – Continuing clashes and first earthquake

In autumn 1997 and winter 1998 Kunduz province continued to be an air-supplied enclave of the Taliban in northern Afghanistan, which was still, without this exception, controlled by the Northern Alliance, although the latter was considerably fragmented by this time. The first major fighting in Afghanistan's northeast in 1998 broke out when Taliban forces from Kunduz province attacked Jombesh positions in northern Baghlan province in late January. The attacks aimed at threatening the province's capital, Pul-e Khumri, at the connecting road to Kabul, but abated after three days of heavy fighting.²³³

On 4 February, a strong earthquake (6.1 on the Richter scale) with its epicentre in Rustaq district in Takhar province and accompanied by numerous aftershocks during the following week occurred in northeastern Afghanistan. Although the Taliban as well as the Northern Alliance had announced a ceasefire in view of the high numbers of casualties,²³⁴ fighting including air assaults erupted in the affected region at the Kunduz-Takhar frontline within days after the earthquake. Both parties accused the other of breaking the cease fire.²³⁵ While clashes between the two sides continued throughout February, mainly in Qala-ye Zal and Bangi districts,²³⁶ the UN and international aid organisations tried to reach the remote areas of Takhar province to provide humanitarian aid. However, apart from a few exceptions, such as on 17 February when 24 Taliban army trucks transported rice, flour and medicine through the

²³³ 'Taliban, Opposition Clash in Northern Afghanistan', *AFP*, 26 January 1998.

²³⁴ Several sources put the death toll at about 4,000 people while nearly 7,000 livestock were killed and more than 15,000 homes were destroyed.

²³⁵ Saeed Khan, 'Afghan Forces Trade Fire as Workers Distribute Quake Aid . . .', *AFP*, 9 February 1998 and 'Taliban Reportedly Launched Attack During Cease-Fire', *BBC*, 12 February 1998.

²³⁶ 'Afghan Opposition Claims Capture of Key Northern Town from Taliban', *AFP*, 13 February 1998; Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran, 'Hopes for Peace by Way of Religious Schools Commission Reportedly Fading', *BBC*, 16 February 1998; Radio Voice of Shari'ah, 'Opposition Attack on Takhar, Kunduz Provinces repulsed', *BBC Monitoring*, 16 February 1998.

frontlines to areas of Takhar province,²³⁷ the cease-fires remained unstable and endangered the provision of sufficient humanitarian aid.²³⁸ In fact, despite the presence of a major humanitarian catastrophe, both sides focused on regrouping their forces and preparing for the next round of fighting which was to occur early in spring.

8.2.5 Spring 1998 – Failed negotiations and full-scale Taliban offensive

From late February onwards, the Taliban began to transport units belonging to the core forces of their troops to Kunduz province.²³⁹ While the redeployment of such a huge number of troops from southern and eastern provinces like Kandahar, Ghazni, Helmand, Nangarhar and Kabul did not remain unnoticed by Northern Alliance commanders,²⁴⁰ both sides mainly concentrated on propaganda exercises first. On 27 February 1998, the Taliban's newly appointed governor of Kunduz province, Aref Khan, stated in an interview with *Radio Voice of Shari'ah (Kabul)* that the people of his province firmly support the Taliban government and that Kunduz will thus be the springboard for broadening the supremacy of the Taliban all over northern Afghanistan in the coming (Islamic) year.²⁴¹ Three days later, Ahmad Shah Massud, called for unity and steadfastness among the different Northern Alliance factions from Mazar-e Sharif and promised to end the Taliban hold of Kunduz province soon.²⁴²

After the Taliban launched a fairly successful preparatory offensive in late March, attacking from their Kunduz positions southwards in the direction of Baghlan province's capital city of Pol-e Khomri,²⁴³ another cease-fire was brokered by the UN in mid April to prepare another round of peace talks scheduled for late April.²⁴⁴ Although both

sides agreed to the cease-fire and to send representatives to the week-long negotiations in Islamabad, it became obvious that the Taliban as well as the Northern Alliance were preparing for a military solution. While negotiating in Pakistan's capital both filled their weapons and munitions dumps at the frontlines in northeastern Afghanistan and skirmished with each other to find points of weakness in the other side's defences.²⁴⁵

After the peace talks in Pakistan had finally collapsed on 3 May 1998, it was the militias of Ahmad Shah Massud who launched the first major attacks at the Bangi section of the Kunduz-Takhar front three days later.²⁴⁶ However, two attempts of Jamiat's fighters to break through the Taliban defensive lines and advance towards Khanabad town failed whereupon Mulla Omar's forces seized the initiative.²⁴⁷ As expected, the Taliban army launched a carefully arranged full scale offensive at the outset of the second week of May including more than 2,000 fighters that aimed to capture the northeastern parts of Baghlan and the southwestern parts of Takhar provinces.²⁴⁸ Despite strong resistance by Jamiat's forces, numerous counter-offensives led by Ahmad Shah Massud²⁴⁹ and a diversionary attack of Dostum's troops against the Qala-ye Zal section in the western part of the Kunduz frontline during the second half of the month,²⁵⁰ the Taliban brought the districts of Bangi, Eshkamesh, Nahrin and Burka under control by the end of May. The fighting of this month was reported to have been the fiercest in northern Afghanistan in about ten months.²⁵¹

8.2.6 Summer 1998 – Stalemate in the northeast and second earthquake

While the Taliban were strengthening their defensive positions to hold the newly gained ground and Massud and Dostum were still counter-attacking in the districts of Bangi and Qala-ye Zal,²⁵² a second major earthquake (6.9 on the

²³⁷ Abdullah Zaheeruddin, 'Warring Parties Exchange Aid, Not Gunfire, after Afghanistan Quake', *AP*, 17 February 1998.

²³⁸ Gair Moulson, 'U.N. official: Afghan Rivals' 'War Games' Endanger Aid', *AP*, 26 February 1998.

²³⁹ Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran, 'Opposition Official Warns of Impending Taliban Attack in North', *BBC Monitoring*, 23 February 1998.

²⁴⁰ Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran, 'Taliban Move Forces to North', *BBC Monitoring*, 3 March 1998.

²⁴¹ Radio Voice of Shari'ah, 'Kunduz Provincial Governor Says Taliban Preventing Afghanistan's Disintegration', *BBC Monitoring*, 2 March 1998.

²⁴² Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran, 'Northern leader Masud Calls on Opposition to Unite', *BBC Monitoring*, 2 March 1998.

²⁴³ Stefan Smith, 'Taliban Launch Major Assault in Northern Afghanistan', *AFP*, 25 March 1998.

²⁴⁴ Abdullah Zaheeruddin, 'Taliban Army Accuses Enemy Forces of Breaking Cease-Fire', *AP*, 19 April 1998.

²⁴⁵ Sayed Salahuddin, 'Taliban Offensive Feared after Afghan Talks Fail', *Reuters*, 4 May 1998.

²⁴⁶ 'Taliban Beat off Opposition Attacks in Afghan Northeast: Report', *AFP*, 7 May 1998.

²⁴⁷ Jean-Claude Chapon, 'Taliban Capture Two Towns in Afghan Northeast', *AFP*, 8 May 1998.

²⁴⁸ Jean-Claude Chapon, 'Afghan Opposition Claim Capture of Taliban Positions', *AFP*, 11 May 1998.

²⁴⁹ 'Afghan Opposition in Counter-Attack after Losses', *Reuters*, 15 May 1998.

²⁵⁰ 'Afghan Opposition Attacks Taliban in Northern Province: report', *AFP*, 26 May 1998.

²⁵¹ Thomas Ruttig, 'Kampf auf den Erdbebenrömmern', *Tageszeitung*, 3 June 1998.

²⁵² Mohammad Bashir, 'Taliban and Dostam Forces Clash in North and West Afghanistan', *AFP*, 2 June 1998.

Richter scale) hit northeastern Afghanistan on 30 May. Although the death toll and the damage it caused were similar to the previous one,²⁵³ this time the warring parties did not even agree to a temporary or regional ceasefire,²⁵⁴ which made relief efforts by international organisations even more difficult.²⁵⁵ Contrary to their policy of February, the Taliban refused to send any help to the affected areas that entirely belonged to the Jamiat controlled territory in Takhar and Badakhshan provinces.²⁵⁶

Throughout June and July the Northern Alliance forces were under more and more pressure in northwestern Afghanistan while the situation in the northeast was at a stalemate after forces of Jamiat consolidated their positions at the Kunduz-Takhar frontline following the setbacks of May. Although both sides frequently reported territorial gains,²⁵⁷ neither the Taliban nor the Northern Alliance was able to decisively pierce the enemy's lines. On 7 July, the local strongman of Imam Saheb, Abdul Latif Ibrahim, the Taliban's civil and military leader of the strategically important northern-most district of Kunduz province for about a year, switched allegiance and rejoined the forces of Ahmad Shah Massud together with his militia, including additional family members. This defection differed from previous ones, as he abandoned the stronghold his clan had been ruling for years but moved his forces to the other side of the frontline and fell in line with Jamiat's troops in Takhar province. In this case, Imam Saheb district was not handed over to the other war faction while the de facto rulers remained in power. The district remained under Taliban control and the defection did not lead to territorial gains for the Northern Alliance. The reason the Ibrahim clan broke rank with the Taliban (or was simply forced to quit) was probably due to their Uzbek ethnicity. When throughout 1997 and 1998 the Taliban incorporated the mujahedin administration of

Kunduz province into their command-and-control structures, most ethnic Tajiks and Uzbeks were replaced by Pashtuns or were increasingly underprivileged.²⁵⁸

8.2.7 August 1998 – Fall of Mazar-e Sharif and breakout of Kunduz pocket

During the first half of August 1998, the military situation in northern Afghanistan fundamentally changed when the Taliban forces succeeded in their third attempt to capture Mazar-e Sharif. After the forces of Mulla Omar had gradually gained ground in the areas north of Herat throughout the previous months, they captured Faryab province to the east in July and led a force of about 5,000 fighters under Mulla Fazel Mazlum to Dostum's stronghold of Sheberghan in the next province to the east, Jowzjan.²⁵⁹ They took Jowzjan on 2 August.²⁶⁰ Only a few days later, the Taliban forces were approaching the gates of Mazar-e Sharif when again local Pashtun commanders formerly allied with Hezb-e Islami switched sides and enabled the attackers to execute their final two-pronged offensive against the city centre.²⁶¹ After the loss of Sheberghan, Dostum's remaining forces had been shaken and their frontline to the west of Kunduz simply collapsed,²⁶² when Taliban forces under Mulla Amir Khan Muttaqi launched a major breakout operation on 3 August and pushed through Samangan province towards Mazar-e Sharif from the east.²⁶³ The unofficial capital of the ousted Rabbani government and political centre of the Northern Alliance fell on 8 August 1998. A diversionary offensive launched by Jamiat forces under Ahmad Shah Massud on 5 August at the Burka section of the Kunduz-Takhar frontline did not gain momentum and could not prevent the

²⁵³ The areas that were mainly affected by the 30 May 1998 earthquake included Rustaq and Chah Ab districts in Takhar Province and Shahr-e Bozorg district in Badakhshan province. According to UN figures, about 4,500 people were killed and approximately 16,000 houses destroyed or seriously damaged.

²⁵⁴ Ruttig, 'Kampf auf ...' [see FN 251].

²⁵⁵ Joe Barr, 'Disaster Response with a Difference – Afghanistan June 1998', *Australian Journal of Emergency Management* (Summer 1999), 2–6.

²⁵⁶ Bashir, 'Taliban and Dostam' [see FN 252].

²⁵⁷ Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran, 'Clashes Resume in the North, United Front Speak of Taliban Defeats', *BBC Monitoring*, 8 June 1998; Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran, 'Iranian Radio Reports Failed Taliban Attack in Takhar Province', *BBC Monitoring*, 18 June 1998.

²⁵⁸ See UNHCR publication, 'Situation in Afghanistan 1998', Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1998, 9. <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/pdfid/467009322.pdf>.

²⁵⁹ Aimal Khan, 'Mazar-i-Sharif Falls to Taliban', *Afghanistan News Bulletin* No. 98, Peshawar August 1998 (sources: *The News International*, *Frontier Post*, *Nation* and *Dawn* as of 9 August 1998).

²⁶⁰ See Richard Galpin, 'Taliban Near Total Victory', *The Guardian*, 4 August 1998.

²⁶¹ Aimal Khan, 'Taliban Capture Another Strategic Town in North', *Frontier Post*, 7 August 1998.

²⁶² Stefan Smith, 'Taliban Troops in Total Control of Mazar-i-Sharif after "Clean-Up"', *AFP*, 10 August 1998.

²⁶³ Behroz Khan, 'Taliban Close in on Mazar-i-Sharif', *Afghanistan News Bulletin* No. 98, Peshawar August 1998 (sources: *The News International*, *Frontier Post*, *Nation* and *Dawn* as of 4 August 1998).

major military victory of the Taliban in northwestern and central-northern Afghanistan.²⁶⁴

8.2.8 August 1998 – Taliban briefly capture Taloqan

In fact, the Jamiat forces in Takhar province themselves came under strong pressure when additional Taliban forces in Kunduz province backed by their victorious comrades further to the west launched an unexpected, full-scale offensive on 11 August. With its point of main effort at the Bangi section of the frontline, the offensive led by Commander Mulla Muhammad Naim included between 2,000 and 3,000 fighters.²⁶⁵ The Bangi valley, located in the district of the same name, had been the area of the farthest advance or turning point of several offensives for both parties. This time, though, during the very first hours of their offensive, the Taliban spectacularly took Bangi district without fighting. The key commander of the defence lines in the valley, Engineer Muhammad Omar of Ittehad-e Islami, together with some other members of his party and local commanders of Hezb-e Islami switched sides and offered the attackers free passage.²⁶⁶ The push through Bangi district technically split the defence lines of Massud into a northern part, with the Khwaja Ghar section as its core, and a southern part, from Eshkamish valley further to the south, and enabled the Taliban to execute a direct attack on the city of Taloqan. After hours of heavy fighting, the Taliban eventually took the capital of Takhar under heavy losses on 12 August 1998.²⁶⁷

8.2.9 Autumn 1998 – Massud strikes back

Throughout August, the Taliban consolidated their power in most of the newly captured territory and succeeded in bringing under control nearly the entire province of Baghlan. Ahmad Shah Massud conducted meetings of his remaining field commanders in Badakhshan province and had to regroup and resupply his forces. While many observers were awaiting the launch of the

Taliban's final offensive to capture the remaining 10 per cent of Afghan soil, the collapse of the Northern Alliance and the end of the war, the militias of Jamiat struck back on 26 August.²⁶⁸ First, some parts of Badakhshan²⁶⁹ that had already fallen under Taliban control as well as parts of Khwaja Ghar and Farkhar districts²⁷⁰ in Takhar province were retaken by Ahmad Shah Massud's forces, who regained the initiative in northeastern Afghanistan. Following fighting raging back and forth through Takhar province throughout September, Jamiat recaptured Taloqan on 17 October and inflicted heavy losses on the defenders.²⁷¹ About 250 Taliban soldiers were captured and their senior commander Mulla Muhammad Naim killed.²⁷² By the same time Jamiat forces regained parts of Archi district,²⁷³ broke through the Eshkamesh section of the frontline again and regained control over parts of adjacent Baghlan province. This operation again brought about heavy casualties to the forces of Mulla Omar, who lost approximately 100 fighters killed in action and 1,000 captured or wounded.²⁷⁴ In Archi district, Jamiat was capable of holding its ground and succeeded in establishing the frontline on the territory of Kunduz province for the first time in a long while. The Taliban forces in Kunduz province, meanwhile under the overall command of Mulla Dadullah Akhund again,²⁷⁵ launched several fierce counterattacks on Jamiat's new defensive positions, however, and tried to break through towards Khwaja Ghar district again. These engagements led to severe losses on both sides and forced hundreds of local inhabitants to temporarily flee the area.²⁷⁶ During November and December 1998, Ahmad Shah Massud succeeded in regaining even more territory in Kunduz, Takhar and Baghlan provinces without seriously threatening the Taliban's control over Kunduz city. However, his forces recaptured Ishkamish and

²⁶⁴ As a result of the events in August 1998, General Dostum fled to Uzbekistan and Jombesh for the time being ceased to exist as a considerable military force within the Northern Alliance. The siege of Kunduz province, at times the only stronghold of the Taliban in northern Afghanistan, ended after about 16 months.

²⁶⁵ Sayed Salahuddin, 'Afghan Taliban Take Key Provincial Capital', *Reuters*, 11 August 1998.

²⁶⁶ Rahimullah Yusufzai, 'Taliban Capture Strategic Taloqan', *Afghanistan News Bulletin* No. 98, Peshawar August 1998 (sources: *The News International*, *Frontier Post*, *Nation* and *Dawn* as of 12 August 1998).

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁸ Tajik Radio first programme, 'Northern Forces Destroy Taliban Reserve Column – Tajik Radio', *BBC Monitoring*, 27 August 1998.

²⁶⁹ 'Taliban Gain Foothold in Rabbani's stronghold', *Dawn*, 17 August 1998.

²⁷⁰ 'Taliban Troops Capture Masood's Base', *Dawn*, 22 August 1998.

²⁷¹ Sayed Salahuddin, 'Afghan Opposition Capture Northern Town', *Reuters*, 17 October 1998.

²⁷² 'News Summary on Afghanistan 1998', *Agency Coordinating Body For Afghan Relief (ACBAR)*, January 1999, 15.

²⁷³ Salahuddin, 'Afghan Opposition' [see FN 271].

²⁷⁴ 'News Summary on Afghanistan 1998', 15 [see FN 272].

²⁷⁵ Iranian radio from Mashhad, 'Afghan Taliban's Attacks Foiled in Kunduz and Parwan Provinces', *BBC Monitoring*, 18 October 1998.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

Nahrin districts during an operation in mid November that also lead to the surrender of hundreds of Taliban fighters.²⁷⁷ Later in November, parts of Imam Saheb district including Sher Khan Bandar²⁷⁸ as well as parts of Khanabad and Burka districts came under the control of Jamiat again. Thus, by the end of the year, just prior to the onset of winter, Jamiat had secured important supply lines from Tajikistan to the Kunduz-Takhar frontline and from Takhar further south to the Panjshir valley and the frontline north of Kabul, the second important area still under control of forces loyal to Ahmad Shah Massud and Burhanuddin Rabbani. In addition, the remaining forces fighting the Taliban were in a favourable position to defend Takhar province or to launch a renewed offensive aiming at the recapture of Kunduz city.

8.2.10 1999 to 2001 – Military developments in Kunduz and Takhar provinces

Throughout 1999 and 2000, the Taliban consolidated their rule in the territories captured in 1998 despite on-and-off uprisings and sporadic fighting in the northwestern and central-northern parts of Afghanistan. In northeastern Afghanistan, a permanently existing frontline between the Taliban forces and Massud's fighters shifted back and forth between the eastern districts of Kunduz and the western parts of Takhar provinces, sometimes including areas of Baghlan province. There were enduring skirmishes and smaller engagements at the frontline, interrupted by major offensives of one of the warring parties every few weeks or months. During this positional warfare, both sides made extensive use of artillery, including rocket and grenade launchers, mortars and mines. The Taliban frequently used their air force and bombarded Massud's defensive positions prior to infantry assaults or attacked urban areas to discourage the civilian population from supporting the Northern Alliance. By this time the primary operational objective of Jamiat and its allies was to expel the Taliban forces from Kunduz province, to lay the foundations for a renewed offensive towards Mazar-e Sharif or, alternatively, to advance southward to the Salang area and link Jamiat's separate areas of influence. The Taliban aimed at inflicting a decisive defeat on the forces of Ahmad Shah Massud, whom they perceived as

²⁷⁷ 'Anti-Taliban Forces Claim Capture of Two More Districts in North', *AFP*, 15 November 1998; 'News Summary on Afghanistan 1998', 16 [see FN 272].

²⁷⁸ Luke Hunt, 'Kabul Airport Heavily Rocketed as Opposition Claim Advance in Kunduz', *AFP*, 28 November 1998.

the only remaining serious enemy, thereby achieving a complete military victory and bringing the civil war to an end.

In mid January 1999 Kunduz governor Aref Khan admitted in an interview that the districts of Imam Saheb and Dasht-e Archi were no longer under Taliban control.²⁷⁹ This meant, in fact, that the forward positions of Jamiat's forces were only about 25 kilometres away from their operational objective of Kunduz' urban area. However, there was a relative lull in fighting for the following months. The first major attack of 1999 occurred only when Massud's forces attacked in Archi district and along the Kunduz-Takhar connecting road in early April.²⁸⁰ For about two months, heavy engagements took place in the eastern districts of Kunduz province²⁸¹ until the situation calmed down during the summer months. From 1 October 1999 onwards it was the Taliban's turn again. After focussing on the Panjshir-Shomali frontline during the summer months,²⁸² the forces of Mulla Omar launched a major offensive that led to several battles around Khwaja Ghar district, where the northern section of the Kunduz-Takhar frontline ran.²⁸³ Throughout 1999, however, neither side was able to achieve their operational goal, the capture of Kunduz city in the case of Massud's forces or the capture of Takhar province in the case of the Taliban.

This changed in 2000 when the latter finally took Taloqan on 7 September. The first major battles in 2000 occurred in March in Imam Saheb district and were reported to be the heaviest fighting in about seven months.²⁸⁴ During spring and the first half of the summer, activities mutually focussed on the Shomali frontline and the Salang pass area where fierce battles with heavy casualties for both sides took place. Minor engagements occurred in Baghlan province.²⁸⁵ However, in August the Taliban shifted their centre of gravity to the northeast again and launched a full scale-offensive at the southern section of the Kunduz-Takhar frontline. They overran Eshkamish district centre

²⁷⁹ 'News Summary on Afghanistan 1999', *Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief (ACBAR)*, January 2000, 9.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 9.

²⁸¹ 'Taliban Confirm Heavy Fighting in Northern Afghanistan', *AFP*, 9 May 1999.

²⁸² 'News Summary on Afghanistan 1999', 10–11 [see FN 279].

²⁸³ *Ibid*, 12–13.

²⁸⁴ Sayed Salahuddin, 'Afghan Taliban Claim Taking Foes' Port Town', *Reuters*, 1 March 2000.

²⁸⁵ 'News Summary on Afghanistan 2000', *Agency Coordinating Body For Afghan Relief (ACBAR)*, January 2001, 32–33, 39–40.

on 4 August and reached the outskirts of Taloqan city on 10 August. While the Taleban also attacked in Kunduz province and captured the areas in Imam Saheb, Archi and Khanabad districts that were still held by Massud's forces, it was four weeks before they finally penetrated the city centre of Taloqan.²⁸⁶ In the aftermath of Taloqan's fall, Massud's forces launched several counter-attacks, none of which led to the recapture of the city. By this time, the districts of Chal, Namak Ab, Baharak, and Khwaja Ghar became the arena of fierce fighting. The battle for Takhar province and adjacent territories of Kunduz' Imam Saheb, Archi and Khanabad districts altogether lasted from early August until November when the intensity of the fighting slowly went down.²⁸⁷ This period of the Taleban's northern campaign has been described as probably the bloodiest by numerous contemporaries.²⁸⁸

In 2001 both sides conducted major attacks in Takhar province during January, whereupon it became calm for a longer period. Heavy fighting flared up again when the Taleban launched their summer offensive at both frontlines, in Shomali as well as in Takhar province. Despite the deployment of up to 25,000 men, including about 10,000 fighters²⁸⁹ from Pakistan, Arab and Central Asian countries, the Taleban did not bring the entire province of Takhar under control nor succeed in pushing further into Badakhshan province before, after the terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001, the constellations in the war completely changed in October 2001.

8.2.11 1998 to 2001 – Taleban administration in Kunduz province

Between June 1997 and November 2001, the Taleban ruled Kunduz city and most parts of the province. Kunduz province belonged to the Northern Zone, which additionally included the provinces of Baghlan, Samangan, Balkh, Jowzjan and Faryab. The governor general of the Northern Zone was the governor of Balkh province, Mulla Nurullah Nuri.²⁹⁰ Due to the political and strategic

importance of the province, Mulla Omar additionally appointed a 'Political Commissar for Kunduz area'. This position was filled by Mulla Amir Khan Muttaqi for the first year and then transferred to Mulla Abdullah Zakeri.²⁹¹ Because of the importance of the city during its siege and after, due to the proximity of the frontline, senior Taleban officials as well as renowned field commanders repeatedly took command of forces based in the Kunduz region. Besides, the Taleban incorporated the already existing provincial administration into their governmental structures by assigning key positions to local strongmen as well as by bringing in long-serving Taleban officials from outside.

The choice of the key defector Aref Khan as governor was probably partly a reward for his defection as well as a pragmatic decision to secure his network and local constituency. Aref Khan is said to have been the most influential among Kunduz province's Pashtun commanders by this time. However, in addition, the Taleban appointed Mirza Muhammad Naseri as Chief of Police²⁹² and Arbab Muhammad Hashem²⁹³ as commander of the local garrison,²⁹⁴ which ensured them

²⁹¹ National Security Archive – The George Washington University, 'Afghanistan: The Taliban's Decision-Making Process and Leadership Structure,' Confidential, U.S. Embassy (Islamabad) Cable, 31 December 1998, 15. [Excised].

²⁹² Sometimes Mirza Muhammad Naseri was referred to as Chief of Police and sometimes as Commander of Kunduz security forces. See Radio Voice of Shari'ah, 'Taleban Provincial Council Discusses Refugees, Military Problems', *BBC Monitoring*, 30 October 1999.

²⁹³ Commander Arbab Muhammad Hashem is viewed as a ruthless commander and cruel leader by many contemporaries, as he is well remembered for some actions he took as a Taliban commander after he switched sides in 1997. When he commanded forces at the Bangi frontline, he is said to have accepted high losses among his fighters, ordering several mass attacks by huge numbers of inexperienced and young fighters to overcome the Northern Alliance's defences. In accordance, it has not been forgotten in some areas that Arbab Hashem rigidly enforced recruitment for the Taleban's militias in many villages under Taleban control, except the villages of his own stronghold in Chahrdara district. Interviews with former fighters and commanders of Shura-ye Nazar's forces at the Kunduz-Takhar frontline, Kabul 2011 and 2012 and interview with a mid-level Taleban commander (who was airlifted from Kabul into the Kunduz pocket in late summer 1997 together with his about 250 fighters and fought in the northeast until late 1998), Kabul 2012.

²⁹⁴ Later, in February 2000, the Taleban's ministry of defence formed a new divisional headquarters in Kunduz city. Arbab Muhammad Hashem was appointed chief of staff of 5th Jihad Division in Kunduz city. See Radio Voice

²⁸⁶ Ibid, 32–33, 45–47.

²⁸⁷ Ibid, 52–53, 57, 62.

²⁸⁸ Interviews with civilian people from northern Afghanistan as well as Taleban and Northern Alliance commanders, who fought in the North, Kabul, 2011 and 2012.

²⁸⁹ Rashid, *Taliban. Afghanistans Gotteskämpfer*, 335 [see FN 204].

²⁹⁰ Mulla Nurullah Nuri, born 1967 in Zabul province, served as governor of Laghman province and then as interim governor of Balkh province for a while. He was officially appointed governor-general of the Northern Zone in 2000.

additional support of local Pashtuns. The three defectors were longstanding elements in the local power structure of Kunduz and represented different factions of its Pashtun community. Aref Khan was a Mohmand Pashtun of the Zakhel sub-tribe with his stronghold in Kunduz city area. After his assassination on 4 April 2000, he was replaced by his brother Omar Khan.²⁹⁵ Arbab Muhammad Hashem was the key militia commander of Chahrdara district and represented the local part of the well-respected Durrani tribe of the Popalzai. Mirza Muhammad Naseri was a Ghilzai of the Naser tribe and had a strong base in Aliabad district. In fact, the latter two retained the command of the local militias that had defected with them and just got official positions in the Taleban administration. However, due to the presence of large contingents of the Taleban forces and thousands of recruits from all over the country in Kunduz province, the local militias of Arbab Hashem and Mirza Naseri would not have constituted a serious threat in case of a renewed defection. If anything, during some engagements they contributed to the Taleban's effort.

Another key supporter of the Taleban in Kunduz province, possibly the most valuable, was Haji Amanullah Utmanzai,²⁹⁶ who played a major role in

organizing the Taleban's logistics during their campaign in the northeast. Haji Amanullah Utmanzai acted as a treasurer for the Taleban between 1997 and 2001 and on several occasions mediated between Taleban and Northern Alliance officials. As almost every major Taleban offensive in the north of the country began with a defection of some of the enemy's commanders, money was an important weapon. Furthermore, knowledge about local power structures as well as contacts to key figures, especially among the Pashtuns, were decisive. Haji Amanullah provided both.

A key position in the Taleban's provincial administration was the head of the intelligence department. This was assumed by Mulla Tajmir Jawad²⁹⁷ between 1998 and early 2001 when he was transferred to the same position in Nangarhar province. Mulla Tajmir was installed in Kunduz province at the instigation of two senior Taleban officials, his superior Qari Ahmadullah and Mawlawi Abdul Kabir.²⁹⁸ Qari Ahmadullah was the chief of the Taleban's Intelligence between 1997 and 2001 and since 1999 concurrently served as governor of Takhar province, as the Taleban's senior leadership saw the intelligence focus there.

of Shari'ah, 'Afghan Taleban Set Up New Military Division in North', *BBC Monitoring*, 16 February 2000.

²⁹⁵ Commander Aref Khan was murdered on 4 April 2000 while staying in Peshawar, Pakistan. It was reported that he stayed in an area heavily inhabited by Afghan refugees and was shot dead by a single assailant using a Kalashnikov assault rifle while sitting in a car. His death was reported and commented on by both, the Taleban and Northern Alliance, which equally praised him for his role in the 1980s jihad. The background of the assassination remained largely unclear. Some sources say Aref Khan was in Peshawar for medical treatment; others indicate he was hiding there as he was about to switch sides again. However, if Aref Khan had fled Kunduz area and was killed by the Taleban because of an imminent defection, the Taleban probably would not have made his brother, Haji Muhammad Omar Khan, the successor as Kunduz governor. See Iranian news agency IRNA, 'Iran Reports Clashes between Taleban, People in Northern Afghanistan', *BBC Monitoring*, 31 March 2000; Radio Voice of Shari'ah, 'Afghan Taleban Say Killing of Governor in Pakistan Great Loss', *BBC Monitoring*, 4 April 2000; 'Key Afghan Governor Shot Dead in Pakistan – Police', *Reuters*, 4 April 2000; interview with an eyewitness of the assassination of Aref Khan in Peshawar, Kabul 2011.

²⁹⁶ Haji Amanullah Utmanzai, born between 1940 and 1945, is a Mohmand Pashtun of the Utmanzai clan and originates from the village of the same name in Kunduz district. His party affiliation during the jihad is disputed. Some sources claim that he did not belong to any mujahedin party but supported their cause. Haji

Amanullah Utmanzai is a religious scholar and occasionally mediated between the warring mujahedin factions in Kunduz province after 1992. According to a popular anecdote, he arranged a secret meeting of Northern Alliance officials as well as representatives of both Taleban and al Qaeda in 1998 and transferred a huge sum of money from one party to another. This allegedly gave his career in the Taleban movement a decisive boost. Interviews with former low and mid-level Taleban commanders and officials from Kunduz and Kabul, Kabul 2011; interview with a citizen of Kunduz province, Kabul 2012.

²⁹⁷ Mulla Tajmir Jawad, supposedly a Dzadran Pashtun, born between 1972 and 1974 in Khost province (according to different sources in Paktia or Ghazni), was a protégé of Mawlawi Abdul Kabir and a close confidant of Qari Ahmadullah. Mulla Tajmir was supposedly trained by Pakistan's ISI before he joined the Taleban's intelligence organisation. Interview with a former mid-level Taleban official from Sarobi district, Kabul province, Kabul 2012; interview with a former Taleban official responsible for maintaining an archive of the Taleban movement in Kabul, Kabul 2012.

²⁹⁸ Mawlawi Abdul Kabir, a Pashtun of the same Dzadran tribe, was born in Paktia province in 1969 and grew up in a village located in the Kunduz-Baghlan Pashtun strip in Nahrin district. He was the governor of Nangarhar province, governor general (*rais-e tanzim*) for the Eastern Zone, deputy and finally (after the death of its chairman Mulla Muhammad Rabbani in April 2001) acting head of the Kabul Shura during the last years of the Taleban rule. Due to his concern in northeastern Pashtun affairs, he is said to have played a role in the installation of Mulla Tajmir Jawad in Kunduz province. Later he facilitated Tajmir's transfer to Nangarhar province.

Mulla Tajmir and Qari Ahmadullah supposedly had a close working relationship and rose to power behind the scenes as they held two key positions in the Taleban's political-military leadership apparatus dealing with the ongoing war against Massud.

Among the senior military commanders of the Taleban who led forces in Kunduz region were some that held high political positions, such as Mulla Amir Khan Muttaqi,²⁹⁹ Khairullah Khairkwa³⁰⁰, Mulla Abdur Razzaq³⁰¹, the chief of staff of the Taleban forces, Mulla Muhammad Fazel Mazlum³⁰² and his deputy Abdul Ghani, better known as Mulla Baradar.³⁰³ Furthermore, a

²⁹⁹ Mulla Amir Khan Muttaqi, born 1968, a Sulaimankhel Pashtun from Ghazni province, was the Taleban's minister for culture and information and later became minister of education. Following the capture of Kunduz city in 1997 he also held the position of political commissar in Kunduz area. By this time he commanded a large contingent of fighters in Kunduz province. However, in 1998 he was replaced as Kunduz political commissar by Mulla Zakeri.

³⁰⁰ Mulla Khairullah Khairkwa, born in 1967, a Popalzai Pashtun from Zabul province, served as governor general of the North-western Zone and governor of Herat province. Later he became the Taleban's minister of interior. In late summer 1997 he oversaw the massing of Taleban troops in Kunduz province and commanded the second (failed) offensive against Mazar-e Sharif.

³⁰¹ Mulla Abdur Razzaq, born 1964, originates from Kandahar province (some sources claim he was Pakistani) and served as the overall Taleban commander during the offensive that led to the capture of Kabul in September 1996. Later he admitted that he had personally ordered the murder of former Afghan president Najibullah following the seizure of the city. In June 1997 he was among the senior Taleban leaders captured in Mazar-e Sharif but later released. While he was the Taleban's deputy minister of defence in 1998, Mulla Abdur Razzaq personally commanded forces at the Kunduz-Takhar frontline. Later he became the Taleban's minister of interior. See Rahimullah Yusufzai, 'No Differences with Omar: Mulla Rabbani', *The News International*, 9 December 1998; Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia*, Second Edition, Yale University Press 2010, 49 and 59.

³⁰² Mulla Muhammad Fazel Mazlum, born 1967 in Uruzgan province, was appointed chief of army staff probably sometime after the Taleban's capture of Kabul. However he personally commanded forces at divisional or corps level at different frontlines, including the Kunduz-Takhar front. In 2001 he was the overall field commander of Taleban forces in northern Afghanistan.

³⁰³ Mulla Baradar, a Durrani-Popalzai Pashtun from Uruzgan province, briefly served as governor of Herat in 1997. Since 1998 he concurrently served as deputy chief of army staff and right-hand man of Mulla Fazel Mazlum as well as commander of different frontline corps. In June 1997 he oversaw the advance on Mazar-e Sharif and organized the subsequent defence of Kunduz city. In

number of renowned field commanders that did not hold official positions led forces in Kunduz area, among them Mulla Dadullah Akhund³⁰⁴ and Mulla Abdul Qayum Zaker,³⁰⁵ were increasingly joined by contingents of foreign fighters after 1998.

8.2.12 1998 to 2001 – IMU activities in Kunduz area

In the summer of 1998 Taher Yuldash³⁰⁶ and Juma Namangani³⁰⁷ founded the Islamic Movement of

1998 he was the main strategist of the Taleban's successful campaign in northern Afghanistan and personally led forces in Kunduz province. During offensives at the Kunduz-Takhar frontline in the following years, Mulla Baradar frequently oversaw operations on site.

³⁰⁴ Mulla Dadullah Akhund, born 1966 in Uruzgan province, was one of the most talented field commanders of the Taleban and well known for both his charisma and ruthlessness. He committed serious crimes against humanity when commanding forces in Mazar-e Sharif in August 1998 and in Bamian province in 1999 and 2000. He was the key Taleban frontline commander succeeding in stabilizing a new frontline and organizing an all-round defence in Kunduz province during summer 1997. During the following years he was frequently deployed to Kunduz province at crucial times.

³⁰⁵ Mulla Abdul Qayum Zaker, a Durrani Pashtun of the Alizai tribe from Helmand province, grew up in the northern Afghan province of Jowzjan. He commanded the so-called 'Helmandi brigade', a unit of several hundred fighters recruited from southern Helmand province that enjoyed a high reputation among the Taleban's ranks. Mulla Abdul Qayum Zaker was deployed to the Kunduz-Takhar frontline where he led his unit during several engagements throughout 2000 and 2001.

³⁰⁶ Taher Yuldash, (1967–2009), born Taher Abdukhalilovich Yuldashev, worked as a mulla in a village in Soviet Uzbekistan after he abandoned a higher education. In 1991 he got to know Juma Namangani. Taher Yuldash spent a lot of time in Peshawar during the mid-1990s, where he established the links with local and international Islamists that would later enable him to found the IMU, to seek exile in Afghanistan and, after 2001, in Pakistan. Until the death of Juma Namangani, Yuldash acted as the representative to the Taleban authorities, strategist and religious authority of the IMU. After 2001 he took responsibility for the IMU's day-to-day business as well and led the organisation's military operations until he was killed by a US drone strike in Waziristan in August 2009.

³⁰⁷ Juma Namangani (1968–2001), born Jumaboi Ahmadjonovich Khojiyev, fought as a conscript with a Soviet unit of paratroopers in Afghanistan in 1987. Influenced by his experiences there, he allegedly discovered his identity as a Muslim and in 1991 joined the flourishing Islamic movement in his Uzbek hometown of Namangan. By this time he got to know Taher Yuldash with whom he later founded the IMU. Due to his military skills and charisma, Namangani

Uzbekistan (IMU)³⁰⁸ in Kabul and were provided with safe accommodations and offices in Kabul and Kandahar by the Taliban leadership.³⁰⁹ In May 1999 they got permission to set up training camps, operational bases and a military headquarters in northern Afghanistan. Thus, the IMU operated facilities particularly in Kunduz, Balkh and Takhar provinces between 1999 and 2001. The bulk of Namangani's fighting force migrated to northern Afghanistan in November 1999 after they were forced to abandon their former basis in the Tawildara region in Tajikistan. About 600 fighters along with their families moved to the provinces of Balkh and Kunduz.³¹⁰

After having executed their first major terrorist attacks in Tashkent in February 1999, the IMU switched to guerrilla warfare and launched a number of raids on Uzbek and Kyrgyz territory throughout the summer months of 1999 and 2000. Operating from their bases in Afghanistan and Tajikistan, the IMU targeted police stations and border posts as well as foreign citizens for kidnapping.³¹¹ During the summer of 2001, IMU raids into Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan were limited to a few operations, as the bulk of the IMU battled the Northern Alliance alongside their Taliban allies.³¹² Since autumn 2000 a force of about 800 IMU fighters already formed part of the Taliban garrison of Taloqan city, which was defended against numerous offensives of Ahmad Shah Massud's forces.³¹³ In early 2001, Mulla Omar

enjoyed a legendary reputation among Central Asian Islamists until his death in 2001. Orally transmitted myths and legends about his life and death are still popular in both Kunduz and Takhar provinces where he frequently operated between 1999 and 2001. See Ahmed Rashid, 'They're Only Sleeping. Why Militant Islamicists in Central Asia Aren't Going to Go Away,' *The New Yorker*, Annals of Terrorism, 14 January 2002.

³⁰⁸ For 'Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU)' refer to glossary at the end of the report.

³⁰⁹ It is hard to date the foundation of the IMU exactly. While most sources claim it was in summer 1998, others say it was even earlier, in 1996 or 1997. Interview with Guido Steinberg, *SWP Berlin*, January 2012.

³¹⁰ Michael Fredholm, 'Uzbekistan and the Threat from Islamic Extremism', Conflict Studies Research Centre, March 2003, 6.

³¹¹ *Ibid.*, 6–7.

³¹² Ahmed Rashid reports that besides about 10,000 Afghan Taliban next to 5,000 non-Afghan nationals participated in the September 2000 offensive that led to the capture of Taloqan. He estimates that 3,000 Pakistanis, 1,000 IMU members (mainly Uzbeks) and 1,000 al-Qaeda affiliates (many of them Arabs) fought at the Takhar frontline. See Rashid, *Taliban: Islam, Oil and the New Great Game*, 80 [see FN 159].

³¹³ Michael Fredholm, 'Uzbekistan and the Threat', 9 [see FN 310].

appointed Juma Namangani commander of a unit called 'Brigade 21',³¹⁴ which consisted of about 3,000 fighters, including Arabs and Pakistanis.³¹⁵ Thereby, Juma Namangani became the most powerful non-Afghan field commander in Afghanistan.

In Kunduz province the IMU operated several facilities. Its military headquarters was located in the city centre of Kunduz close to the main roundabout.³¹⁶ When the building was looted by Afghan civilians after the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001, manuals teaching guerrilla warfare in several languages were found.³¹⁷ Training camps were reported to have been established in Kunduz and Imam Saheb districts.³¹⁸ In addition, the IMU ran a hospital as well as a madrassa and several mosques around Kunduz city. While the IMU also recruited among ethnic Uzbeks in Afghanistan, some of the families of its fighters originating from Uzbekistan settled in parts of northern Afghanistan. Regarding Kunduz province, sources specifically mention Imam Saheb district as a place where IMU fighters and their families stay until today.³¹⁹

The IMU was heavily involved in drug trafficking between Afghanistan and the Central Asian states and mainly operated along routes in northern Takhar province or in the Sher Khan Bandar area of Kunduz province.³²⁰ Besides, donations from Islamic charities in Saudi-Arabia, the Gulf countries and Pakistan as well as contributions from the large Uzbek communities in Pakistan, Saudi-Arabia and Iran made up an important financial pillar of

³¹⁴ In the Joint Task Force Guantanamo Detainee Assessment of Mulla Fazel Mazlum, the unit is referred to as 22nd division.

³¹⁵ While the IMU mainly consisted of Uzbeks and a few hundred Tajiks, Kyrgyz, Chechens and Uighurs, 'Brigade 21' additionally included Pakistani and Arab nationals. See Guido W. Steinberg, *The German Jihad: On the Internationalization of Islamist Terrorism*, Columbia University Press, forthcoming 2012, chapter 8.

³¹⁶ Turkiston, Tashkent, in Uzbek, 'Central Asian Islamic Militants Training at Secret Camps in Pakistan – paper', *BBC Monitoring*, 18 February 2000.

³¹⁷ Rashid, 'They're Only Sleeping' [see FN 307].

³¹⁸ It is quite hard to locate the training facilities of the IMU exactly as some sources mix up IMU camps with al-Qaeda camps. Furthermore some of the training sites were used by both organizations or existed temporarily. It seems probable that the IMU operated at least two or three permanent facilities in Kunduz province besides the headquarters in the city centre.

³¹⁹ Author's interview with ethnic Uzbek from Imam Saheb district, Kabul, March 2011.

³²⁰ 'Central Asia: Drugs and Conflict'. *International Crisis Group*, Asia Report No 25, Executive summary and recommendations, 26 November 2001.

the organisation.³²¹ Due to its centrality, the widely ramified money market (including the hawala brokers) and the useful ties of its ethnic Uzbek citizens with Uzbek communities in the Fergana Valley and particularly in Saudi-Arabia, Kunduz city was a major hub in the financial system of the IMU.

8.2.13 1998 to 2001 – al-Qaeda activities in the Kunduz area³²²

Jihadists associated with al-Qaeda³²³ were already active in Kunduz province in the early 1990s when northeastern Afghanistan became a retreat area for fighters of the Islamist opposition in the Tajik civil war. The 'Furqan Project', al-Qaeda's logistical support for the Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan (IRP) between 1992 and 1997, was described as the organisation's largest operation in Afghanistan after Usama Bin Laden and most of his cadres left for Sudan early in the 1990s.³²⁴ The project was run by al-Qaeda's key operative remaining in Afghanistan, Mustafa Hamid aka Abu'l-Walid.³²⁵ The 'Furqan Project' was coordinated from Kunduz province and included military training and financial support for the Tajik fighters of IRP.³²⁶ Around 1995 the 'Furqan Project' expired.³²⁷

Probably as a consequence of the August 1998 US missile strikes against terror camps in eastern Afghanistan, al-Qaeda returned to Kunduz province in late 1998.³²⁸ According to Pakistani intelligence officials and US diplomats, al-Qaeda was constructing a command-and-control centre in a natural cave complex in Kunduz province close to the Tajik border by this time. The facility was described as al-Qaeda's 'most startling new asset'³²⁹ and was seen as one element of a network of al-Qaeda facilities to be established in eastern and northern Afghanistan.³³⁰ Shortly after these reports emerged, there were rumours that Usama bin Laden himself stayed in the area.³³¹ Throughout 1999 there were more reports about al-Qaeda training camps in Kunduz province. The Northern Alliance newspaper, *Payam-e Mojahed*, reported that al-Qaeda's training camp in Aliabad district was one of the four most important bases of the organisation all over Afghanistan.³³² Another al-Qaeda camp was located in Chahrdara district.³³³

Between 1999 and 2001, al-Qaida's 'Brigade 055'³³⁴ was occasionally based in Kunduz province and fought at the Kunduz-Takhar frontline against Massud's forces.³³⁵ The unit fought its probably most legendary battle when it was cornered in

³²¹ Steinberg, *The German Jihad*, chapter 8 [see FN 315].

³²² The earliest presence of Arab fighters in Kunduz province dates back to the years of the 1980s jehadjihad when a number of volunteers that came from the Egyptian group al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya allied themselves to Hekmatyar's Hezb-e Islami and established their principal camp in Kunduz province. See Khaled Dawoud, et al., 'Encircled but fighting on, Arab units prepare for martyrdom', *The Guardian*, 20 November 2001.

³²³ On al-Qaeda in Afghanistan between 1996 and 2001 see Peter Bergen and Paul Cruickshank, 'Revisiting the Early Al Qaeda: An Updated Account of its Formative Years', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 35 (2012): 1.

³²⁴ 'Cracks in the Foundation: Leadership Schisms in Al-Qa'ida From 1989–2006', Harmony Project, Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, September 2007, 10.

³²⁵ Mustafa Hamid aka Abu'l-Walid, born 1945 in Egypt, fought in Afghanistan during the 1980s and was a member of al-Qaeda's inner circle during the founding years. When the organization moved to Sudan, he remained in Afghanistan and later became a key advisor to Mulla Omar. Mustafa Hamid published the Taleban's official propaganda organ, al-Imarah, and later wrote extensively on the history of the Arab mujahedin in Afghanistan. He fled Afghanistan when the Taleban regime was toppled and has stayed in Iran since. See Vahid Brown, 'A Profile of Abu'l-Walid al-Masri', *Combating Terrorism Centre*, 1 January 2008. <http://www.ctc.usma.edu/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/Abul-Walid.pdf>.

³²⁶ 'Cracks in the Foundation', 10 [see FN 324].

³²⁷ Bergen and Cruickshank, 'Revisiting the Early Al Qaeda', 17 [see FN 323].

³²⁸ 'Terrorist Training Camps Resume Operations in Afghanistan: Report', *AFP*, 22 December 1998; Iranian news agency IRNA, 'Arab "Terrorist" Training Camps Reportedly Reactivated', *BBC Monitoring*, 24 December 1998.

³²⁹ Adrian Levy and Cathy Scott-Clark, 'Bin Laden Primes Terror Machine', *The Sunday Times*, 20 December 1998.

³³⁰ *Ibid.*

³³¹ 'Osama Not in Hekmatyar Area – HIA Spokesman', *Xinhua*, 16 February 1999.

³³² *Payam-e Mojahed*, 'Parwan: Northern Alliance Paper Says Taleban Depend on Bin Ladin', *BBC Monitoring*, 21 November 1999.

³³³ Ian Cobain, 'Alliance Deal would Let Foreign Fighters Flee City – War on Terror – Battle for Kunduz', *The Times*, 20 November 2001.

³³⁴ Brigade 055 was an al-Qaeda guerilla force allegedly integrated into the Taleban army between 1997 and 2001. It comprised of about 2,000 mainly non-Afghan fighters trained and financed by al-Qaeda but forming an integral part of the Taleban's forces. Brigade 055 apparently functioned as a shock force for the Taleban, the motivation and morale of its fighters reportedly exceptionally high. In fact, the Brigade is a subject of numerous myths and legends while its real history remains one of the least-researched aspects of the al-Qaeda phenomenon. See Rohan Gunaratna, *Inside al-Qaeda. Global Network of Terror*, London, Hurst 2002, 58–60.

³³⁵ Peter Bergen, *Holy War, Inc. Inside the Secret World of Osama bin Laden*, New York, The Free Press 2002, 162.

Kunduz city together with large contingents of the Taliban army and the IMU in November 2001.

9 NOVEMBER 2001: THE BATTLE OF KUNDUZ AND ITS AFTERMATH

9.1 National Level

On 9 September 2001, two al-Qaeda assassins, disguised as journalists, killed Ahmad Shah Massud with a bomb hidden in their camera during an interview in Khwaja Bahauddin in northern Takhar. While his senior commanders were still desperate and under shock, seeking how to deal with this major setback, their most powerful ally, the US, previously reluctant in support, came under attack itself on 11 September 2001. These attacks completely changed the relationship between the US and the Northern Alliance, as the latter became the key asset in the US defence ministry's strategy for the upcoming war against al-Qaeda and their host, the Taliban regime. Within the leadership of Shura-ye Nazar, three persons took over the responsibilities of Ahmad Shah Massud. General Muhammad Qasem Fahim, Massud's former intelligence chief, became the military leader of Jamiat's forces. Yunos Qanuni, a longstanding advisor of Massud, particularly on political matters, emerged as the main negotiator with other Afghan groups while Dr Abdullah Abdullah continued acting as the foreign minister of the Northern Alliance's government.³³⁶

The United States war strategy intended to avoid a large-scale land war and favoured a combination of aerial warfare, limited operations with Special Forces and an Afghan ally providing ground forces. Hence, the US had to re-establish and massively reinforce the Northern Alliance, especially the remnants of Jombesh whose former strongholds of Mazar-e Sharif and Sheberghan were under Taliban control by the time of the US-led intervention. However, after a massive air offensive, coordinated by small teams of Special Forces accompanied by local anti-Taliban forces, paved the way, opposition leaders in northern, eastern and southern Afghanistan returned to their former areas of influence and reorganized their militias. The air strikes began on 7 October 2001.³³⁷ The first Special Forces team moved to an area south of Mazar-e Sharif by helicopter on 19 October. During the

following days, more teams landed in Takhar, the Panjshir valley and southern provinces.³³⁸

Impressed by the US air supremacy and an expected defeat of the Taliban, many local commanders switched their allegiance as they had done years before when the Taliban were on their advance. The first major city that fell to the Northern Alliance was Mazar-e Sharif on 9 November 2001.³³⁹ The city was taken by militias commanded by General Atta Muhammad Nur of Jamiat, Ustad Muhammad Mohaqeq of Wahdat and General Dostum, who had returned from exile just weeks before. The capture of Mazar-e Sharif caused a domino effect and advances by the Northern Alliance during the following days led to the conquest of parts of the provinces of Bamyan, Baghlan, Jowzjan, Balkh and Takhar. Maimana, the capital of Faryab, fell on 11 November and Herat, the third biggest city of the country, was captured from the Taliban on 12 November. After the Northern Alliance forces attacked from Shomali valley on 12 November, the Taliban retreated and Kabul city was occupied on 13 November without fighting. Jalalabad in eastern Afghanistan fell one day later so that most parts of Afghanistan were under control of militias under direct command or at least associated with the Northern Alliance by mid November.³⁴⁰ The Taliban had retreated to their two key strongholds where they prepared for a last stand, Kandahar in the south and Kunduz in the north. As the pressure of Northern Alliance forces at the Takhar frontline mounted, the Taliban forces and their allies of the IMU and al-Qaeda had little choice but to retreat via Khanabad district to the city area of Kunduz. Kandahar city was the last stronghold of the Taliban and fell on 9 December 2001. Previously, during the last week of November, Kunduz province became the scene of a dramatic and bloody battle.

9.2 Regional Level

Most of the Taliban forces that had abandoned the cities of Mazar-e Sharif and Taloqan without fighting retreated to Kunduz province. There, Northern Alliance forces under the command of General Daud Daud advancing from the area of Taloqan met the first heavy resistance of Taliban units when they tried to push into Khanabad district on 13 November.³⁴¹ Thereupon General

³³⁶ Maley, *The Afghanistan Wars*, 218 [see FN 54].

³³⁷ *Ibid.*, 219.

³³⁸ US Army Centre of Military History, *The United States Army in Afghanistan. Operation Enduring Freedom*, 17 March 2006, 10–12.

³³⁹ Maley, *The Afghanistan Wars*, 221 [see FN 54].

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 221–2.

³⁴¹ US Army Centre of Military History, *The United States Army*, 16 [see FN 338].

Daud ordered his forces to entrench so that the eastern frontline ran from the Archi-Khwaja Ghar region in the north down to the hills that border the Kunduz-Taloqan connecting road between the town of Khanabad and Bangi Bridge. In the south, the frontline ran through Aliabad district and in the west the forces of Dostum massed in the Kholm-Chahar Dara border region. Among the senior field commanders of General Daud's forces in the east were Commander Engineer Muhammad Omar, Commander Abdul Mutaleb Beg and General Mir Alam Khan. The forces approaching Kunduz province from the west were under the overall command of General Dostum. His field commanders included General Abdul Majid Rozi and General Atta Mohammad Noor.

Kunduz province was encircled for eleven days between 13 and 24 November 2001. These days were marked by ongoing US air attacks including carpet bombings of Taleban frontline positions and negotiations between different factions of the Northern Alliance and representatives of the besieged. The airstrikes directed by Special Forces during the siege killed or wounded about 2,000 Taleban and foreign fighters and destroyed 12 tanks, 51 cargo trucks, 44 bunker complexes, as well as numerous other vehicles and supply dumps.³⁴² Numerous houses and villages particularly around the small town of Khanabad were destroyed and thousands of civilians fled the area while the exact number of civil casualties remains unclear.

The forces trapped in Kunduz province comprised local Taleban militias, units of the Taleban army from the south and the east, large contingents of Pakistani Taleban, the bulk of the IMU respectively Brigade 21, a large contingent of al-Qaeda's Brigade 055 as well as Pakistani military and intelligence personnel that had supported the Taleban army during recent years. The total strength of the Taleban forces and their allies was estimated at about 8,000 to 12,000 fighters. Among the senior commanders trapped in Kunduz were Mulla Fazel Mazlum, who was the overall commander of the forces inside the pocket, Mulla Dadullah, who acted as his deputy and commanded a section of the frontline, Mulla Abdul Qayum Zaker, who was in charge of another frontline section as well as Mulla Nurullah Nuri and Mulla Baradar, who had both fled to Kunduz after the fall of Mazar-e Sharif. The local Taleban forces were led by Arbab Mohammad Hashem and Mirza Naseri while Omar Khan was still the Taleban's governor of the city. The key leaders of the foreign fighters were Juma Namangani in charge of

Brigade 21 as well as the commander and second-in-command of al-Qaeda's Brigade 055, Abdul Hadi al-Iraqi and Gharib al-Sana'ani.

During the eleven-day siege, several rounds of negotiations took place. At first, the Northern Alliance commanders Mutaleb Beg and Engineer Mohammad Omar met a delegation of the Taleban in Imam Saheb city on November 16. Arbab Mohammad Hashem, acting as the chief Taleban envoy, was offered two options. The Northern Alliance promised not to kill any Afghan Taleban fighters if they would defect to the other side or attack the non-Afghan forces inside the city.³⁴³ Regarding foreign fighters, Northern Alliance commanders announced that they had issued 'explicit orders' to shoot any non-Afghan fighter captured while fighting at Kunduz.³⁴⁴ This apparently encouraged the contingents associated with al-Qaeda or IMU not to surrender. Refugees and defectors who had managed to make their way through the frontlines reported that the foreign fighters had sworn an oath to become martyrs. Thus, owing to the announcement of the Northern Alliance and the attitude of the foreigners, the Afghan Taleban commanders got into a dilemma.

The inner circle around Mulla Fazel Mazlum was apparently not willing to fight until death as long as there was a chance of obtaining pardon. However, the Afghan Taleban commanders did not trust the Northern Alliance's promise of free passage, but feared being killed in an act of revenge. While negotiations went on, the first major Afghan Taleban units surrendered. Smaller groups of Afghan Taleban or single fighters had reached Northern Alliance positions already since the beginning of the siege, but around 19 November they managed to surrender in larger numbers.³⁴⁵ It is reported that Mulla Fazel personally managed to get up to 600 Afghan Taleban through the

³⁴³ David Rennie, 'Fall of the Taliban – Betray Your Comrades and You Can Live', *The Daily Telegraph*, 17 November 2001.

³⁴⁴ Ian Cobain and Hamir Habad, 'Alliance Deal Would Let Foreign Fighters Flee City – War on Terror – Battle for Kunduz', *The Times*, 20 November 2001.

³⁴⁵ Actually, the southern section of the frontline in Aliabad district was manned almost completely with fighters who had recently been Taleban. The commander in this area, Amir Gul from Baghlan province, had defected during the early phase of the battle for Kunduz. Allegedly he defected with a force of up to 3,000 fighters. See Luke Harding et al., 'Northern Stronghold Ready to Capitulate. Questions over How Surrender Will Take Place', *The Guardian*, 22 November 2001.

³⁴² Ibid, 16.

frontlines while he remained inside the pocket.³⁴⁶ However, there were also numerous reports indicating that Afghan Taleban who intended to give themselves up were shot by foreign fighters. Exact numbers could hardly be confirmed, but allegedly about 300 to 500 mainly Afghan Taleban were gunned down between 17 and 20 November.³⁴⁷

In addition to the apparent split within the defender's camp, the battle for Kunduz was overshadowed by the everlasting conflict between Jombesh and Jamiat. For those two Northern Alliance factions it was about who would enter the city first and appear as the conqueror of the Taleban's long-time northern stronghold. Thus, there were also two different tracks of negotiations during the final days of the siege. On 20 November, Mulla Fazel and Mulla Dadullah negotiated with General Daud. These talks again excluded representatives of the foreign fighters, but obviously led to a pre-deal regarding the surrender of Afghan Taleban forces. However, the decisive negotiations were held on the night of 22 November in Dostum's headquarters in the Qalaye Jangi fortress close to Mazar-e Sharif, where a heavily guarded convoy had brought the Taleban delegation from Kunduz.³⁴⁸ The Northern Alliance was represented at the meeting by General Dostum, General Atta Muhammad, Ustad Mohaqqueq and a number of high-ranking Jombesh officials. The Taleban delegation comprised Mulla Fazel, Mulla Nuri, Arbab Muhammad Hashem and the Kunduz governor, Omar Khan.³⁴⁹ At 2 A.M. on 22 November, both sides announced they had a deal and according to Mulla Fazel, 'Nobody will be fighting in Kunduz.'³⁵⁰ The Taleban supreme commander also stated that he was optimistic that the foreign fighters would accept his word and surrender as well.

What exactly happened in the course of the days between the return of the Taleban delegation to Kunduz on 22 November and the occupation of the city centre by forces of General Daud early on 26 November remains nebulous. However, sometime between 15 and 22 November the Pakistani air force evacuated up to 1,000 personnel from the pocket of Kunduz in an operation dubbed 'airlift of

evil'³⁵¹ by observing US Special Forces (that had the order not to interfere). Among those evacuated were apparently several hundred Pakistani nationals of the ISI and the Frontier Corps as well as many foreign fighters. According to Ahmed Rashid, more foreign terrorists escaped from Kunduz than later managed to flee the Tora Bora cave complex. Possibly, the absence of some key Arab or Uzbek commanders, who had already fled the area, led the bulk of the remaining foreigners to accept the deal brokered by Mulla Fazel.

However, even the Afghan Taleban commanders remained suspicious. According to numerous contemporaries from Kunduz province, a meeting of the senior Afghan Taleban commanders was held before the defenders of Kunduz surrendered on 24 and 25 November. While some weighed to trust the word of General Dostum to be given free passage, others decided not to surrender but to take the risk and try to slip through the frontlines to escape. Apparently Mulla Baradar and Mulla Dadullah were the most prominent members of the group that did not surrender. Whether they bribed their way through the frontlines or boarded one of the last Pakistani planes remains unclear. However, Mulla Fazel, Mulla Nuri, Mulla Zaker, Arbab Muhammad Hashem and Mirza Muhammad Naseri were among those commanders who surrendered. While the first three were brought to Guantanamo Bay a few weeks later, the latter two and a number of local mid-level commanders were killed in a mysterious helicopter crash on 8 December 2001 while they were being transported from one prison to another.³⁵² The Taleban since claim that the helicopter crash was arranged by the Northern Alliance to get rid of the key figures of local Taleban presence in Kunduz province.

Regarding the Taleban foot soldiers who surrendered at Kunduz on 24 and 25 November, the bulk was taken prisoner by forces under the command of General Dostum. The number of fighters who had held out until this time was estimated at 3,000 to 4,000.³⁵³ Those men faced the fate already mentioned in the paper's introduction, the incidents that became public by the terms 'Qalaye Jangi massacre' and 'convoy of death'.³⁵⁴

³⁴⁶ Luke Harding, 'Afghans Unite against Trapped Arabs. Defectors Quit Besieged City for Alliance Dugouts', *The Guardian*, 21 November 2001.

³⁴⁷ Ibid; 'B-52 Bombers Attack Kunduz', *The Guardian*, 20 November 2001.

³⁴⁸ Harding et al., 'Northern Stronghold' [see FN 346].

³⁴⁹ Balkh Radio, Mazar-e Sharif, 'Alliance, Taleban Agree on Fate of Afghan, Foreign Troops under Siege in Kunduz', *BBC Monitoring*, 22 November 2001.

³⁵⁰ Harding et al., 'Northern Stronghold' [see FN 346].

³⁵¹ For a detailed report of the 'airlift of evil', see Ahmed Rashid, *Decent into Chaos. How the War against Islamic Extremism Is Being Lost in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Central Asia*, London, Penguin 2008, 90–3.

³⁵² 'Helicopter Crash kills 18', *The Independent*, 09 December 2001.

³⁵³ Rashid, *Decent into Chaos*, 92 [see FN 351].

³⁵⁴ See section 1 of this paper.

10 PERSISTENCE OF CONFLICTS AND CONCLUSIONS

The first part of the conclusion will briefly sum up what happened to the individual figures presented throughout sections 5 to 9 since Afghanistan's political zero hour in autumn 2001. This finally illustrates how important it is to examine the history of Kunduz area carefully to understand the post-2001 conflict situation.

Muhammad Ghulam from Chughay village in Khanabad district, who took over the position of his slain brother **Amir Chughay** within Ittehad in autumn 1994, defected to the Taliban in June 1997 and later switched sides between Shura-ye Nazar and the Taliban three times in one month, is currently serving as the mayor of Kunduz city. After the fall of the Taliban regime he served as chief of police of Kunduz province and later became the commander of a border police brigade in Takhar province. Despite the fact, that he never achieved the reputation of his brother, who is still honoured as a legendary commander by many former mujahedin, Muhammad Ghulam has been playing an important role in Kunduz' micro politics since the early 2000s. He is considered to be an important member of Mawlawi Abdur Rabb ar-Rasul Sayyaf's network and also maintains close ties with the Taliban.

Omar Khan from Za Khel village in Kunduz district, who became the last Taliban governor of Kunduz after the assassination of his brother **Aref Khan** in April 2000, is a wealthy landowner and a respected, influential Pashtun elder. He is the owner of the property where the US and first German PRT were established. Since the first of his business engagements with the Germans, he acted as a mediator between ISAF and Afghan lobbies. Omar Khan was a member of the Wolesi Jirga (Lower House of the Parliament) between 2005 and 2010.

Haji Amanullah, from Utmanzai village in Kunduz district, the Taliban treasurer and chief logistician for their northern campaign, is considered to be one of the key powerbrokers in Kunduz province today. He partly controls the money market (i.e., the moneychangers) of Kunduz and owns estates and properties, among them land and houses that host facilities of the UN. Haji Amanullah is one of the most influential Pashtun elders in northern Afghanistan and is still well connected to numerous insurgent factions. Reports indicate that he never ceased to be a supporter of the Taliban and still operates money transfers for the insurgency. Haji Amanullah Utmanzai frequently came into the picture in the recent past when it

was about settling conflicts between ISAF and any Afghan lobbies. Following incidents that led to civilian casualties, he served as a mediator between the German PRT and the victims' families several times whereupon he was praised as a 'friend of the Germans' and supporter of ISAF in the German media.³⁵⁵ Haji Amanullah Utmanzai became a member of the Afghan High Peace Council in October 2010 where he is believed to represent the Taliban faction.³⁵⁶

Mir Alam Khan, the only senior Kunduz commander who stayed with Shura-ye Nazar in June 1997, has been the most influential non-Pashtun powerbroker in Kunduz province during the past ten years apart from General Daud Daud. He commanded the 54th Division of General Daud's 6th Corps of the Afghan Militia Forces until the unit was disarmed in 2003. Throughout 2005 and 2006, Mir Alam briefly served as chief of police of Baghlan province. Mir Alam Khan partly controls the money market of Kunduz, is said to be heavily involved in drug-trafficking and operates an extensive network of informants and supporters who are mainly former companions. He makes no pretence of his ambitions to become chief of police in Kunduz province and the reach of his influence was clearly manifested when he thwarted the appointment of Juma Khan Hamdard as governor of Kunduz province in 2007. Since 2009 he has been one of the main militia commanders in Kunduz province, a position that was additionally backed by his brother in law, General Daud, until the latter was assassinated in May 2011.

Qari Rahmatullah, the governor of Kunduz between 1993 and 1997 who occasionally commanded frontline units of Jamiat, served as the director of the department for light industries of Kunduz province in the early 2000s and was a member of the Wolesi Jirga (Lower House of Parliament) between 2005 and 2010.

Arbab Muhammad Hashem, who was killed under mysterious circumstances in December 2001, is still being commemorated by his clan and many Taliban sympathizers in Kunduz province. His eldest son, Mawlawi Qasem, has been a key figure in the insurgency that has grasped Kunduz province since 2007. He successfully exploits both

³⁵⁵ Stefan Klein, 'Augen auf und durchhalten, Erkundungen am Hindukusch (II)', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 8 October 2008; Ansgar Graf, 'Jung verhindert Blutrache an Deutschen in Kundus', *Welt Online*, 2 September 2008.

³⁵⁶ Thomas Ruttig, 'The Ex-Taliban on the High Peace Council. A Renewed Role for the Khuddam ul-Furqan?' *Afghanistan Analysts Network*, Discussion Paper 04/2010, http://www.aan-afghani.org/uploads/20101020TRuttig_ExT_in_HPC.pdf.

the long-lasting Hezb-e Islami connections of his family as well as their well-developed relationship to senior Taliban operatives. He is said to have very close ties to IMU, the Haqqani network and al-Qaeda, which makes sense as Aiman al-Zawahiri personally praised Arbab Muhammad Hashem after he was killed. Zawahiri, while under high pressure of being captured by the time of his press release, mentioned that Arbab Hashem was a martyr who intentionally blew up the Northern Alliance helicopter in December 2001.³⁵⁷

The **Ibrahimi clan** has been playing a major role in Kunduz province politics and beyond since the early 2000s. Abdul Latif Ibrahimi served as governor of Kunduz province between 2002 and March 2004, Faryab between 2004 and 2007 and Takhar between 2008 and 2010. Abdul Rauf Ibrahimi commanded the border police of Kunduz, has been a member of the Wolesi Jirga since 2005 and until recently serves as its speaker. Abdul Qayum Ibrahimi has been serving as a senior police officer since the early 2000s. For a time he was chief of police of Imam Saheb district. The family clan is the de facto ruler of Imam Saheb district and is reported to be heavily involved in drug trafficking. Abdul Latif and Haji Rauf Ibrahimi are deemed to support the political wing of Hezb-e Islami while maintaining close contacts to Jombesh. Abdul Latif Ibrahimi's sub-commander, Sufi Abdul Manan, became the mayor of Imam Saheb town after 2001 and is considered to be one of the most influential figures in Imam Saheb district. In March 2009, his compound became the scene of a US Special Forces operation that caused tense controversies in the media.³⁵⁸

The members of the **Obaidi clan** again became active for Hezb-e Islami after 2001 and have been supporting the Taliban insurgency in Kunduz province logistically. Territories under their control became key retreating areas for insurgents since 2006. Abdul Hamid Obaidi who is considered to be the most influential figure in Archi district up to the present day facilitated operations of Mulla Abdul Salam. Mulla Abdul Salam, the infamous Taliban shadow governor of Kunduz province between

2007 and early 2010 mainly fell back on the Obaidis regarding the provision of hideouts for himself.³⁵⁹

Engineer Muhammad Omar Sulaimani, who was in command of Shura-ye Nazar forces in Kunduz province in 1995 and later offered the Taliban free passage when he was in charge of the Bangi section of the Kunduz-Takhar front, became Kunduz governor in March 2004 and held the office until his assassination in October 2010. Engineer Mohammad Omar remained a key figure in the patronage network of Mawlawi Abdur Rabb ar-Rasul Sayyaf, who is reported to have intervened several times when president Karzai was about to remove Engineer Mohammad Omar from his post due to allegations of corruption.

Mulla Muhammad Fazl Mazlum and Mulla Nurullah Nuri have been held in extrajudicial detention in the Guantanamo Bay detention and interrogation facilities since early 2002. Both have been the subject of exploratory talks in 2011 and 2012 about a possible exchange of prisoners in connection with the intended opening of a Taliban office in Qatar.

Mulla Taj Mir Jawad, the chief of Taliban intelligence in Kunduz province from 1998 until early 2001, rebuilt a sophisticated Taliban intelligence organization in eastern, southeastern and northeastern Afghanistan during the first years of the Taliban insurgency. During this time, he mainly operated from Thal and Peshawar areas in Pakistan. He was one of a few senior Taliban operatives associated with the Peshawar shura who funnelled resources to Kunduz province when the insurgency developed there in 2006 and 2007. While he is also active in Logar province, his main area of operations during the recent past has been Kabul province. He is reported to be one of the key figures running the 'Kabul attack network' and rates as a senior Haqqani network operative.³⁶⁰ Afghan sources dealing with the Kunduz insurgency claim that Mulla Taj Mir Jawad still maintains close ties with Taliban and Haqqani network operatives in the northeast. The same sources also report that he made the necessary contacts for al-Qaeda when they re-established their hub in Kunduz province

³⁵⁷ James Oberg, 'Bin Laden's Right-Hand Man, Al-Zawahiri, Interviewed on Fighting in Afghanistan', original source: *Al-Majallah Newspaper* (in Arabic) Issue December 16–22, London 2001, 12–13. <http://www.rense.com/general18/ex.htm>.

³⁵⁸ 'IWPR Probe Challenges US Account of Kunduz Killings', *Institute for War and Peace Reporting*, 23 April 2009, <http://iwpr.net/report-news/iwpr-probe-challenges-us-account-kunduz-killings>. See also: Susanne Schmeidl, 'Until You Get the Wrong Ahmad . . .', *Afghanistan Analysts Network blog*, 19 December 2009, <http://www.aan-afghanistan.org/index.asp?id=508>.

³⁵⁹ Author's interview, Kabul, March 2011.

³⁶⁰ Bill Roggio, '2 American Troops Missing in Kabul as US Targets Kabul Attack Network', *The Longwar Journal*, 24 July 2010; Martin Smith, 'The Spy Who Quit. A Conversation with Amrullah Saleh', *Frontline interview with Amrullah Saleh*, November 2010. <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/2011/01/video-amrullah-saleh-spy-who-quit.html>.

and installed a safe house in the proximity of Kunduz city.³⁶¹

Mulla Dadullah Akhund, who was one of the Taliban's key frontline commanders in Kunduz province on several occasions, became the most popular figure of the Taliban insurgency during its early years. He was killed in a Special Forces operation in southern Helmand province in May 2007. Mulla Dadullah was regarded as a very effective commander and also represented a propaganda figure as he was the only active senior Taliban operative who gave media interviews. His area of operations included the provinces of Kandahar, Helmand, Uruzgan (his home province) and Zabul.³⁶² If or to what extent he – or his brother Mulla Mansur Dadullah (originally Mulla Bakht Muhammad) who succeeded him after his death – remained in contact with his formerly well-established networks in Kunduz province cannot be assessed.

Mulla Baradar, (originally Abdul Ghani) who planned the Taliban's 1998 northern campaign and later fought in Kunduz province on several occasions, became one of four key military commanders (the others were the Mullas Dadullah, Obaidullah and Osmani) that crucially contributed to the development of the Taliban insurgency in southern Afghanistan after 2003. He rose to be the Taliban's 'number two' after the other members of the quartet were killed or captured. In 2008 and 2009 Mulla Baradar became the architect of the Taliban's renewed expansion towards northern Afghanistan. He is said to have personally chosen commanders and allocated resources for operations in Kunduz province.

Mulla Abdul Qayum Zaker (a.k.a. Mulla Ghulam Rasul), who was in charge of the 'Helmandi brigade' at the Kunduz Takhar frontline, was released from Guantanamo prison in 2007. He immediately joined the insurgency and became one of the Taliban's most successful field commanders in the south. Together with Abdul Rauf Khadem, he was chosen to succeed Mulla Baradar after his capture in early 2010. As his family background and his personal career are clearly linked to northern Afghanistan (he grew up in Jowzjan province), Afghan analysts dealing with the insurgency assess it is improbable that Mulla Zaker will lose sight of the north.³⁶³

³⁶¹ Author's interview, Kabul, March 2011 and April 2012.

³⁶² Thomas Ruttig, 'Die Taliban nach Mulla Dadullah. Ihre Strukturen, ihr Programm – und ob man mit ihnen reden kann', *SWP-Aktuell*, 31 June 2007.

³⁶³ Author's interview, Kabul, March 2011.

Conclusions

Regarding the distribution of power in Kunduz province between 1992 and 2001, it has been shown (in sections 5 and 6) that the local power structures were highly fragmented during the rule of the mujahedin until 1997. In fact, the province reflected the national level conflict formations on a smaller dimension, as nearly all relevant actors had a social or ethnic base there. However, in 1993 local commanders in Kunduz province formed alliances and fought each other in contradiction to the national-level conflict formation. Basically, alliance formation among the mujahedin parties followed a power-political calculus and was purposive.

The oldest conflict between the long-standing political organisations in Kunduz' politics is the rivalry between Jamiat and Hezb-e Islami, which goes back to the 1980s.³⁶⁴ Another traditional conflict line exists between Jamiat and Jombesh that goes back to the early 1990s. In fact, Kunduz province was neither a stronghold of Jamiat nor of Jombesh in the first half of the 1990s. The province was the scene of an ongoing power struggle, which was fuelled by its strategic location and ethnic heterogeneity. Concerning Hezb-e Islami and Ittehad, one could argue that these two organizations had strongholds in Kunduz province as the two lacked a coherent area of influence comparable to the ones of Jamiat or Jombesh.

As section 7 has illustrated, Kunduz province has a strong potential for Taliban support due to its settlement history and the overall socio-economic situation. The wave of defections, particularly in June 1997, underlines the importance of the ethnic factor in the conflict history of Kunduz. From a Taliban point of view, Kunduz province was a major stronghold in northern Afghanistan. Their rule over Kunduz was marked by a Pashtun domination of the provincial administration. Besides widespread bribery and individual power-political calculus, most defections proceeded along ethnic lines.

As the example of Aref Khan, who had fought under Massud for more than a decade, showed, the Taliban did not care about former affiliations, as long as a person was Pashtun. The province was never a stronghold of the Northern Alliance, and the military successor of Ahmad Shah Massud, Qasem Fahim Khan, has no traditional power base in the province. He originates from the Panjshir valley, never fought in Kunduz province and never stayed or hid there.

³⁶⁴ On the national level, the rivalry between Hezb-e Islami and Jamiat goes back to the 1970s.

As the report continuously showed, there are two obvious factors why so many actors and networks focus on Kunduz province: its strategic location and its ethnic composition. Its location at the junction of the road connecting Mazar-e Sharif with northeastern Afghanistan and the north-south route from the Tajik border to the Salang pass and Kabul make the province a valuable military asset. Due to its proximity to Central Asia, the province constituted a major smuggling and drug-trafficking hub during all phases of the civil war. Controlling it fully or partly provided those actors based in Kunduz province with a sound access to financial resources. Against this backdrop, they also were able to easily establish the logistics required for guerrilla warfare.

The ethnic factor of the civil war in Afghanistan repeatedly became apparent throughout this analysis. Hence, the ethnic heterogeneity of Kunduz province was an important pre-condition for the parties fighting in northeastern Afghanistan to exploit long-existing conflicts and tensions among the ethnic groups and mobilise supporters along ethnic lines. Furthermore, the ethnic diversity of the province has been providing a social base not only for nearly all Afghan warring parties but also for transnational organisations like the IMU and al-Qaeda.³⁶⁵ The settlement history of Kunduz province also partly explains the existence of far reaching religious and even financial networks. The IMU for example, was able to fall back on networks that comprised of Uzbeks in Uzbekistan's Ferghana valley, in Saudi-Arabia or Iran and Afghan Uzbeks living in Kunduz province; many had left Central Asia after the Soviets took over Bukhara and Khiva in the 1920s. There many of the Uzbeks living in different countries belonged to the same tribe or clan.

For many parties involved in the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan, Kunduz province meanwhile became important in a symbolic or even psychological way as well. The province's long history of heavy fighting, atrocities, expulsion, looting and betraying as well as numerous individual fates shape the symbolic importance of the city. Regarding the Taliban, the events of November 2001 are a sort of a trauma for them. According to former Taliban fighters, those

³⁶⁵ An ethnic Arab from Kunduz province reported that Arabs (by nationality) affiliated with al-Qaeda who operated in Kunduz province, and frequently used the homes of ethnic Arabs in Kunduz city as safe houses. He furthermore mentioned that those Afghan Arabs were exclusively Dari speakers and in some cases even did not like the Arabs from abroad but supported them due to the common decent. However, this is a single source of information that requires further research.

who held out in the encircled city between June 1997 and August 1998 enjoyed a legendary reputation. The air bridge and the actions taken by famous field commanders like Mulla Dadullah enabled the Taliban to defend an encircled town far away from their heartland and north of the Hindukush mountains for about 16 months. This was one of the few logistically and operationally sophisticated operations of the Taliban, ever. However the incidents that contribute most to the special importance of Kunduz province for the Taliban movement occurred in November 2001. Senior leaders of the Taliban who were – in the eyes of the movement's supporters – betrayed in Kunduz province when they negotiated the surrender, are still in detention in Guantanamo. Among those who escaped from Kunduz was Mulla Baradar, the key architect of the northern offensive that began in 2008. Mulla Abdul Qayum Zaker, one of the two overall military leaders of the Taliban right now, is a Pashtun from the north who rose to fame as a commander at the Kunduz frontline. However, his personal fate, including five years in Guantanamo prison, is strongly linked to the Kunduz battle of November 2001.

Who were the relevant actors and networks when the German government discussed a mission in Kunduz province in summer 2003? A comprehensive analysis of the local power structures and regional spheres of influence was already possible by this time, as most of the relevant sources were available. An analysis would have shown that the leverage of Qasem Fahim Khan on Kunduz province's micro politics was in fact limited. Furthermore, it had become clear that the fall of the Taliban regime had at first led to a vacuum of power, out of which in the following years strongly fragmented, informal power structures developed. These structures were found by the German soldiers and development workers when they came to northeastern Afghanistan in 2003. The power structures by this time were mainly a reflection of the power situation as it was between 1992 and 1997 (Jamiat-e Islami, Jombesh-e Melli, Hezb-e Islami and Ittehad-e Islami being the main actors in the conflict).

The organizations participating in the Kunduz insurgency since 2007, again mainly correspond to the actors that already fought in northeastern Afghanistan between 1998 and 2001 and finally found themselves surrounded in the November 2001 pocket of Kunduz (Taliban, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and al-Qaeda). What many German officials dealing with the Afghanistan mission did not understand when the security situation worsened after 2006 was that not a single organization participating in the insurgency was a new player in Kunduz province.

All of them could fall back on or exploit existent networks that had persisted over time.

To conclude, in the fields of intelligence, cultural and historical awareness and knowledge about district-level politics, the Germans were insufficiently prepared when they started their mission in Kunduz province in late 2003. Inexplicably, this situation has not fundamentally changed until today.³⁶⁶

GLOSSARY

Peshawar Seven

The 'Peshawar Seven' represented the seven Afghan mujahedin parties that were chosen out of about eighty resistance groups by Pakistan's intelligence agency (ISI). They were all Sunni organisations and the only ones allowed to operate from inside Pakistan, while all other Pakistan-based Afghan organisations were forbidden by 1980. Pakistan did so, in order to strengthen the resistance while simultaneously bringing the parties under its control and avoiding the emergence of one or two dominant organisations that could become too strong. Those groups that were banned included the ones that were perceived by the Pakistani authorities to have an Afghan nationalist agenda.

The 'Peshawar Seven' consisted of four Islamist and three moderate, traditionalist Islamic parties,³⁶⁷ out of which six were mainly dominated by Pashtuns and one by Tajiks, reflecting the heterogeneity intended by Pakistan. The oldest of these seven was **Jamiat-e Islami-ye Afghanistan** (Islamic Society of Afghanistan) founded by the Tajik religious scholar, Professor Burhanuddin Rabbani. In 1975/76, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar split away from Jamiat and formed **Hezb-e Islami-ye Afghanistan** (Islamic Party of Afghanistan). In the years to come Jamiat-e Islami and Hezb-e Islami were the only organizations that developed typical 'party characteristics' like a party manifesto, hierarchical structures, committees, etc. The five other parties mainly reflected the personal, tribal, religious or clientelistic network structures of their

leaders or main figures. In 1979, following a dispute among its senior leaders, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and Mawlawi Yunos Khales, Hezb-e Islami-ye Afghanistan split into two factions that were commonly called **Hezb-e Islami Hekmatyar** and **Hezb-e Islami Khalis**. In 1980, Mawlawi Abdur Rabb ar-Rasul Sayyaf, a Wahhabi religious scholar, founded **Ittehad-e Islami bara-ye Azadi-ye Afghanistan** (Islamic Union for the Liberation of Afghanistan), initially as an umbrella organisation for what has been the 'Peshawar Six' by then, but turning it into his own group.

The three more-traditionalist parties, **Jabha-ye Melli Nejat-e Afghanistan** (Afghan National Liberation Front) of Hazrat Sebghatullah Mojaddedi, **Mahaz-e Melli-ye Islami-ye Afghanistan** (National Islamic Front of Afghanistan) of Pir Sayed Ahmad Gailani and **Harakat-e Inqilab-e Islami** (Islamic Revolution Movement) of Mawlawi Muhammad Nabi Muhammadi, were mainly based on the religious and clientelistic networks of their leaders, who all were high-ranking religious scholars and dignitaries. Hazrat Mojaddedi and Pir Gailani, moreover, are heading two of the most prominent Sufi orders present in Afghanistan and partly incorporated the followers of the respective orders into their parties. For an overview of the resistance parties, see Conrad Schetter, *Ethnizität und ethnische Konflikte in Afghanistan*, Berlin 2003, 424ff and Thomas Ruttig, *Islamists, Leftists – and a Void in the Center. Afghanistan's Political Parties and Where They Come From (1902–2006)*, Konrad Adenauer Foundation 2006.

Hezb-e Wahdat

Hezb-e Wahdat-e Islami (literally Islamic Unity Party) was a merger of eight Afghan Shia parties that already had been parts of an Iranian backed Shia counter-alliance (dubbed 'Tehran Eight') against the Sunni 'Peshawar Seven', since 1987. Following the collapse of the PDPA regime and under the leadership of Abdul Ali Mazari, Hezb-e Wahdat developed more and more into a Hazara nationalist movement, while the major Shia party that stayed away from the 1990 merger, **Harakat-e Islami-ye Afghanistan** (Islamic Movement of Afghanistan) of Muhammad Asef Mohseni, represented the non-Hazara Afghan Shia. Harakat-e Islami is sometimes being mixed up in the literature with Harakat-e Inqilab-e Islami, as both parties are often simply called *Harakat* (Movement). For a comprehensive account of the development of Hezb-e Wahdat see Niamatullah Ibrahim, 'At the Sources of Factionalism and Civil

³⁶⁶ Author's interviews and conversations with former PRT Kunduz commanders, staff officers, military intelligence personnel as well as officials of the German Federal Foreign Office and Federal Intelligence Service, who served in Kunduz province between 2007 and 2011.

³⁶⁷ The distinction between more radical and more-or-less moderate or traditionalist parties as it is made in most of the academic literature is of course debatable. Another perspective on the seven parties, as suggested by some academics, would at least regard all of them as Islamist and then discuss the degree of radicalism.

War in Hazarajat,' Crisis States Research Centre, Working Paper No. 41, January 2009.

Jombesh-e Melli

Jombesh-e Melli Islami-ye Afghanistan (National Islamic Movement of Afghanistan) was officially established in June 1992 under the leadership of General Dostum, who was by far the party's most dominant figure throughout the 1990s. While the party is often simply understood depicted as the representative of the Turkic people of Afghanistan (mainly the Uzbeks and Turkmen) it actually lacked a clear political and ideological identity. At the time it was formed, the party included former PDPA officers, like Dostum, militia commanders who had supported the Najibullah regime, members of the Afghan Ismaili minority as well as mujahedin commanders of different factions. For a detailed analysis of Jombesh see Antonio Giustozzi, 'The Ethnicisation of an Afghan Faction: Jombesh-i-Milli from Its Origins to the Presidential Elections', Crisis States Research Centre, Working Paper No. 67, September 2005.

Shura-ye Nazar

Since the mid-1980s, Rabbani and Massud were the role models of the two most influential factions or camps within Jamiat. Burhanuddin Rabbani as a religious scholar and politician from Badakhshan province was supported by religious networks and received strong support from the Tajiks in northeastern Afghanistan. The Panjshiri-Tajik Ahmad Shah Massud was the most important military commander of Jamiat and headed the Shura-ye Nazar-e Shemal (Supervisory Council of the North), a military council he founded in 1985 to coordinate mujahedin operations of Jamiat with commanders of other parties in northern Afghanistan. Massud represented the Panjshiri Tajiks within Jamiat's senior leadership and had a large support base among commanders all over northern Afghanistan. See Thomas Ruttig, *Islamists, Leftists – and a Void in the Center. Afghanistan's Political Parties and Where They Come From (1902–2006)*, Konrad Adenauer Foundation 2006, 19.

Northern Alliance

Officially Jabha-ye Muttahed-e Islami bara-ye Nejat-e Afghanistan (United Islamic Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan) but often more simply referred to as 'Northern Alliance' or 'United Front', it consisted of Jamiat/Shura-ye Nazar, Jombesh, Wahdat, Ittehad, Harakat-e Inqilab, Harakat-e Islami, Jabha, the Ismaeli militia of Sayed Mansur

Naderi and a splinter faction of Hezb-e Islami led by Wahidullah Sabawun. (It is unclear whether he acted as a place holder for Hezb's mainstream led by Hekmatyar.) However, the fighting force of the 'Northern Alliance' was primarily made up of militias of Shura-ye Nazar, Jombesh and Wahdat. Between autumn 1996 and the US-led military intervention in Afghanistan in 2001, the forces associated with the 'Northern Alliance' were steadily driven back by the Taleban and roughly controlled 10 per cent of the country by 2001. After the Taleban had decisively defeated Jombesh by late summer 1998 and Wahdat by spring 1999, the resistance of the alliance was mainly maintained by Shura-ye Nazar's forces.

Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU)

The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) has its roots in the Uzbek Islamist opposition against the regime of Islam Karimov, who has been ruling Uzbekistan since its independence in 1991. During the time of its 'Afghan phase' from 1998 until 2001, the IMU was double-headed. Taher Yuldash(ev), who had spent most of his time between 1995 and 1998 in Peshawar, became the political leader and the religious authority of the organization. In Peshawar, Yuldash had established links with Afghan and Pakistani Islamists, al-Qaeda operatives and allegedly with intelligence officials from Pakistan, Saudi-Arabia, Iran and Turkey. These contacts later helped the IMU in raising funds for building its structural basis and recruiting fighters. Juma Namangani, after having led a force of Central Asian fighters during the Tajik civil war, became the military leader of the IMU. Despite the end of the Tajik civil war in 1997, he maintained his operational main base in Tawildara region in Tajikistan until 1999. Since late 1999, Juma Namangani has spent most of his time in northern Afghanistan where he was in charge of the training, recruiting and military operations. Between 1998 and 2001, the main goal of the IMU was to topple the Karimov regime in Uzbekistan. Thus, the organization perpetrated terrorist attacks in Tashkent in February 1999 and raided police stations and border posts on Uzbek and Kyrgyz territory throughout the following years. Despite their exile in Afghanistan and the recruitment of fighters from all over Central Asia, the organization preserved a nationalist agenda during this phase. However, the Taleban and the IMU benefitted from their alliance. The Taleban offered the IMU freedom of movement on their territory and allowed them to recruit among ethnic minorities in northern Afghanistan. As a quid pro quo, Namangani and Yuldashev supported the Taleban militarily in their struggle with the

Northern Alliance. See Ahmed Rashid, 'They're Only Sleeping. Why Militant Islamicists in Central Asia Aren't Going to Go Away', *The New Yorker*, Annals of Terrorism, 14 January 2002 and Guido W.

Steinberg, *The German Jihad: On the Internationalization of Islamist Terrorism*, Columbia University press, forthcoming 2012, section 8.

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