

First Draft Publishing/Primary



# Taliban

A Critical History From Within  
Abdul Hai Mumtaz  
Mike Martin: Foreword



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**Dr. Mike Martin:  
Foreword**

The Taliban have been the subject, or more precisely the object, of a wide variety of scholarly and journalistic works. Indeed, a large number of books have been written about Afghanistan's recent history—since the Communist revolution and takeover in April (Saur) 1978—yet insight about Afghanistan, and particularly the Taliban, is surprisingly hard to come by.

Often, little is written beyond tired clichés of the Taliban's treatment of women or stereotyped views of their relationship with al-Qaeda. They are barbaric, primal, almost animal. Most works on the Taliban, with one or two notable exceptions, do not stray from these central narratives. Why is this?

For me, the answer lies in the tangled and emotive concept of *otherness*, so well described by Edward Said in his now-classic work, *Orientalism*, which came out the same year—1978—as the Saur Revolution in Afghanistan. The Taliban are the other. Perhaps among the most extreme examples of the other that we as “Westerners”, or “Progressives”, or “Liberals”, (all loaded terms, I accept) are faced with in the modern day.

How can one understand, for example, the lashing and beating of women for wearing shoes that make a noise? The removal of music—that basic human therapy—from the public sphere? The destruction of irreplaceable artwork? One cannot. And by othering the Taliban, we condemn these acts but, more importantly, we reinforce our sense of who we are, ourselves. We stand in tension to *them*.

This is no way to develop understanding of Afghanistan, and those involved and wrapped up in the Afghan conflict; we are lucky, therefore, to have *Taliban: A Critical History from Within* by Abdul Hai Mutma'in.

Mutma'in is the Taliban's most well-known media operator. working as personal

spokesman of the Taliban leader, Mullah Omar, for more than a decade. He stands witness to the inner workings of the central hierarchy of the Taliban, from their ascent to power, through the period of the Taliban government and its collapse, as well as their re-emergence as a reaction to the government and international actors in the post-2001 period.

On one level *Taliban: A Critical History from Within* is a personal memoir. As such, we should expect it to be subjective and weighted towards the author, and those with whom he has sympathy. It is all these things; very much so. This somewhat diminishes its value as an insider's account of the Taliban.

But this subjectivity is in itself useful to the scholar as it shows us how the Taliban, and Mutma'in wish to be perceived. We learn about the Taliban's worldview. And this is where the subjective bias of the author is at its most useful. As the Afghan war cycles and continues, and enters new phases of hopeful peace negotiations, this information becomes ever more important.

Additionally, and as already highlighted, the literature on Afghanistan draws from a remarkably small set of data. The numerous general histories of the period covered by this book often draw from the same data; the same anecdotes and points of view often appear in several works.

*Taliban: A Critical History from Within* covers the same events, from the rise of the Taliban movement in 1994, through the period of the Taliban Emirate, when the movement controlled Kabul and up to 90% of the country (1996-2001), to the fall of the Taliban (2001) and the post-2004 resurgence of the movement. But they are covered in detail enough to delight a historian.

But most importantly, in my opinion, Mutma'in's book reveals the complexities of and within the Taliban movement, where our understanding of them is dominated through seeing *others* as simplistic and evil. In *Taliban: A Critical History from Within* we learn of the Taliban's own struggles with factionalisation within the movement; we learn of the difficulties in dealing with foreign powers that we normally ascribe as friendly to the Taliban; and we learn of just how extensively the Taliban are intertwined with the mujahedeen (and communist) landscape in Afghanistan from the 1980s.

In a world where the British government tries to suppress literature that tells Afghan stories from the war, or in which the British library declines to host an archive of Taliban documents because it is worried about contravening anti-terror laws, Alex Strick van Linschoten and Felix Kuehn and their publishing house *First Draft Publishing* are to be applauded.

It is only through the study of the other that we can hope to bring an end to conflict.

*Mike Martin*

*London*

*July 2019*

## Preface

I was around three or four years old when the Communists led the bloodiest coup in Afghanistan. KhAD personnel were arresting the faithful. One day, a few ugly moustached men knocked on our door. My father left with them and then he never came back. We never saw him again.

After a year, I began to understand that this kind person was no longer with me. Poverty, a cold fireplace, and my old clothes made it evident – I was an orphan. Every man with a moustache looked like my father's murderer. My uncle took us with him to another village, and we no longer had a home of our own.

When the Afghan communists were unable to control the situation, they brought in the Soviet communists along with their killer aeroplanes. The Red Army created a situation like the Day of Judgment in the entire country. We were not the only unfortunate orphaned children whose days of playing were marked by flames and fire, murders, and aerial bombardment. Man-made technology seemed more brutal to us than humans. We called the Russian convoy of war, weapons, tanks and vehicles *quwwa* – force.

In the name of punishing miscreants, Russian forces used to enter villages and show their brutality to Afghans. They targeted every living being including children and animals. During our childhood, we always saw bloodstained corpses and bombed houses, and the name of the Red Army was akin to thunder.

One day, I woke up, washed my face, and had my breakfast of green tea and dry bread. I heard the heavy sounds of tanks and screams of fear. I was scared. The villagers freed their animals so they could escape. People were running in the streets like their houses were haunted. Women, old men, and children were all running on the path, sometimes looking behind them. My elder brother and I went to the fields, and ran alongside a deep narrow canal. We felt the danger from the helicopter gunfire and hid in a dry canal filled with stones and

branches. We were fearful and spent all day hiding in the canal without moving and talking to each other.

When the forces left in the afternoon, fathers and mothers started to search for their children and animals in the fields. As children, we understood that even though we were young, we could not save ourselves from armed men.

When I see pictures of bombed Syrian houses and children buried underneath the rubble of destroyed houses it reminds me of my childhood. Are humans of the twenty-first century still so brutal?

We were raised amid these complexities of war, and completed an Islamic education. While religion introduced us to humanity, we were not able to find that in our society. Those who started jihad to defend the country, we never saw that humanity in them as well. There was nothing to change our perceptions that human beings were, in all reality, cruel, and murderous.

At a very young age we went to Pakistan for religious education. There we saw the internal conflicts between the Afghan mujahideen groups. We saw the lavish lives of some of the jihadi leaders. It was greatly shameful that like the moustached men of KhAD, there were a few bearded war winners in the streets of Peshawar who were involved in the murder of Afghan refugee writers and professors.

After the fall of the communist regime, we saw the brutality of the 'war winner'. Militants in the cities, villages, and on the highways. Later, those beard murderers? Those who killed Afghans in the name of their 'western supporters' were seen walking around the towns of United Kingdom and Germany wearing trousers, and sans beards!!!

Those who killed others because of a religious edict turned their backs on the same religion for the sake of personal interests and desires.

I heard something from the writer and poet Abdul Bari Jahani about this. He recounted seeing a poem on the desk of a female singer sent by Mullah Assadullah Hanafi, a member of a jihadi organisation, who had requested her to sing his poetry. The female singer sang songs for those Khalqi pilots who bombed our houses. But she refused to sing his poetry by saying that the

blinded our houses. But she refused to sing his poetry by saying that the Mullah's rough words were heavy to sing.

After joining the madrassa we never thought that one day we would need weapons to counter brutality. Similarly, there was a time when I considered the need to join the Taliban movement, but I never thought that I would continue this till the end. I thought I would resume my Islamic education after two years. I came to the building of the cultural and information ministry in a situation when I was not willing to leave the movement or take up arms. But my fate became more complicated by joining this soft-natured organisation, and the society of verse and poetry. The head of the organisation went to Kabul and my friends considered me eligible to be introduced as head. On the first day, I felt like angels whispered in my ears. I became dubious about my future, but I consoled myself that after a year or two I would definitely go back to the madrassa.

On April 11, 1998, an incident took place that completely immersed me in the past. I was thinking of my father all day. In the Miyan Koh area in the north of Kandahar city, a mass grave was identified near the base of a mountain after a confession by a former KhAD communist. I was visiting the same area with a few guests. We saw a few people digging in a large ditch and uncovering human bones. This was the mass grave of Islamic scholars and religious people from Kandahar and the surrounding provinces who were killed by KhAD after the coup.

I tried to search for and release the murdered communist official responsible for this mass grave, working with the son of Suleiman Zarak, a former KhAD chief. I wanted to forgive these white bearded, moustached murderers out of Islamic forgiveness and humanity and affection for their old age. It seemed better to me that they live with their children and grandchildren. I was forgiving my father's murderer in the same spirit. I never thought that one day they will again dye their white beards and moustaches and join hands with invaders to kill our oppressed prisoners.

When I returned to the office in the evening., I prepared an incident report based on my thoughts. Instead of the usual announcer, I presented the evening news on the radio. When I exited the studio, I felt like I was an orphaned child and cried over my father's grave.

I received a call from the late Governor of Kandahar Muhammad Hassan Rahmani. He said that the BBC wanted to talk to me about the mass grave of Miyan Koh; I will give them your number, tell them what you presented on the radio.

I had never talked to any media until then. It was only because of the governor's stressing on this that I talked to them. For two days, the senior secretary of Wakeel Ahmad Mutawakkil did not answer the BBC's phone call, and they were asking me about him. I told Mutawakkil that the BBC newscaster is asking about you. Mutawakkil was sitting with Mullah Muhammad Omar Mujahid and because of the phone's speaker, Mullah Omar heard my voice. I heard another voice; after some time Mutawakkil told me that Mullah Sahib says you should talk to the BBC. This was new to me, so I declined. Mutawakkil said: I am not the one saying this, this is according to Mullah Omar's instructions.

I was unaware of the details of the issue, and I had no experience of talking about political incidents. I then looked for details of the incident, and this marked my start as an official spokesperson. I continued as spokesperson throughout the next four years of crises, and represented Mullah Omar in the media on national and international issues.

The years passed by very quickly, and we were engaged in other news, and in conflicts. We thought the Soviets are brutes, and the Western world loves humans. It seemed very strange to us that these lovers of humanity would bomb our houses, kill our women and children, and scare our sleeping children at night.

When American warplanes bombarded Kandahar for the first time, a severed limb of a young Kandahari girl was found in a destroyed house at Madad Khan Square in Kandahar. There were no signs of her body. This leg looked like the first tableau from the US invaders for depressed Afghans.

On the other hand, the Western media, Afghan spokespeople, and listeners were praising the US invaders' weapons and forces. A few of the old 'war winners' from the mujahideen were waiting for bigger bombs to be used.

My time as a spokesperson was very complex and beset with crises for Afghanistan and the Taliban on a regional and international level.

These pages mostly contain these secrets, information and incidents. I have presented this in the form of stories; and other information is presented as a reference. This book is not a form of judgment. It is not issued from a personal pulpit, nor is it based on someone's doing, or as a campaign for anyone. This is a true story based on incidents that I observed or heard. This book will not please those who are in love with the Taliban, nor those who hate the Taliban. I hope it is a good source of information for the people who lie in between these two categories, and that it serves as a beneficial read.

It is possible that the information that I received from others is unclear; this shouldn't be considered a personal shortcoming. But in those parts where I discuss the information I received, there might be an unwilling inclination, which is a human weakness. There are a few realities that I have to hide due to serious constraints. I hope readers will forgive my silence over these issues. We live in the East, and unfortunately there is a low level of tolerance, and one is beset with difficulties. Even those who claim freedom of expression are against our statements.

With love and respect,  
Abdul Hai Mutma'in

## **Chapter 1: The meaning and roots of the words *Talib* and *Taliban***

The world was introduced to a new name by the end of the 20th century: 'Taliban.' This word was not new for most people. Talib is an Arabic word taken from the word 'Talib-e-ilm', which means learner or student. In Arabic, the plural is 'Talba, Talaab, and Taliboon.' In the Arab world, students of schools and universities are known as 'Talab ul Jamia' or 'Talab ul Madaris' if they are students of religious studies, modern, or social education.

In India and Pakistan, the words 'Talba' and 'Talbat' are used for religious or modern education. In Afghanistan, students of modern education are known as 'Muhasileen' or 'Muta'limeen' which are also Arabic words, and religious studies students are known as Talib, and the plural Taliban is used instead of the Arabic plurals. Similar to 'Yaran', 'Dostan' and 'Afghanan', Taliban is a Pashto plural.

From a historic context, in Persia and Khorasan, like other parts of the Islamic world during the Ottoman Caliphate, the teachers of literature and ethics were known as 'Muallimeen' or 'Muadabeen.' Slowly these words changed, and it is now popular to use the words 'Mullah, Maulvi, Maulana.'

In Afghan society, the mullah who received religious education is known as 'maulvi'. The word maulvi is taken from the word maulana, which means owner, honourable or a wise person. The objective here is the third meaning. A person who is affiliated with religious studies is generally known as a mullah.

'Akhund' is a Persian word used for teacher. The word is sometimes used in Pashto along with mullah, for example, 'Mullah Burjan Akhund.'

The word 'Akhund' is also used in Afghanistan by the Shi'a community for their Imam or Shi'a Mullah, and they call their Mullahs 'akhoondan.' But in Pashto, this word is used in a different context. as an insult. When someone introduces a

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Mullah as a half Mullah, they say: 'He is not a Mullah but an Akhund.'

In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the son of an Islamic scholar is known as 'Akhunzada'; the actual word is 'Akhundzada' which means the son of a mullah or akhund. This honorific is normally used for a senior Islamic scholar's son.

The word 'sahibzada' is also used for the sons of Islamic scholars, Sufis, and righteous people. In the Pashto dialect, this word is generally pronounced as 'sabzada' or 'sawzada.' The title of 'sahib haq' or 'sabi haq' is also used for the son of a teacher or an Islamic scholar.

#### AFGHANISTAN AND THE TALIB CULTURE

The Taliban's cultural education dates back centuries in Afghanistan. There were very limited official madrassas to provide religious education. Generally every Islamic scholar had limited students depending on his capacity. Along with the mosque, he had one or two rooms for the students' residence. Taliban called it 'hujra' or 'deirah.' Food was provided by people affiliated with the mosque. Islamic scholars who were able to provide religious education were Imams of large mosques, and one or two big villages were affiliated with the mosque. The residents voluntarily provided food to the Imam and Taliban because of their affection for religion. Children were sent to houses for collecting food; they are known as 'Charyan' or 'Chani' in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. There were two types of students in these small education centres. The first were those who came from nearby areas for religious education and didn't have associated expenses. The others were students who came from faraway areas to study because of the scholar's popularity. They lived there during the week, and would go home every Thursday afternoon and return on Friday. A few stayed there for months, even years, remaining until the completion of their education. Facing hardship and hunger and a sense of helplessness while undertaking religious education is considered a matter of pride and good fortune.

Religious teachers always tell their students that facing hardships for education is not a new thing in Islamic history. World famous Islamic scholars faced adversity for religious education. Personalities like Imam Bukhari faced challenges in the search of Hadith

## Challenges in the Search of Education

They give the examples of 'Ashab e Suffa' and say that the practice of needy students residing together began during the life of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him.) Ashab e Suffa were those companions of the Prophet who were learning Islamic rulings and Sharia from him. They had no place to stay and so they lived in a room atop the mosque built with date tree fronds and branches. That is why they are known as the Ashab e Suffa. In Islam they are considered a key source of righteousness, understanding of Islam, Seerah, and Hadith. Abu Huraira (may Allah be pleased with him) – whose actual name was Abdul Rahman – was the most famous student who narrated the majority of Hadith from Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). He faced many challenges in this path. One day, because of hunger, he was lying down on the route to the Nabawi mosque, unable to move. He did not express his condition to anyone. People passed by him. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) came and took him home.

Abu Huraira (May Allah be pleased with him) said: Ashab e Suffa (Taliban) were guests of Islam; they had no family, wealth, or anything else.

During the last few centuries in Afghanistan and the surrounding areas/region, religious education was mostly provided through madrassas. These are also known as hujra or dars. Later on, a few official and organised religious education centres were established. Some of them were personal endeavours and others were official. But these madrassas had organised learning methodology, classes, and examination rules. This includes Kabul's Arabic Darul Uloom, Abu Hanifah Madrassa, Nangarhar's Najmul Madaris, Ghazni's Noorul Madaris, Assadia of Balkh, Muhammadia of Kandahar, Herat's religious madrassa, Darul Uloom Takharistan in the north, and a few other small and large madrassas.

It was very difficult for students to gain admission to the madrassas run by the famous Islamic scholars in Afghanistan. It was a source of pride for students who obtained admission. Only intelligent students were admitted to such madrassas after an interview.

## TALIBAN IN JIHAD

Islamic scholars played a leading role in the three popular wars against Britain.

Many Islamic scholars and Taliban were martyred during these wars. The graveyards of Taliban in Kandahar city, Boldak, Shaheedano square in Herat, Kandahar Darwaza are proof of this. According to the Afghan historian Abdul Shakoor Rashad, all these graves are of the Taliban who were martyred fighting British forces.

In the war against Britain, hundreds of famous Islamic scholars took part, including Mullah Mushk Aalim Andar (whose real name was Din Muhammad), Maulana Abdul Razzaq Andar, Najmuddin Akhundzada, Haji Sahib Turangzai, the Hazratan family from Shor Bazaar in Kabul, Maulana Amir Muhammad, who was more famously known as Chiknaro Mullah Sahib, Said Muhammad Akbar Shah known as Sarkanno Mullah Sahib, Mawlawi Abdul Karim who went by Jan Abad Mullah Sahib, Sheikh ul Mashaikh Abdul Ghafoor from Swat, Mawlawi Faiz Muhammad, and Mawlawi Abdullah Ghaznawi. The list is very lengthy. Each of these scholars had hundreds of students who participated in these wars.

Amir Abdul Rahman, who worked with the colonisers at the time, writes in his book Taj al-Tawarikh about the Islamic scholars who joined Muhammad Ayub Khan, the victor of the famous Maiwand battle against Britain. He writes: Muhammad Ayub Khan had very limited war weapons and fighters, but the ignorant Mullahs who were against me announced jihad. This was in favour of Muhammad Ayub Khan. They said that I am a friend of Britain and my rival is a winner.

#### ISSUES BETWEEN AMANULLAH KHAN AND ISLAMIC SCHOLARS

In 1919, Amanullah Khan was selected as the king of Afghanistan after the murder of his father Habibullah Khan. Due to the efforts by Hazratan and Islamic scholars, Amir Amanullah Khan declared independence and jihad against Britain in the presence of thousands of Afghans at Kabul's Eidgah mosque. Britain did not accept the independence of Afghanistan, leading to the third and last war between Afghans and Britain. Many Islamic scholars participated in this war along with Amanullah Khan's commanders, including two sons of Khawaja Abdul Qayyum Mujaddidi, Shams ul-Mashaikh Fazal Muhamamd Mujaddidi and Noor ul-Mashaikh Fazal Omar Mujaddidi from the Hazratan family. Nadir Khan was the commander of the Tal battlefield and

Hazratani family. Noor Khan was the commander of the Far Battalion, and Shams ul-Mashaikh Fazal Muhammad Mujaddidi was with him. Shah Wali Khan was the commander for the battlefield of Waziristan, and Noor ul-Mashaikh Fazal Omar Mujaddidi was supporting him.

During the bombardment by British warplanes, the commander of the eastern zone Salih Muhammad Khan retreated because of minor injuries. The forces faced losses and Amanullah Khan announced a ceasefire. A few religious people and fighters were unhappy because of this announcement. They wanted all those areas back from Britain which had been temporarily separated from Afghanistan due to a famous agreement between Amir Amanullah Khan and General Durand. As Britain did not follow this agreement and repeatedly attacked Afghanistan; this was not legitimate anymore. Afghans on the other side of the Durand Line were disheartened because of this.

On August 19, 1919, Britain accepted the independence of Afghanistan. King Amanullah Khan awarded the official 'Sun Medals' to the Hazrats and gave them the titles 'Shams ul-Mashaikh' and 'Noor ul-Mashaikh'.

On December 10, 1927, Amanullah Khan and his wife went on a long tour of Europe. In June 1928, he returned to Afghanistan, and made surprisingly unexpected announcements like imposing a ban on the veil (the hijab), Sharia dress and the call to prayer (adhan) in Kabul, calling for the freedom of women, adaptation of European lifestyle and clothing, and placing limitations and a ban on Islamic education.

He faced difficult questions from religious scholars, including 'Hazratani', his partners in the war for independence. Noor ul-Mashaikh migrated to the independent tribal areas and lived there for five years. It is said that he was very serious in implementing his reforms, and punished those who opposed him. People on both sides of the Durand Line rose up against him and Amanullah Khan left the country.

Afghan researchers and historians have different opinions about Amanullah Khan's reforms. A few official letters during the reign of Muhammad Zahir Shah, and some history books, declare those Islamic scholars and clerics who opposed Amanullah Khan after his Europe visit to be British agents. But a few

things help a person in understanding the reality. If those scholars gave every kind of sacrifices, why would they oppose Amanullah Khan when he starts a friendship with Europe? If they were British agents, why did they support Amanullah Khan in a war against Britain?

The Afghan historian Hassan Kakar visited Kandahar during our rule. I was his host. We had an in-depth discussion on this. I still recall his words: 'For what Amanullah Khan wanted to implement in the name of reforms, the methodology he adopted was his lunacy.' But Kakar's statements cannot be completely trustworthy. In the past two decades, owing to a change in the situation, we cannot say anything about his recent statements on the same. He was a flatterer and praised us exaggeratedly during our rule. After the fall of our government he began to oppose us. It is possible that his statements were transitory and made for our pleasure.

Amanullah Khan was what he was, but for the development of the country he should have considered the national interests and respect to religious beliefs with a positive attitude. He should have given an Afghan touch to this development, instead of a Western touch and evil efforts to change the culture and criticising religious values. He should have started this movement sagaciously and in the context of the situation, and invited the public and religious class to join him. This would have been beneficial for him, the country, and the religious class.

According to history books, Amanullah Khan wanted positive social change. He was fractious in every aspect of his life. He was irresolute during difficulties. A sign of his wilfulness was that he would brandish a pistol and issue death threats over small issues. At the times of real resistance, he preferred to escape and left the country and his followers.

He did not resist like Daud Khan with his gun until death, nor did he support his followers after his escape. This is a proof of his ineffectiveness.

After Amanullah Khan's escape, there was a power vacuum for some time until Nadir Khan came into power. Even though the religious class was capable of jihad, they were marked by righteousness and a sense of reclusiveness. They were not organised enough to fill this gap, though they were capable of establishing a powerful national and Islamic rule.

establishing a powerful national and Islamic rule.

During this power vacuum, Habibullah Kalakani was the ruler who made a foray into Kabul along with his supporters after an attack. He supported religious laws but was inexperienced and incapable of handling administrative matters. In the end, Nadir Khan removed him from the government through a conspiracy, and had him executed in revenge.

When Nadir Khan came into power, he annulled the reforms and a few non-cultural changes instituted by Amanullah Khan, which calmed the emotions of the religious class and the public. After the short rule of Nadir Khan, and during Muhammad Zahir Shah's reign, the conditions for Islamic scholars were relatively good. But the gap between the government's modern education academies and Islamic scholars increased. Islamic scholars were busy with traditional education, while the modern academies were moving away from religion day by day. The influence of Marxist philosophy was increasing steadily. The behaviour of school and university students grew insulting towards Islamic scholars. The voluntary silence of the government against this practice gave rise to communism in Afghanistan.

#### INTEREST OF RELIGIOUS GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS IN POLITICS

In all three wars against the British, the resistance was led by Islamic scholars, and the then-rulers accepted their verdict and decision of resistance. The religious class, its personalities or families, were valuable to rulers. The religious class was active in the public sphere, and at that time they did not feel the need for a political structure or a special framework. But they gradually felt the need with the change in the situation and trials and tribulations.

#### NOORUL MADARIS AND KHUDDAM UL-FURQAN

During the initial rule of Zahir Shah, Noor ul Mashaikh Fazal Umar Mujadadi began organising Islamic scholars and creating political awareness. The impact of this can still be seen in Afghanistan. In 1942, the Noorul Madaris Madrasa was established by Mullah Mushk Aalim Andar in Ghazni's Shalgar district. This madrassa was very organised and also had programmes of political awareness as well as religious education. The teachers were reclusive and only focused on teaching. But a few teachers, administrators, and Hazratan family members organised lectures and programmes for public information, political

members organised lectures and programmes for public information, political and Islamic thoughts. This spurred many significant personalities in Islamic ideology and jihad to arise from this madrasa, and its effects spread across the country. This led to the establishment of the Khuddam ul-Furqan organisation, which started an ideological and political struggle. This organisation published a magazine called 'Nida e Haq' that was often banned by the government because of political criticism. Khuddam ul-Furqan was led by Muhammad Ismail Mujadadi, the son of Zia ul Mashaikh Fazal Umar Mujadadi. His deputy was Mawlawi Nasrullah Mansoor. Mawlawi Abdul Sattar Siddiqui was responsible for Nida e Haq. Mawlawi Rahimullah Zurmati was in charge of the magazine after him, and remained so until the end. This organisation and madrasa offered religious education along with inculcating political awareness. The madrasa had classes up to the 16th grade; including secondary school till the 12th grade. The Hadith course was completed by the 16th grade. One of the Sheikh ul Hadith was a graduate from Deoband, and so the Hadith course offered was as per that of the Deoband Madrassa. The Sahih Bukhari, Sahih Muslim, Sunan Abi Dawud, Sunan Tirmidhi, Muwatta Imam Malik, Sunan Nisai and Sunan Ibn Majah were taught. The main focus was on Sahih Bukhari, Sahih Muslim and Jamia Tirmidhi.

The Khuddam ul-Furqan organisation gradually spread to modern academies. During Zahir Shah's rule, the leaders of the organisation organised huge protests against a few anti-Islamic activities. The protest continued for a few days. The government was scared of a public revolt and so it began a crackdown against Islamic scholars. Many were imprisoned. The protests ended because of assurances by the government, but the anti-Islam, and particularly the communist elements in the government, became sensitive to the Hazratan family. While Zahir Shah was on a visit to Italy, his cousin Daud Khan unseated him in a coup.

Daud Khan was mostly surrounded by communists. The problems increased for the Khuddam ul-Furqan but the government was aware of the family's background, and was not able to pressurise them further. In the year 1385, during the communist coup, all the family members of Hazratan, save one or two children and women, were initially imprisoned and later executed. One hundred members of the Mujaddidi family were executed in communist prisons.

Hundreds and thousands of Khuddam ul-Furqan members and followers were imprisoned, and the majority of them were later executed. The followers of this influential family later joined jihadi organisations like the Harakat Inqilab Islami, Hizb-e Islami of Mawlawi Muhammad Yunus Khalis, Nijat-e Milli, Ittehad-e Islami and started jihad. Noted personalities included Mawlawi Nasrullah Mansoor, Mawlawi Jalaluddin Haqqani, Mawlawi Shafiullah, Mawlawi Rafiullah Muazan, Mawlawi Abdul Sattar Siddiqui, Mawlawi Rahimullah Zurmati, Kandahar's famous commander Lala Malang, Zabul's famous commander Mullah Musa Kalim and other famous jihadi commanders around Afghanistan.

#### IKHWANISM AND ISLAMIC MOVEMENT

After the First World War, the last vestige of the Islamic caliphate under the leadership of the Turkish Ottomans fell victim to the conspiracies of Western powers. The Islamic world felt the need for unity. As a result, the first Caliphate movement started in the Indian subcontinent, and Deoband's Islamic scholars played a major role. This movement was crushed by the British, but it served to awaken the Muslims of the subcontinent. In 1928, an Islamic scholar called Hasan al-Banna and his friends established the Muslim Brotherhood (Ikhwan ul-Muslimeen) movement, which aimed to implement Islamic Sharia in Egypt.

Over time this movement became very influential in Egypt. In 1948, when Palestine lost its independence, the Ikhwan ul-Muslimeen started raising slogans of resistance and for the defence of Palestinian independence and began struggling for this cause. The slogan of 'Palestine independence' increased the popularity of this modern Islamic movement in Egypt and neighbouring Arab countries. Fearing the popularity of this expanding organisation, the Egyptian ruler Mahmood Fahmi Nuqrashi Pasha announced that the Ikhwan movement was illegal. The Ikhwan ul-Muslimeen's assets were confiscated and many of its members were imprisoned. The followers of the movement were enraged, and it is believed that the Egyptian ruler Nuqrashi was killed on 28 December 1948 by a few Ikhwan members. In revenge, the rulers of the new government executed Hassan al-Banna. After this, the movement faced many problems and bans. Hindrances were created because of the interference of Britain in Egyptian society. In 1954, the Ikhwan ul-Muslimeen was blamed for the murder of Gamal

Abdul Nasser. About a hundred key members of Ikhwan were imprisoned for fifteen years. One of the famous people among these was Sayyed Qutb, who wrote many well-known books about Islamic ideology and struggle. He also wrote a famous book of interpretation, *Fi Zilal al-Quran*. He was released for a period but rearrested and then executed on August 29, 1966.

This movement influenced neighbouring Arab countries and other Islamic movements in the Muslim world. In the pursuit of Islamic political power, Muslims in different countries, including Afghanistan and Pakistan, adopted similar patterns. The followers of this movement are known as Ikhwanis, or followers of Ikhwanism.

In Pakistan, the Jamaat-e Islami, under the leadership of Maulana Maududi, is considered the followers of Ikhwan ul-Muslimeen. During the rule of Zahir Shah in Afghanistan, an Islamic movement group (Islami Nahdat) was established during 1331 or 1332 by a group of Islamic students and teachers at Kabul's Sharia College. This group was later known as followers of Ikhwanism. After the communist coup, three of the jihadi organisations were considered to be the political and ideological heirs of the Islami Nahdat movement.

The founder of this group was Ghulam Muhammad Niazi, a resident of Andar district in Ghazni. He was head of the Sharia College at Kabul University, and had completed his higher education from Egypt's Al Azhar University. He was influenced by the ideology of the Ikhwanis and started a similar kind of political struggle in Afghanistan. There is another theory that Ghulam Muhammad Niazi was the source of the ideology, and his student Abdul Rahim Niazi was the founder.

The main followers of this movement were killed during the rule of Daud Khan and the communists. A few Islamic scholars also joined this movement. Professor Niazi had ties with renowned Islamic scholars and took their advice on several issues.

In modern education centres, this movement came into existence against Leninist-Marxist ideology and the anti-Islam movements. The then-rulers were also supporting this ideology and these movements. After a coup against Daud Khan, key members of this movement were imprisoned and executed. Some

initially, key members of this movement were imprisoned and executed. Some members were forced to migrate to Pakistan.

In 1975, after the communist coup, the Islamic movement members were not able to unite under one jihadi organisation. The Jamiat-e Islami and the Hizb-e Islami considered themselves to be the actual heirs of the Islamic movement. These contests led to jockeying between these groups for political power.

There were other active individuals, small groups, and associations and organisations of Islamic scholars and spiritual figures, but they were not influential at this level.

#### THE COMMUNIST COUP AND THE START OF JIHAD

During the rule of Daud Khan, the Khalq and Parcham communists were very influential. Daud Khan was afraid of Islamists, and he trusted communists. During the last days of his rule, his relationships worsened with the USSR leader Brezhnev. During a meeting in Moscow, Brezhnev expressed his concern over the presence of NATO technicians in northern Afghanistan, and Daud Khan responded rudely. The talks ended without a result. Daud Khan decided to expel communists from the government at that time, but the communists followed in the Soviets' footprint and attempted a bloody coup, first in the leadership of the Khalq party, and became the rulers. After about sixteen-and-a-half months Hafizullah Amin killed the government leader Noor Muhammad Taraki and took power. Hafizullah Amin was killed by the Parcham party, and Babrak Karmal – along with the Soviets – came to Kabul on armoured tanks. This was practically the start of the USSR invasion.

The communists were unaware of Afghans' ideology, beliefs and culture. They were initially not rejected by people. Very few people stood by them for the sake of resources and personal interests, or because of fear. The majority showed that they were sensitive to them. They brutally targeted people who had a different ideology or who practically opposed them. The religious class was targeted, and every Islamic scholar and spiritual personality who had some public support was forcibly disappeared. Approximately one hundred thousand people including Islamic scholars, spiritual leaders, and members of Islamic movements went missing, and the nation came to know of their martyrdom over a decade later.

Islamic scholars played the actual role in this jihad. In Afghanistan's far-flung areas, people attacked government buildings and officials using just sticks, axes and spades. This revolution was led by the local mullahs. During Daud Khan's rule, Pakistan-based Islamists tried to begin jihad against the government, but they did not receive a positive response from people. But it was when the mullahs announced jihad that people began to fight with their axes and sticks. This revolution gave life to the anti-USSR world, who supported the mujahideen and provided shelter to refugees.

#### FORMATION OF MUJAHEDDEEN GROUPS IN PAKISTAN

During Daud Khan's time, a few Islamists were in hiding in Pakistan. They started organising Afghans to create a national resistance. These organisations united twice under one leader, and then split again. After the coup in 1358, Burhanuddin Rabbani, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, Mawlawi Muhammad Yunus Khalis, Mawlawi Jalaluddin Haqqani, Mawlawi Nasrullah Mansoor and their friends were looking for an organised and united jihad group. Due to efforts by Islamic scholars, they agreed to unite under the leadership of Mawlawi Muhammad Nabi Muhammadi in the Harakat Inquilab Islami organisation that year. This alliance split when Rabbani and Hekmatyar withdrew in the same year, but most Islamic scholars remained in Mawlawi Muhammad Nabi's organisation, as did Mawlawi Mohammad Yunus Khalis.

In 1358, Abdul Rab Rasul Sayyaf went to Peshawar, and an alliance was formed between the Hizb-e Islami (Hekmatyar), Jamiat-e Islami and the Hizb-e Islami (Mawlawi Khalis). Sayyaf was selected as leader of this temporary alliance. But after a few months, the united organisations blamed Sayyaf for financial corruption and this alliance split. Mawlawi Khalis probably wrote about this in a magazine titled 'Da Masooliat Ahsas de Masnoniat Zamin De.'

Sayyaf registered a separate organisation with Pakistan and foreign authorities with the same name, and received significant funds and weapons. Initially his organisation had no major role in Afghanistan. Those commanders who left their groups because of a shortage of funds and weapons joined Sayyaf's organisation. During the last days of the jihad, only a few commanders came forward from Sayyaf's group.

Sayyaf was facing a lack of manpower, but he had enough weapons and funds. There were a few commanders in search of this, and a few received weapons and later sold them for money. This organisation was a good source for such activities.

One of Sayyaf's successes was that he attracted Arab mujahedeen by making himself popular in the Arab world. His friendship with Arabs, particularly his close relationship with Abdullah Azzam, opened the door for support from government and charity organisations.

In special meetings and funding events, Sayyaf requested funds as a representative of all mujahedeen, but kept most of the funds in his organisation's name.

Since the mullah and his followers had a major role in the public uprising, every group that had more mullahs was initially strong. Most of the mullah class joined Harakat initially under Mullah Muhammad Nabi's leadership, because Harakat had more public support than other jihadi organisations. But because of shortcomings like indiscipline, disorder, the shortage of weapons and internal disputes, this organisation gradually grew weaker. The many commanders of Harakat joined wealthier organisations. The second big organisation was the Jamiat-e Islami led by Burhanuddin Rabbani, which had influential commanders like Ahmad Shah Massoud and Ismail Khan.

Hizb-e Islami was third, and remained so till the end.

In Pakistan's propaganda-filled environment, the Hizb-e Islami was introduced as the leading major organisation. Pakistan and other supporters provided huge funds and weapons beyond their capacity. They were very strong in their propaganda, and a few Pakistani organisations and departments also supported them.

Since the world was observing the mujahedeen from Peshawar, a few foreigners also had similar views. Even the Russian general Boris Gromov erred in his reminiscence of Hekmatyar. He wrote about the Kandahar battle of the Soviets against Mullah Naqib and another Harakat group that lasted forty days. He says this battle was very intense because Hekmatyar also came to the battlefield. But

everyone in Kandahar knew that these forces were fighting against Mullah Naqib's militants and other Harakat mujahedeen. An armed Mullah Burjan from Panjwai broke the siege. Mullah Naqib was associated with Harakat and later joined Jamiat. Similarly, the destroyed tanks and helicopters in some areas were the work of other groups, but the Hizb press members used images of them in their weekly and other magazines, and claimed these as their activities. This is why Hizb-e Islami was known as a leading militant organisation in Peshawar's milieu, but the reality was very different.

On the community level in Afghanistan, Harakat, Hekmatyar and Khalis had sixty per cent more jihadi personnel, while Jamiat (inside Afghanistan) didn't even have 20 percent. But Jamiat was distinctive because of two great commanders like Ahmad Shah Massoud and Ismail Khan, as well as by controlling the government recruitment of new commanders due to their financial resources.

Ahmad Shah Massoud and Ismail Khan were only attributed to being from Jamiat. They considered themselves as separate powers on a regional level. Massoud named his organisation Shura Nizaar, and Ismail Khan led a Shura based in three provinces. The strength and popularity of these commanders also shows that they forced minor commanders of the Jamiat and other organisations that used different tactics to follow them. It is said that they executed a few minor commanders because of their opposition. It is thought that Ismail Khan mysteriously killed a few commanders from Herat and Badghis. Massoud is also accused of killing tens of commanders; starting from the initial days of Jihad by killing his deputy Amir Pahlawan Ahmad Jan, who was the target of a conspiracy that he had a relationship with the government.

#### HIZB AND JAMIAT IN CONFLICT

Hizb-e Islami and Jamiat initially began a political and propaganda war against each other, which later transformed into an armed conflict. A year before the communist coup in Afghanistan, members of different movements who had escaped from Daud Khan had joined one party. Rabbani and Hekmatyar later split from the group, and Hekmatyar tried to kill Rabbani and Ahmad Shah Massoud. There was an attempted shooting at the house of the famous mujahid commander Adam Khan in Peshawar. According to Ustad Yasir and Muhammad

Commander Adam Khan in Peshawar. According to Ustad Tash and Muhammad Zaman Muzammil, Massoud and Rabbani were Adam Khan's guests.

Hekmatyar gave pistols to Hajji Din Muhammad, Mawlawi Sarfaraz and Mawlawi Zahid to kill them. When Adam Khan understood the situation, he managed to protect Rabbani and Massoud just in time.

After the disintegration of the USSR in the north, Hizb commanders killed their opponents, the group commanders of Ahmad Shah Massoud. Ahmad Shah Massoud responded by killing the famous Hizb commander Sayyid Jamal and six other key commanders in the north. The war between the groups began after these incidents, and also impacted the battlefield of propaganda in Peshawar.

Hizb-e Islami and Jamiat-e Islami published books and magazines against each other, and used rough language. A reader of those publications could not think they were written by a jihadi group. They transgressed moral limits by including sexual allegations in their propaganda. I read their published material during my childhood in Peshawar and it included such things that a Muslim writer cannot write and discuss in detail.

Hizb-e Islami's daily newspaper in Peshawar *Shahadat* didn't just use indecent language against Jamiat-e Islami but other jihadi organisations as well. In 1989 a photo of an Afghan girl standing besides an Englishman was published in *Shahadat* with the text: 'She is a daughter of Milli Nijat group leader Sibghatullah Mujaddidi.' They did not even verify if she really was Mujaddidi's daughter. At that time, Mujaddidi was a leader of the exiled transitional government in Pakistan. Even though it was confirmed the next day that Mujaddidi didn't have a daughter; the newspaper never apologised.

This bitter opposition and these moral failings turned Kabul to ashes. On the other hand, Hizb intelligence members were accused of killing rival mujahedeen, commanders, members of the public, and scholars. An engineer friend once told me a story about how he was sitting in a car with Haji Malik Qamar, a high ranking Hizb intelligence official. He pointed towards a house in Peshawar, laughed, and said that the people of this house don't know how many people I have killed and buried in the courtyard of this house. He had rented this house and killed and buried people there.

Hekmatyar stood out because of a well-organised jihadi organisation and as an active leader. But he also sowed the seeds of intolerance in Afghanistan's jihadi culture. He was very aggressive in politics and propaganda. He treated rival mujahedeen brutally in military and intelligence. During the initial days of war, he considered his political and military opponents as one and the same.

#### ROLE OF ISLAMIC SCHOLARS AND TALIBAN IN JIHAD AGAINST USSR

The religious class – especially the mullahs who had some public support – were the first target after the communist coup. Afghan communists openly said that communism succeeded in the USSR after Stalin killed 20 million Russians. We will also kill a few million Afghans.

But in Afghanistan they needed to kill more people – as people were not ready to accept communism and more than 90% of the nation should have been put on trial. Communists implemented Stalin's philosophy to an extent by killing innocent Afghans. If Afghans had delayed their revolution against them, it might have left a way for communists to implement their plan to kill a few million Afghans.

Over a million Afghans lost their lives while opposing communists. Most were killed in self-defence and resistance instead of in captivity. Communism was uprooted from Afghanistan and other countries because of these sacrifices. Islamic scholars comprised a major part of those who undertook the military and political struggle against communism. The Taliban movement came into existence as a continuation of the same struggle.

#### MILITARY STRUGGLE

The people's verdict about the jihad and the national revolution was issued by the publicly-supported Mullahs. In Paktia, Mawlawi Jalaluddin Haqqani, Mawlawi Nasrullah Mansoor, Matiullah Khan, and Mawlawi Farid Mahmood and many other Islamic scholars were the leaders. In Ghazni, Qari Baba, Mawlawi Hayatullah (Mullah Kaka), Mawlawi Gul Muhammad, Mawlawi Nek Muhammad, Mawlawi Bahadur Khan, Mawlawi Muazzan, Mawlawi Abdul Hakeem, Mawlawi Abdul Rahman, Mawlawi Faqir, Mullah Faiz ul-Haq (the Amir of the Nawa district), Mullah Abdul Salam (Haji Salam), Qari Abdullah Danish, Qari Abdullah of Jinnah Abad and the fronts of many well-known

Islamic scholars, Talibs and Qaris.

In Kabul, Mawlawi Shafiullah and his brother Mawlawi Siddiqullah were famous jihadis. The commanders of Mawlawi Muhammad Yunus Khalis, Mullah Musa Kalim started jihad in Zabul and most of his group members were Taliban. Prior to his martyrdom, also Mullah Madad Khan. The Taliban included Mullah Abdul Salam Rocketi, Mullah Abdul Karim, Mullah Abdul Qahhar, and the leader of Shajoi Taliban Mullah Abdul Ghani. Mawlawi Muhammad Yunus Khalis had the most influence in Nangarhar. Mawlawi Jameel ur-Rahman had many group members in Kunar. In Laghman, Mawlawi Abdul Rahim Hanafi was a famous jihadi, who was killed by the Hizb-e Islami. In Logar, Mawlawi Abdul Ahmad (known as Haji Abdul Ahad) was the regional head of the Harakat Inquilab Islami. Mullah Khushal, Mullah Dawood, Mawlawi Munawar, Mullah Katim (who was Logar governor during Rabbani's rule) and many other Islamic scholars and Taliban were commanders of well-known jihadi fronts and groups.

In Peshawar's political arena, the famous Islamic scholars from Logar included Mawlawi Muhammad Nabi Muhammad (Amir of Harakat Inquilab Islami) who was a resident of Abbas Qala, Baraki district. Mawlawi Zabto Khan, Mawlawi Muhammad Meer, Mawlawi Musa Jan, Mawlawi Fazal Ahmad, Mawlawi Hashmi, Mawlawi Said Akbar Dilawar (the father of Mawlawi Shahabuddin Dilawar) and Mawlawi Furqani are worth mentioning. In Kandahar, Mullah Naqibullah, Mullah Malang, Lala Malang, Mullah Muhammad Rabbani, Mullah Burjan, Haji Mullah Muhammad, Mullah Nek Muhammad, Mullah Obaidullah, Mullah Muhammad Sadiq, Mullah Yar Muhammad, Mullah Faizullah Akhundzada, Mullah Muhammad Umar Mujahid, Mullah Nooruddin Turabi, Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, Mullah Mashar, Mullah Mohammad Hassan Rahmani, Mashar Mullah Muhammad Ghaus and many others were famous Mullahs and Taliban who either had Taliban fronts, they were leading a Jihadi group or were busy in Jihad in other fronts as deputies or common Mujahideen.

In Helmand there were the famous groups of Nasim Akhundzada, Rais Mullah Abdul Wahid, Mawlawi Atta Muhammad and Mawlawi Baz Muhammad. In Uruzgan Mullah Abdul Rahim, Mawlawi Abdul Ghani, Mullah Abdullah, Mullah Muhammad Shafiq, Mullah Abdul Malik, Mawlawi Jabbar, Mullah Rawi Muhammad, Mullah Mohammad Abbas, Commander Abdul Wadood, Mullah

Muhammad, Mullah Muhammad Abbas, Commander Abdul Waheed, Mullah Muhammad Sadiq, Mullah Mashar, Mawlawi Muhammad Sharif among others.

Mawlawi Jalaluddin Haqqani and Mawlawi Nasrullah Mansoor wielded influence in Khost and Paktia, while Mawlawi Mansoor also held sway in Paktika and Ghazni.

Mawlawi Jalaluddin Haqqani was a key jihadi force in the area. He was a high-ranking Islamic scholar and had a big madrassa across the border. He fought on the frontline, and so most of his fighters were madrassa Taliban. Most of his group leaders were also Taliban. His commanders included Mullah Rahimullah (Zadran), Mullah Din Muhammad (Mangal Bali Khel), Mullah Shahzada (Kandahar), Mullah Badruddin (Paktia), Mullah Dawar Khan (Ghazni) and Mullah Shah Wali (Ghazni).

In the south and south-west, people were familiar with Taliban militant groups and their habits, character, and characteristics. But because of propaganda or a lack of knowledge, a few people said the Taliban were militant groups or jihadi groups exported from another country.

The pure Taliban fighters in these fronts initiated the Taliban movement. People and the jihadi section were familiar with them in their areas because of their morality and fighting prowess. The public supported them immediately, and those mujahedeen and mullahs who left the right path were not able to confront them. They kept up a resistance for a very limited time and preferred to escape later.

#### POLITICAL STRUCTURES

The Harakat organisation had a permanent political structure called the Jamiat Talba Harakat, whose head was known as the talba's president. Excepting the struggle of the Jamiat in religious studies, publications, and political education, they had no influence on their organisation's commanders and militants in Afghanistan. They had offices in Peshawar and Quetta. Taliban from the central, eastern, and southeastern provinces were affiliated with the Peshawar office, while religious students from the western, southwestern and south region had a relationship with the Quetta office. Mawlawi Wakeel Ahmad Mutawakkil headed the Quetta office, and Mawlawi Ihsanullah Ihsan was the head of the

Kandahar province. They would later become well-known Taliban figures. Jamiat Talba Harakat also had provincial leaders. The Jamiat's main objective was to create awareness among religious Taliban about regional and international politics, meetings about key days and issues, discussions and arranging educational programmes.

The role of the Jamiat Talba was not strong and organised in Mawlawi Muhammad Nabi Muhammadi's organisation, because the attention of the leadership was not constant. A separate Harakat group was established by Mawlawi Nasrullah Mansoor. The Taliban's structure was active and functional because Mawlawi Nasrullah Mansoor trusted students of religious madrassas and considered this young generation to be the future leaders of Afghanistan. He reiterated in trainings and meetings that this new religious generation can play a special role in Afghanistan's future politics. He organised this political structure called 'Tanzeem Talba' and included elders from all provinces as well as prominent areas in Pakistan where Afghans were in a majority or had schools and madrassas. It offered weekly educational programmes to recruit or attract students from schools and madrassas. Students from modern universities and schools were also appointed as leaders for a few areas. These young people led and taught political education courses. They delivered lectures to thousands of Jamiat members on important historic issues and detailed incidents. Mawlawi Mansoor instructed his students to learn English and Arabic, which made many elder mullahs criticise him. Jamiat published three or four publications.

One of these publications was very famous among those published in Peshawar. It was a weekly magazine called *Kausar* led by Muhammad Amin Frotan, who was an important Hizb-e Islami official. He left Hizb later because of certain issues, and joined Mawlawi Mansoor as his deputy. He criticised Hekmatyar in *Kausar* magazine. Hizb intelligence attempted to kill him, but he survived and received a severe head injury and so he was no longer active. In Jamiat Talba many people came forward who were able to do administrative work under Rabbani and the Taliban government. It was said during the Taliban's regime that so-and-so person understands administration as he has spent time in Mawlawi Mansoor's organisation.

Young people from Harakat Madaris and Hizb schools participated in Mawlawi

Nasrullah Mansoor's educational sessions on politics and education. He was therefore very influential among Taliban, and many young Taliban used "Mansoor" as a pseudonym in their names.

The famous personalities in the Taliban movement who were Mullah Mansoor's followers include: Mawlawi Muhammad Tahir Anwari (Financial Minister and Planning Minister), Mawlawi Arifullah Arif (Governor of Ghazni or Deputy of Finance Ministry) Qari Ahmadullah (Police chief of Kandahar, Zabul, Nimroz, interior Minister and chief of intelligence), Mawlawi Rahimullah Zurmati (deputy minister for the Ministry of Information and Culture) Mawlawi Ahmad Jan (Minister for Electricity, Mines and industries) Mawlawi Ishaq Akhundzada (Governor of Laghman) Engineer Abdullah Gul Rayyan (Head of Human Rights Commission), Ustad Faiz Ahmad Faiz (Spokesperson for Ministry of Foreign Affairs) Abdul Ghafoor Afghani (Spokesperson for Ministry of Foreign Affairs), Abdul Hakim Mujahid (Taliban Representative in New York and Afghan Ambassador to Islamabad) and a few other high and low-ranking officials. The family of Sayyed Muhammad Tayyab Agha and their group was also associated with Mawlawi Nasrullah Mansoor but when the weapons supply to Mawlawi Mansoor's group stopped, they also joined the Ittehad Islami organisation like other groups.

The Hizb-e Islami, Ittehad Islami and Milli Nijat groups also later established similar political structures for religious students.

During the early nineties in Peshawar, the religious class (Taliban) wanted to start a movement, and establish a permanent initiative and reformative organisation in Afghanistan. They agreed and established a permanent organisation called the Jamiat Talba Ahle Sunnat, held weekly meetings, and appointed leaders and deputies for each province. Over the course of time, the organisation gained followers and they had silent followers in Afghanistan. All, or the majority of them, were refugees in Pakistan and travelling Taliban. Later on, a few Taliban from this group appeared in Afghanistan; like Mawlawi Abdul Hakeem Shar'i, the head of Khost for Jamiat Talba Ahle Sunnat. He later became the police chief of Khost and implemented good security measures as compared to his colleagues. He dissolved his organisation into the Taliban movement when Taliban reached Khost. He remained governor of Khost for

movement when Taliban reached Khost. He remained governor of Khost for some time during the Taliban regime.

This new Taliban organisation was joined mostly by Taliban who were impartial, or were disappointed by Mawlawi Nabi's Harakat organisation. Due to the efforts of Islamic scholars, Mawlawi Muhammad Nabi Muhammadi and Mawlawi Mansoor's Harakat eventually united. Muhammadi was selected as the leader and Mansoor became the deputy. The Tanzeem Talba and Jamiat Talba also merged.

#### MILITARY COMPOSITION OF THE TALIBAN FROM GHAZNI TO ZABUL

A few years before the Taliban movement in Paktika, Ghazni, and Zabul, religious students started a movement for peace, justice, and security. Large meetings were initially held, and regional commanders were later requested for support. When Dr Najibullah's government evacuated a few districts and only controlled the provincial centres, conflict erupted among the commanders in Ghazni, Paktika, and Zabul. When the Najib government was close to collapsing, a few provincial centres were also on the verge of defeat.

There was a severe war underway between different groups. The religious students (Taliban) from these areas initiated efforts for peace and security during that period, and asked a few commanders for military support so they could intervene when required to control the situation.

There are two main reasons why the movement did not rise up like it did in Kandahar. Firstly, there was not such a degree of brutality that a movement begins immediately. Secondly, there were no isolated Taliban groups in the area, like Mullah Kaleem's group in Zabul (later headed by Mullah Madad) was also a Taliban group, which strengthened the group till the end. This was accepted after the martyrdom of Mullah Madad. Because of this the regional commanders treated Taliban with a light touch and avoided conflict.

These Taliban showed themselves as one unit and arranged preaching sessions. This united structure later played a major role for the movement in capturing Ghazni, Zabul and Paktika. When the Taliban rose up in Kandahar, the local Taliban in Ghazni and Zabul on Kabul highway immediately began their activities, and their communication with Kandahar developed. On the Kabul-

Kandahar highway, from Ghazni till Kandahar, the Taliban's political and military structure was three to four years older than that of Kandahar.

Mullah Ishaq Akhundzada (who later became the governor of Khost, and then Laghman during the Taliban regime) was leader of the group and had tens of Taliban in the Qarabagh district of Ghazni. Mullah Abdul Bari was his deputy. Oband's Taliban leader was Abdul Manan, Mullah Abdul Wali was the Taliban leader for Muqur district, Gelan and Jindi Taliban were headed by Mullah Abdul Ghaffar. The Taliban leader for Zabul and Shahjoi district was Mullah Abdul Ghani, while Mullah Abdul Jabbar and Mullah Noorullah Noori were his deputies. During the Taliban regime, Mullah Noorullah Noori became the governor of Balkh and the head of the northern zone, and after the US invasion he was imprisoned at Guantánamo for 13 years.

Mullah Abdul Wahab was the head of Taliban in Zabul's centre of Qalat; his deputies were Mullah Assadullah and Mullah Muhammad Nazeer.

When the Taliban initially reached Zabul, the Taliban commanders of Qalat and Shahjoi had established checkpoints and centres in the area because they did not want the Kandahar Taliban to override their rule in Zabul, as they wanted to rule it themselves. The other demand was that no one would collect weapons in Zabul. These points caused a disagreement a month before the Ghazni battle.

In December 1994, Qari Ahmadullah was the police chief of Qalat, and a resident of Ghazni's Khogyani district who remained as the interior minister and intelligence chief during the Taliban regime. I lived with him in Balochistan for two years, and because of this connection I lived with him in Qalat to support him. He told me that the local Taliban do not want to join the main movement and are putting their views and demands forward. One of Zabul's Islamic scholars Mullah Abdul Salam Salimi, an Islamic scholar from Kandahar whose name I don't recall, and Mullah Nooruddin Turabi, who was the justice minister during the Taliban regime, and was then responsible for controlling newly conquered area, visited the Qalat Taliban leader Mullah Abdul Wahab to convince him. I also accompanied them. Mullah Abdul Wahab was making different excuses during the discussion and also criticising the Taliban. He was not agreeing with us in any way. After some time, Abdul Wahab disappeared.

He didn't join the movement until the end, but his deputies joined the Taliban.

That December, another delegation from Kandahar led by Mullah Ihsanullah Ihsan visited Zabul. They called for a meeting in Qalat's grand mosque. During the meeting, Mullah Madad's brother Aziz Khan and Mullah Abdul Salam Rocketi (the head of the military corps in Nangarhar during the Taliban regime) were also present. In a convincing and effective speech, Mullah Ihsanullah detailed the causes of starting the Taliban movement, its objectives, and future strategy. During the meeting Aziz Khan and Mullah Abdul Salam Rocketi announced their full support to the movement. Mullah Rocketi said: If the Taliban were Pakistanis, I would have stopped them in 'Share Saffa' area. (Because Mullah Rocketi had announced his enmity with Pakistan after kidnapping a Pakistani officer.) He added: I know who the Taliban leaders are; what they want.

After a few days Mullah Noorullah Noori and Mullah Jabbar, accompanied by armed guards, visited Qalat to meet Taliban leaders. They had polite discussions which led to an agreement. Later, as a commander, Mullah Noorullah Noori and his friends took part in military action, and the disagreements were resolved.

#### NEED FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF THE TALIBAN MOVEMENT

When Soviet forces left Afghanistan in February 1989, the communist regime led by Najib was heading towards downfall day by day. Najib started offering peace negotiations. After a brief period the government began evacuating district centres and getting a stronghold on provincial capitals. Many provincial centres fell to the mujahedeen after some time. There was an ongoing contest and conflict between different mujahedeen groups over newly controlled areas. Some organisations had a very careful stance, while Jamiat and Hizb who were opponents dating back to Peshawar, were against each other. Peshawar-based coalition governments faced continuous opposition from Hekmatyar. In the transitional government based in Peshawar, Sibghatullah Mujaddidi was the head of the government, Mawlawi Muhammad Nabi was the Defence Minister, and Mawlawi Khalis was appointed Interior Minister. Hekmatyar was Minister of Foreign Affairs but after some time he announced his departure and termed the government a 'rented government building.'

When the Pakistani government and international partners understood that except for Rabbani and Hekmatyar, other organisations were not interested in conflict for the sake of gaining rule, they began trying to convince the two. As a result, in 1992, after the fall of the Najib government, Hekmatyar was selected as prime minister, Massoud as defence minister, Sibghatullah Mujaddidi as leaders of the government for two months; and after two months Rabbani was appointed as leader of the government for four months. As the Najib government fell because of the opposition of their famous brutal Gilamjam militia supporters, they were still controlling Kabul city and Ahmad Shah Massoud entered Kabul as their supporter.

While Ahmad Shah Massoud and the Gilamjam militia got control of Kabul, other militants were not allowed in the city. Hizb forces also tried to enter Kabul, and they initially reached the interior ministry and up to the door of the President House, but were pushed back to the city's borders after a fierce battle by the joint forces of Massoud, Gilamjam militia, and militants of the old communist regime. A brutal war also started between Hizb and Jamiat forces. Over the period of three years, Kabul city was completely destroyed and more than 50,000 innocent Kabulis were martyred in their conflict. The martyrs included children, women, and senior citizens. In the beginning Mujaddidi entered Kabul city, and after a few days went to Mazar city as a leader of a government delegation. There he announced the titles of 'Great General' and a holy title of 'Khalid bin Walid' – a famous commander and companion of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) – for Abdul Rashid Dostum. This annoyed many Afghans.

After two months Mujaddidi tried to remain in his position. But from the very first day, Ahmad Shah Massoud had not accepted him as leader of the government, nor any of his orders. He even used the double-meaning, dramatic term 'acting government' for the president during the official broadcast on television, radio and newspaper. When the two months were over, he easily removed Mujaddidi and Rabbani became the leader in an official ceremony. After four months Rabbani held the position and depended on Massoud's military forces. This disappointed other united organisations and commanders, and weakened the already-weak coalition. Sincere-minded Hizb commanders

and elders distanced themselves from the prevailing conditions. Only commanders who were blind followers were left to fight. Even if they were involved in any negative activity, they were welcomed and provided all kinds of support. Kabul city was transformed into a brutal battle ground for Massoud, Dostum, Hekmatyar, Sayyaf, and the militia of Hizb-e Wahdat. After the communists' war crimes it is perhaps difficult to find similar examples of brutality in Afghanistan's history.

The militias of Sayyaf in areas under the control of the Hizb-e Wahdat militia disgraced Hazara women, killed people, and looted their houses. Under the leadership of Mazari, Wahdat-e Hazara militias took revenge on Sayyaf by capturing Pashtuns and cutting their throats while alive, then pouring hot oil on them. There was a movement in the dead body and Wahdati Hazara celebrated this and called it the 'dance of the dead.' This was their invention and it is perhaps difficult to find an example of such brutality in the world.

The Sayyaf group was led by Sayyaf, his nephew Mumtaz, commander Sher Alam and a few other infamous militants. Wahdat was led by Abdul Ali Mazari and other elders and commanders of Wahdat who supported these activities. Most of them are in official positions in the current government.

During Rabbani's rule the country's capital was divided like this among the brutal commanders. What was the situation in far-off areas?

There is a long story of brutality, aggression against people's life, honour and belongings in Kabul city, for which even a book of thousands of pages would not suffice. Writers in the region and international human rights organisations have published considerable evidence about this. Regretfully, no one punished these criminals. Instead those claiming to uphold human rights have rewarded these criminals for their colonial objectives by providing them positions and dollars.

Since the incidents of September 11, 2001, when the United States invaded Afghanistan, the same militants and violators of human rights are ruling the people because of the support of US invaders. The Independent Human Rights Commission cannot publish a report that records these incidents of human rights violations in the civil war during the last two decades because of these criminals.

#### A FEW EXAMPLES FROM KABUL

Early on in Kabul city, the Gilamjam militia led by Abdul Rashid Dostum looted, forcibly took women and underage children to their containers and gatherings involving music and alcohol, and disgraced them. If they refused them, they were killed. These stories have been noted by many Kabulis. Leaders of the Shura-e Nazar group were also involved in similar activities. Killing people was a matter of routine for them – anyone who refused their demands was killed. Hizb-e Wahdat's people were involved in an armed conflict with Sayyaf's militants over land issues. Hizb-e Wahdat militants captured Pashtuns and nailed their heads alive. Pashtun women were disgraced and their breasts cut off while they were alive. These are repeated incidents. There are many people and witnesses who saw these incidents, and they are still around. The imprisoned Hizb-e Wahdat members have confessed to activities like this.

At a checkpoint near Pul-e Charkhi, a pregnant woman was kidnapped by militants, and her husband was told that we have seen women in every condition except while giving birth. We want to observe this as well.

Most of Sayyaf's militants were addicted to drugs. They raped Hazara women, killed their children and old men. They looted their wealth and disgraced them. The leaders turned to support every type of brutal and cruel commander who were able to kill people for them. Commanders like this were provided every kind of privilege.

A checkpoint between Kabul and Nangarhar near Sarobi was under the control of Hekmatyar's commander Zardad Faryadi. One of his militants was dressed like a dog and his teeth were sharp. The dog was sent to people who refused to give money at the checkpoint to receive the required money.

There is a story famous among Kabulis that a Shura-e Nazar commander forcibly took away someone's wife. The husband managed to take his written complaint to Rabbani, who wrote on the back of the complaint: "Respected Commander, please give him back his wife."

#### BARBARISM IN KANDAHAR

Kandahar city was divided among tens of commanders. Control was mostly

Kandahar city was divided among tens of commanders. Control was mostly wielded by the Mullah Naqib group, but he wasn't strong in his own right. His power was courtesy Commander Khan Muhammad, who was famously known as Khano. He led brutal men, and Mullah Naqib himself feared him.

Gul Agha Sherzai was the governor. He received financial support from Rabbani in Kandahar's name. He had no power, and so he only focused on becoming rich. He had a few military personnel, and most of them were drug addicts, useless, and bad people. The corps was under the control of Khano, who had military power. He also had weapons and armoured tanks. Rabbani paid heed to him since this group was affiliated with the Jamaat e Islami in Kandahar. The airport was under the control of Haji Ahmad Tar, the son of the senior commander Haji Maghash. The military area of Qashla Jadid and the surrounding western areas were under the control of the brutal Amir Lali militants. Sayyaf's commander Ustad Abdul Alim controlled the Saropzay area of western Kandahar. He was a driver before the jihad, and so he was famously known as 'Ustad'. His men were also cruel, just like those of other commanders. Some were less bad; others were the worst. The old Kandahar city was controlled by the Hizb-e Islami commander Atta Muhammad Sar Katib.

The jihad against Soviets in Kandahar was initiated by very religious people. Many other people who came later were also pious because people who participated had the spirit of jihad, and were righteous and Islamists. As time passed, a few well-known and active jihadis like Lala Malang were martyred, and the majority faded away. Over time, the desire in the mujahedeen to garner wealth and power increased. This problem was prevalent in the entire country. Illegal steps were taken for this, and contract killers and thieves were given a home in these groups. These thieves and contractual killers became so strong that their commanders couldn't control them. In Kandahar there were many Jamiat members who were former Khalqis and remained in communist militias. A few commanders welcomed them because of tribalism, or to crush their opponents. Later on, the same people became powerful, and established checkpoints through the same people. These people then never cared for anyone's honour and life, because they'd been carrying out this cruelty and brutality since the days of the communist regime. For example 'Mansoor' and 'Baro', who had a checkpoint on the Kandahar-Boldak highway, kidnapped

young girls and boys from vehicles for their sexual desire. The Taliban attacked this checkpoint a few days before capturing Kandahar and killed the two commanders and hanged them on their tanks. Most of their militants were killed in war, and only Abdul Raziq (the Kandahar police chief) was left alive because he was underage. This incident scared off militants in Kandahar and it became easy for Taliban to capture the province.

There was a war ongoing between different groups in Kandahar, during which the houses of people were set ablaze. People guarded their honour and houses by patrolling at night. Most of the actual mujahedeen were at their homes, and only those commanders were in the battlefield who had gathered old communists because they were from the same tribe, and were fighting each other to capture territory. A few eyewitnesses from Kandahar told me stories, like how there was a tank on one side of a checkpoint, and for a month shells were fired on opponents. At the end of the month, because of the huge firing the tank operator lost his mind and was taken to Pakistan for treatment.

The people of Kandahar have a surprising history of jihad against communism. The mujahedeen of Kandahar were technically very strong fighters. They entered Kandahar city at night and fought with the government forces until the morning. When they left the city in the morning, the government would have faced severe losses. It was not possible for the mujahedeen to enter Kandahar city without the support of its people. The communists were not able to openly leave their security checkpoints in the city centre because half of Kandahar's population was fighting against them.

The people of Kandahar once raised the *takbeer* chant against the government from their roofs. The calls grew to an extent that confounded the government. People were fired upon, but the government could not quiet them. Later, the government apologised and started jirgas. Unfortunately, a few courageous and righteous mujahedeen were martyred, and a few preferred to stay home after the fall of the Najib government.

#### PEOPLE'S MEMORIES

I heard this story from Mawlawi Abdul Ali Deobandi, a righteous figure who was a senior mufti and Islamic scholar during the Taliban regime. He said: A

commander took a wife of a Kandahari to his room to disgrace her. The husband was a Pashtun, but he was powerless to protect his wife. He started shouting and crying out aloud that for God's sake, she is my honour. The commander sent a few militants, who put him face down and twisted his penis so powerfully until it separated from his body. The person died on the spot.

An official of Kandahar Radio told me an eyewitness account of a child in the Shahre Naw area of Kandahar. A person at a checkpoint beckoned him to come to him. The child was aware that the man's intention was to commit sexual abuse so he ran away. The militant shot down the child with a Kalashnikov and martyred him.

A young muhajir mullah was taking his dead father's body to Shahjoi for the funeral rites. On the Kandahar-Zabul route near Shahr-e Safa district, there was a check post of the Hizb-e Islami commander Garano. The young mullah said that his jihadi family was associated with Hizb-e Islami. I wanted to get some relief from these militants and introduced myself as a Hizbi. They angrily laughed and said we only know money. Due to my father's sudden death I only had enough money for travel. The rest was taken by the checkpoint militants. They took me to the district office along with my father's body and asked, 'Is this your father's dead body?' I said 'Yes'. They told me that if you cannot give money, you will have to dance near your father's body. I started making excuses and appealed to them, that my father is dead, I am a mullah and I don't know how to dance. They loaded their Kalashnikov and after that I understood that they will not spare me unless I dance. I started dancing and danced until I was close to collapsing. Then I took my father's dead body, and because of the shame I have never told this story at home. But I am thankful to God that there was no woman with me at that time.

There are many famous stories of the brutality of Kandahari militants, but I consider these stories enough as an overview. These conditions impacted those righteous mujahedeen who sacrificed themselves to free Kandahar from communists. During fights these mujahedeen stayed home and their positions were captured by former communists, sedition-minded people and mujahedeen gone astray, who together besieged the courageous people of Kandahar. Mullah Muhammad Omar came forward to lead a revolution against them. The nation

Muhammad Omar came forward to lead a revolution against them. The nation just wanted a call, therefore the public support for an empty-handed Mullah Omar was very dramatic.

WHO WAS MULLAH MUHAMMAD OMAR MUJAHID?

Mullah Muhammad Omar was born in 1960 in the Chah Himat village of Kandahar's Khakrez district. He belonged to a religious family. His father's name was Mawlawi Ghulam Nabi. Mullah Omar's grandfather was Mawlawi Muhammad Rasool, and his great-grandfather was Mawlawi Baz Muhammad. Mullah Omar's father Mawlawi Ghulam Nabi was also born in Khakrez, and received his religious education from different schools in the district. Later on, because of his involvement in religious teaching and proselytising in the same area, he became known as a famous social and religious personality.

Mullah Omar belongs to the Tomzi branch of Hotaki Pashtuns, which is a famous and historic Pashtun tribe. After the Ghoris, it is the second historic tribe that is honoured to lead Pashtuns. Islamist leaders in contemporary Afghan history include Hotaks such as Haji Mirwais Khan (Mirwais Nikka).

Mullah Muhammad Omar's family members were professional Islamic scholars and teachers of religious studies which made them well-reputed figures in their area.

When Mullah Omar was two years old, his family migrated to the Node village of Dand district in Kandahar, where they were engaged in providing religious education. Mullah Omar's father passed away in the same area in 1965, and was buried in an old graveyard that was associated with the name of Taliban.

After his father's death, when Mullah Omar was five years old he and his family migrated to Dehrawood district in Uruzgan. This is where he spent his initial years under the tutelage of his uncles Mawlawi Muhammad Anwar and Mawlawi Muhammad Juma.

When he was eight years old, Mullah Omar joined the religious madrassa of his uncle Mawlawi Muhammad Juma in the Shakra-e Kuhna area of Dehrawood. He completed his primary and secondary religious education with distinction. He began higher religious studies at the age of 18, but was unable to finish his

education like many other Muslim students because of the communist coup in 1979.

#### PARTICIPATION IN THE JIHAD AGAINST THE USSR

Mullah Omar began jihad against Soviet invaders from Dehrawood, Uruzgan. He became well known as a courageous fighter on the provincial level, and was selected as commander of different jihadi coalitions for joint military operations. In Uruzgan he participated in different battles as a commander or a common mujahid, but he was renowned as a good fighter in the entire province. A few of his friends say that even at a young age he had a few unique characteristics and leadership skills which is why he was selected as a commander. He was the owner of a strong body during the initial days of jihad.

In 1983 he went to Maiwand district in Kandahar with his jihadi friends and took part in jihad against the USSR under the leadership of Faizullah Akhundzada, the famous jihadi commander of Harakat Inquilab Islami. A few Taliban in Kandahar were then very famous because of their courage and tactical skills, but Mullah Nek Muhammad, Mullah Muhammad Omar Mujahid and Mullah Muhammad Akhund were very well known. According to people in Kandahar, Mullah Nek Muhammad alone engaged a convoy of Russian armoured tanks for hours and destroyed dozens of tanks with an RPG rocket. It is said that he carried three types of weapons to fight armoured tanks and military personnel. Mullah Omar and Mullah Nek Muhammad participated together in many battles. Mullah Omar was injured four times during the war against the USSR, and he lost the use of his right eye.

#### A FEW JIHADI MEMORIES OF MULLAH MUHAMMAD OMAR

People close to Mullah Omar have recorded these memories:

- 1) There was a strong government checkpoint called 'Badawano posta'. The communists had placed a tank at a highly sensitive position near the check post. The mujahedeen were facing issues because of attacks from this point. Many mujahedeen tried to eliminate that tank but no one succeeded. In the end the local mujahedeen invited Mullah Omar from Maiwand, and he successfully destroyed this tank with an RPG. His colleague Mullah Obaidullah Akhund burned many Russian armoured tanks and vehicles in Mahala Jat (Kandahar)

during the jihad against Soviets. The next day when people saw those burned armoured tanks and vehicles, they thought the convoy was still halted there. Mullah Obaidullah Akhund served as defence minister during Taliban rule and after the US invasion he was appointed as Mullah Omar's deputy. He was martyred in a Pakistani prison in 2010.

2) Russian armoured tanks were passing through Sangisar in Zhari district on the Kandahar-Herat highway. Mullah Omar and Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar were there. They only had four RPG rockets to attack the Russian convoy, and destroyed four armoured tanks. During Taliban rule Mullah Baradar was appointed to the general staff for the Defence Ministry, and later as Herat governor. After the US invasion he served as a deputy to Mullah Omar. He is currently imprisoned in Pakistan.

3) Mullah Omar destroyed seven Russian tanks with RPG rockets in the Taimooriyan area of Dand district when Russian tanks were moving forward to attack mujahedeen in rifle pits. According to witnesses, Mullah Omar and Mullah Obaidullah rescued the mujahedeen and defeated the well-equipped Russian forces. Mullah Obaidullah was injured in this battle.

From 1983 to 1991, Mullah Omar was engaged in jihad against the Soviets from the important mujahedeen bases in the Maiwand, Zhari, Panjwai and Dand districts of Kandahar. He successfully carried out operations against the Soviets on the main Kabul-Kandahar highway near Shahr-e Safa district of Zabul and Qalat city. Mullah Omar took part in all of these military operations against Soviets. His favourite weapon was the RPG – the most effective weapon against armoured tanks. He was an expert at using RPGs.

In the last years of the jihad many Taliban groups lost control and split up. Mullah Omar and his famous friends left Faizullah Akhundzada's group. After a brief period, he was forced by his friends to make a strong mujahedeen group. He established a small base in the Aday area of Sangisar on the Kandahar-Herat road. He covered expenses through funds provided by his mujahid friends and a few donors, until this jihadi group was registered with Harakat Inquilab Islami. But the truth is that during the jihad Mullah Omar never met with Mawlawi Muhammad Nabi Muhammad, nor did he go to Pakistan for weapons. During his

life he was only once taken to Quetta for treatment of his injured eye, and he returned to Kandahar afterwards. This was his first and last visit to Pakistan. But a few members of his family claim that he visited Pakistan four times during the Afghan-USSR war. Once was for his treatment, a second time to register his group, and two other visits to see injured friends. Allah knows best.

END OF THE JIHAD AGAINST THE USSR

After the fall of the Najib government in 1992 and the start of the civil war, Mullah Omar and other real mujahids put down their weapons and established a religious madrassa near Haji Ibrahim Mosque in Gheshano village, Sangisar area, Dand district. Mullah Omar resumed his incomplete religious education at this madrassa along with a few of his jihadi friends. He studied the Hadith book 'Mishkat ul-Masabih', the translation and interpretation of the Qur'an, but was unable to read more Hadith books. He also had lessons of recitation and pronunciation of the Qur'an for his friends. He was an expert at Qur'anic recitation and pronunciation. Mullah Omar was then a teacher as well as a student, and the founder and director of a small madrassa.

Mullah Gul Agha (a member of the Rahbari Shura and the Economic Affairs head of the Taliban), a jihadi and madrassa friend of Mullah Omar says: There were 32 Taliban living with Mullah Muhammad Omar in this Sangisar madrassa. The names of these Taliban are as follows:

Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar

Mullah Yarana

Mullah Saifullah

Mullah Saaduddin (resident of Baghran, Helmand)

Mullah Abdul Zahir

Mullah Akhtar Muhammad

Mullah Bari

Mullah Abdul Kareem

Qari Abdul Salam

Mullah Ghulam Mahyuddin

Mullah Abdul Ali

Mullah Abdul Bari

Toor Mullah Abdul Qayyum

Mullah Abdul Ghafoor  
Mawlawi Abdul Rahman  
Abdul Manan (Mullah Omar's stepbrother)  
Mullah Abdul Salam  
Mullah Ghazi  
Mullah Sardar Muhammad  
Mullah Zareef  
Mullah Daru Khan (of Maiwand)  
Gul Mullah Juma Khan  
Mullah Janan  
Mullah Saadullah.

Mawlawi Abdul Habib, Mawlawi Abdul Rahim, Mawlawi Abdul Rahman and Malangano Mawlawi Sahib (famous with the same name) were the teachers at this small madrassa.

When the brutality of militants escalated, people were looking for a religious scholar's verdict against this cruelty, and about their silence over this brutality.

This tyranny was in the cities as well as in remote areas. On the main highways of Helmand-Kandahar and Kandahar-Boldak, passengers were treated very badly. The brutality on the Helmand-Kandahar highway created many issues for people living near Mullah Omar's residence. From Maiwand up to Kandahar city, Dawar Khan, Salih, and Nadar Jan were very brutal commanders. They treated travellers very badly and posed a significant threat to their honour and property. Mansoor and Baro were known as cruel commanders in the Inzargi, Ghazni, Tangi and Takht-e Pul areas on the Boldak-Kandahar road. Mansoor was a former commander of the famous militia leader Esmat Muslim, and was supported by many former communists and people of the Achekzai tribe because of tribal links.

In June 1994, under an initiative taken by Mullah Omar, a meeting was held in a mosque of the former mujahid Haji Ghausuddin featuring regional Islamic scholars, the managers of madrassas, teachers, and imams. The attendees included Mawlawi Saeed Muhammad, who remained a judge of regional mujahedeen and was well known as Mawlawi Pasanai, and Mawlawi Abdul

Hakeem (who was famously known as Sheikh Abdul Hakeem), a member of the Taliban Shura and in-charge of justice. The participants decided to start a reformation movement against indecency. Mawlawi Saeed Muhammad was requested to lead this movement. He refused, and the meeting ended without any result. The next day Mullah Omar along with his friend Mullah Abdul Samad visited different madrassas to get the support of madrassa Taliban.

Mullah Gul Agha says that the first meeting was held in the Haji Ghausuddin mosque. Mawlawi Sayyed Muhammad, more well known as Mawlawi Pasanai, was not a part of this meeting. The attendees, including mullahs, tribal elders, and the directors of local madrassas, were asking for steps to stop these brutal activities, but they suggested to Mullah Omar to get an edict from the regional judge and Mufti Sayyed Muhammad Pasanai.

According to Mullah Gul Agha: It was decided at the meeting that Mullah Muhammad Omar should consult with Mawlawi Sayyed Muhammad and get a decision of jihad against this oppression and tyranny. The court was in the Zangiabad area. Haji Bashir gave us a vehicle and a driver. Mullah Omar, his friend Sufi Mawlawi Abdul Samad and I went to the courts and waited there until the afternoon. In the afternoon we shared details of the meeting with Mawlawi Pasanai. He said he would invite a few more Islamic scholars for consultation, and asked us to contact him again tomorrow. We went to the regional commander Mullah Gul Akhund and spent the night with him. The next day we went to the courts. Mawlawi Sayyed Muhammad had invited three more Islamic scholars for consultation – Mawlawi Atta Muhammad Akhundzada, Mawlawi Shah Muhammad and Mawlawi Abdul Khaliq. Based on their mutual consensus, they told Mullah Omar that jihad is obligatory in the current conditions, and there is an extreme need against militants and oppressors. But they said that we cannot give a written verdict as the militants and oppressors will disgrace us and we cannot defend ourselves, and you also do not have a military force.

Mullah Omar said: We will begin our jihad and if we succeed, you should support us and give us a decision. If we fail or are martyred, no one will bother you.

Along with Sufi Mawlawi Abdul Samad, I joined Mullah Omar who wanted to visit the madrassas and convince the Taliban for jihad. We then went to Panjwai and met with Mullah Muhammad Akhund (who later became a Taliban military commander), Mu'allim Paidar (regional commander) and Haji Torak Agha (the Khost Governor during the Taliban regime who later headed the Red Crescent) who promised their full support. The driver of Haji Bashir (Bashir Noorzai) said he was tired and could not drive to the Ghoshak Gaarja village. Mullah Omar asked to go to my guestroom and pass our regards to Mullah Baradar Akhund, and to tell him that we have started our work. From that time on it appeared that Mullah Omar was the leader and Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar was his deputy.

Mullah Omar and Sufi Mawlawi Abdul Samad went to Sarwar Mama's room, who gave them a motorcycle. They visited different madrassas including Mashan (a village near Mullah Omar's village), the madrassa of Haji Akhtar Muhammad Aka in Talokan village, Haji Qadir Aka's madrassa where Sheikh Mawlawi Abdul Hakeem offered short Islamic courses, and the madrassa of Haji Hafiz Majeed (the Kandahar police chief during the Taliban regime) in Zangiabad village where other Taliban also lived.

During every lecture Mullah Omar delivered a written speech and explained the need and obligation of jihad. He requested the Taliban to prepare for jihad and insisted on beginning it immediately. He said: No one should have the excuse of religious studies, and no one should care about injuries or martyrdom. Similarly, no one will ask for resources and you will all have to support me based on trust.

Very few Taliban agreed to join Mullah Omar because of these strict terms. Around 54 Taliban from different madrassas were ready, and Mullah Omar had spoken with them to come to our lessons the next day. But after mutual consensus they came to our lessons at 1 am. Mullah Omar saw them at morning prayers. He also led the prayers, and afterwards asked me how to transport these Taliban. I told him that we should seek Haji Bashir's help. We sent Mullah Saifullah Akhund to Haji Bashir on Sarwar Mama's motorcycle. He provided one white 4x4 vehicle and one heavy Hino vehicle. The teachers Sanaullah and Muhammad Nabi were also there. Haji Bashir never took those vehicles back.

The Taliban were then going on to Keshkinakhud, the capital of Maiwand district. They only had five weapons – three Kalashnikovs and two heavy machine guns. We left the weapons for the madrassa's protection and went on to Maiwand with swords and sticks. We constructed a room in the madrassa, and security checkpoints were established with chains on each side of the market. During the security search the Taliban cut the hair of brutal militants (*topakian*, or the 'men with the guns').

On the second day Haji Bashir provided us 20 weapons and three million Afghani. Haji Burget Aka, a regional tribal leader, also provided fifteen weapons including a long-range machine gun.

On the third day, under the leadership of Mullah Omar, eighty armed Taliban gathered including Mullah Baradar Akhund and other older friends. I had a rocket launcher and three rockets. We moved from Maiwand and reached the Pashmol Wazir area mosque at 1 am. Mawlawi Khush Dil probably woke up for late night prayers, and said that since we were tired he would perform guard duties until the morning.

In the morning, Mullah Omar sent a group of Taliban to one side of the highway under the leadership of Mullah Baradar Akhund, while a group of Mullah Rahmatullah Akhund (martyr), the commanders Mullah Abdul Wahid Akhund, Sani Mullah Mashar and Akhund were on the other side. There was an exchange of gunfire but no casualties.

In the evening Mullah Baradar had taken position on the highway. The militants (*topakian*) came in a car that they had forcibly taken from people and were captured by the Taliban. During a security check a few alcoholic drinks and bullets were seized from the car. The militants later escaped.

At night the friends of Sar Katib (the general commander of Kandahar) came, and the battle began again in the morning. The militants at the check post shouted that they were Sar Katib's men. After an exchange of gunfire, six checkpoints of the illegal checkpoint commander Salih were cleared. Mullah Dadullah Akhund, the Taliban commander, was injured that day and he was the first man injured in the Taliban movement.

The famous tribal elder Daru Khan of Klak (Kolak) and Solgha area had three illegal checkpoints. He asked for safe passage which we provided. He left the checkpoints without putting up any resistance. At that time the Taliban were divided into different otaqs, they had four to five otaqs. The support and pleasure of people was palpable. The number of Taliban increased every day. The numbers and morale of the Taliban further increased after the late Haji deputy Mullah Muhammad Rabbani Akhund and Mullah Muhammad Isa Akhund joined.

INITIAL NEGOTIATIONS WITH MILITANTS (*TOPAKIAN*) ACCORDING TO MULLAH GUL AGHA

Most of the commanders and the people who had set up illegal checkpoints from the city, excluding Mullah Naqib and Khan Muhammad, came for negotiations. For example Sar Katib of Bagh Pul, Ustad Abdul Hakeem from Zarra Pula, Nadir Jan of Nagehan, Amir Lalai of the city, Habibullah Jan of Sanzari, and many other small commanders met with Mullah Omar, Mullah Baradar Akhund, and Mullah Muhammad Akhund. They demanded that the Taliban shouldn't bother them and that they would fully support the Taliban. One of Mullah Omar's demands was to take down the chains of illegal checkpoints. Their response was that if your aim is to implement Sharia in the city, we will establish strong courts and provide armed personnel and other resources. Mullah Omar said that we do not want charity, you should abandon the illegal checkpoints. We will make rooms for the Taliban there to control security, and protect the public and their property. We do not trust you anymore.

It was eventually agreed on that they will take down the checkpoint chains and the Taliban will build rooms there.

At that time the main otaq was in Dand, and later Mullah Omar talked to Mullah Mansoor who had a security checkpoint in the Tarnaka area (the border area between Kandahar city and Boldak) that he would take down the chains and discuss their statements with Mullah Omar, which should be noted. Firstly, all Kandahar commanders will take down the chains on security checkpoints but the people of Boldak will definitely fight. Secondly, do not get involved with people on hair and simple issues – if you succeed, no one will stand in your way. This came to pass, and the armed militias of Boldak battled against the Taliban. Mansoor and other criminals were hanged and no one asked or cared about them

MANSOUR and OTHER CRIMINALS WERE HANGED AND NO ONE ASKED OR CARED ABOUT THEM.

#### THE BEGINNING OF THE TALIBAN MOVEMENT AS PER MULLAH OMAR

A grand meeting of eminent Islamic scholars began in Kandahar on April 4, 1996. At the end of this meeting, Mullah Omar was given the title of 'Amir ul-Mu'mineen'. I was present throughout every stage of the meeting in my capacity as a host. Mullah Omar addressed the gathering on the last day, speaking in a simple dialect and tone. After a couple of days he made the same address with some minor changes to a delegation of Islamic scholars from Boldak. This is the summary of his statements:

The conditions of Kandahar city and surrounding areas has reached a point that the honour, life, and property of Muslims was not safe. One day when I was cycling to the madrassa, I saw a person standing on the road. By the time I reached there, he was dead. This and other brutalities affected my mind negatively. After reaching the madrassa I considered it obligatory to stop these crimes. My friend and I left the madrassa and went to Zangiabad. I asked for a motorcycle there from a man called Sarwar, a resident of Talokan village. I told my friend that we will now visit madrassas to invite them to join our cause.

In the evening we went to a madrassa and invited fourteen Taliban from there, saying that Muslims are being destroyed, and a few cruel sinners have captured these areas. No one's life, honour or wealth is safe. On every route people are dishonoured by these immoral people. We shouldn't stay quiet in such conditions, and if you are acquiring this knowledge for the gratification of Allah, then you should leave this for His gratification. Studying and teaching is not possible under these tyrannical conditions. We cannot stop this cruelty just by raising slogans. I told them that no one has promised us support; we will ask Afghan Muslims for food, and we don't even know if they will help. There is a possibility that we will never find an opportunity to continue our education, and we are also not sure about our chances of success.

To encourage them I also said: These immoral sinners are sitting on hot stones in this hot weather, and are showing their disobedience and enmity against Allah. Why can we not openly support religion? Don't be negligent and discouraged. When we capture any place we will sit there, and there will be no complaints that we missed our lessons or that we do not have money, weapons, and food

that we missed our lessons or that we do not have money, weapons, and food. After that I asked them whether they supported me or not.

None of them said whether they were ready. They told me that we can support you if you can do any thing on Friday night. I told them who will do something after Friday.

As Allah is witness, the story is the same. If we had looked for physical goods and tools, we would have returned to our madrassas discouraged. But I have promised and trusted Allah, and it was because of this trust that we reached this position.

After that we went to another madrassa and told them that this wasn't an easy task. They were five or seven who provided their names. Both the madrassa Taliban were from the same umma, country, and the residents of the same area. It wasn't like they were from a different place, or some were scholars while others ignorant. They were all young men. It was a strange wisdom, and I was facing a big test set by Allah.

This was the start of the Taliban movement. We visited different madrassas by motorcycle, and by the evening fifty-six people gave us their names. I told them to gather early in the morning at my place. At night, we came back to my place and by 1 am all of them were present.

The next morning we arranged for two drivers, and at 10 am we sent a few people to Haji Bashir. We asked him for two vehicles and weapons, which he provided. We went to Keshkinakhud (the district centre of Maiwand) and arranged for a few more people. When our numbers increased, we took the weapons and began our work from a location five miles away from our area.

At the end Mullah Omar said that we have made a big claim, and we will face many difficulties for this. This work just needs relying on God. It is easy to claim, but practically it is a very difficult test. He added, "O Islamic scholars! I need your support and guidance as I am still a student. If you do not guide me correctly to implement Allah's law, you will be responsible in the hereafter."

HAJI BASHIR'S SUPPORT TO MULLAH OMAR

In the spring of 1996 when Mullah Omar was establishing a movement against

In the spring of 1999, when Mullah Omar was establishing a movement against barbarism in the region and illegal checkpoints, Haji Bashir's militants were engaged in a conflict with Sayyaf commander Ustad Abdul Aleem's militants. Haji Bashir was the area commander of Hizb (Mawlawi Khalis group) and controlled Maiwand district centre. Abdul Aleem's men wanted to establish an illegal checkpoint near Maiwand, which posed a new challenge for locals. Bashir's militants opposed this. There was an armed battle near Localkhailo hadeera (graveyard) in Maiwand and one militant from Aleem's group was killed. Militants from Aleem's group later attacked a base of Bashir under the leadership of Mullah Abdul Sattar, and 17 people from the Haji Bashir Noorzai group were killed.

This was a huge loss for Haji Bashir. He had not been involved in local conflicts until then. After this incident, he was looking to solve these issues in a dignified manner. Haji Bashir was long acquainted with Mullah Omar, as they were residents of Maiwand and Bashir knew of his jihadi achievements. When he came to know about Omar's intentions, he immediately supported him by providing him with his force and area. This is how Taliban got control of Maiwand district and established a base there. They also established another base in Hawz-e Madad Bazaar towards Kandahar city.

Mullah Omar and his friends began a struggle to eliminate illegal checkpoints and establish peace in the areas between Kandahar and Helmand. A small base was also established in Dand district near Kandahar city. For at least two months they requested the militants at illegal checkpoints to abandon this work. In the end they forcibly eliminated an illegal checkpoint run by a militant commander in the Pashmol area between Kandahar and Maiwand. This was the beginning of Taliban military action.

From the Taliban's new base in Hawz-e Madad until Kandahar there were approximately ten checkpoints run in the name of commanders: Daru Khan (Colak), Bismillah (Pashmol), Peer Muhammad (Pashmol), Salih Muhammad (Passa Wazir Kala Sara), Qayyum Khan (Ashugha), Habibullah Jan (Sunkhari), Nadir Jan (Shah Agha Dowrahi), Atta Muhammad Sar Katib (Bagh Pul), Ustad Abdul Aleem (Sarpoza), Mullah Naqibullah (Hindu Kotai).

THE FIRST ILLEGAL CHECKPOINT AND THE FIRST BATTLE

When Mullah Omar and his friends began their organised struggle against illegal checkpoint militants, the militants at checkpoints were repeatedly requested to stop, but their response was very harsh and disgusting. The first militant checkpoint was the Daru Khan checkpoint near Pashmol on the highway. People were fed up with the injustice and cruelty of militants. On September 29, 1996, Taliban attacked Daru Khan checkpoint in the Kolak area. The attack was successful, and the militants escaped and left the area. Taliban rid people of these checkpoint militants and their commanders, and as a result they were welcomed by local communities everywhere which renewed their spirits. Public support began taking hold and new people from everywhere joined them.

This was the first step of Taliban's military advancement, and they appeared in the area between Dand and Panjwai districts, areas where Mullah Omar had previously wielded influence. A few ignorant or selfish commentators link the appearance of Taliban to Boldak district near the border with Pakistan, which is a historic mistake. Taliban uprisings started from the area between Maiwand, Dand, Panjwai and Zhari districts and first appeared in Maiwand, the area of Afghan conqueror Muhammad Ayub Khan.

#### MULLAH OMAR'S SELECTION AS AMIR

The elimination of the Daru Khan checkpoint scared off other militants. A few voluntarily abandoned the area, while a few cruel men including Salih and Nadir Jan remained. A few famous former jihadis and new Taliban from the Boldak, Arghistan, Arghandab and Maruf districts joined the Taliban movement. Mawlawi Abdul Samad and Mullah Omar were working together up until this time. Mullah Omar was the military leader, while Mawlawi Abdul Samad was the chief. Mawlawi Abdul Samad was scared of the Taliban's expansion as he was very cool-minded.

Most Taliban considered Mullah Omar as their actual leader. Influential friends and regional Islamic scholars wanted either of them as a permanent Amir. Eight days after the first military operation a meeting for the selection of Amir was called in the White Mosque of Hawz-e Madad area. Most participants, including Mullah Nooruddin Turabi, agreed on Mullah Omar as Amir, and he was chosen by consensus agreement. The Taliban then prepared to capture Boldak district.

## **Chapter 2: The Taliban movement war and conquest from Kandahar to Kabul-Kandahar**

### VICTORY AT SPIN BOLDAK

Spin Boldak was not under the Taliban's influence, or a place from which the Taliban movement began. The Taliban rose up from areas between Kandahar and Helmand that were under the influence and areas of jihad of Taliban leader Mullah Muhammad Omar. After the capture of the checkpoint – which is considered their first military showing – Islamic scholars and Taliban from Arghestan, Maruf and Boldak districts of Kandahar visited Mullah Omar. These districts boasted of famous mujahideen, Taliban and Islamic scholars including Mullah Muhammad Rabbani (known as Haji Muawin ('deputy'), who became Mullah Omar's assistant and chief minister) from Arghestan. These districts were on the verge of collapse and required a united voice. After consultation with the Taliban of these districts, Mullah Omar planned to capture Spin Boldak and attacked the district on October 10, 1994.

After ten days of military operations between Kandahar and Helmand, the Taliban were organised with several covered vehicles. One of the vehicles was commanded by Mullah Muhammad Akhund (who later became a military commander in the south in the Taliban regime), a Taliban commander and resident of Zuwando Haderay village. The other vehicle was under the command of Mullah Muhammad, a close ally of Mullah Omar. The trucks stopped in the district centre of Spin Boldak and the Taliban uprising began. Boldak district centre was under the control of Hizb commander Akhtar Jan who was unprepared for battle. His armed men fled the area owing to the sudden attack. The Taliban fired shots in the air to scare them. Most of the district came under Taliban control. Akhtar Jan and his men came prepared the next day and attacked the district centre, but the Taliban didn't fire in retaliation as per Mullah Omar's instructions. The Taliban wanted opponents to leave the area without battle and so did not respond to their firing.

On the third day when they attacked again, the Taliban responded and Mullah Dadullah fired a RPG rocket. For the first time a man on the Taliban's side was killed – Saleem Agha, a resident of Zangiabad, Kandahar. After a short while the remaining parts of the district also fell to the Taliban. Regional media spread the news of Spin Boldak's capture and the Taliban garnered attention of countries in the region and around the world. The Taliban were undoubtedly warmly welcomed by businessmen, the people, and drivers on highways. This news spread on both sides of the Pak-Afghan border, and Pakistan-based Islamic madrassa students came to support the movement and new Taliban joined the conquest of Kandahar.

The capture of Spin Boldak was a good initiative for the movement, because on one hand Taliban and famous commanders from the adjoining two districts joined the movement, and on the other hand so did Afghan Taliban from Pakistani madrassas. There was a huge market between Boldak and Chaman where major businessmen had dealings. The presence of Taliban became a source of relief for them and they financially helped Taliban and managed expenses for food, fuel and vehicles, which strengthened the movement. After capturing Boldak the Taliban also captured a few arms and ammunition depots of militant groups and acquired a huge quantity of weapons.

The financial support and promotion of the movement by Pakistan-based Afghans and religious-minded Pakistani Pashtuns doubly boosted Taliban forces. Everyone who travelled to Iran or Pakistan through this route, whether alone or with their family, faced problems that they wanted to see eradicated. This also had an effect on Pakistanis as peace and security in the neighbourhood means a better future for the region.

#### CONQUEST OF KANDAHAR

Even before the capture of Spin Boldak, the Taliban moved freely in Kandahar city because there was no powerful security agency. With the exception of a few places, every kind of militant was free to move around in the city and no one attacked each other. After capturing the Daru Khan checkpoint, all checkpoints between Maiwand district and Kandahar were evacuated as militants fled. A few left the area after mounting minor resistance. Only the Bagh Pul area check post

of Hizb-e Islami commander Atta Muhammad (Sar Katib) remained, as well as a base of Ustad Abdul Aleem's militants.

The Taliban initially tried to solve these issues with mutual understanding. But distrust set in when Atta Muhammad planned to kill Mullah Omar. After the capture of Nadir Khan check post on Shah Agha road, the Taliban established a centre in the Hindukotai area. Mullah Omar usually visited this centre from Maiwand, and the Sar Katib checkpoint was located on the same route. The plot was exposed by Omar Khatari, the son of the tribal leader Haji Abdul Aleem, who was from Mullah Omar's village. Mullah Omar delayed his travel and the plan failed. After a few days Sar Katib arrested the famous Taliban commander Mullah Burjan on this route. Taliban arrested another Hizb-e Islami commander Abdul Ahad, and Mullah Burjan was released in exchange.

The role of Islamic scholars and Taliban is very prominent in the capture of Kandahar. Pashtuns living by the Kuzhak mountains and in the border areas of Kandahar are from similar tribes. There are many madrassas in these areas, and during the jihad against USSR these areas were famous as a crossing route and rest area for mujahideen. People from these far-off areas migrated from Spin Boldak, Maruf and Arghistan districts because of tribal links to border areas in Pakistan like Chaman, Gulistan, Pasheen, Zangal, Qila Abdullah, and Toba.

There are many madrassas and Islamic scholars there that wield regional and tribal influence. During the jihad against USSR they had religious and spiritual motivations. The late Maulana Abdul Ghani from Chaman is worth mentioning here; his speeches against communists scared them to the extent that his mosque was shelled from across the Durand line.

The important Taliban and Islamic scholars from Boldak included Mullah Abdul Samad, Mullah Abdul Raziq (Taliban interior minister), Mullah Sirajuddin, Mullah Dost Muhammad, Mullah Khaliqdad, Mullah Abdul Manan Hanafi and Mullah Wali Jan.

On November 3, Taliban entered Kandahar city after capturing checkpoints between the city and Boldak. Takht Pul and Inzargi militants escaped, and these losses affected the morale of commanders in Kandahar. They were trying to form a coalition against the Taliban, but because of their conflicts over the last

form a coalition against the Taliban, but because of their conflicts over the last few years they had very little time to forge a quick alliance. The airport and many areas of Kandahar city fell to the Taliban without any resistance.

When negotiations failed, Sar Katib was defeated in battle and escaped. After his defeat, the prominent commander of Kandahar Mullah Naqibullah Akhund surrendered his weapons and equipment to the Taliban. One can say that the actual support in conquering Kandahar city was by Mullah Naqibullah. He completely handed over control of the corps to the Taliban, comprising forty tanks and other heavy and light weapons.

The key Taliban commanders who played a role in Akhund's surrender were Mullah Muhammad (who remained the general military head and was martyred during the battle with Ismail Khan and escaping militants between Kandahar and Herat) and Mullah Muhammad Rabbani, the deputy of Mullah Omar and head of the caretaker council. A year prior to his surrender, Mullah Naqib told people in Kharqa Mosque that the commanders that are attributed to me are not under my control, which indicates that he was looking for a way to get out of the situation. He played a role in the handover of the corps, and forced the famous commander Khan Mohammad 'Khano' to escape along with his commanders. Khan Muhammad later became the police chief of Kandahar during the Karzai government, and was killed in a Taliban attack.

On November 15, Kandahar city and the surrounding areas came under Taliban control. Mullah Omar was appointed the head for all military and government offices in the province. After the capture of Kandahar, Taliban became a topic in the regional and international media. Everyone defined Taliban according to their information. Militants who fled told BBC Pashto, a well-known media source at that time, that Pakistan supported Taliban in the capture of Kandahar. This was either their statement, or given at the behest of others, but it helped the Taliban's rivals. This caused the Taliban to be accused of taking Pakistan's support.

However, people were not influenced by this propaganda. The Taliban were welcomed everywhere, which helped them move into other areas throughout Afghanistan. In the sphere of militancy, Hekmatyar was the only one to announce war against the Taliban. Hizh-e Islami commanders in Kandahar had

announcement was against the Taliban. Hizb-e Islami commanders in Kandahar had little intention of fighting the Taliban but the Peshawar-based Hekmatyar's communication command – recorded by the Taliban – forced Sar Katib to fight. He was defeated and escaped to Pakistan. At that time Pakistan was supporting Hekmatyar, and Pakistani intelligence officials were visiting the battle lines near Charasyab, Kabul. He was provided weapons and equipment and so was unable to accuse the Taliban of having Pakistani support. But he later alleged that the Taliban was supported by former communists, the United States, and the United Kingdom. In Quetta, Hizb-e Islami members distributed texts stating that Mullah Burjan was actually a communist general who had taken on a new identity. But this was not accepted by the people of Kandahar who knew Mullah Burjan since the beginning of jihad in Afghanistan.

Hekmatyar's propaganda continued until the Rabbani government welcomed the Taliban, and Sayyaf called the Taliban 'angels of salvation.'

In Ghazni, the Taliban defeated the coalition forces of Hizb-e Islami and Hizb-e Wahdat and captured Maidan Wardak. Hekmatyar's forces withdrew from Charasyab on the outskirts of Kabul. Taliban faced off against Rabbani and Massoud's forces. Hekmatyar and his friends had considered Taliban as old communist forces supported by Russians because they were welcomed by the Rabbani government. Later on, they accused Taliban of being the force of Britain, America, and Zahir Shah. In 1994, after Rabbani and Hekmatyar forged a coalition with the efforts of Pakistan's Jamaat-e Islami leader Qazi Hussain Ahmed, the Taliban captured Kabul. President Rabbani and Prime Minister Hekmatyar escaped to the north of Kabul. Hekmatyar told BBC Pashto that Britain entered Kabul through Jalalabad and now their slaves have entered.

#### POST-KANDAHAR DEVELOPMENTS

After the defeat of Sar Katib in Kandahar, Mawlawi Muhammad Nabi's continuous efforts and negotiations with Harakat commander Ghaffar Akhundzada failed. The Taliban started a war against Akhundzada. Since Taliban and Islamic scholars from Helmand supported the movement, Ghaffar Akhundzada tried to combat the Taliban with tribal militias. The Jamiat commander Raees Abdul Wahid supported the Taliban against Akhundzada. After he was defeated, Helmand, including the centre of Lashkar Gah, came

completely under Taliban control. The minor commanders who remained and were opposed to the Taliban escaped to Farah, or avoided engaging in armed conflict. Commanders who had fled Helmand and Kandahar joined the forces of commander Ismail Khan in Farah, and gathered on the Nimruz and Herat borders. They planned to retake Helmand and Kandahar with Ismail Khan's support which led to a clash between Taliban and Khan.

Ismail Khan equipped and supported the commanders. After the Taliban captured Farah and Nimruz, most of these commanders escaped to Iran.

After the conquest of Helmand, Taliban reached the centre of Zabul. Since there was a presence and influence of former Taliban groups, no one faced off against the Taliban. The only one with such intentions was the Hizb commander Hamidullah. But his group was very small and weak in the last days of jihad, and he was considered to be Hekmatyar's only commander in Zabul. After observing the Taliban's force he escaped to Ghazni and joined Hizb militants in the Maidan area.

Uruzgan was an area where Mullah Omar wielded influence. A few commanders like Mullah Shadiq Akhund joined Taliban, and others like Governor Jan Muhammad Khan were quiet. But they later started to oppose the Taliban. The Taliban were generally given a warm welcome in Uruzgan and up until the end Taliban held sway over the province.

During the winter Taliban reached the outskirts of Ghazni. The major part of the Janda, Muqur and Qarabagh districts were already under the control of local Taliban prior to the arrival of the main Taliban force.

#### GHAZNI BATTLE

In mid-November 1994 the Taliban gained control of Kandahar and shifted their focus to Helmand and Zabul. The Taliban structure in these provinces was three years older than that in Kandahar, and they started acting to clear the region after being inspired by the events in Kandahar. Most of the organisation's commanders had a good relationship with Taliban and treated them with politeness.

Taliban appointed leaders for most of Ghazni's districts, and soon after

conquering Kandahar they arranged a meeting at the agriculture department in Ghazni, since the department head was a Taliban supporter. Taliban leaders from different districts attended the meeting, including Waghez leader Mullah Shahabuddin Saqib, Mawlawi Abdul Wakeel from Shalgar, Khogiani district leader Qari Hazrat Muhammad, Mullah Muhammad Ishaq Akhundzada from Qarabagh, Mullah Abdul Mannan from Oband, Muqar district's Mullah Muhammad Shafiq and Geelan and Jindi Taliban leader Mullah Abdul Ghaffar. They defined their structure as a commission with representation of these Taliban leaders. They had also invited Mullah Sayyed Ahmad Shaheed as a representative for Ghazni city and centre.

The commission decided that the members, friends, and Taliban would meet in Gailan district of Ghazni province for their activities. The district is near Zabul highway and the Taliban were also active in the nearby Shahjoi district of Zabul. They wanted harmony in these adjoining areas.

The commission members gathered in Gailan and decided to collect weapons, and then attack the hill point check post of Jindi Bazaar on the highway. However the checkpoint was evacuated before the attack.

The commission sent a delegation to Nawa district, which was then under the control of Harakat commander Mullah Fazi ul-Haq (Naway Amir), who welcomed and supported the Taliban.

The commission then shifted focus to Muqur, and held a huge event in Muqur bazaar's main mosque. All the commanders of the district were invited to the gathering. Yawar (Mahaz Milli), Habibullah Jan and Mullah Nizamuddin from Harakat Inquilab Islami, Sher Khan (Jamiat-e Islami) and Haji Fazal (Mahaz-e Milli) attended and they promised to support Taliban. The key figure among them was the commander Habibullah who controlled the district centre and main market.

With the encouragement of a general military commander Khyal Muhammad of Qari Baba, Habibullah Jan welcomed the Taliban. Initially the Taliban housed their armed men in Mullah Nazimuddin Centre and then went around the district. When Habibullah Jan handed over the district to the Taliban, a few commanders were still making excuses about handing over the weapons. Small Taliban

were still making excuses about handing over the weapons. Small Taliban groups attacked their centres and they evacuated without putting up any resistance. Mullah Muhammad Gul Jawzjani and Mullah Firoz played a major role in these small groups. Mullah Muhammad Gul Niazi was a Pashtun from the northern area of Jawzjan, but his family migrated to Ghazni's Jawzjan area during Zahir Shah's regime. He was a brave and experienced fighter who fought the communist regime while working under Jalaluddin Haqqani's groups.

After the capture of Muqur's centre by Ghazni Taliban, Qari Baba (Taj Muhammad), a powerful commander in Ghazni, invited Taliban for negotiations. At that time he controlled the centre of Ghazni province and Shalgar district, as well as wielded influence in Jawarah district.

A delegation of Ghazni Taliban led by Mullah Shahabuddin Saqib met Qari Baba at the checkpoint of Taliban supporter Peer Muhammad in Nanay near Ghazni city. Qari Baba told stories of his jihad and his love and friendship with Taliban. He declared himself a Talib from an Islamic scholar family. Taliban offered him to support them the way Mullah Naqibullah had supported them in Kandahar. They came to an agreement that if Hekmatyar supporters attack Qari Baba, the Taliban will support him and if Hizb-e Islami supporters attack Taliban, Qari Baba will stop them.

At that time there was a conflict between commanders of the provincial council. Mullah Gul Muhammad, the commander Khyal Muhammad, and the famous Shi'a commander of the Mohsini Movement Dr Shahjahan supported the Taliban while others opposed the movement. Taliban supporters exposed the plans made against the Taliban in council meetings.

A council called Ulema Council was also established at that time. It was headed by Mullah Abdul Hakeem from Qarabagh, the father of the Qarabagh Taliban leader Mullah Ishaq, a credible scholar who had graduated from Noor ul-Madaris.

This council sent a delegation about the newly established movement and held a meeting with Taliban in Janda, near the Taliban's main centre in Gilan. The delegation comprised the now-deceased Engineer Abdullah Gul Rayan and Mullah Hazrat Gul. After their return they sent Mullah Hazrat Gul to Peshawar

to share the issue with Harakat leader Mullah Muhammad Nabi.

In Ghazni, there were two kinds of groups – one were the followers who were with Mullah Muhammad Nabi from the beginning, and the second majority group was of Mullah Mansoor; people who joined him after the split from Harakat. After the supply of weapons to Mullah Mansoor's group stopped, many of them joined other organisations, like Qari Abdullah of Jinnahabad, Amir of Waghaz Mullah Fakhruddin, Mullah Gul Muhammad, Mullah Abdul Baseer from the centre.

But all of them followed the Harakat Amir Mullah Muhammad Nabi in religious and sensitive affairs. Mullah Muhammad Nabi sent letters to all of his important commanders, including Qari Baba, through Mullah Hazrat Gul and other colleagues to support the Taliban without any preconditions.

After a lengthy meeting with the Taliban delegation, the newly established Ulemaa Council of Ghazni sent a delegation to Kandahar to meet Mullah Omar. The delegation was headed by Mullah Abdul Hakeem, who was accompanied by Taliban leaders from the commission and Taliban district leaders from Ghazni.

It was now the end of November. Fresh military forces were sent from Kandahar to the Zabul provincial centre. Mullah Muhammad Omar was busy in negotiations with supportive commanders in Uruzgan and had prepared plans for completely cleaning Uruzgan. The conflict with Ghaffar Akhundzada in Helmand was still unsolved. This delegation visited Kandahar and was hosted by Higher Council member Ihsanullah Ihsan, and stayed in Kandahar for a few days to meet Mullah Omar.

When Mullah Omar returned from Uruzgan, the delegation met him and it was agreed that they would work together. Mullah Abdul Hakeem told Mullah Omar that to stop the propaganda and establish new groups, 'give me your hands in bayat.' According to my information this was the first bayat in the movement, and prior to this the Taliban had never looked to this tradition. The delegation swore their allegiance. Before they departed Mullah Ihsanullah Ihsan recommended to them that Mullah Omar had said: because of arrival of new Taliban from Kandahar you shouldn't proceed beyond Muqur district, because in Ghazni we are facing different opposition groups like Hizb-e-Wahdat

Ghazni we are facing different opposition groups like Hizb-e Wahdat, Hekmatyar and Qari Baba who is still coordinating with Ghaffar Akhundzada and we are still in a conflict with Akhundzada.

The delegation from Muqur was still in Kandahar when a few Taliban including Sayyed Ahmad Shaheed Khel and Muhammad Gul Jawzjani attacked a famous checkpoint with a bad reputation. After overcoming a small resistance the checkpoint was evacuated and the Jamiat-e Islami commander Najiullah escaped. During this battle Muhammad Gul Jawzjani and another Talib were injured and they were brought to Kandahar at night. In the early hours of the next morning, Mullah Ihsanullah Ihsan woke up an important Taliban leader Mullah Shahabuddin from Ghazni and sent him to Ghazni with instructions to stop moving forward until fresh forces reached from Kandahar.

After the Qarabagh battle a delegation of the Rabbani government from Kabul headed by Mullah Sakhi Dad Faiz visited Ghazni Taliban for negotiations. In Qarabagh's Naeem Qala village they met with the Ghazni Taliban commission member Mullah Shahabuddin Saqib who explained the objectives to them. Mullah Sakhi Dad Faiz delivered the Rabbani government's message of support for the Taliban.

At that time Abdul Ghaffar – a sub-group of Qari Baba in Shalgar's Konsaf vilalge – attacked the centre of Hekmatyar supporters. It was a battle of a short duration with no losses. According to several people, it was just a tactical clash as Qari Baba was actually trying to forge a coalition against the Taliban but most of his commanders were willing to support the Taliban. Shortly after this battle Qari Baba sent a letter to the Taliban Commission, asking about the promise of supporting them against Hizb.

At the end of December Mawlawi Ihsan came to Zabul from Kandahar and held a meeting in Zabul's central mosque. I was present at the meeting. Many important commanders announced their affiliation with the Taliban. Negotiations were progressing with the Taliban of Shahjoi as well. Mawlawi Ihsan went to Nuqur district and invited Taliban leaders of Ghazni there. He was accompanied by Mullah Nooruddin Turabi and a few other Taliban leaders. Meetings were held with regional commanders. A Talib leader from Shalgar called Mullah Noorullah arranged a meeting between commander Khval

Muhammad and Mawlawi Ihsan in the Yargoto area between Qarabagh and Shalgar.

Khyal Muhammad and Mawlawi Ihsan assured each other of their full support. After this commander Khyal Muhammad arranged a meeting between Mawlawi Ihsan and Qari Baba in the area of Nanay. Mawlawi Ihsan was accompanied by many armed Taliban so that Qari Baba could observe their forces. The Ghazni Taliban leaders present in the meeting pointed towards the Taliban and said they are our supporting forces. At the end of the discussions, Qari Baba took out a letter of Mawlawi Muhammad Nabi from his pocket and told Mawlawi Ihsan that my Amir has instructed me to support you.

At that time, Qari Baba signed an undisclosed agreement with Hizb-e Islami. He allowed Hekmatyar's forces to enter Ghazni city and fight the Taliban. Qari Baba did not consider himself capable of facing Taliban and all the groups were supporting Taliban, including commander Khyal Muhammad. This shows that in Ghazni, and particularly in Shalgar district, it was considered impermissible to fight against Taliban and Islamic scholars. On the other hand, the sons or brothers of many of Qari Baba's commanders were being educated at madrassas and most of them joined the Taliban movement.

The Taliban thought that during the winter in Ghazni they would fight against illegal checkpoints and defend the probable attacks of Jamiat and Hizb with the support of Qari Baba. But because Qari Baba allowed Hekmatyar supporters to enter Ghazni, it became a reason for the Taliban to stop Hekmatyar's men from getting control of Ghazni.

These were the last days of January 1995.

From Chaman, Hekmatyar captured a military base unit between Ghazni city and the Shash Gawo area with the support of Qalam, Zardad and Sar Katib. Commander Khyal Muhammad, Dr Shah Jahan and other commanders who were Taliban supporters then advised the Taliban to enter and capture strategic areas in Ghazni city from the militias of Hizb-e Wahdat and Hekmatyar. On January 28, 1995, Mawlawi Ihsan visited Ghazni city and under the leadership of Dr Shahjahan, held a meeting with Hazara commanders, leaders, and scholars.

Akbari represented Hizb-e Wahdat in the meeting while Muhsini represented the Hazara movement. Shi'a mullahs were also in attendance, as were Zahidi from Akbari group and Hakimi from Khalili's Hizb-e Wahdat group. After reaching a mutual understanding they announced support for the Taliban, and at the end the Shi'a mullahs prayed for the victory of Taliban.

But Khalili's Hizb-e Wahdat was secretly preparing for a battle with the Taliban along with Hekmatyar's forces. The Taliban organised a huge gathering of armed Taliban in the Nanay area to control Ghazni, and supporting Taliban groups from Kandahar and Zabul also came to Ghazni.

On the second night Taliban militants entered most parts of Ghazni city. In the morning commander Khyal Muhammad invited his group commanders and officially handed over Ghazni Brigade to Mawlawi Ihsan, which comprised armoured tanks and other weapons.

The Taliban had no artillery or tank experts. But under the leadership of Arifullah Arif from Paktia, many militants and relatives of Mawlawi Nasrullah Mansoor came to Ghazni. They had artillery and tank experts who wore a unique uniform, and they empowered Taliban forces by operating tanks and artillery. These experts had an unparalleled role in gaining control of Ghazni city.

On the third night Hizb-e Islami militants attacked the famous check posts of Tappa Sardar Ghundai on the hill tops in the Rodha area of the city, but these attacks were repelled by the Taliban. The Akbari and Muhsini groups of Hizb-e Wahdat surrendered the check posts to Hazara Taliban.

On the first day of the battle Mawlawi Ihsan Ullah was the general commander while Noorullah Noori (Zabul), Haji Inayatullah (Ghazni-Tawda Cheena area) and Mullah Khaliqdad (Kandahar-Boldak) served as military commanders, with the exception of supporting forces from Paktia.

Taliban pushed back the Hazara, and on the other side the Hekmatyar militia was pushed back to the Ghond area. A unit between Ghazni city and Dek district was abandoned by Hekmatyar's supporting militia. In the morning Mawlawi Ihsanullah went to Dek and held a meeting with the tribal leaders, Islamic scholars, and nominated district governor of the district. That same day, Mullah

Omar dispatched Mullah Muhammad Rabbani to Ghazni. He visited all areas and in the afternoon went to the unit. A detailed discussion was held between Mullah Rabbani, Mawlawi Ihsanullah and Ghazni Taliban about the current situation and battle. After reaching a consensus, the command of the battle was taken over by Mullah Rabbani and a new Taliban commander and militants from Kandahar came to Ghazni. This included Mullah Mashar (Mullah Abdul Qayyum) and commander Raees Abdul Wahid (Baghran chief.) The next morning Hekmatyar and Hizb-e Wahdat militias began their attacks, and by the afternoon the Taliban had taken Ghond from Hekmatyar's forces and the Hizb-e Wahdat was pushed back from the frontline. Many Hizb-e Islami and Hizb-e Wahdat supporters were imprisoned in this battle. The local Taliban from Wardak's Jaghtu area blocked the route of defeated Hekmatyar forces and many were arrested. All of them were freed by Taliban leaders after some time. Fortunately no prisoner was killed during this battle.

Mawlawi Arifullah Arif was appointed as governor of Ghazni by the Taliban. After the advancement of Taliban a huge convoy led by the famous commander Mullah Mashar (Mullah Abdul Qayyum) attacked the Seesay regiment in Wardak's Saeed Abad area. This regiment belonged to Sayyaf's militants. A huge amount of weapons was recovered from there. After that Taliban captured Saeed Abad district and no one resisted them until Maidan Shahr. On February 2, the provincial district of Wardak Maidan Shahr also came under Taliban control.

After the defeat of Hekmatyar militias in Ghazni, commander Zardad and a few other commanders escaped to Logar's Kharwar district through the Zana Khan area. A few Taliban from Ghazni followed him from Zana Khan and entered Kharwar. At that time the Taliban of Logar were also organised. Another group of Taliban entered Logar from Wardak's Sheikh Abad Tangi area. Many commanders welcomed Taliban in Logar, and the Hizb-e Islami militia fled. Local Taliban from Logar were also armed, and because of this after one day of capturing Maidan Shahr, the provincial centre of Logar Puli Alam also fell to the Taliban. On the same day Taliban captured a Hizb-e Islami centre in Charasyab district without facing any resistance. Nangialay, the local commander of Mahaz Milli in Wardak, and Harakat commander Musa in Maidan Shahr supported the Taliban

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At that time Taliban were facing off in battle with Burhanuddin Rabbani's Jamiat and coalition forces in west and central Kabul. Ahmad Shah Massoud was leading in Kabul, and Ismail Khan was leading the war in the west. The exiled commanders from Helmand and Kandahar were also with him. In the west the Taliban expanded to Farah and Nimruz.

#### THE TALIBAN IN LOY PAKTIA

A few days after the conquest of Ghazni, Mawlawi Ihsanullah visited Qari Baba to assuage him, as he was feared because of his hidden support to and agreement with Hizb in the Ghazni battle and secondly, an environment of mistrust prevailed with his other commanders, especially Khyal Muhammad. He covered the areas around his house with mines, but removed them after meeting with Mawlawi Ihsan. After a few months he went to Kabul and joined Rabbani, Massoud and Sayyaf forces.

After meeting Qari Baba, Mawlawi Ihsan went to Shahrana, the provincial centre of Paktika, on the invitation of Paktika Governor Mawlawi Fareed Mahmood and police chief Muhammad Ali. They were both former commanders of Mawlawi Nasrullah Mansoor. Under the leadership of Mawlawi Ihsan, a group of Taliban went to Shahrana and the district centre was handed over to them. Mawlawi Ihsan was appointed governor and police chief. Later on he went to Gardez, Paktia, which was already under Taliban control since Mawlawi Nasrullah had joined Taliban before the Ghazni battle.

Other influential commanders avoided engaging in armed conflict with the Taliban, as the district centre Gardez was already under the control of united commanders and Mawlawi Nasrullah Mansoor's family, and all of them supported the Taliban. After the victory of Kandahar and Zabul, the Paktia Governor Mawlawi Abdul Latif Mansoor (a former Taliban agriculture minister, Kandahar mayor, and current member of the Rahbari Shura) welcomed Taliban. This was the reason that in the Ghazni battle, family members and supporters of Mawlawi Nasrullah Mansoor played a key role by supporting Taliban against Hekmatyar and Hizb-e Wahdat forces.

From Gardez Fort, Mawlawi Ihsanullah arranged groups for the surrounding

areas of Paktia and Paktika. He held meetings with tribal leaders and commanders in Gardez city and also invited jihadi commanders from Khost. These were the initial weeks of February. In the middle of February, negotiations between Mawlawi Jalaluddin Haqqani and Mawlawi Ihsanullah were successfully completed. On 19 January, Khost city was handed to the Taliban because of the support of Jalaluddin Haqqani. The Taliban gained complete control over Loy Paktia. Taliban control over Khost city and the provincial centre strengthened them in the south, and similarly to Kandahar, they garnered support from the public and Islamic scholars.

#### THE KABUL FRONT AND THE FIRST BATTLE WITH MASSOUD

Ahmad Shah Massoud talked directly with the Taliban in Maidan Shahr. Mullah Muhammad Rabbani asked him to leave Kabul and to join the Taliban for peace in Afghanistan. Massoud initially agreed and even offered his gun to the Taliban. But he was actually observing the Taliban's strength. When he returned, he initially bombarded Taliban and then attacked them.

At that time Taliban militants were near Reshkhori brigade, and because of the sudden attack by Massoud they were pushed back from Charasyab. This impacted their spirits negatively, and for the first time they faced a major hindrance after continuous victories. But they held their war positions in Logar and selected a battlefield in Maidan Shahr near Paghman. The commanders of Sayyaf and Massoud were jointly participating in the war. This was the start of the war between Taliban and Massoud's coalition forces.

The run of victories had ended, and the strong resistance mounted by Massoud's forces demoralised the Taliban to a degree. The government's forces were generally under strong pressure and were scared of the collapse of Kabul, as it was practically besieged by the Taliban.

#### THE ESCAPE AND DEATH OF ABDUL ALI MAZARI

In early March 1995, the Taliban reached Kabul for the first time. The environment in Kabul was rife with fear. Hizb forces left Charasyab as Hizb-e Wahdat forces were also part of the coalition (Hamahangi Shura) against the government. After the defeat of coalition forces in Ghazni, the command of war against Taliban was distributed and Dostum's militias left Kabul. Due to the

against Taliban was disrupted and Dostam's militia left Kabul. Due to the withdrawal of Hizb forces from Charasyab, Hizb-e Wahdat forces were besieged between Taliban and Massoud's force in the west.

During the battle in Ghazni Hizb-e Wahdat commanders supported Hizb-e Islami against the Taliban. After the Taliban entered the surroundings of Kabul, Ahmad Shah Massoud and the Sayyaf militia took advantage of the situation and tried to capture territory from Hizb-e Wahdat. A fierce battle was underway between them to capture areas from the other. Hizb-e Wahdat commanders gave safe passage to the Taliban to enter Kabul city. Without any instructions from the leadership and a war plan, low-level Taliban commanders advanced in the south of Kabul and faced a sudden attack by Massoud's forces, due to which they lost control over many areas, including Charasyab.

Hizb-e Wahdat wanted to protect themselves and broke the siege during the war between Taliban and Massoud forces. On March 11, the leader of Hizb-e Wahdat Abdul Ali Mazari tried to escape Kabul with a few commanders in a Parks Wagon, a Russian vehicle. A local resident informed the Taliban about his escape. He was arrested by the Taliban and according to Mullah Omar's instructions, he was to be transferred to Kandahar in an aeroplane. In Mullah Omar's view, if important commanders from militant groups do not voluntarily surrender and are arrested during the war, they should be held as prisoners until a decision is taken or there is a reduced chance of mutiny.

Mazari and his commanders were initially sent to Logar. A helicopter was sent from Kandahar to transfer Abdul Ali Mazari and a few of his commanders. Their hands were tied and a Talib militant accompanied them as a guard. He was negligent and fell asleep, and one of the prisoners was looking for the areas below. As the helicopter crossed Ghazni city, the small hills which is the beginning of the Hazara areas appeared. Commander Abu Zar, the resident of Ghazni who knew the area well, untied his hands and snatched the sleeping Talib's Kalashnikov. He ordered the pilot to land in those hills. Initially the pilot did not accept the order but after Abu Zar fired, his hand was injured and he was compelled to land the helicopter near the main road in Noghi area, Odray Hadeera. A group of Taliban was travelling from Kandahar to Ghazni when they saw a helicopter make a sudden landing. They thought it was an accident. A vehicle of Taliban immediately went to reach the helicopter and saw that a few

vehicle of Taliban immediately went towards the helicopter and saw that a few large bearded men with their hands tied were running from the helicopter towards the hills. Taliban understood they were escaping so they fired at them and killed all of them.

When Mullah Omar learned about the incident he ordered an investigation and considered it a very bad incident, since for the first time a group leader was killed in a sudden event. No one had intentions of killing Abdul Ali Mazari. This incident had a national impact, and the Taliban were sad. His dead body was handed over to his followers who considered this event as a deliberate act by the Taliban. It was said that they kept Mazari's body in the surroundings of Balkh for a few days and made different, painful stories about his death to stir up the emotions of the Hazara tribe against the Taliban.

The Taliban had no differences with the Hazara. Every tribe, area, every criminal or righteous person, were the same to the Taliban. But with this incident Hazara started propagandising against the Taliban, and Iran also took serious notice.

The investigation showed that the incident was unintentional, and the prisoners were considered responsible. The Taliban who shot the escaping prisoners were unaware of their identity and thought that these people have killed the pilot and the Taliban in the helicopter.

Abdul Ali Mazari and his commanders were actively involved in bloody wars and crimes in Kabul after the fall of the communist regime. Abdul Ali Mazari was a nervous and cruel person accused of domestic fights, cruelty and torture.

#### A FIERCE WAR BETWEEN TWO GROUPS AND THE DISARMAMENT PROCESS

The summer of 1995 passed by in war. The Taliban repeatedly faced a shortage of money and weapons. At that time Taliban received revenue from Kandahar customs on the Pakistan border, and the revenue from other provinces was very low. Pashtun and tribal businessmen living near the border provided a lot of financial support because they considered the Taliban to be the only hope for peace in the region.

The Taliban were focusing on collecting weapons. Disarmament of militant groups was considered an important objective to establish peace. Another

objective of disarmament was that the Taliban needed ammunition. The search of weapons ensued in unlawful acts which Mullah Omar was unaware of. Brutal actions were taken in some cases. These were the initial wrongful acts by a few young men and minor commanders. One person was even killed in Zabul during the recovery of weapons. When Mullah Omar learned about this, he issued instructions for the Taliban. I remember a few of them, as under:

“Fear Allah, in the name of weapons, do not beat people. I came to know that people are beaten with cables. This is a devilish act, fear from Allah’s punishment. For confession do not beat people and after that if anyone beats someone with cable he will be punished severely.”

Mullah Abdul Qayyum (Mullah Mashar) was the general commander of the war frontline from Kabul towards Maidan Shahr at the time, while Mullah Burjan was in charge of the Charasyab area. He was severely injured. Later on, Mullah Muhammad was the general military in-charge for the west.

There were fierce battles around Kabul for an entire year, and attacks from both sides. The Taliban advanced several times, but because of the prevalent use of anti-personnel mines by Massoud in the south and west of Kabul, access was blocked for people and vehicles. They faced many losses because of these mines.

On May 10, 1995, the Taliban were pushed back on the western war front lines in Farah and Nimruz owing to a sudden attack by Ismail Khan and coalition forces that was supported by an air force. The Taliban left the region after putting up a strong fight. After the fall of Farah, Nimruz was besieged. Ismail Khan, the coalition commanders, and their militants entered Zaranj city through Iran. The police chief of Nimruz, commander Qari Ahmadullah (who worked in the interior ministry and in intelligence during the Taliban regime) fought them all day. A shortage of weapons led to him being arrested by Ismail Khan’s forces. Mawlawi Abdul Ghani Jawzjani and a few others successfully left the area, but Mawlawi Izzatullah Arif, the chief of the province’s revenue office, was martyred after putting up a long resistance.

The Taliban on the western front near Farah moved towards Herat at times, and sometimes they were pushed back to their previous positions. The Taliban lost more than a thousand lives during these bloody battles in the western region.

Mullah Omar also visited these battlefields because all self-exiled commanders in the coalition with Ismail Khan were fighting on these fronts. Their advancement was a direct threat to the actual Taliban capital – Kandahar.

#### THE RUSSIAN PLANE INCIDENT AND INITIAL DIRECT CONTACT WITH THE WORLD

On August 3, 1995, a Russian plane TD76 Ilyushn II was in the Kandahar airspace and travelling towards Kabul. Kabul officials were unaware that a plane of this kind had landed in Kandahar. After the fall of the Najib government, the country was divided among different commanders, and so Kandahar Airport's communication system was disconnected from Kabul.

When the suspicious plane was seen on the radar and it showed the destination as Kabul to communication tower control, Mullah Omar was urgently contacted. A military aeroplane then took flight to force the Russian plane to land.

The military aeroplane was piloted by Colonel Jilani Khan Noorzai, who had expertise and experience in this field. The Russian plane was forced to land. We later received information that the plane belongs to Airistan Air Transport from Tatarstan of the Russian Federation. This plane was loaded with ammunition of heavy weapons, and it was like a saviour for the Taliban as the movement was facing a shortage of cartridges at the time.

A detailed investigation from the documents was decided. The weapons were part of the Russian Federation's military support to the Kabul government led by Burhanuddin Rabbani from Albania (a party to the Warsaw Pact). The cartridges were handed over to a military in-charge and the flight crew was sent to a guesthouse. A translator who worked with Soviets during the USSR invasion and a few guards accompanied the prisoners. The responsibility to observe them was taken by the head of the guesthouse, the late Ahmad Ali Khan Muttaqi, a brother of Amir Khan, and later by Mawlawi Sulaiman, a resident of Lilindar, Kabul. A delegation was appointed to investigate these prisoners.

The Soviets began comprehensive efforts for the release of the prisoners. Taliban demanded the release of fifty to sixty thousand Afghan prisoners if they were alive, most of whom were religious scholars. At that time people thought that they have been taken to Russia. After the fall of communism in Afghanistan, in

order to save themselves Afghan communists told people that they hadn't seen those prisoners, and they had been taken to Russia. It was later confirmed that these prisoners were not taken by Soviets but killed by Afghan communists.

There were thirty tonnes of arms and ammunition on the aeroplane, and seven crew members: Vladimir Sharpatov (Commander), Gazinur Khairullin (Co-Pilot) , Alexander Zdor (Navigator), Askhad Abbyazov, Yuri Vshivtsev, Sergei Butuzov and Viktor Ryazanov.

The negotiations between the Taliban and Soviets took a long time because the Taliban were not officially recognised by any country. It is said that an American Senator Hank Brown was making independent efforts in this regard. Russian prisoners also requested that the maintenance of the aeroplane must be technically monitored and the engines checked from time to time. The Taliban accepted this because of international standards. The prisoners were taken to the airport every week and later on, after two weeks on a Friday for checking.

The one-year custody of the aeroplane passed.

On Friday, August 16, 1995, the crew members went to the airport along with armed guards as per routine. They were not allowed to extend the limited time frame. But it was the Taliban spirit that after developing a little trust they became careless. On that day only six guards went with the aeroplane crew, and there was no technical person available to monitor their work. Three of the guards went for Friday prayers and only three careless Taliban were sitting in the aeroplane, waiting for the pilots to finish their routine work and for their colleagues to return and transport the crew back to the guesthouse. It appeared that the crew had observed the negligence of the Taliban and been planning an escape. Initially they started up one engine with a battery and understood that the other engines could be easily started. While the Taliban always thought that if an aeroplane cannot cross our airspace without our consent, it also could not depart. But Soviets were familiar with the characteristics of their radars and had planned to keep themselves off the radar. The crew seized the opportunity and closed the doors to the careless guards and the aeroplane quickly taxied down to the runway. The monitoring tower informed air command that the aeroplane is moving towards the runway. The Taliban hurriedly tried to block the runway

with a minibus but the plane took to the air, avoiding the obstacle. They knew the desert route on the map without mountains up until the United Arab Emirates. They operated the aeroplane in a low flight mode over deserts and sea and reached Sharjah.

It was shameful that the MIG 22 fighter aeroplane was out of order that day. After it became functional the escaped aeroplane didn't show up on the radar. Initially it was thought that the plane went towards Kabul or Turkmenistan, or maybe Iran. But no one thought about the United Arab Emirates. Since the Taliban had very few aeroplanes it wasn't possible for them to send aeroplanes in different directions.

This incident was very alarming and raised many questions, which led to mistrust and criticism among low-level and high-ranking Taliban officials. No one suspected Mullah Omar, as everyone was aware of his habits – that he never had or allowed anyone to have secret dealings, and didn't need secret deals. He openly did the work that seemed legitimate to him and never cared about what people said. But people began criticising airport officials, the people responsible for the guesthouse, and for the transfer of prisoners from the guesthouse to the airport. This disturbed the environment. Mullah Omar eventually broadcast a radio statement on Kandahar Radio and through wireless communication to all security pits.

In the statement Mullah Omar said: We completely investigated the issue of the aeroplane escape. Except negligence, no one from the Taliban movement was involved in it. This incident was as destined. We expect no doubt from any Talib on anyone regarding this incident. Do not talk unjustly against anyone as it is like saying something invisible and blaming other Muslims. Fear Allah and keep quiet regarding this incident.

After this statement I never heard anyone talking about this incident. Everyone was of the opinion that it was an accident and fated. The situation immediately improved after this statement.

#### INTENSE WAR IN THE WEST AND THE BLOODIEST FRONTLINE

From March to September 5, 1995, the Taliban got control of Herat's provincial centre after a fierce battle on the western frontline. When the Taliban captured

centre after a fierce battle on the western front. When the Taliban captured Farah and Nimruz in the spring, Mawlawi Abdul Ghani Jawzjani was appointed Nimruz governor, Qari Ahmadullah as the police chief and Mawlawi Izzatullah Arif as the head of the revenue office. These provinces remained under Taliban control for almost two months.

The Taliban were under military pressure from Herat near the Shindand area, and a war with Ismail Khan's forces was underway. When opposition forces captured Farah on the occasion of Eid, on May 10, 1995, many Taliban were martyred, injured and imprisoned. The caretaker governor of Farah Mullah Obaidullah Akhund was also imprisoned. Ismail Khan's forces then attacked Nimruz from the Iran side, and all Taliban militants were besieged; Governor Abdul Ghani and a few others successfully managed to escape. The police chief along with a few of his friends fought all day, and was arrested at the end of the day because of a shortage of arms and ammunition. After fighting for a long period, Mawlawi Izzatullah Arif was also martyred. Several key Taliban were imprisoned, including Mullah Obaidullah Akhund (Defence Minister in the Taliban regime), Mawlawi Abdul Samad from Boldak, and Qari Ahmadullah. They were later released in an exchange of prisoners. Qari Ahmadullah and his deputy Mullah Abdul Bari were excluded from this exchange and remained in prison until the conquest of Herat.

In June the battles increased once again to recapture Farah and the Taliban succeeded in capturing a few districts and key areas. A fierce war was ongoing to advance on Herat. Mullah Omar was monitoring this war and he visited the frontline several times. Ismail Khan and his coalition forces planned to conquer Kandahar and Helmand. During this war the general commander of the Taliban Haji Mullah Muhammad Akhund was martyred and the Taliban were defeated. In two days, war spread from the Farah border to Gereshk district in Helmand.

#### FEAR OF KANDAHAR'S COLLAPSE AND THE HISTORIC BATTLE OF GERESHK

In the last weeks of August 1995, the western war front were pushed back by Ismail Khan and his coalition forces, with the support of Ahmad Shah Massoud's forces and former militants from Kandahar and Helmand. The Farah district centre was captured from the Taliban. They moved forward towards Helmand in a few days. The Taliban lost their spirit after the martyrdom of their

important commander Mullah Muhammad Akhund. The war reached the Shurawo Manda area of Gereshk district, and there was a threat to the district. The enemy had planned to move towards Kandahar after capturing Gereshk.

#### EYEWITNESS TO THE SITUATION

At the time there were 13 Taliban groups, and I was the commander of a small Taliban group in Spin Boldak. Boldak was initially considered an important Taliban centre because after Maiwand, it was another key district centre from where Taliban had captured Kandahar city.

The martyrdom of Mullah Muhammad affected the battle in the west as the Taliban had lost a strong commander. He led the Taliban in conquering half of Afghanistan, and the Taliban had succeeded because of his war tactics. He adopted new war strategies and keenly observed the manoeuvres of enemies, which resulted in victories with fewer losses. He was kind to war prisoners and followed Islamic principles during war. He always tried to minimise the loss of life or injuries to opponents. Mullah Muhammad was famous as an expert war commander in the jihad against Soviets, and was among the first and a trustworthy commander of Mullah Omar from the beginning of the Taliban movement. He was very dear to Mullah Omar and because of this, Mullah Omar used the name 'Marhoom' for his wireless communication.

The defeat in this war and the martyrdom of Mullah Muhammad resulted in the Taliban being pushed back. There was a threat that Kandahar and Helmand could fall. Mullah Omar asked for supporting Taliban forces from other areas including Boldak. Mullah Khairullah was then the district governor for Boldak and also an official spokesperson for the Taliban movement. He and his friend, the commander Mullah Dost Muhammad, prepared for war. I accompanied them and selected an RPG launcher to carry. I saw this launcher with the mujahideen in the war against the Soviets during my childhood and so it looked better to me. We began travelling in the afternoon and reached Kandahar at night. When we left Kandahar city, a vehicle with tinted windows was over-speeding. When the driver saw this he reduced the speed and the car stopped. Mullah Khairullah and Mullah Dost Muhammad went up to the vehicle; we also accompanied them. Mullah Omar was driving this vehicle. He spoke politely, and said: "I am going to arrange more militants and military equipment. We will prepare ourselves for

to manage those weapons and military equipment we will prepare ourselves for tomorrow's war. You go to Helmand." His calmness gave me courage and it was my first participation in a battle.

We moved slowly and in the morning vehicles full of fleeing Taliban who had fought through the night came towards us. The closer we got to Gereshk, the more Taliban we saw fleeing from the war frontline. When we reached Gereshk, Mullah Khaliq Dad, the brother of Mullah Dost Muhammad, was standing with Russian cannons on a blockaded road so that the Taliban cannot escape the area. When we met Mullah Khaliq Dad he was weeping over the martyrdom of Mullah Muhammad.

At the end they controlled the fleeing Taliban. Mullah Omar visited a few times and made arrangements for weapons and militants to control the battlefield. Ismail Khan's planes heavily bombarded the Gereshk brigade until noon. In the afternoon we moved two kilometres towards Kandahar and established a temporary base there near the Chahal Meel area. In the afternoon it was announced that we will attack enemy forces as they are planning to attack us; it is better that we do so first.

Due to the efforts of Mullah Omar, repaired tanks also arrived, which boosted the morale of the Taliban. This was a historic day because the enemy was dreaming about capturing the main base of the Taliban movement in Kandahar. There were only 800 Taliban while the enemy had aerial support and thousands of militants equipped with tanks. Our attack was like a 'suicide attack.' A vow was taken from all the Taliban that no one would retreat and we would fight until our last breath.

The attack was organised in a manner that the armoured tanks and other heavy vehicles would be with the forces on the main road, and one big force equipped with heavy machine guns, 82MM cannons, RPG rockets and light machine guns will move towards the left and the right side of the road in 4x4 vehicles. The entire area would be covered so that the enemy couldn't besiege the Taliban.

The war started after they attacked before afternoon prayers. We quickly went towards the left side of the road. A white 4x4 vehicle speedily crossed us and unloaded Taliban in between the rivals and they attacked the enemy lines. I was

surprised by how quickly they reached the enemy, who was not able to target them in return. We followed them and saw an armoured tank going ahead. I took out an RPG to hit the tank but when I pressed the trigger, it didn't work. I told my friend that it wasn't working, who replied that it was an old rocket and the pin was broken. I joined Mullah Zahir from Boldak and shared his RPG. He was famous for hitting targets with an RPG. The first RPG fire damaged the tank and became non-functional.

The Taliban fought this battle as a decisive war, using the full extent of their will and power. We saw aerial bombardment and thought they will tear us to pieces, and there were chants of Allahu Akbar (God is Great) along with gunshots.

Mullah Zahir targeted another tank and fired gunshots at other tanks as well. Our small group of seven to eight fighters had dominated the enemy fighters. In the evening the battlefield environ became colourful because of gunshots. We stopped firing because of the shortage of cartridges; as one of our colleagues said do not use more cartridges to avoid the siege. The vehicle carrying weapons and cartridges was at a little distance from us and there was dry land between us. Fearing the weapons shortage, I ran towards the vehicle without the permission of my friend. One of them followed me. Militants fired at us with machine guns but luckily we reached the vehicle and took a box of Kalashnikov, LMG and RPG launcher cartridges and returned successfully to our positions. Our friends were happy and we resumed our attack. Victory chants began and the enemy started to retreat. We went closer to the damaged tanks. The tank driver/operator had escaped and there was an injured old man nearby with a big water can on his back. His pocket was full of the Rabbani government-issued money. One of our friends asked him if this is why he went to war. He replied, "I thought I would have more time to live but I think it is the end for me now."

The battle ended and we were feeling at ease. After one week we advanced again towards another side, and the enemy's heavy losses added on to our victories.

Our small group went to Gereshk city. The number of people in the group increased, but the conditions here were quite altered. Thousands of young and old boys and men had reached there to support the Taliban. Everyone wanted to take revenge, because when the news spread in Kandahar that former militants

were coming to the city once again, people rose up against them. They wanted to protect their city, lives, honour, and wealth, and took up weapons to fight against illegal militias without being asked. On that day commander Mullah Burjan was unable to participate in the war as he was injured. In Kharqay central mosque, people were requested for support. People not only came to Gereshk but also brought vehicles full of food including fresh grapes, cooked meat, and bread. People brought whatever they had to support the Taliban. This changed Gereshk into an emotional and enthusiastic fighting force. This also motivated us; I had never seen such public support and love before. As we were tired from the previous night, we took some food and went to Mullah Khaliq Dad's place. Today it was not an environment of war, and there was peace.

Around 9 am the next day, Mawlawi Abdul Manan Hanafi, Mullah Khaliq Dad and Mawlawi Dost Muhammad's friends prepared meat and tea. After having tea at around 9:45 am, one of our friends said that the famous checkpoint commander Nadir Jan had been arrested and was being taken to Kandahar. We also wanted to see him so I ran towards the road and stopped a Hino vehicle that was full of Taliban. Some were sitting, others stood, and an old, aged man with a white beard was sitting in the middle. I was surprised by how this bearded old man had committed major crimes like dishonouring women and murders.

The vehicles left in the direction of Kandahar. We saw Mullah Omar's vehicle speeding on the route and when he saw the Hino vehicle, he stopped his car. Nadir Jan was taken down and Mullah Omar shot him in the head with his handgun. According to my information, he was the first and the last person who Mullah Omar killed. Nadir Khan was a commander who had an illegal checkpoint with a bad reputation near Mullah Omar's house. He abducted women from vehicles to dishonour them. This checkpoint was considered one of the reasons for the uprising of Mullah Omar.

At night under the leadership of Mullah Rahmatullah, Mullah Abdul Salam and other commanders followed enemy forces. In the morning when we reached Dilaram, the central district of Nimruz, the opponents left the area after a little while and fled towards the district centre of Farah. The dead bodies of the enemy lay on both sides of the road. These heavy losses broke their military strength but Ismail Khan's aeroplanes were still heavily bombarding our territories.

## ILLEGAL TREATMENT OF PRISONERS

When we moved from Gereshk the next day, we saw the dead bodies of prisoners who had been killed – not under the instructions of any commander, but by common Taliban. There were a few Taliban who did not participate in battle, but killed prisoners afterwards. Unfortunately after the death of Mullah Muhammad no other commander focused on the issue of stopping the Taliban from illegal actions. Mullah Muhammad never allowed anyone to kill prisoners of war. Many Taliban said that those militia members who were forgiven by Mullah Muhammad were fighting against them again, so they should not be pardoned. It is true that there were many exiled militants of Kandahar and Helmand who after being forgiven had again fought against the Taliban.

This illegal act was done by a few careless Taliban as revenge for the martyrdom of Mullah Muhammad and other Taliban during these wars. There was no sovereign and powerful commander after Mullah Muhammad who had the authority to stop them. Mullah Rabbani's presence later controlled the situation to degree.

Mullah Rabbani was once nearly trapped in a related incident. He wanted to protect a white-bearded Herati prisoner from a Talib. He ran towards him but the Talib fired and it was a close call for Mullah Rabbani. The prisoner was protected and that Talib faced severe punishment from the Taliban's leaders.

The majority of the prisoners who were killed were militants who had fled from Kandahar and Helmand, so the Taliban had no mercy for them. Even though the ratio of killed prisoners was low, this impacted my mind negatively. I even became doubtful about the legitimacy of this holy war. This victory was a celebration for my peers, but I felt pressured and downcast.

Mullah Muhammad Rabbani, who was controlling the war, said it was an illegal act and that no one is allowed to kill prisoners. He was not able to monitor the small Taliban groups. Mullah Omar had also instructed that not a single prisoner should be killed. But in these unorganised operations a few prisoners were killed by irresponsible common Taliban. I had never seen a similar incident where prisoners are killed without facing any justice. This side of war looked brutal to me. Even then I was sure that this was a purely holy war, and the participation of

every single Talib in this war was purely holy. But I realised that the holiness of war is very hard in reality if a few Taliban can deviate and commit a crime. What would others do during war? I accepted that human beings can easily become used to murders. I said to myself: O Allah! Do not make me a habitual murderer.

The same became my fate. My friends headed towards Herat with ambitions of its conquest. I went till Ab-e Khurma mountain, and after that I knew that the Taliban had no more losses and did not need more militants. In this fight the people taking revenge exceeded actual fighters. Therefore, without consulting anyone, I returned to Dilaram with Commander Haji Bashir. I went on to Kandahar and remained in Boldak for a couple of months. I handed over the group weapons to the Boldak district governor and bade farewell to military struggle. After that I was inclined towards cultural and political services in the Taliban movement.

#### WINNING HERAT

After a week of war, the Taliban captured the central district of Herat on September 5, 1995. Ismail Khan's forces put up a resistance outside Herat and avoided war within the city. Ismail Khan and his key commanders escaped to Iran through the Islam Qila area. Nimruz and Farah were already under Taliban control. The Taliban started a clearing operation in the surroundings of Herat, and got control of a few areas in the Badghis, Faryab and Ghor provinces, which put them face to face with Dostum's forces for the first time.

Like in other cities, after capturing Herat city the Taliban announced a general amnesty. After a few days' delay, the former officials and members of the old regime returned and resumed their work. However, the high-ranking positions and departments were given to the Taliban, while the old staff was appointed to lower positions.

During one week of this war, which started from Gereshk and ended with the conquest of Herat, Nimruz, and Farah, enemy forces faced heavy personnel and material losses. Almost a thousand militants were killed, including fleeing militants and commanders from Kandahar and Helmand, Ismail Khan's militias, forces supporting Ahmad Shah Massoud, and a few Panjshiris as well who were

unfamiliar with the area and lost their way as they made their escape.

The Taliban appointed Mullah Yaar Muhammad as Herat governor. He was an intelligent, kind-hearted and friendly personality. During the jihad against the Soviets he was a famous commander at the Kandahar level, and on the level of Afghanistan he was famous for targeting Russian warplanes. He single-handedly targeted thirteen USSR warplanes (MIG 21 and MIG 22) with American Stinger missiles. However the question arises of how he got Stinger missiles in this quantity. The answer is that he was friends with Hamid Karzai during the jihad against USSR and they were both from the same tribe. Karzai was probably looking after the Stinger missiles for the CIA at the time.

The Taliban took on the official responsibilities of another large province. The people of Herat are educated, friendly, and polite. But various conspiracies were planned by Iran against the Taliban from time to time which also created issues. The assassination of the governor was planned a few times in Iran. A telephone set tricked out with explosives was received at the governor's office but intelligence officials recovered the bomb fitted in the headset very expertly.

Along with the governor, a member of the High Shura and a senior preacher of the Taliban movement, Mawlawi Ihsanullah Ihsan, was also sent to Herat to establish friendly ties between communities and the Taliban. He was very skilled in this field.

#### POST-HERAT VICTORY, AN INCREASE IN GOVERNMENT REVENUE FOR THE TALIBAN

Herat city is the official gateway for trade with Iran and Turkmenistan. Many products from Iran and the Middle East come to Afghanistan from Bandar Abbas via Herat. This route is very important for Iran and Afghanistan. Similarly the Torundai gate near Turkmenistan is considered an important route for trade with Central Asian countries. The Iran border was closed for trade for a long time but it was later opened. The approximate monthly revenue of Herat customs at that time was between \$0.5-0.6 million. This amount was not insignificant for a movement like the Taliban. The earnings increased later on, and this initial amount was a lifeline for the Taliban movement.

Used vehicles from the Middle East, tyres, Mobil oil, household products and

other goods, from Iran gasoline oil and food products, oil and food products from Turkmenistan were imported through Herat customs. The Nimruz border, and the southern Khost border (Ghulam Khan gate) also generated some revenue.

The Taliban imposed very few taxes on business goods. After taking control over Afghanistan, the daily revenue was less than \$100,000, which was very low as compared to previous governments in Afghanistan.

During the war in Herat, Nimruz and Farah, the Taliban captured a huge cache of weapons, vehicles, and armoured tanks from the enemy. A few aeroplanes and warplanes in Shindand airport were also taken into custody by the Taliban.

A HUGE GATHERING OF ISLAMIC SCHOLARS IN KANDAHAR AND THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE *AMIR UL-MU'MINEEN* TITLE FOR MULLAH MUHAMMAD OMAR

In March 1996, the Aali Shura (Supreme Council) suggested to Mullah Omar to call a meeting of Islamic scholars from conquered areas and Afghan refugee scholars from other countries on the general situation and war, to take their suggestions and guidance, so our upcoming activities are organised according to religious principles and directives.

It is said that initially this was recommended to the Shura by Mawlawi Jalaluddin Haqqani through Mawlawi Ihsanullah Ihsan, who shared it with the other members, and this was later suggested to Mullah Omar.

The technical school of Kandahar was selected as the meeting venue. The building had enough space for a large meeting. A temporary office was established at the school entrance to register the guests and make arrangements for their stay. Mawlawi Hamdullah Nomani, the director for the Information and Cultural Department, was appointed as the in-charge of this office. Ahmad Ali Khan Muttaqi, the guest house in-charge, was organising other activities for the meeting. A few of our friends were also supporting them. Those scholars who came together from the same area wanted to live in one place, and separate large rooms were allocated to them. One, two, or three people were given rooms according to their capacity. A few guests were also staying at the provincial guest house and the Maiwand Hotel. The Islamic scholars from Kandahar returned to their homes at night.

The meeting began on March 30, 1996, and Mullah Omar joined on the third day. Before noon prayers, Mullah Omar summarised the story of the initiation of the Taliban movement during his speech. He cried during his speech, and almost all the participants cried along with him.

During his speech, Mawlawi Ihsanullah Ihsan emotionally recommended to the gathering that we should call our leader as ‘Amir ul-Mu’mineen’ which was welcomed by all of them. The allegiance started. Mullah Omar was confused and surprised because this was all unexpected. His eyes filled with tears and he was trembling. The environment was sentimental as Mullah Omar’s speech was simple, based on the truth, and effective, while on the other hand Mawlawi Ihsanullah Ihsan emotionally charged the attendees. I asked two of the senior friends whether the title was part of the programme. They said there was nothing like this, and Mullah Omar never asked for it.

There were approximately 1400-1500 registered attendees, not including the Islamic scholars who participated from Kandahar, or those who made their own arrangements for their stay. Mawlawi Ihsanullah Ihsan, Mullah Muhammad Rabbani, Mullah Burjan, Mullah Nooruddin Turabi, Mawlawi Wakeel Ahmad Mutawakkil and a few others from the Supreme Council attended.

At the end of the meeting the scholars declared the rule of Burhanuddin Rabbani and illegal checkpoint militias to be illegitimate, and issued a verdict to forcibly remove Rabbani from the government. The declaration and title of Amir ul-Mu’mineen caused an uproar in the opposition’s publications.

At the end of the meeting suggestion and recommendation forms were distributed. On the fourth day we brought these forms in huge bags because there were so many. A committee was appointed to review these forms.

The names of the Islamic scholars who participated that I recall are as follows:

**KANDAHAR :**

Sheikh ul-Hadith Mawlawi Abdul Ali Deobandi

Qazi Mawlawi Saeed Muhammad (Mawlawi Pasanai)

Sheikh ul-Tafsir Mawlawi Abdul Salam

Mawlawi Abdul Wadood  
Sani Mawlawi Obaidullah  
Mawlawi Ghulam Haider  
Sheikh ul-Hadith Mawlawi Abdul Hakeem  
Sheikh ul-Hadith Mawlawi Abdul Ghani  
Mawlawi Azizullah  
Mawlawi Sadozai

**HELMAND :**

Mawlawi Muhammad Khawas  
Mawlawi Abdul Rauf  
Mawlawi Abdul Wahid  
Mawlawi Muhammad  
Mawlawi Matiullah

**ZABUL :**

Mawlawi Abdul Ghafoor Sanani  
Mawlawi Inayatullah Ghabarguwi  
Mawlawi Saif ur-Rahman Akhundzada  
Mawlawi Muhammad Nauman and tens of others

**GHAZNI :**

Mawlawi Muhammad Absar  
Mawlawi Abdul Bari  
Mawlawi Faizullah  
Mawlawi Abdul Sattar  
Mawlawi Raza Khan  
Mawlawi Abdul Basir (Raees)  
Mawlawi Ilam Gul  
Mawlawi Muhammad Ghayyur  
Mufti Rahmatullah Deobandi

**MAIDAN :**

Akhundzada Sahib or Yousaf Khel  
Mawlawi Rafiullah Muazan  
Mawlawi Muhammad Malook

**KABUL :**

Sheikhul Hadith Mawlawi Tarakhel  
Mawlawi Noor Muhammad Saqib  
Mawlawi Ahmadullah  
Mawlawi Abdullah Jan  
Mawlawi Abdul Qudoos

**PAKTIKA :**

Mawlawi Hamidullah Fayez  
Mawlawi Muhammad Farid Mahmood  
Mawlawi Muhammad Yaqoob  
Mawlawi Muhammad Omar  
Mawlawi Raz Muhammad

**PAKTIA :**

Mawlawi Khalilullah Firozi  
Mawlawi Fazal Rahman  
Mawlawi Hamdullah Naqshbandi  
Mawlawi Azam Gul  
Mawlawi Sahib Shah (Babkar Mullah Sahib)  
Mawlawi Nadir Jan

**KHOST :**

Mawlawi Obaidullah Sabri  
Mawlawi Saeed Waseem  
Mawlawi Abdul Rahim Bilali  
Mawlawi Aqil Muhammad Khani Khel

**LOGAR :**

Mawlawi Musa Jan  
Mawlawi Fazal Ahmad  
Mawlawi Furqani  
Mawlawi Shahabuddin Dilawar

**NANGARHAR :**

Mawlawi Abdul Qadir  
Mawlawi Qari Mahmood Shah

Mawlawi Qari Mahmood Shah

Qari Ilhamuddin

Mawlawi Abdul Rasheed

Mawlawi Abdul Baqi

Mawlawi Said Rasool

**KUNAR :**

Sheikh Abdul Qadir Assadabadi

Mawlawi Noor Jalal

**LAGHMAN :**

Mawlawi Saeed Rahman

**HERAT :**

Mawlawi Khudaidad

Mawlawi Jalilullah Mawlawizada

Hassan Waseeqi (Shia scholar)

**FARYAB :**

Mawlawi Abdul Rahman

**BALKH :**

Mawlawi Abdul Samad

**FARAH :**

Mawlawi Najibullah

**KUNDUZ :**

Akhundzada Sahib of Gujjaro

**BAGHLAN :**

Mawlawi Muhammad Muslim

**BAMIYAN :**

Mawlawi Muhammad Islam

CONFLICTS WITH HEKMATYAR SUPPORTERS IN THE SOUTH

In the winter there was a battle between the Taliban and Hekmatyar's commander Khalid Farooq in Paktika's Urgun district in which he was defeated.

Later on, he faced losses in an armed battle with Mawlawi Muhammad Yunus Khalis commander (Hizb-e Islami Khalis) in Paktia's Zadran area and escaped. His weapons were taken by the Taliban. Under Mullah Burjan's leadership, Taliban got control of Sayyaf's arms and ammunition depot in Paktia's Spina Zazai area. In the Speena Shaga area, the Taliban gained control of the Hizb-e Islami Hekmatyar base and weapons. A money printing machine was also recovered from this base. This machine was brought by Hizb-e Islami to print their own Afghan currency because at that time two other types of currencies were accepted in Afghanistan – one was printed in Russia for the Rabbani government, and the other was Junbashi currency printed by Dostum. Hekmatyar also wanted to print his own currency.

Mullah Burjan's strategy to capture Kabul was very successful. The enemy was engaged in a vast area and was compelled in the end to accept defeat. After cleaning up Urgan district he moved with a large force from Gardez towards the Mizakka and Zazai Ahmed Khel districts which were under Sayyaf and Hekmatyar's forces and seized control of them. The Taliban then got control of Zazai Aryub and Speena Shaga.

The negotiations between the Rabbani government and Hekmatyar were successful and on May 24 they signed an agreement for a unity government. Qazi Hussain Ahmad played an arbitration role in these negotiations. After killing thousands of people and being in opposition for four years Hekmatyar once again decided to join the Afghan government under Rabbani's leadership.

#### HEKMATYAR ADVANCES TOWARDS KABUL AND THE TALIBAN MOVE TOWARDS NANGARHAR

After the successful negotiations between Rabbani and Hekmatyar and coming to an agreement against the Taliban on May 24, 1996, Hekmatyar was given a position that he'd earlier rejected. He had fought against Massoud's forces for almost three years; almost fifty thousand people sacrificed their lives. In the fourth year he accepted Rabbani as president and Massoud as defence minister.

On June 26 Hekmatyar moved towards Kabul with a huge convoy. His supporters chanted victory slogans until they reached Kabul. Hizb-e Islami convoy guests stayed at Kabul's government hotels for a few weeks. In the

beginning of July Hekmatyar's supporters were appointed in relevant ministries as per the agreement.

Negotiations were underway at that time between the Rabbani government and the Eastern Shura led by Nangarhar Governor Haji Abdul Qadeer to join the central government and defend Kabul and the adjoining provinces from the Taliban. Two important entry points to Kabul – Charasyab from the Logar side and Maidan Shahr from Maidan Wardak – were then under Taliban control. The Kabul-Jalalabad highway was under government control until Sarobi, and from Sarobi to Jalalabad it was controlled by the Eastern Shura.

Led by Mullah Burjan, after clearing the southern areas the Taliban focused their attention on eastern Afghanistan. The Jalalabad-Kabul highway was of strategic importance at the time. A few commanders in the eastern region were in contact with the government while a few key commanders were in contact with the Taliban. They not only welcomed the Taliban to Nangarhar but also ensured them of their support as they were fed up of a dozen commanders and their brutalities.

On one hand The Taliban were afraid of eastern Afghanistan and advancing towards the east to besiege Kabul looked difficult.

In Logar, Taliban forces under the leadership of Mullah Burjan prepared themselves for Jalalabad. Haji Abdul Qadeer and his supporters also prepared his force of a thousand men in Hesarak district to fight Taliban forces coming from Logar's Azra district.

The family of Haji Qadeer then forced Mawlawi Muhammad Yunus Khalis to use his jihadi influence against the Taliban to stop them from entering Nangarhar. They told Mawlawi Khalis that if the Taliban enter Jalalabad city there will be a huge bloodshed. In mid-September Mullah Omar's office in Kandahar received a letter from Mawlawi Khalis stating that "If the Taliban advances towards Nangarhar they will be responsible for the consequences." But Mullah Omar understood that this is according to the wishes of Haji Qadeer and Din Muhammad. Later on, Mawlawi Khalis invited the Taliban to Nangarhar through two of his advisors.

Under the leadership of Mullah Burjan, Taliban forces moved carefully towards Hesarak district. On the second day they faced the enemy force in Hesarak, but as the leader of the forces was in contact with the Taliban they gave them safe passage. On September 10, a convoy of eastern shura commanders moved towards Torkham. It was attacked on the highway between Jalalabad-Torkham by Munjay, a brother of commander Shumali Khan. These commanders were brutally martyred in this attack. Among these martyred commanders, Engineer Mahmood and Saaz Noor were in contact with the Taliban. After the attack Munjay escaped to Pakistan.

The victorious operations led by Mullah Burjan with Mullah Rabbani's planning were progressing and advancing towards Jalalabad. Mullah Burjan was leading from the front and Mullah Rabbani was looking after discipline and supplies. Every new attack was planned according to his instructions.

On September 11, the Taliban entered Jalalabad city. At that time the Jamiat commander Hazrat Ali brought in a few militants from Massoud's forces to Jalalabad city. The Taliban first faced them in Darunta but after a little fighting they escaped. Jalalabad city came under Taliban control without any battle. The Taliban forces moved towards Kunar and Laghman and seized control without facing any resistance. The Taliban were welcomed by the public. All the militiamen who surrendered after disarmament were publicly forgiven.

After the conquest of Nangarhar, Mawlawi Muhammad Tahir Anwari (popularly known as Haji Mudeer) was appointed governor, but he declined the offer stating that it was a very complex job and he was not eligible. Mullah Omar became angry and said that I am ordering this as an Amir as you have the capability, but he recused himself.

Mawlawi Muhammad Tahir Anwari was a resident of Zurmat district, Paktia, and was a close friend of Mawlawi Nasrullah Mansoor. When Mawlawi Nasrullah Mansoor was Paktia governor, Anwari was garrison commander. Prior to that he was a manager of the armoury, and so he was famous with the title Mudeer Sahib. He was a righteous person and liked a simple life. He was not fond of power and authority though after the capture of Kabul he was appointed by Mullah Omar as chief of organisational affairs. He also served as finance

minister and planning minister during the Taliban's government. In addition to his educational capabilities, he was very intelligent and experienced in organisational work.

After Tahir Anwari declined the offer, Mawlawi Abdul Kabir, the Logar governor, was appointed Nangarhar governor and Mawlawi Abdul Hakeem was named the governor of Logar. Mawlawi Abdul Kabir was also the east zone in-charge of the Taliban and remained in that position as well as Nangarhar governor and the deputy of Ministers Council (Shura) until the end of the Taliban regime. Mullah Omar trusted him a lot, and he was one of the most powerful Taliban officials after Mullah Omar.

## Chapter 3: Taking Kabul, September 26

After the defeat of Hizb and Shura-e Nazar coalition forces in Surkhakan area, Laghman, the Taliban led by Mullah Burjan advanced toward Sarobi. At the beginning of operations against the enemy, Mullah Burjan was martyred after being hit by an 82 MM cannon shell. The Taliban concealed news of his death until the capture of Kabul so as not to boost the enemy's morale. Mullah Omar was feeling so sad that even advancing towards Kabul was not enough to assuage his grief. After Mullah Muhammad Akhund, he was the second senior commander whose death was a major incident for Mullah Omar.

The Taliban became a threat to Kabul from all four sides, and the Massoud and Hekmatyar forces lost their morale. The Taliban were ready to attack from Maidan Shahr; similarly Taliban forces from Azra district moved towards Charasyab, Kabul. The operation began on both sides of Sarobi, and the Taliban led by Mullah Fazul from Logar's Hesperak district also came to Sarobi.

The coalition forces in Sarobi put up a strong resistance, and fourteen days after conquering Jalalabad the Taliban got control of the district (on September 25). The coalition forces abandoned most of their weapons and fled. After that the Taliban attacked Kabul from all four directions. Massoud's forces lost their morale because of a continuous month-long war. This disrupted Massoud's tactical plan and he was unable to manage a new strategy.

The new advancement of Taliban forces and the bloodless victory of the eastern provinces increased trust in the Taliban. The public support for and warm welcome to the Taliban in Kabul demoralised Massoud and his coalition forces. After the continuous attacks on Kabul, which started on September 25 and continued until the next evening, Massoud and his supporting forces were unable to resist any further. On the night of September 26, the coalition forces escaped towards the north of Kabul.

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A few local residents in north Kabul stopped the escaping Panjshiris and robbed their families. Massoud and his commanders had left the area earlier, and after that Sayyaf, Hekmatyar and Rabbani escaped and gathered in the Panjshir valley. After the Taliban reached Panjshir valley, Rabbani, Hekmatyar and a few other officials moved to Tajikistan.

During the night of September 26 the Taliban entered Kabul. In the morning of September 27, after Najib was killed, he was hanged in Ariana Square. After long periods of war, the residents of Kabul felt the environment was peaceful. This was why they celebrated, and in a few areas of Kabul they welcomed the Taliban with flowers. The murder of Najib was decided on before the entry to Kabul. Mullah Abdul Razzaq, Mullah Yarana, Abdul Salam Rocketi and a few other commanders had reached a consensus on this. They were of the opinion that if Najib is kept alive, he will be protected because of international and regional pressure, which would be akin to protecting a huge murderer of the people. The Taliban killed him because as a KhAD intelligence chief during the Russian invasion he intentionally killed thousands of Muslims. The Taliban movement otherwise avoided killing prisoners of war. Ismail Khan killed more than a thousand Taliban during direct combat but the Taliban never decided to kill him during his imprisonment. He remained in a Taliban prison for three years. He was an opponent and not a murderer of the people.

Taliban were assigned to bring Najib from the United Nations office. After he was brought out of the office, he was killed with a handgun and hanged in Ariana Square.

#### KABUL VICTORY, TALIBAN RULE AND THE INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

A day after the capture of Kabul, Mullah Omar assigned control of Kabul to a Shura comprising six members including Mullah Muhammad Hassan, Mullah Abdul Razzaq, Sayyed Ghiasuddin Agha, Mullah Muhammad Ghaus and Mullah Obaidullah, under the leadership of Mullah Muhammad Rabbani.

As the leader of a new organisation Mullah Muhammad Rabbani announced the policy of the Taliban during the first media event. This included a complete Islamic system, termination and change of ambassadors and staff appointed by the former regime in embassies and consulates, an announcement of a general

pardon for militiamen who surrender and hand their weapons over, the opening of highways, defending the Taliban's stance on the murder of Najib and his brother, welcoming Zahir Shah as an Afghan, the announcement of peace talks with Dostum, and other activities.

After two days the heads of offices who were in Kandahar were sent to Kabul as acting ministers. The chief of Kandahar Information and Culture Department Mullah Amir Muttaqi Khan was appointed Acting Minister for Information and Culture, the head of foreign affairs in Kandahar Mullah Muhammad Ghaus was named acting Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mullah Allah Dad as the Acting Minister of the Communications Ministry, Mullah Obaidullah as Acting Defence Minister, Mawlawi Hamdullah Naumani as Acting Minister of Higher Education and Kandahar intelligence chief Mullah Khaksar as the Acting Minister for Security (intelligence). Changes were made over time and new people appointed as ministers and deputy ministers like Qari Ahmadullah (Ghazni) as Interior Minister, Mawlawi Muhammad Tahir Anwari (Paktia) as Finance Minister, Qari Din Muhammad Hanafi (Badakhshan) as Planning Minister, Mawlawi Abdul Raqib (Takhar) as Refugees Minister, Mawlawi Abdul Baqi (Nangarhar) as Minister of Martyrs and Disabled, Mawlawi Rustam (Laghman) in the Ministry of Urban Development, Makhdoom Abdul Salam (Badakhshan) as the Minister of Work and Social Affairs, boxer Abdul Shakoor Mutma'in (Kabul, Paghman) as head of the Olympics committee and so on.

It was initially believed that these ministers were temporary acting ministers, and that after gaining complete control over Afghanistan new ministers would be appointed according to a new administrative policy and this wouldn't be conditional on membership of the Taliban movement. Later on, prolonged internal wars and international issues reduced the chances of this.

Mullah Muhammad Rabbani was the leader of the acting ministers. The ministers' cabinet comprised of Taliban but the deputies, advisers, administrative workers and other officials were appointed from former government, so the Taliban did not face administrative and professional issues.

After gaining control of Kabul, the Taliban garnered the attention of the region and the world. Some key news items based on the world's response to the

Taliban are hereby described:

On the first day of the Kabul victory, the Russian Foreign Ministry issued a statement that the collapse of Kabul has further complicated the issue of Afghanistan and that the United Nations should force the Taliban to establish a broad-based government.

On the second day of the Kabul conquest, the spokesperson for US Foreign Affairs said in an interview with the Voice of America: Washington feels sorry for Najib's execution; the Taliban should adopt the path of negotiations and stop the smuggling of drugs. They should abandon the training centres of miscreants. It is too early to speak about official recognition for the Taliban. The US promised her support to rehabilitate Afghanistan.

On the same day the UN Security Council issued a statement condemning the murder of Najib and asking both warring groups to negotiate instead of war. Other countries' interference was requested in Afghanistan's internal affairs.

On the same day, Amnesty International condemned the death of Najib.

Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan expressed their concern over Taliban rule. Turkmenistan remained neutral against the Taliban and declared them a danger for their country. Turkey remained neutral and offered to host peace talks between the armed opposition. Iran strongly condemned the rule of the Taliban.

Pakistan showed a positive stance towards the Taliban and announced its support for peace between the armed groups. Saudi Arabia and Middle Eastern countries had a similar response. Key personalities from Pakistan supported their government's stance. Maulana Fazl ur-Rehman asked the government to officially recognise the Taliban. In an interview with Jang newspaper he said: The US is creating hindrances for the Taliban government. All Islamic movements around the world should unite against America.

The leader of the Jamaat-e Islami criticised the Taliban because of his friendship with Rabbani and Hekmatyar.

Mawlawi Muhammad Nabi Muhammad and Mawlawi Muhammad Yunus Khalis welcomed Najib's execution and requested the Afghan nation to support

the Islamic Government of Taliban. Peer Sayyed Ahmed Gailani declared the death of Najib as a proper act but added that his execution should have taken place after a trial. He added that the Taliban got power with public support and now with the support of the United Nations they should call a jirga.

On October 4, Hekmatyar told Voice of America: The Taliban are slaves of Britain and are America's men. We did not fight them properly in Kabul and they will soon be expelled from there.

On October 10, Burhanuddin Rabbani gave an interview to the BBC in Takhar's Taloqan city and said: The Taliban are agents of Pakistan. He claimed that if he remained for some more time in government he would have completed the general election. He said this even though he had made a fake shura called "Ahl ul Hal Wal Aqd" and had no intentions of peacefully leaving the government.

#### RESPONSES OF AFGHANS LIVING ABROAD

With the exception of a few people, most Afghans living abroad welcomed the capture of Kabul by the Taliban. Those Afghans whose families were living in Afghanistan felt the conditions were better and it was the first chance of getting rid of civil war. Therefore every Afghan was happy. At that time the Taliban were not defined as anything special, and all Afghans had one wish – for a peaceful and united Afghanistan.

Afghans in the neighbouring countries and in every corner of the world welcomed the Taliban. The ambassadors in Afghan embassies and consulates were inclined towards the Taliban. In America and Europe many Afghans held meetings and protested in support of the Taliban. On October 11, led by Imam Uddin Safi, Afghans held a protest in Germany. Half of the protestors were women.

#### RAPID ADVANCEMENT OF TALIBAN TOWARDS THE NORTH

A day after capturing Kabul, the Taliban faced off against opponents in Parwan, who escaped to Panjshir after a short battle. On September 30, Taliban gained control of the areas until Salang Tunnel, including Jabal Siraj. After capturing Gul Bahar market they reached the entrance of Panjshir. Instead of entering Panjshir, the Taliban focused on Salang to proceed towards Baghlan, Pul-e

Khumri, Kunduz, and Takhar. The other side of Salang was controlled by Dostum's forces. The Taliban sent a message to them for safe passage but they denied access. The Taliban did not want to start a war with Dostum's forces.

If the Taliban had continued their advance towards Panjshir that day, the demoralised Massoud forces would not have been able to resist for long. As time passed, Massoud's forces closed the entrance to the Panjshir valley with huge rocks, and it was not possible for Taliban vehicles to enter the valley. On the other hand in the north of Kabul they planned a guerrilla war against Taliban, so that they suddenly attacked Taliban convoys from houses, crop fields and orchards.

On October 5, the Taliban entered Panjshir valley, but it was not possible to advance further as the area was closed by Massoud, and his forces were targeting Taliban from the hilltops using heavy weaponry. Still, the Taliban wanted to enter the valley.

Due to the negligence of the Taliban in Jabal Siraj and the adjoining areas, Massoud's group leaders suddenly attacked the Taliban on October 8. The Taliban were not familiar with the area and were not expecting such an attack. Their force was divided into two. Massoud's forces entered the area and targeted the Taliban from the orchards and people's houses. The Taliban were not able to target the houses in return. Many Taliban were wounded and captured alive by Massoud's forces.

As time passed, Massoud's supporters took advantage of the Taliban's simplicity and began a propaganda campaign of tribal prejudices. Different kinds of propaganda brought the residents of these areas closer to Massoud, who had been against Massoud during the times of jihad and where Massoud had very little influence. When his forces were escaping from Kabul, these people robbed them of their cars and wealth, even forcibly taking the women's jewellery. The Taliban made no positive efforts to change people's mindset in response. They thought that like in other areas of Afghanistan, people would also support and welcome us.

Efforts were required here from the Taliban to convince these people that the Taliban do not have ethnic biases and do not give importance to ethnic

prejudices. They should have convinced the mujahideen and Islamic scholars of the area and given control to them.

The situation worsened later, and the attacks from people's orchards and houses caused distrust among the Taliban. In a few months these areas were exchanged between the Taliban and Massoud's forces several times. This spirit of battlefield victory compelled the Taliban to burn the orchards and forcibly expel people from a few areas. This became a source of shame and a challenge. During the jihad against the USSR there was no ethnic division among these people, and they fought very courageously against Kabul's communist regime. There were many famous Tajik jihadi commanders from these areas who were affiliated with the Hizb-e Islami and were against Massoud. This included Sufi Painda from Salang, Ustad Saboor Farid, Ustad Fatah Muhammad from Parwan, Engineer Tariq from Jabal Siraj, Almas of Parwan, Kareem from Qara Bagh, Haji Dawood of Kalakan, Sufi Naeem of Kalakan, and Haji Qadir from Mir Bacha Kot .

Many Pashtun commanders were affiliated with Jamiat-e Islami under the leadership of Rabbani, including Anwar Dangar from Shakar Darra, Sufi Rasool from Farza area, Qari Muhib from Qara Bagh, and Commander Shaheen from Parwan.

Ahmad Shah Massoud considered it necessary to create ethnic divisions in this area and made significant efforts for this.

#### THE DESTRUCTION OF HOUSES AND BURNING OF ORCHARDS

In the north of Kabul, the Taliban advanced towards Panjshir valley several times, but because of the sudden attacks from houses and orchards they retreated and faced heavy losses.

Military commanders and the defence minister asked Mullah Muhammad Omar to allow them to eradicate the orchards that were used for attacks against them. In response Mullah Omar said: I cannot just give you orders; if Islamic scholars permit, I will not stop you.

The issue was brought before the Supreme Court and Ulema Shura. They permitted that these orchards could be eradicated which were really being used

permitted that those orchards could be eradicated which were really being used to attack the Taliban, where there was evidence of this. This verdict was not endorsed by all scholars. There were a few military commanders who opposed this, like the head of the eastern zone and Nangarhar Governor Mawlawi Abdul Kabir, who later on became the deputy of the Ministers' Shura. He brought two thousand fighters from the eastern zone to the north of Kabul for battle. He opposed the decision of the Defence Ministry and went to Kandahar. He asked Mullah Omar whether this was his decision. Mullah Omar said: No, I only allowed them to ask Islamic scholars for a decision about this. Mullah Abdul Kabir said: Then I am not bound to follow this. In reply, Mullah Omar said: if it doesn't seem right to you, don't do it.

The burning of a few houses and orchards was a sort of calamity for the Taliban. It halted their advancement and supported the propaganda of its rivals. Hatred of the Taliban increased among people because of these activities. It was worse because for the first time, people faced heavy losses from a movement supported by the public like the Taliban. Forcibly exiling people from this area to others was even more shocking. The Taliban had a strong stance on the honour and the culture of people and they were very careful about such matters. In the Afghan tradition, the relocation of families was a humiliating act not based in local culture. This was a clear-cut cruel act by an Islamic movement which opened the floodgates for propaganda based on falsified stories, which badly impacted the Taliban movement.

This was explicitly an illegal act and was opposed by many inside the movement. With the exception of a few military commanders, others openly opposed this, and eventually a few officials complained to Mullah Omar. This included Mullah Muhammad Rabbani, Mawlawi Abdul Kabir, Mawlawi Abdul Latif Mansoor, Mullah Amir Khan Haqqani, Mullah Amir Khan Muttaqi, Mullah Muhammad Gul Niazi, and Mawlawi Wakeel Ahmad Mutawakkil.

#### THE BEGINNING OF THE WAR WITH DOSTUM

On October 7, ten days after the capture of Kabul, the exiled President Burhanuddin Rabbani and Dostum met to form a coalition. Iran, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Russia were behind the move to form a coalition of three rebel groups including Shura-e Nazar (Jamiat), Hizb-e Wahdat and the Dostum

militia. Three days after this meeting, Massoud, Khalili, and Dostum announced a rebel group named Afghanistan Defence Council (Afghanistan Difa'a Shura). A written agreement was signed between them in Khanjan district. Mansoor Nadari from Pul-e Khumri and Hekmatyar's commander Bashir Baghlani from Baghlan also announced their support. Hekmatyar's son-in-law Ghairat Bahir told the media they were not party to the agreement and coalition as they were not invited.

On October 13, General Dostum and Rabbani held another meeting in the Salang area, which was also attended by leaders from Sayyaf's group and Hizb-e Islami. They showed their new intentions to attack Kabul. Three commanders from Massoud's forces – Commander Abdul Qadir, Nisar Ahmad and Muhammad Nazeer – opposed his agreement to join a coalition, and joined the central government instead. They were warmly welcomed by the Taliban.

After a few days the Dostum militia took positions against the Taliban in the north. On October 26, the fighter jets of Dostum's forces bombed the Taliban battle frontline. The next day they hit the Taliban's military bases in Bala Murghab district in Badghis.

As a representative of the coalition forces (Defence Council), Massoud warned the Taliban to leave Kabul, otherwise they would take it by force. They similarly promised to the UN that Kabul should be de-militarised and the Taliban and forces of Dostum, Hizb-e Wahdat, and Shura-e Nazar should jointly run the Kabul government. Many experts declared this a conspiracy by former militias to gain control over Kabul. Before the Taliban movement, these groups were involved in armed conflicts and it was not possible for them to form a unity government based on trust. They were also unable to establish a united government and system in the country. Their militants were forced to form a temporary coalition against the Taliban through the efforts and arbitration of other countries. Even during the war they did not trust each other and their men. When they got control of any city, they looted the homes and wealth of people before their leaders arrived. For example after the escape of General Malik, when Dostum forces regained control of Mazar city, coalition forces and Hizb-e Wahdat militias looted the city.

The Taliban sent thousands of fighters to the northern war frontline under the leadership of Mawlawi Jalaluddin Haqqani from Loy Paktia and Mawlawi Abdul Kabir from Loy Nangarhar to defend Kabul. This time the Taliban again took the battle to the areas of Jabal Siraj and Gul Bahar. The war fronts were not permanent, and changed with time.

The Taliban only had an Islamic verdict to fight Rabbani and coalition forces. After the attack by Dostum's forces, on October 30 the Taliban Shura and Islamic scholars officially declared war against Dostum.

War ensued between the Taliban and the Dostum militia in the west-eastern provinces, including Ghor, Badghis and Faryab. General Abdul Malik attempted a coup against Dostum, and Dostum left the country. But after the defeat of Abdul Malik, bloody battles took place with Dostum's forces. After the war with Dostum, representatives of India and Iran visited Mazar-e Sharif and promised military and political support to Dostum. Meetings with Dostum were held in Mazar in this vein on November 9 with the Deputy Foreign Minister of Iran Alauddin Brojerdi and on November 16 with the Indian Deputy Foreign Minister Gonat.

In January 1997, fearing an advance from the Taliban, Dostum destroyed a small portion of the Salang tunnel from the northern side.

#### THE COALITION OF TALIBAN AND GENERAL ABDUL MALIK AGAINST DOSTUM, AND BLOODY WAR

Abdul Rasheed was born in 1954 to a shepherd Abdul Rahim; his mother was Anwarsha. He was born in the Khwaja Koh district of Jawzjan and belonged to an Uzbek family. During Dawood Khan's era he was a general worker in the Sheberghan oil and gas wells. After the Russian invasion, he was a fighter for the communists and USSR forces for the sake of monetary benefits. His fighting abilities helped him to initially lead a battalion, and later on he recruited new supporters and formed a brutal militia. He considered every brutal activity to be right in support of Soviet forces. He selected the title of 'Dostum' for himself, because when Soviet forces entered any village, they used a common slogan – 'Dost ya Dushman' (friend or enemy). They held their guns to the heads of men, women, and children until they said 'Dost/Dostum or Dushman.' Many women, men, and children answered 'dushman' out of fear which led to their deaths.

men, and children answered 'ushman' out of fear which led to their deaths. These incidents mostly took place in Pashtun areas.

He selected the title 'Dostum' to show more loyalty to Soviets, and the Soviets also called him Dostum, 'our friend'. The Dostum militia is also known as the Gilamjam militia because when their fighters entered any area after a battle they looted villages and houses.

General Malik was the in-charge of foreign affairs for Junbish-e Milli. The enmity between General Malik and Dostum began when the brother of General Malik, Rasool Pehalwan, who was known as 'Rasool-e Bee Khuda' (Messenger without God) because of his brutality, was killed by Dostum in connection with a sexual incident. General Malik was looking for an opportunity to take revenge. On the other hand it is also said that Iran had a plan B for Ahmad Shah Massoud and General Malik to remove Dostum from the picture and deal heavy losses to the Taliban through a conspiracy.

In the early months of 1997 there were direct and indirect negotiations between General Dostum and the Taliban through different channels. One of the channels was Pakistan. Several meetings were held in Islamabad between the Taliban and Dostum's representative Abdul Baqi Turkistani and General Abdul Malik, the Junbish foreign affairs in-charge, to resolve issues with Dostum without engaging in battle. In May 1997, a few of Dostum's powerful commanders including Commander Abdul Malik, Gul Muhammad Pahlawan and Ghaffar Pahlawan revolted against Dostum and announced his removal as the leader of Junbish.

The representatives of General Abdul Malik in Islamabad began negotiations for a coalition with the Taliban through Colonel Riaz and a few other military personnel and government officials. Mullah Muhammad Ghaus from the Taliban was part of the delegation that hid many details of the meetings from Mullah Omar. To restore trust with the Taliban, General Malik handed over former Herat governor Turan Muhammad Ismail Khan to the Taliban, who had recently crossed the Iran border to fight the Taliban with Dostum's forces.

On May 16, 1997, General Malik, Herat Governor Mullah Abdul Razzaq and Foreign Minister Mullah Muhammad Ghaus signed an agreement. The

agreement stated that the Taliban were bound to give the control of those provinces of northern Afghanistan to General Malik where Junbish held influence, and Islamic Sharia and laws will be implemented in those provinces. The central government's rules would apply, and the Taliban forces would visit these areas. Initially, there would be a united war against Dostum.

Mullah Omar, the Defence Ministry and the Intelligence Directorate were unaware of this development. Mullah Omar was informed that General Malik is joining the Taliban without any terms and conditions, and he will hand over all weapons to the Taliban. This was clearly disobedience by Mullah Muhammad Ghaus and Mullah Abdul Razzaq against Mullah Omar and the rules of the Taliban government. They thought that if they presented the agreement to Mullah Omar he might nullify it, and that if the north was cleared of Dostum's forces they could convince Mullah Omar. But this line of thinking led to major issues.

Mullah Omar never agreed that people would be left to the mercy of former commanders. Instead they would first hand over the areas to the Taliban and then given any official position. The objective from the beginning of the Taliban movement was to eliminate these local rulers and commanders and put an end to their brutality.

On May 18, the Taliban and General Malik's forces started a joint operation against the Dostum militia. On May 19, General Malik told the media about the reasons behind his revolt against Dostum, and his unity with the Taliban. In an interview with the BBC he said: As per the wishes of the nation we removed General Dostum from the leadership position of Junbish-e Milli Islami (United Islamic Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan) because of his treason against Afghanistan and killing many Muslims. The Shura Milli Islami has decided to join the Taliban and implement Sharia through revolting against former communists.

He mentioned Dostum's deputy Majid Rozi, Ghaffar Pahlawan, Gul Muhammad Pahlawan and the Samangan Governor Mawlawi Abdul Qudoos as his supporters.

Ghaffar Pahlawan told the media that they have requested ten thousand militants

General Farnawari told the media that they have requested ten thousand militants from the Taliban, which they accepted. He said many of the supporting Taliban are in Faryab and a few also reached Sheberghan.

On May 24, Sheberghan and Mazar fell, and Dostum fled to Uzbekistan. At that time Mullah Abdul Razzaq sent thousands of unarmed Taliban by air to Mazar with the intention of arming them there. This was the start of the worst game.

In the evening Mawlawi Wakeel Ahmed Mutawakkil – unaware of the clauses and delicacy of the agreement – announced Mullah Abdul Razzaq as the head of the Balkh administration and General Abdul Malik as the deputy of the Foreign Affairs Ministry.

The apparent victory of Mazar drew the region and the world's attention towards the Taliban. Many Afghans and regional countries declared this province's capture as positive for Afghanistan and suggested that it signalled an end to war in Afghanistan. In an announcement, the US State Department asked for a ceasefire and a broader base for government. A few Afghan ambassadors and diplomats abroad announced their support for the Taliban, this included Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and Italy. The Charge d'Affaires of Afghanistan in Italy Muhammad Naeem Muslimyar and the entire staff announced their support for the Taliban. The US government closed the Afghan Embassy in Washington because Secretary Siraj Kamal announced his support for the Taliban and the other Secretary Yar Muhammad announced his support for Rabbani.

The Taliban advanced towards Bamiyan. In the north of Kabul, a large convoy including a few important Taliban ministers was gathered to support Mazar. In Salang, Commander Basir Salangi of Massoud's force surrendered to the Taliban. The Taliban also captured a few areas in Baghlan. Everyone thought that this would be the last battle.

For this reason, Pakistan officially recognised the Taliban government on May 25. In the next two days Saudi Arabia and the UAE also recognised the Taliban government. Many other countries were also planning to officially recognise the Taliban government.

On May 28, the Hizb-e Wahdat and General Malik's militias attacked the Taliban. Thousands of unarmed Taliban were besieged and attacked from every

Taliban. Thousands of unarmed Taliban were besieged and attacked from every side. Those Taliban who were armed were not led by Mullah Abdul Razzaq as he was taken hostage by General Malik. The Taliban were surprised and unaware of the actual situation. General Malik said that the attacks were by Hizb-e Wahdat forces.

At that time a few leaders from Kandahar were there to control the administrative works of Herat, including Mullah Muhammad Akhtar Mansoor (Minister of Air Defence), Mullah Muhammad Sadiq (member of the High Shura – Supreme Council), pilot Jilani Khan (air force commander) and Haji Fazal Muhammad and a few others, who were taken hostage by General Malik. After a bloody war, the Taliban left Jawzjan, Sar-i Pul and Faryab. Many armed and around three to four thousand unarmed Taliban were taken prisoner by Hizb-e Wahdat and General Malik's militia.

Mawlawi Ihsanullah Ihsan was martyred in battle. Mullah Muhammad Ghaus returned to Kandahar after a few weeks. He said that he hid himself in Hazara areas and managed to reach Kabul. His beard was shaven and he was wearing a double-breasted *qamis* like people from the northern areas. His small blue eyes and red-cheeked face and his dress gave him the appearance of the Hazara people.

On the other side, Bashir Salangi once again switched loyalties to Ahmad Shah Massoud and he closed Salang. Massoud's forces once again advanced in the north, taking full advantage of the Taliban's conditions. There were only a few hundred Taliban left in the north. But in the surrounding areas of Kabul, the war front lines in the north were recaptured by the Taliban.

The command of war in Baghlan was with the powerful Taliban commanders Mullah Dadullah and Amir Khan Haqqani. They succeeded in bringing Pul-e Khumri under their control, but they were later pushed back to Baghlan. Bashir Baghlani, acting on Hekmatyar's instructions, wanted to disarm the Taliban and hand over their leaders to coalition groups. But the Taliban very cleverly strengthened their positions and after some time, on June 19, they entered Kunduz with the support of regional commanders and brought Kunduz under their control. They surprisingly repelled every attack on Kunduz. Mullah Dadullah and Amir Khan Haqqani became famous for putting up a strong

Daudan and Amir Khan Haqqani became famous for putting up a strong resistance.

On June 2, a coalition force called Jabha Nijat Milli Afghanistan was established in Mazar city by Junbish, Hizb-e Wahdat, Shura-e Nazar, and Harakat of Mohsini, which aimed to jointly fight the Taliban. On June 6, the Deputy Foreign Minister of Iran Alauddin Brojerdi visited Mazar-e Sharif and congratulated the new group, and assured it of Iran's support.

A cargo plane loaded with weapons for Ahmad Shah Massoud landed at Kabul's Khawaja Rawash airport on June 6. The pilot Lieutenant Colonel Abdul Saboor and deputy pilot Lieutenant Colonel Muhammad Nasir provided much documentary evidence of Iran and Tajikistan's support and weapons supply to Massoud. On the second day a group of opponents who had recently crossed into Afghanistan through Iran was arrested with heavy weapons in Farah's Dani Abad area. They were accompanied by two Iranian military personnel which clearly revealed the military support of Iran and Tajikistan against the Taliban.

The Taliban gained control of Kunduz airport and restored communication with Kabul through a military transport plane. The Taliban broke the siege and established a strong base in Kunduz for northern Afghanistan. They received more men and weapons through air transport and sent injured Taliban to Kabul.

#### GRAVEYARD OF THOUSANDS OF YOUTH: DASHT-E LAILA

The names of those Taliban who were sent to Herat were not listed or registered. It was only known that there were eight to ten thousand, most of whom were new madrasa students, Talibs and huff. They had joined the Taliban in the hope that this would be the last war and then there would be peace in Afghanistan. They did not have weapons. Some of them were killed in the city and others were captured alive. They were later taken out of prisons, loaded in container trucks, and taken to Sheberghan's Dasht-e Laila desert, killed and thrown into gas wells and buried in the ground; some of them were left to burn under the sun.

After General Dostum regained power, a few thousand dead bodies were recovered, and a few international organisations also visited mass graves. Thousands of dead bodies of Taliban were found with their hands tied at the

back. Around 13,200 Taliban were martyred according to different pieces of evidence. Only a thousand were armed while the rest were unarmed. They were invited by General Malik and were his guests.

#### ISMAIL KHAN'S CAPTIVITY AND ESCAPE

On May 18, 1997, Ismail Khan was handed over to the Taliban by General Abdul Malik under an agreement with the Taliban Foreign Affairs minister Mullah Muhammad Ghaus. He was initially transferred to the west zone leader and then taken to Kandahar. He was held there in a special prison of the Afghan intelligence directorate. The next day Mullah Omar ordered that someone should talk to him in detail and then share a recording with him. I visited the Investigation Directorate of Intelligence along with the Chief of Information and Cultural Directorate Sayyed Muhammad Haqqani. Mullah Omar had already communicated by phone with the Kandahar intelligence chief Qari Hamid Gul. We sat in a room, and after some time Ismail Khan was brought to us. His legs were chained. He looked very sad and weak.

When we saw this old, aged, weak person, we felt sad that his legs shouldn't be chained at least while he was meeting us. I started questioning him. My first question was 'how do you feel in Taliban imprisonment?' He said: I regret that I was involved in jihad against Soviets and today I am imprisoned as a convict in the captivity of Muslim brothers and Islamic scholars.

I asked him: How many Taliban did you martyr during the wars and are you still preparing for war? Are you not liable for punishment because of these acts?

His voice changed and he answered: I am a convict but I hope that Amir ul-Mu'mineen will have mercy on me and forgive all my sins.

It appeared that he was aware that Mullah Omar would hear this discussion. We knew that there were many people who had plans to kill Ismail Khan. We tried asking questions that could normalise the overall situation.

After that I asked him about his arrest. He said he was arrested because of a conspiracy by General Malik. He added: 'Do not trust General Malik as he is very cunning and dishonest.'

I asked him about the differences between him and Massoud. He said: Massoud wants Shura-e Nazar's domination over Jamiat, and he took authority from Rabbani. He has a fascist ideology. I was a strong follower of Rabbani and Massoud was against my force and authority. He also stated a few other differences between Massoud and him.

I asked him about his former jihadi achievements, and after this he seemed normal. He shared a story of the jihad days about digging a long trench. After that he told a story about his son, who was born during the jihad days. After six years when his son saw him, he was not able to recognise that this was his father. He also did not recognise his son.

He cried after this story, and we were also quiet for a while. Then he said: I regret that I faced many problems during the jihad, and in the prison of mujahideen brothers I am awaiting punishment. I hold hope for mercy from Mullah Omar to forgive me and utilise my military skills as commander in the Taliban system.

I asked him: How will you satisfy Mullah Omar that you will not take up weapons against the Taliban again. He answered with hope in his eyes: I promise I will give surety; I will swear by God that until my last breath I will not oppose the Taliban. If you utilise my skills as a Muslim mujahid, I will garner many achievements for the Taliban like in the jihad days.

I asked tens of questions and sent the recorded cassettes to Mullah Omar. After listening to the cassette, Mullah Omar was of the opinion that Ismail Khan should remain in prison until the Taliban's system is stronger. He meant that when conditions become favourable he will be released after taking promises and guarantees.

I saw Ismail Khan five months later that October, when I brought Pakistani journalist Rahimullah Yousafzai to him. This time Ismail Khan was very relaxed and in a normal condition. He asked me to allow him a pen and paper to write his memoirs. I conveyed his message to Mullah Omar but I am not sure whether he was allowed or not.

The main points of his interview with Rahimullah Yusufzai broadcast on the

BBC on October 3, during the evening programme, were as follows:

The Taliban have not treated me harshly. We should have supported them. Alas! We took up weapons against them. They will succeed in bringing Sharia law to Afghanistan because success is for whoever is in the right.

Ismail Khan remained in a Taliban prison for three years, monitored by the Kandahar intelligence chief Qari Hamid Gul.

Qari Hamid Gul was not experienced, and not capable of systematic intelligence. He was involved in many activities that were not associated with him. During the jihad against the Soviets he worked as a common spy for the mujahideen in Kandahar and so he was trustworthy for those Taliban leaders who knew him then. But he still had the same habits that he did during the Russian jihad, like riding a motorcycle in Kandahar city and looking at the roofs for unknown antennas and needless involvement in a few issues. He was not familiar with his job description and authority. He was not knowledgeable and had very low religious knowledge, and therefore he was involved in brutal activities. On the other hand he was involved in negatively propagandising against the Central Intelligence Chief Qari Ahmadullah and accused him of allowing communists into the intelligence directorate and that he needlessly treated people softly, that he didn't punish people and that he wasn't eligible for this position.

A month prior to Ismail Khan's escape, Qari Ahmadullah informed Mullah Omar's office that we have a confirmed report of Ismail Khan's escape plan, if you hand him over to us we will protect him. Mullah Omar was surprised and considered the report to be an exaggeration. He immediately sent an important official to Mullah Hamid Gul with a message saying: leave other work and only concentrate on protecting Ismail Khan. This increased Hamid Gul's envy of Qari Ahmadullah, and he blamed a few of Ahmadullah's colleagues as well. On March 26, 2000, Ismail Khan escaped the prison with the support of his guards. Hamid Gul and his coworkers knew about his escape around 9 am.

All the main routes and roads were blocked on Mullah Omar's instructions, and there was strict checking everywhere. But Ismail Khan crossed into Iran after a few days passing through villages and the desert. It was not possible for the Taliban to control these areas. His vehicle also hit a mine which led to him being

Taliban to control these areas. His vehicle also hit a mine which led to him being injured. It was later confirmed that one of his security guards helped in his escape for a huge amount of money and after a year of negotiating with Ismail Khan's family. It was planned for a long time.

Hamid Gul was a person of very low capabilities. His personnel were not reliable including this security guard who was considered as trustworthy by Hamid Gul. He was responsible for this incident because of his negligence. He was imprisoned for investigation. His deputy Haji Qahir tried to escape to Iran but was arrested between Herat and Kandahar.

#### TALIBAN RE-ADVANCEMENT TOWARDS THE NORTH

In September 1997, the Taliban once again successfully captured the strategic Tashkurgan district of Samangan from the Kunduz side. On September 9, it gained control of the Mazar-e-Sharif airport. Mullah Omar instructed the Taliban not to fight within cities as to avoid public losses. Mullah Omar wanted the opponents to end fighting and leave the control of the city to the Taliban. Taliban advanced towards the other areas of the city with the support of a few commanders, but they were bombarded by suspicious planes from the Tajikistan side. The Taliban officially blamed Tajikistan for bombardment from Tajikistan airports.

On September 13, the Taliban gained control of Hairatan township near the Tajikistan border. The forces of General Malik and Jamiat were pushed back to Sheberghan from Mazar, and only Hizb-e Wahdat was putting up a resistance. The war continued for a week and on October 4, Dostum once again crossed into Afghanistan through Tajikistan. He joined his supporters and Hizb-e Wahdat to fight against the Taliban and recaptured the Chamtal and Charbolak districts of Balkh, and the Mazar-e Sharif airport. The Dostum militias entered the picture again after four months, and General Malik's forces left the area.

On October 7, Taliban lost control of Hairatan port, and on October 11 they evacuated the Tashkurgan district. Mazar was recaptured by Dostum instead of General Malik. Mazar-e-Sharif was looted by Hizb-e Wahdat and Dostum's militias. Shops and houses were robbed and women were dishonoured. On October 16, the Hizb-e Wahdat leader Muhammad Mohaqiq acknowledged the looting by his forces, and said we were busy in war and a few people were

looking by his forces, and said we were busy in war and a few people were involved in this activity.

Peace talks between Dostum and General Malik succeeded because of arbitration by Iran; this saw General Malik returning to Mazar on October 14 and promising to take Kunduz from the Taliban.

After some time, conflict between Malik and Dostum sparked again as Malik and his brother began activities against Dostum in Faryab. On November 22, General Dostum took control of General Malik and his brother Gul Muhammad Pahlawan's bases in Maimana city and Shirin Tagab districts. General Malik escaped to Iran and released five high-level Taliban prisoners near the Taliban front in Badghis, including Mullah Akhtar Muhammad Mansoor, Mullah Muhammad Sadiq, Haji Fazal Muhammad, Mullah Abdul Razzaq and pilot Jilani Khan Noorzai. They reached the Badghis Taliban and were later sent to Herat.

#### THE FINAL VICTORY OF THE NORTHERN PROVINCES

The huge defeat, losses, and martyrdom of thousands of Taliban in May 1997 couldn't stop Taliban from the conquest of northern Afghanistan. That September, the Taliban reentered Mazar city but were pushed back by Dostum's forces. Until July 1998 the Taliban prepared for a huge attack on northern Afghanistan from Kunduz. Taliban organised their war plans for the northwest frontline of Herat and Badghis.

On the afternoon of July 12, 1998, I was asleep and suddenly woke up due to the sounds of low-flying jets. This was because of the two Taliban pilots who lowered their jets over Kandahar city at any important victory and gave signals to Mullah Omar for victory and congratulations. I heard the voice of Mashar Haji Lala on the central communications system saying that Faryab has been conquered.

I immediately went to the office. We had a lot of telephone calls; media representatives and organisations were requesting information. We provided information to the media until the evening. The next morning, according to Mullah Omar's instructions, we warned Tajikistan and Uzbekistan to not allow aircraft from their bases to bombard the Taliban. Mullah Omar also announced

that the Taliban shouldn't treat prisoners of war badly.

The Taliban cleared many important areas of Faryab and appointed a police chief and other officials for the provincial centre. On July 18, Dostum and coalition forces recaptured the Juma Bazaar area of Faryab. Dostum's air force was carrying out heavy bombardment and it appeared that their aircraft was taking flight from the neighbouring country. The Taliban sent a few of their experts with Stinger missiles near the war frontline. The next day one of Dostum's jets was shot down and there was limited bombardment after that. Taliban recaptured Juma Bazaar after that and continued their advance.

On July 26, an armed opposition group of 500 militants from the Ghazni area between Faryab and Ghor surrendered to the Taliban. Four days later, the Taliban gained control of Faryab's remaining districts, including Daulatabad, Faizabad and Khwaja Musa.

On August 2, Taliban entered Sheberghan, the provincial capital of Jawzjan, after a bloody war. Foreign NGO workers and Iran's embassy staff under the leadership of Iranian Ambassador Murtaza Haddadi escaped via aeroplanes. The next day, the Taliban began an attack on Balkh from Kunduz and Sheberghan. At that time, we announced that as per Mullah Omar's instructions, if weapons are handed over to the Taliban there will be general forgiveness for all opponents. Unfortunately, we later came to know that as a revenge for the Dasht-e Laila incident, and ignoring the instructions of Mullah Omar, Abdul Manan Niazi and a few minor commanders killed many prisoners of war.

On August 6, the provincial centre of Balkh Daulat Abad was captured, and the Taliban continued their advance on the city. On August 8, under the military leadership of Mullah Baradar and Mullah Muhammad Fazal, the Taliban entered Mazar city. By 8 am, the entire area came under the control of the Taliban.

On August 11, the Taliban entered Takhar's Taluqan district from the Kunduz side, under the leadership of Mullah Muhammad Naeem. Key provinces including Badghis, Faryab, Sar-i Pul, Jawzjan, Balkh, Samangan, Baghlan, Takhar and Kunduz came under Taliban control and remained so until the United States' invasion.

On September 13, under the leadership of Mullah Baradar the provincial district of Bamiyan was captured and the adjoining areas were also cleared later.

A few of General Dostum's commanders escaped from Faryab and Jawzjan to Sar-i Pul. On August 10, 33 war commanders of Dostum were arrested during a search operation in Sar-i Pul and imprisoned.

During the capture of Mazar-e Sharif at night, eleven staff members from the Iranian Consulate went missing. Iran requested the recovery of their personnel through Iran and the United Nations. A search operation and investigation began according to Mullah Omar's instructions, and after a few weeks their bodies were found in a ditch. Iran announced an open enmity with Afghanistan and organised its military on the border with Afghanistan for war.

The bodies of the Iranians were found on September 10 and they were officially handed over to Iran the next day.

AFTER MORE VICTORIES, A SHORTAGE OF EXPERT CADRES

After the final conquest of Mazar, almost ninety per cent of Afghanistan was under Taliban control. A few dozen new governors, police chiefs, judges and district governors were required which Mullah Omar appointed very soon because of his nature.

There were issues of quality at different departments. There were no major issues about the governors, police chiefs, and judges because Taliban officials were capable for these jobs. But the Taliban did not struggle for their selection in national and technical organisations. In the newly conquered areas, governors appointed their friends in technical departments. The experienced staff of previous governments was neglected. This was a major governance issue.

On the other hand, the Taliban military in the newly conquered northern provinces was somewhat dominating governance. If we look at the capital, a few intelligent Taliban officials were controlling Kabul, like Mawlawi Abdul Kabir, Mawlawi Said Muhammad Haqqani, Mawlawi Mutawakkil, the Deputy Minister of Public Health Dr Fazal Rabbani, the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Sher Abbas Stanekzai and Kabul Mayor Hamdullah Naumani. They were familiar with administrative and technical work. or were able to familiarise themselves in

a short period of time owing to their intelligence.

Mawlawi Abdul Kabir was prominent in administrative and innovative work. I have heard from the Deputy of Administrative Affairs Muhammad Hussain Mustas'ad that it was difficult for technical officials to make officials understand the challenging government tasks. But workers were scared of Mawlawi Abdul Kabir as he followed administrative work and was well aware in advance of the situation. Mawlawi Abdul Kabir earlier served as the deputy of the ministers council, Nangarhar governor, and the leader of the eastern zone. When the defence minister got injured, Mullah Omar appointed him as acting defence minister for a period. He told Mullah Omar by telephone: Some people do not like the works that are assigned to me. If you are appointing me as defence minister, their envy will increase. Mullah Omar replied: Mawlawi Sahib! As long as I am alive, do not worry.

Mullah Abdul Kabir was in contact with Mullah Omar until his disappearance. He later faced all kinds of difficulties courageously. He was considered a mastermind of organised administration, economic projects like paving highways, establishment of public shuras, but there were hindrances in the implementation of his innovative plans.

The intelligent Taliban officials were mostly young madrassa graduate mullahs. Very few had received religious education from other countries except Pakistan and Afghanistan. There were only a few officials at lower positions who had graduated from religious institutes in Saudi Arabia or Egypt's Jamiat ul-Azhar. Most were sent to Egypt by Harakat Inquilab Islami during the Soviet invasion. Unfortunately the students who received scholarships to study at Al-Azhar University did so based on political affiliations, and those students were not able to present their religious skills. This Azhari group was unemployed during the Taliban regime. They learned common Arabic from the streets of Egypt, went to Alexandria for tourism, and enjoyed the songs of Umm Kulthum. They never looked for religion and spirituality. Their leader was Muhammad Sharif, the son of Mawlawi Mohammad Nabi, who returned from Al-Azhar and married a famous Afghan singer who he had a friendship with lasting several years. His Al-Azhar friends Qasim Halimi and Rahimullah Hanafi were in on his secrets. They worked as deputy chief in the Foreign Affairs ministry during the Taliban

They worked as deputy chief in the Foreign Affairs ministry during the Taliban regime.

While there was an overall weakness observed in the administrative work of different departments in the Taliban government, there was a surprising degree of transparency and accountability which underscores the honesty of the officials and their accountability to Mullah Omar.

#### ADMINISTRATIVE AND JUDICIAL FUNCTIONING OF THE TALIBAN

As mentioned earlier, the majority of administrative tasks were carried out with the support of staff from previous governments. As time passed, a few Taliban officials became familiar with the work, and a few intelligent Taliban officials became experts at these tasks.

The technical staff was a lifeline in related departments. For example, the presence of a medical doctor, deputy, or advisor was important in a provincial health department. In the department of mines, a petroleum engineer was required as an advisor or a deputy. These needs were generally not taken into consideration, and the governor's friends or other regular Taliban who lacked technical skills were appointed as staff.

The Taliban divided Afghanistan into zones under the control of the interior ministry. This eased the work because the separate access to every province could have been problematic and every zone could easily interact with the relevant and adjoining provinces. For example, the issues of Nuristan were better resolved from the eastern zone of Jalalabad instead of from Kabul.

While the system of government departments was followed properly in Kabul, the official works of the Amir ul-Mu'mineen was not carried out in as systematic a manner as in previous governments. Most of the tasks were completed as an emergency and in a short period. But the letters that were officially sent to the ministers' department followed all the steps, and the administrative affairs office similarly sent official letters through the proper channel and was well organised. But direct orders from Mullah Omar's office did not follow any administrative system.

Unfortunately, a proper record of common applications, and the letters received

from military Taliban was not maintained, and copies were not kept for very long. There was a possibility of fraud, and fraudulent incidents took place twice but the perpetrators were arrested soon. These things were regularised slowly and gradually.

Mullah Omar had three different secretaries at different points. Two had more authority, while one had less. Abdul Salam Katib was more authoritative and an independent secretary but he was unfamiliar with modern and international issues. Before being appointed to the ministry Mutawakkil was an authoritative political and administrative secretary. Tayyab Agha was a very polite secretary and did not like to personally interfere in official work. He kept to the work that related to him and also delivered everyone's messages to Mullah Omar. He had no wish to interfere in other people's work. He was a liaison between Mullah Omar and the al-Qaeda leadership because of his close relations with the latter. Tayyab Agha was a very emotional young man then and a fan of al-Qaeda's ideology. He had no affinity with or information about global politics and diplomacy.

In 2000, he was leading an Arabic magazine called 'Al Emara' which was published from Kandahar in Arabic and English. The Arabic writers included al-Qaeda members. Once in an article they used the title 'Enemy of Harmain' for the Saudi king, previously the Taliban used the title 'Servant of Haramain al-Sharifain' for the king. Copies of these magazines were officially sent to the Afghan Consulate in Jeddah as well.

When the Jeddah Consul General Mawlawi Basheer Ahmad visited the Kandahar Secretariat, he came to Mullah Omar's room with Mawlawi Abdul Jalil. I was also sitting there. He told Tayyab Agha that you have used the title 'Enemy of Haramain' for the Saudi king and you officially sent this magazine to the embassy in Saudi Arabia, this is against moral and diplomatic norms. I liked the consul's rational statement, but Tayyab Agha casually told them – 'you are afraid'.

Hundreds of people entered Mullah Omar's office without going through a security check. These people were utilised in general work, like collecting applications, reading them out to Mullah Omar, and replying to these letters or

applications as per his instructions.

These people also reported external news to Mullah Omar's office, but they were actually employees of the senior secretary. They also did small jobs in Kandahar. For example, the radio in-charge Abdul Ahad Jahangirwal was initially appointed by the Directorate of Information and Culture to bring news for the radio broadcasts from Mullah Omar's office. Later on he visited Mullah Omar's secretary Abdul Salam for various tasks. But after the collapse of the Taliban regime, he faced many issues as a few people called him 'someone attached to Mullah Omar's office'. He also liked for people to call him Mullah Omar's secretary. This led to his imprisonment in Pakistan for six years, and after he was released from jail he went to Qatar, where he still resides.

On the judicial side, the administrative system was based on the legal framework of Zahir Shah and Daud Khan, and many new judges were not familiar with the complexities of the system. Even though they had more educational expertise and made more effort, these issues were mostly resolved by former government clerks. Sometimes they took advantage of these issues and engaged in corruption. It was difficult for the judges to properly trace this.

But the enforcement of laws was very quick as compared to previous governments, because high-level Taliban judges particularly focused on implementing laws, resolving issues early, and looking at claims, since they faced pressure from higher authorities. The high-level Taliban judges were part of the Taliban movement and they sought a proper implementation of Islamic Sharia.

There was fake and negative propaganda present around the world against Taliban regarding the implementation of Sharia laws. In the western media, these Sharia laws were declared to be the Taliban's torture. But as I think now, these laws were more legitimate than other laws in the world, where decisions are made based on government laws and courts. The Taliban implemented Sharia laws so that other people could take a lesson from this.

In most countries, the punishment for murder is death, but Qisas was implemented here after lengthy legal procedures. In my opinion, calling it torture was just propaganda against the Taliban.

In contrast to the western media, there was a positive response in the Islamic world and the Taliban justice system was held up as an example. Sometimes Muslims from Islamic countries declared Taliban justice as the only Sharia justice.

In 2000, a young man came to Kandahar from Pakistan's Punjab province. He went to Mawlawi Dilawar and told him that I committed adultery some time ago, and I have promised Allah that when an Islamic justice system is established I will prepare myself for punishment according to the Sharia. Mawlawi Dilawar initially tried to convince him to take back his demand, but after he refused he was punished as per Sharia.

#### *AMR BIL MAROOF*

The main aim and slogan of the Taliban movement was based on the implementation of Islamic Sharia. There was a need of a separate *Amr bil Maroof* force along with another judicial system. But there was a need for special training for personnel of this organisation, and special standards for selection. Unfortunately, the Taliban did not focus on these basic values, and the leadership of this organisation was not wise and did not have foresight. The regular personnel of this organisation did not receive any special training, nor did they have in-depth religious knowledge. This led to them unnecessarily exaggerating in many tasks. We knew about their work methods and its impact on society. Therefore we criticised a few activities of this organisation, which were not tolerated by those responsible, and they blamed us on different charges.

Mullah Omar was also not happy with a few of their activities. One day he said: *Amr bil Maroof* was an important organisation for our system, but it is the most imperfect and weak one. There are many reasons why Mullah Omar did not take practical steps to reform it, but I know these three reasons:

1. Silence and harmful carefulness of Islamic scholars.
2. Defence of this organisation's activities by a few of Mullah Omar's close and trusted people.
3. Mullah Omar's mistrust of the opponents of this organisation.

Many Taliban leaders kept criticism of this organisation to themselves. One of my friends told me that if you were not close to Mullah Omar in Kandahar, opposition to this organisation would have made trouble for you.

The *Amr bil Maroof* leader Mawlawi Abdul Wali was inexperienced in religious understanding. He was a young and serious person. He was supported by the Justice Minister Mullah Nooruddin Turabi, who had little religious knowledge and ran the organisation according to his temperament. The administrative leadership of *Amr bil Maroof* in Kabul was with the deputy minister Mullah Qalamuddin, a resident of Logar. During the jihad he was responsible for the security of Mawlawi Muhammad Nabi. He did not receive much religious education and was the person behind the illegal and bad behaviour in Kabul city. It is said that during Taliban rule, Mawlawi Qalamuddin once visited Kabul to recover debts from a borrower and spent nights in the *Amr bil Maroof* office. He was a tall and strong man. When he went to Kabul city with *Amr bil Maroof* workers, he was liked by his friends because of punishing and beating people. He later got the attention of the minister who appointed him as his deputy.

#### A DISCUSSION WITH MULLAH OMAR ABOUT THE *AMR BIL MAROOF* ORGANISATION

In the Kandahar provincial shura office, there was direct criticism and exchange of words, which infuriated *Amr bil Maroof* officials. In 2000, on the invitation of the Olympics department, a team of cricket players from Pakistan's Chaman area visited Kandahar to play a match against their competitors. After the match, the *Amr bil Maroof* minister went to the ground and punished a few guest players for their Western hairstyle and shaved beards. It was disgraceful and tactless that people invited by one department were disgraced by another. I took this issue very seriously and was supported by a few people, but a few important people and *Amr bil Maroof* officials defended this act. It was our opinion that this complaint, as well as other complaints about *Amr bil Maroof*, had to be discussed directly with Mullah Omar.

I prepared myself for this. The education head Mawlawi Nek Muhammad, the head of the Kandahar jihad madrassa, and a commander from the northern frontline also joined me. After noon prayers, we went to Mullah Omar. Qari Faiz Muhammad began the discussion and said that there are many complaints about

*Amr bil Maroof* and it should be controlled. Qari Faiz Muhammad was very close to Mullah Omar. But Mullah Omar thought that these were not his words so he sarcastically said, 'you care about everyone and you interfere in everything.' Mawlawi Nek Muhammad, who was highly educated in religious studies, very carelessly said to Mullah Omar that our public is in trouble, pressurising them from every angle is against common wisdom. Mullah Omar did not like this open opposition and answered: Mawlawi Sahib! These people who have gone astray do not understand verbal or religious orders; without government monitoring and a forceful invitation towards good it is impossible.

Mawlawi Nek Muhammad presented more reasons, but a person called Mullah Rasool interrupted repeatedly while he talked. Mullah Rasool was famous among friends as Landi Salam (Short Salam). He was the brother of Mullah Ghazi, who was part of a group of Mullah Omar's old friends. This group was known as friends of Mullah Omar. A few people from this group were dignified and wise, but a few like Muhammad Rasool negatively used their closeness to Mullah Omar and interfered in matters which they neither understood nor had any right to interfere.

After Mawlawi Nek Muhammad, I began a discussion with statements that were an implicit protest against the interference of Muhammad Rasool. I said to Mullah Omar: We only came to you because we hope you will listen to us and you are the only hope to solve this problem. He understood from my opening sentences, and Mullah Rasool also stopped interfering. There was a long discussion and I provided details of a few activities of *Amr bil Maroof* and its negative impact. These incidents were faced by people in different cities.

My best recommendation to reform this organisation was that first a meeting of Islamic Scholars, including Supreme Court scholars, should investigate the punishment this department gives to people according to Sharia rules. Secondly, the personnel of this organisation should be trained. And thirdly, they should also focus on preaching methodology as well. The use of sticks and punishments should be limited. My friends were of the same opinion.

Mullah Omar promised to investigate the issues of ill-treatment of people but he did not agree to the first recommendation. His reason was that the head of *Amr*

*bil Maroof* is an Islamic scholar and he should investigate the suspicious punishments. After our lengthy discussion, Mullah Omar agreed to making a few changes, like that the laws of *Amr bil Maroof* will not apply to Afghans coming from abroad for a few months, and that this organisation will also begin preaching and publication work.

#### MULLAH OMAR AS AN AUTHORITATIVE IMPLEMENTER OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM

The Taliban movement from the outset is undoubtedly associated with the personality of Mullah Muhammad Omar, who established the movement from scratch. It initially had a revolutionary touch but later transformed into a system. Mullah Omar selected Islamic Sharia as a standard for this path, so he was only able to do those things that were correctly introduced to him by Islamic scholars or Sharia experts. Mullah Omar was not a full-fledged Islamic scholar, and he depended on the recommendations of Islamic scholars for laws.

Mullah Omar was generally authoritative on administrative and military issues. He was an expert war leader and he never lost his morale even during fierce battles. But in administrative implementation he held a few Taliban leaders and a few unskilled Taliban in high regard. For example, after a few months of Mullah Muhammad Rabbani, he reappointed Mullah Muhammad Hassan for a second time as the deputy of the ministers council, and he was looking after all the matters after the death of Mullah Rabbani. Mullah Omar decided that Mawlawi Abdul Kabir would be first deputy while Mullah Hassan will be second. I received this notification letter in the same manner and I was ready to make an announcement. But I was on my way to the office when – because of recommendations and increased pressure from Kabul and Kandahar on Mullah Omar – both were announced as equal.

Similarly, once the security conditions in Kabul deteriorated, Mullah Omar appointed a famous commander Saif ur-Rahman Mansoor as the Kabul police chief, because he was an active and righteous man, and his friends were committed people and religious students. But a few people were envious of his family, and they pressurised Mullah Omar, resulting in a third person being appointed police chief.

On the other hand, Mullah Omar never punished anyone for open disobedience

and being involved in crimes. When anyone was proven wrong he took decisive action. I consider these two examples to illustrate this:

### **DISARMAMENT AND TERMINATION OF MULLAH DADULLAH:**

Mullah Dadullah was a famous and powerful Taliban military commander. After conquering Kabul, Taliban lost strong and moderate commanders including Mullah Burjan, Mullah Mashar and Mullah Muhammad. Mullah Fazal and Mullah Dadullah were then famous war commanders in the north of Afghanistan. Even though there were other well-known and strong military commanders like Mullah Naeem, Mullah Abdul Razzaq Nafiz, Mullah Baradar, Mullah Obaidullah, Amir Khan Haqqani, Mawlawi Jalaluddin Haqqani and Mullah Saif ur-Rahman Mansoor, these two were more famous. They received very little religious education but were very strong at battle. Their militants included more people from their respective areas along with the Taliban.

Mullah Dadullah Akhund was inured to war after the martyrdom of his friends and continuous fighting. This led him to be a careless, proud and hardhearted commander. He was known as a strong, victorious military leader, and his presence in Taliban ranks was obviously for his feats, and so he considered himself to be the only war victor.

Mullah Omar received complaints several times about Mullah Dadullah's disobedience and waywardness. He was accused of not following the rules of the Taliban movement and being relentless. In the spring of 1998, he had publicly beaten up a district governor of Kabul province. Mullah Omar immediately ordered the Defence Ministry to disarm Mullah Dadullah within a few hours.

This looked impossible, but the Defence Minister Mullah Obaidullah visited the war frontline to see Mullah Dadullah. He was sitting on a hilltop and commanding the battle. Mullah Obaidullah simply said to him: My friend, I know your courage, jihad, and everything. Mullah Omar has ordered me to disarm you. You have very little time, your men should handover their weapons and you should go back to Kandahar. This is Mullah Omar's order.

After thinking it through briefly, he instructed his militants to handover all the weapons and vehicles to the Defence Ministry according to Mullah Omar's order.

order.

Within an hour, his militants were disarmed and hundreds of vehicles were taken into custody. Mullah Dadullah also handed over his personal handgun.

After six months, a delegation of Islamic scholars led by the Taliban Senior Mufti Mawlawi Abdul Ali Deobandi visited Mullah Omar and requested for Mullah Dadullah's forgiveness. Mullah Omar conditionally accepted their request and forgave Mullah Dadullah on the condition that he would never be involved in such activities in the future.

Mullah Omar often told his commanders that anyone who has insolence and pride is not needed by Islam. Therefore we also do not need the jihad and courage of insolent and proud people.

### **ANNULLING HONORARY RANKS AND TITLES BY DECREE:**

During the Taliban regime, a few people tried to illegally take honorary academic and military titles from Kabul University. They brought evidence from the communist and Rabbani regimes, showing that Sulaiman Laeq received an honorary academic title, and a few others were given titles of professors and generals. Mullah Omar was unaware of these issues and signed off on many educational title documents. Even the head of the Olympic Committee, Abdul Shakoor Mutma'in, a Paghman resident who had received medals in a few games, also tried to get the honorary degree of a professor. He visited Kandahar for this and there was an argument in my office between him and the Educational Academy head Muhammad Hussain Mustas'ad. Mustas'ad told him that you can be a sports hero but professor is an educational title. Your efforts to get this is defaming the system and educational institutions. Similarly, the head of Sharia Radio Muhammad Ishaq Nizami unethically acquired the title of professor from another organisation, and sometimes appended the title to his name during the news.

In 2000, Mullah Omar received complaints and after consulting with the staff of educational institutions, nullified all honorary degrees and titles through a decree. After this move no one tried to take honorary titles up until the end.

The Taliban selected their leader with the title of Amir ul-Mu'mineen (Leader of the believers) in 1995 in the presence of Islamic scholars from across the country through taking allegiance. The Taliban wanted an Islamic administrative and government system. Taliban leaders, regular Taliban, and Taliban scholars had different opinions about present-day democracy.

Regular Taliban and mullahs hate the word democracy. My friends and I never heard anything about this from Mullah Omar. Current and former Taliban leaders who are aware of political and international issues have moderate opinions about democracy.

The current political and religious figures in the Taliban do not take an in-depth look at the actual foundations of democracy. They have a few core and important perceptions. One is that anything going on in weak Islamic countries in the name of democracy is wrong. The major powers in these countries create opportunities for their personal benefit. Through economic activities, propaganda and intelligence efforts they prop up those who protect their interests. Even if they are not loyal to their own country, they get ahead by using wealth, the media, and through secret conspiracies. When they are in power then they are honoured by colonialist countries that talk of them positively.

The other thought about democracy is that during elections every group considers lying, making baseless claims and false accusations and showing off for the sake of their candidate. Secularists and Islamists are similar, so how can one expect anything purely Islamic from a religious personality if he is involved in lies, breaking promises, hypocrisy, and boasting. Implementing Islam through such a person is like playing a joke with religion. And if they do not follow these things, then their opponents gain victory, who are supported by anti-Islam powers that provide media, money, and propaganda support.

In those weak Islamic countries where the military is a permanent force and not loyal to Islamic ideology, when Islamists gain victory the colonial powers invest in the military and mobilise them against Islamists, as we have seen in the case of Algeria and Egypt.

Indeed, a democratic government is much better in a country where there is martial law and dictatorship against Islam and Muslims. Similarly, a democracy

is better than monarchist governments who oppress the Muslim nation on the advice of colonial powers.

If a Muslim leader is loyal to his faith, and sovereign and kind to his nation, it is beneficial for Islam and Muslims.

In brief, the Taliban do not give importance to the selection process, but prioritise the impact of Islamic ideology and faith on society. Therefore the Taliban do not like to issue a verdict regarding the types of elections.

## **Chapter 4: The beginning of conflicts with the United States, Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda**

The full name of Osama bin Laden is 'Osama bin Muhammad bin Awz bin Laden'; and he belonged to a Saudi family of Yemeni origin. He received a Master's degree in economics from the Malik bin Abdul Aziz University in Jeddah. Osama bin Laden and the famous Palestinian thinker Abdullah Azzam had offices and training camps in Pakistan for Arab mujahideen during the jihad against the USSR in Afghanistan. Their leader was actually Abdullah Azzam who was killed through a conspiracy along with his sons in Peshawar. Osama was a young man at the time, and participated in the jihad against Soviets in Afghanistan.

At that time, mujahideen from abroad were inclined towards Abdul Rab Sayyaf, as he wielded influence over them. Secondly, Saudi intelligence and other groups providing assistance also trusted Sayyaf.

After the end of the jihad against the USSR, Osama bin Laden returned to Saudi Arabia. On August 2, 1990, Saddam Hussain attacked Kuwait. Saudi asked the US for support. A huge US naval force was stationed near the Saudi border. This was opposed by a few Saudi Islamic scholars and people who did not like the west. They objected to the Saudi government that American forces are a threat to the sovereignty of Saudi Arabia. These people had the recommendations of Osama bin Laden in mind, who had offered to the Saudi government that they would organise a force of Arab mujahideen to protect the country, and that Saudi Arabia shouldn't allow US forces as they would stay there forever. This prediction of Osama was later proven true. The Saudi government expelled Osama and imprisoned many of his friends and Islamic scholars.

Osama bin Laden migrated to Sudan. As the Sudanese economy was weak, he began economic projects in the country that also included the construction of highways. When pressure from the US and Saudi on Sudan increased, Osama

migrated to Afghanistan. In the spring of 1996, a few commanders from Nangarhar visited Sudan to participate in a conference. This included Ustad Sayyaf, Commander Saaz Noor, Hizb commander Fazal Haq Mujahid, and the commander of Mawlawi Khalis Engineer Mahmood, and Sifatullah Qait.

They met with Osama bin Laden in Sudan. On behalf of Sayyaf, Saaz Noor invited him to Afghanistan in case he was expelled from Sudan. Later on, with the consensus and instructions of Sayyaf and Rabbani, an aeroplane returning from India was sent to Sudan. This plane brought Osama bin Laden and his friends and family to Jalalabad. Sayyaf's commander Saaz Noor welcomed them at the airport, but Mawlawi Khalis's commanders were later responsible for support and protection.

The news in Osama's close circles was that Sayyaf sent a message to Osama that the Americans have asked us for your arrest or murder. We will not do this, but for this you have to give us a huge amount to protect you and to convince our counterparts in the government. Osama replied that I am not the same old Osama, my hands are empty and I am now a poor immigrant. I cannot pay such a huge amount. When he saw the strong reaction from Rabbani and Sayyaf, he said 'I will try, just give me time' for the sake of his protection.

At that time, there were a few other signs that the CIA was trying to get close to Osama through another country or the Rabbani regime to either capture him alive or kill him. Therefore a few commanders of Mawlawi Khalis, like Engineer Mahmood and Mu'alim Awal Gul, focused particularly on his protection and the location of his residence was kept a secret. A few months after Osama's arrival, the Taliban captured Nangarhar and the plans for his arrest or murder fell through.

After capturing Nangarhar a few Taliban commanders met with Osama and assured him that he would not face any issues from them. Prior to this a few people had tried to scare Osama off the Taliban. A Hizb commander introduced the Taliban as the Americans' special people, and this was why Osama was initially suspicious of the Taliban.

The Taliban did not require detailed information about Osama. It was enough for them that he was an expert Arab, a former mujahid against the Soviets, Osama

ment that he was an expat Arab, a former mujahid against the Soviets. Osama never entered Kandahar or any adjoining areas from where the Taliban movement began. There were Arab mujahideen in Kandahari mujahideen groups during the jihad. Kandaharis were familiar with their bravery and courage in war, and so they liked them and had a religious affinity with them. On the other hand, the jihadi commanders of Mawlawi Khalis's group were with the Taliban and placed at key positions. They were in contact with Mawlawi Khalis, and so the Taliban had no negative perceptions about Osama.

In February 1997, Mullah Omar invited Osama bin Laden to Kandahar and assured him of support to stay in Afghanistan. Mullah Omar said that your country and other countries are not allowing you to live, you are our Muslim brother and this is your country. But during this visit a few other Emirate officials convinced him not to say anything against Saudi Arabia that would anger the country. Osama bin Laden apparently agreed to this. At that time the conflict between the US and Osama bin Laden was so casual that no one in the Taliban thought this would lead to a big conflict and enmity.

A few days after Osama bin Laden returned to Nangarhar, he shared his security issues with the Taliban which were conveyed to Mullah Omar. He thought it was possible that under the guise of friendship someone could hurt Osama bin Laden in Jalalabad and this will be a source of shame for the Taliban. Therefore, he invited him to Kandahar and offered for him to live under the observation of a few elders. Osama bin Laden and his friends were happy and encouraged by this decision, and in the beginning of March, he and his close friends and their families migrated to a peaceful area in Kandahar.

On March 22, the Independent newspaper in London published an interview with Osama bin Laden in which he threatened Saudi Arabia and the United States. This interview was conducted in Jalalabad prior to his move to Kandahar.

Mullah Omar invited Osama bin Laden on March 25, and told him that we are facing a lot of problems. A conflict with Saudi Arabia is very hard for us; do not upset Saudi Arabia just by issuing threats as this is not beneficial for you. You shouldn't say anything more against Saudi Arabia. Osama bin Laden apparently agreed to this again. He was not asked to stop agitating against the United States as at that time he had no capacity to take any practical step against the US and

as at that time he had no capacity to take any practical step against the US, and no one in the Taliban thought what Osama bin Laden could do in a third country against any one.

On March 26, the Emirate office in-charge Mawlawi Wakeel Ahmad Mutawakkil gave an interview to the BBC about Osama bin Laden. The key points of this interview were:

We told Osama not to use our soil against anyone and to not speak out against Saudi Arabia. Saddam Hussein is no longer a threat to Saudi Arabia so US forces should leave the country.

Osama bin Laden was then allowed to change his location, and increase the number of trusted armed personnel for protection. A few elders including Mullah Abdul Jalil were appointed as liaisons.

Until that May, Pakistan, UAE and Saudi Arabia officially recognised the Taliban government. Saudi Arabia was requesting the Taliban to stop Osama's activities against Saudi Arabia and they were satisfied after Taliban assurances. The issues increased gradually. On one hand, the US pressurised Saudi to motivate the Taliban against Osama, and on the other hand, the Saudi government discovered a few activities of Osama bin Laden against Saudi Arabia.

Osama bin Laden had sent threats to members of the Saudi royal family through a satellite phone, and Saudi Arabia officially complained through diplomatic and other sources. Members of the Taliban Ministers' Council and a few key Taliban officials criticised Osama bin Laden because of this act, but he was still not taken seriously.

In February 1998, Osama sent messages to the media containing harsh words against America. After this, a special US representative Richardson visited Kabul and had lengthy discussions with the head of the Ministers' Council Mullah Muhammad Rabbani and other Taliban officials. Richardson presented the issue of Osama as secondary, and prioritised the actual issues of peace talks between Taliban and its opponents, and of a unity government. At the end he told Mullah Rabbani that Osama is not beneficial for both of us, so expel him from your country.

from your country.

In the meantime there were a few signs that the CIA was trying to kill Osama through Afghan agents, but there wasn't strong intelligence to identify the group.

On May 26, Osama and his friends, with the support of former commanders and a few Taliban leaders, arranged a secret meeting with the media in Khost. Representatives of CNN and other international media outlets were invited. Mullah Omar was not informed about the event. There was a strong global reaction against this. Taliban leaders got angry but Osama bragged that Mullah Omar had stopped him from speaking out against Saudi Arabia, but not America.

As a representative of the Afghan government, Mawlawi Wakeel Ahmad Mutawakkil told the media that Mullah Omar was not aware of this meeting, and the Afghan government does not agree with Osama's comments, and that he would not be allowed to hold such meetings in the future.

Taliban leaders recommended controlling Osama so that he would not be involved in political and media activities in the future, and that he would also not talk with locals or foreigners without the Taliban's permission. This issue sparked new discussions among the Taliban. While regular Taliban strongly supported Osama, Taliban officials were against his activities even though they liked him. Everyone said that we should respect him as a Muslim refugee, but he shouldn't threaten the world from our land because we aren't strong enough. We are only capable to control our country and of Islamic rule.

In June the Saudi intelligence chief Turki al-Faisal visited Kandahar, and discussed the issue of Osama bin Laden. Taliban officials told him that Islamic scholars will be invited for the resolution of this issue as per Sharia. A joint commission of Saudi and Afghan Islamic scholars would hold discussions. But this was not implemented.

Osama continued to threaten Americans to scare them, but the Taliban clearly told Osama that he could only do activities that they approved in their land.

Turki al-Faisal offered millions of dollars in support during his visit, but the Emirate declared it a wrong and shameful offer to expel Osama from Afghanistan in exchange for this support. This proves this idea incorrect that the

Taliban protected him as he financially supported them. At the time that Osama joined Taliban he was not rich enough to support the Taliban movement or government. There was a time when Osama's financial sources were facing a crisis and the Afghan government provided fuel for a limited number of al-Qaeda vehicles. I am a witness to a few documents that mentioned that a certain amount of fuel was issued to Arab mujahideen.

#### CRUISE MISSILE ATTACK ON AFGHANISTAN, AUGUST 1998

On August 7, 1998, US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania were hit by bomb blasts. We read news of this after a week. It didn't seem important to us, nor did we think of Osama bin Laden in this regard. The leadership was very busy on conquering the northern areas, and one day after these blasts we conquered the capital of Balkh province which was Dostum's last stronghold. The US had still not pointed to Osama bin Laden and his friends for these incidents, nor did they share any evidence or news with the Afghan government.

Less than two weeks later, at 10 pm on August 20, the Zaraway camp of Khost came under a US missile attack. Osama bin Laden wasn't there, and nor was a single Arab. A few Pakistanis who had been living there since the jihad against the USSR were killed. A few missiles missed their targets: one hit Maruf district of Kandahar and a few hit Pakistani soil. The Maruf missile didn't cause a blast and was transferred to the Kandahar arms depot.

Ten missiles hit a medicine factory in the capital of Sudan which the Americans claimed to be a factory to manufacture chemicals. But this is still not proven – like Saddam's nuclear weapons. Even the recommendation of the Sudanese government for an international delegation to investigate the factory and see whether it was a chemical or medicine manufacturing factory was not accepted by the Security Council.

The Khost attacks undoubtedly had no connection to the Kenya and Tanzania attacks but were planned months before. The US officially blamed Osama bin Laden for involvement in these attacks two months after the November incident.

On one hand these attacks showed the seriousness of the United States, and on the other hand it created hatred for the US among the Taliban, as this attack was

a message to the Taliban that the US is our direct enemy. This attack complicated the positive moves about Osama bin Laden, and the Taliban declared the United States' enemies to be friends. This created an image of the US in their minds as an invader. On one hand, the Americans provoked the Taliban enemies, and on the other hand the relationship with Iran became more tense following the murder of eleven diplomats.

The Taliban had a harsh reaction, and called it an arrogant attack on the country. Strong protests were held in Kandahar, Nangarhar, Kabul, Mazar and other cities. The Taliban Ministry of Foreign Affairs asked the US for evidence of Osama bin Laden's involvement in the Kenya and Tanzania attacks. Mullah Omar's point of view became more rigid at that time, and he showed a serious reaction against the US military attack and pressure. This was one of the reasons that a meeting in September with Turki al-Faisal was marked by tension.

SAUDI REPRESENTATIVE TURKI AL-FAISAL'S MEETING WITH MULLAH OMAR IN KANDAHAR, SEPTEMBER 1998

In September 1998, the Saudi Ambassador for Afghanistan Salman al Omari who lived in Islamabad informed our embassy in Islamabad that a high-level Saudi official's delegation will visit Kandahar. They shared the date of the visit, and on September 18, a day before the delegation's arrival, Salman al Omari came to Kandahar. The Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Mullah Abdul Jalil and other officials were hosts at the Kandahar guesthouse. He installed a dish like a satellite antenna in the guesthouse compound for special telephonic communication.

At 9 am on September 19, a delegation led by Saudi intelligence chief Prince Turki al-Faisal landed in a special aeroplane at Kandahar airport. It is said that they also had a cage for transporting a criminal.

A large room at the Kandahar Governor's House was furnished for them with carpets, mattresses and pillows. This room also had a path towards the old leadership room. It had two rooms to the side for special meetings and to prepare food. I was busy in the food preparation room readying food and fresh fruits. The guests arrived; the food was ready, and the tea and fresh fruit were in place. The Amir ul-Mu'mineen was also there to welcome the guests. I was in a hurry so the welcoming talks could be taken over by actual discussions and I could

so the welcoming talks could be taken over by actual discussions and I could free myself.

A third delegation from Pakistan headed by Tasneem Rana also arrived. In Kandahar, the former Pakistan consul Major Gul translated Mullah Omar's statements to the delegation in English and their statements to Mullah Omar in Pashto. Five minutes had not even elapsed when Mullah Omar raised his voice. I looked inside. We were familiar with him, and I understood that something was wrong. Mullah Omar angrily said to Major Gul that you should translate word for word as I speak. At that time Major Gul was under the influence and confused.

Mullah Omar told one Talib official who was familiar with English to inform him if Major Gul translated something incorrectly or in an incomplete way. I only heard Mullah Sahib saying that you are the rulers of Islamic world and your ancestors have given lessons of Islamic honour and dignity to the whole world. But today you are capturing an oppressed Muslim for the happiness of infidels. The incident occurred in Africa, he is an enemy of America, and what other right do you have in this?

The meeting ended unhappily. Turki al-Faisal angrily left the room. Mullah Omar also left the room and went towards the office with guards. According to eyewitness statements, including that of Mullah Omar's office employees and the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Mullah Abdul Jalil, the summary of the discussion was as follows:

When the meeting started, Mullah Omar warmly welcomed the delegation. Turki al-Faisal initiated the discussion in a sharp tone, and said to Mullah Omar that we came so that you fulfil your promise and hand over our criminal to us with his hands tied. We will take him with us in the aeroplane. His sharp accent was combined with two major mistakes – first, that he didn't offer condolences or give any good or friendly wishes for the movement, and the second mistake or misunderstanding was that Mullah Sahib never promised them anything like this. There was a hatred against the lie and a violation of promise in Mullah Omar's mood.

At that time, one side lied, and on the other side Mullah Omar was unjustly

blamed for backing out of his promise. Thirdly, Mullah Omar was not mentally prepared for anything against Sheikh Osama bin Laden. He never thought of such a demand from the delegation. He then suddenly grew serious and gave a sharp answer to a sharp question, and also taunted Turki al-Faisal. Mullah Omar's words were – 'Firstly, don't make me out to be a liar, I never promised such nor have I given permission to anyone who represents me to make such promises. Secondly, we have promised you a joint session of Islamic scholars to think over this issue but we never promised to hand over Sheikh Osama bin Laden. You are the rulers of the Islamic capital; oppressed Muslims expect help and condolences from you. But conversely you are handing Muslims over to the enemies and you came here on their orders. The incident happened in Africa, America has claimed Osama bin Laden, what right do you have in this?

Prior to this the Emirate delegation had assured the Saudi government that Osama bin Laden would not do anything against Saudi Arabia and they might have convinced him to accept him. Mullah Sahib told the delegation that you do not have any right over him.

Turki al-Faisal reached Riyadh after a few hours. On the second day an official letter was sent to the Afghan Embassy that the Afghan Ambassador should leave Saudi Arabia. The ambassador was expelled and the first secretary took charge of the Jeddah consulate. That day marked the beginning of the tense relationship between the Islamic Emirate and Saudi Arabia.

#### MULLAH OMAR'S UNINTENTIONAL ANGER WHILE MEETING TURKI AL-FAISAL

I wish to comment on this tense meeting. There was a big misunderstanding right from the beginning that Mullah Omar's representatives unnecessarily exaggerated in satisfying the Saudi government regarding Mullah Omar. Mullah Omar's stance on Osama was introduced as very malleable and flexible, and the Saudi rulers thought this was a type of promise and that Mullah Omar would not reject their offer by making a revolutionary decision. This expectation encouraged them to believe in a positive response to their offer.

Secondly, after the conquest of Mazar (Balkh), the death of Iranian diplomats had caused Iran to threaten to attack Afghanistan. A few days prior to this meeting, the Taliban had found the dead bodies of Iranian diplomats, and Iran

had a strong reaction. The harsh words of Turki al-Faisal at this sensitive time was akin to torturing Mullah Omar. It appeared that Turki al-Faisal was taking undue advantage of the current situation, and so Mullah Omar responded to him in an aggressive manner.

Secondly, Turki al-Faisal used an authoritative tone during the discussion with Mullah Omar and addressed him as a subordinate. This might not be new for Turki al-Faisal, as they used the same language for the leaders of poor Islamic countries like us who needed financial support from Saudi Arabia. But Mullah Omar was completely different, and wise people should have used polite language with him.

The foreign and interior ministers of Pakistan, the foreign minister of Uzbekistan, UN Representative Lakhdar Brahimi and the advisor and deputy president of Turkmenistan merit mention here as people who used a normal tone with Mullah Omar. Mullah Omar was not a proud or stubborn person. He was very humble but he never accepted unjustified stubbornness or pride.

#### MULLAH OMAR'S VIEW OF SAUDI ISLAMIC SCHOLARS

Mullah Omar respected Saudi people, law, and Islamic scholars. In Ramadan he sometimes listened to the religious programmes of Saudi radio. It was his suggestion that the Saudi declaration should be followed in Ramadan or Eid as they make arrangements and the relevant organisations are controlled by Islamic scholars.

He believed that Saudi rulers are very serious in administering and protecting the two holy sites or *haramain*. They are organising activities very well, and far better than anyone else. The Taliban were against every kind of anarchy in Saudi Arabia. The Taliban used the title 'Servant of Haramain' for the Saudi king in official radio transmissions. However, a few Taliban who were close to al-Qaeda sometimes opposed this official Taliban policy.

Mullah Omar was against every official statement that was against Saudi Arabia, but when the issues of Osama and Turki al-Faisal were highlighted by the media, the Taliban sometimes adopted a stance against Saudi Arabia in defence which then created issues for the Taliban. All Taliban officials wanted normal relations

with Saudi Arabia but the issue of Osama bin Laden was highly sensitive, and so it was completely impossible at that time.

Mullah Omar wanted positive relations with Qatar, Sudan, Turkmenistan, Turkey, Kyrgyzstan and China. He also wanted a relationship with Libya. Even though Qaddafi was against the Taliban system, they had the same stance about the western world.

Our officials never opposed having a good relationship with Iran, and we had a very careful policy. But the Taliban were suspicious of Iran's friendship efforts. Taliban leaders close to Mullah Omar saw it was important to have a relationship with Iran, and Mullah Omar was not against this in general.

I remember when eleven Iranian personnel of the Iranian consulate were killed during the fall of Mazar, Mullah Omar was very angry during the investigation. One day he said via radio that if I find those who are involved in this incident, I will execute them without legal proceedings. It was the first time that I had heard such a statement from Mullah Omar, and I understood that day that this wasn't planned by the Taliban.

The relationships with Pakistan and the UAE were a lifeline for us as the countries were the only avenues for us to communicate with the world.

Sheikh Zayed's family was under international pressure, and he was loyal to domestic commitments but he still had sympathies for the Taliban until the end. Mullah Omar was also secretly sympathetic to them. Given the economic bans, UAE was the only country we could have used for air transport.

#### THE TRIAL OF BIN LADEN IN A SHARIA COURT

On November 4, the US government blamed Osama bin Laden and 248 of his friends for their involvement in the bomb attacks in Africa that August. A reward of five million dollars was announced for their capture or death. It was astonishing that the US blamed Osama bin Laden for this act in November and wanted to punish him two months earlier when they tried to kill him in the missile attacks that he survived. CIA documents later showed it was working on a plan to kill him at the end of 1996 in Jalalabad and at the beginning of 1997 in Kandahar.

The Taliban requested American officials for clear-cut evidence of Osama bin Laden's involvement in the incidents in Africa. Under instructions from the leadership, we told the media that handing Osama bin Laden over for a case is useless as the US was trying to kill him even before these incidents. If we hand him over to Saudi Arabia or any other country, the Americans will undoubtedly capture him and begin his trial as a matter of political policy. The only way is for his trial in a court in Afghanistan that will make a decision without any interference and based on evidence.

On the orders of Mullah Omar, the Afghanistan Supreme Court announced a special court for 20 days and requested for evidence against the accused. But the US didn't give any importance to our announcement. Instead, they sped up efforts to kill bin Laden. In the last few days of the trial, the US Embassy in Islamabad sent a video cassette as proof of Osama bin Laden's involvement in the attacks.

At that time, other than the Foreign Affairs Ministry, no other Taliban office was permitted a television or VCR. The only place to watch this video cassette in Kandahar was the Radio and Television building. Mutawakkil came in the evening with the cassette to the building. My interest to watch this proof against bin Laden also increased. We called the technical manager and asked him to open the locked television room to watch one video. He was surprised and smiled, wondering what film will they watch alone in a dark room.

The technical manager during Taliban rule was a pious, bearded person. It was the first time he had heard from us that a film will be seen in the dark. He took time to find the keys and later came holding a bunch of rusted keys as he searched for the specific one. A dusty room was opened and we – two or three friends – sat on chairs. None of us knew how to operate the VCR and we asked the manager to set it up. Mutawakkil gave the cassette to the technical manager. The film showed houses of Osama bin Laden's friends in Sudan, then there were children playing in an open space. As per their press releases that were heard by everyone there was no other news, but we watched the video until the end to get more information. This was an old CNN report about Osama bin Laden and his friends. A copy of this was sent to us as evidence. At the end of the video

Mutawakkil angrily stood up and said they are joking with us.

The next day he told the media that US officials had sent us a copy of a CNN report as evidence that has no link to the Africa incidents. This video has no relation to the incident, so there is no evidence for the US claim. The time for Osama's trial also ended.

EVEN IF OSAMA BIN LADEN LEAVES AFGHANISTAN, WE WILL NOT LEAVE THE TALIBAN (USA)

With the February 1999 attacks on Nairobi and Dar es Salaam as their basis, the US repeated accusations and increased the bounty money on Osama bin Laden, and pressurised Afghanistan from every angle. At that time Osama bin Laden and his friends had planned to give themselves up or leave Afghanistan. They shared their idea with Mullah Omar through Tayyab Agha, and he said how would we know if they reached safely. He asked a group of special guards to accompany Osama bin Laden to their destination and bring back information of their safe arrival. If it was not possible to move forward, the guards would protect them during their return.

Sheikh Osama bin Laden disappeared along with his friends. The news reached the media, and the Taliban also confirmed this and said their whereabouts are unknown. At that time a few selfish people spread the news that the Taliban had made a deal about Osama bin Laden or that they had killed him and his friends. On February 14, the BBC interviewed Mullah Omar about this. The interview's main points were:

We don't know the location of Osama bin Laden. We gave him ten security guards for protection, we told them that if Osama bin Laden wants to leave Afghanistan, send him off in a good manner. Now we do not understand whether he is in Afghanistan or has departed for another country. We cannot force him to leave or hand himself over to anyone.

When the media spread the convincing news of Osama bin Laden's departure from Afghanistan, and the world also thought he has left Afghanistan, the US Foreign Affairs spokesperson James Robbin said in an official statement: if Osama bin Laden leaves Afghanistan, there will be no change in our strategy regarding the Taliban.

On February 14, Washington's official statement gave the Taliban a new sign that the US would not leave them even after Osama bin Laden. Until now Osama bin Laden was considered the only US target. Now the Taliban thought that their entire system is a target of the US. Whatever the US aim was with this official statement, it silenced those Taliban leaders who thought that Osama bin Laden was the main reason for the conflict between the US and the Taliban. A new mentality developed that America is the real enemy of the Islamic government and sovereignty.

It strengthened al-Qaeda's preaching among the youth that America is an international enemy of Islam and Muslims, and one should never expect friendship from the country. I remember sitting in a big meeting of regular Taliban that day when a low-level official told the other: Have you heard? By God! They will not leave us. We shouldn't upset the Sheikh for them. Why should we darken our faces in this world and in the hereafter? It is better that we all together (the Taliban and al-Qaeda) should have an enmity against America.

Such statements were made through the media repeatedly that fostered hatred among common Talibs against America and strengthened al-Qaeda's power and preaching.

After a few months Mullah Omar understood that Osama had not left Afghanistan. Mutawakkil asked what we should say about Osama bin Laden's whereabouts to the media. He said we cannot lie as it is now known that he has not left. Only say that he is in Afghanistan but we don't know his location. On July 7 when Mutawakkil gave the same statement, many viewers thought that the journalist drew this news out of him.

#### ECONOMIC SANCTIONS AGAINST AFGHANISTAN

On July 5, 1999, the US announced economic sanctions against Afghanistan. On October 15, Afghanistan's only airline Ariana was barred from international flights. The Rabbani-led alliance welcomed economic sanctions, as did Iran. India requested economic sanctions against the Taliban as well as Pakistan. These sanctions were gradually increased.

On October 6, the US proposed that the UN Security Council should impose

On October 6, the US proposed that the UN Security Council should impose sanctions against Afghanistan. On November 14, the Security Council also imposed sanctions against the Taliban.

In a statement about the sanctions, Mullah Omar said: “Osama is just an excuse for the US. As a superpower the US wishes to do anything they want. There is a Pashto proverb ‘the water of the powerful flows upwards’. Everybody is supporting the powerful today; we all understand the reality. The injustices of the US are known to the world.”

On November 4, protests were held in major cities including Kabul against UN sanctions on Afghanistan. The protestors attacked the UN office in Kabul and broke the windows. US flags and effigies of Clinton were also burned.

These protests were very intense and it was feared that they might spiral out of control. As there was no media coverage, these protests were not covered. After continuous protests, Mullah Omar asked the protestors to stop and said: Bill Clinton and his friends cannot feed us, not can they stop the sustenance that Allah is providing us. Afghans should stop the protests against sanctions.

Until the signing of sanctions by Bill Clinton, the world was not aware whether Osama was in Afghanistan or had already left. After two days Mutawakkil accepted his presence. The quick action of Clinton on this issue also revealed that the issue of Osama was not important anymore. This disappointed the Taliban, and the issue of Osama didn't appear to be an actual issue between the US and Afghanistan.

THE FIRST AND LAST MEETING WITH OSAMA BIN LADEN (ABDUL HAI MUTM'AIN)

I was asked by friends many times to meet Osama bin Laden, but I don't understand why I didn't have much interest even though I was not against his ideology and point of view. I only met him once by chance and shared a handshake with him.

I saw him on April 15, 2001 when Chief Minister Mullah Muhammad Rabbani passed away and a *fateha* (condolence gathering) was underway at Mullah Muhammad Omar's house for guests and officials. People were visiting Mullah Omar for condolence. At noon I took a few guests to his house and was standing

in the courtyard when two vehicles arrived. A slim, tall man wearing a long Afghan dress and a red patterned Arabic kerchief alighted from the vehicle, surrounded by Arab youth. He had a wheaty complexion, an attractive, dignified face. He looked tired while walking and talking. Among the accompanying friends, a short person I knew by the name Abu Hafs Sagheer introduced me to him.

The sheikh smiled and hugged me. I accompanied him to Mullah Omar as a host. Mullah Omar was sitting in a separate room with Mullah Muhammad Nabi Muhammadi who had come for *fateha*. Mullah Obaidullah was also sitting besides Mullah Omar. I went to the room along with Osama bin Laden, the friends, and his young son.

Mullah Omar greeted them and as he didn't want other guests to enter the room except Sheikh, his men and Muhammadi. He asked to close the door. I closed the door. The guests first jointly offered condolences and after that Mullah Omar said to Muhammadi that the person sitting beside me is Mullah Obaidullah Akhund, the defence minister and our elder friend.

I took the meaning from this that Mullah Obaidullah was to be appointed to Mullah Rabbani's position. My perception was not right for a long time as Mullah Rabbani's official work was carried out by his deputy Mullah Abdul Kabir and he was later joined by Mullah Hassan as a second deputy.

Mullah Omar looked towards Sheikh Osama bin Laden and said: you know him? In response, Muhammad looked sweetly towards him and in Pashto used the Arabic words 'Servant of Muslims' and 'Big Mujahid' to make the Sheikh understand his sympathy for him. In reply the Sheikh smiled and said 'May Allah give you a reward.'

With this my mind went to a three-year-old letter that Muhammadi sent to Mullah Omar through his advisor Muhammad Saeed Hashmi about handing over Osama bin Laden. I unexpectedly read this letter when Hashmi was a guest at the Kandahar guesthouse. I went to the room to meet him but he was in the bathroom. There were three papers lying on the mattress. On the first page Muhammadi had written to Mullah Omar: the Saudi government is dear to the Creator and His creatures. Anyone who is in Afghanistan and involved in

Creator and His Creatures. Anyone who is in Afghanistan and involved in activities against Saudi Arabia should be punished and handed over to the Saudi government. On the second page there was an Arabic translation of that first page, and on the third page in Arabic there was a request to the Saudi king for financial assistance stating that we (the Muhammadi family) are facing financial problems. It looked like the original letter was sent to Mullah Omar's office and these were copies that he would take with him to send to Saudi officials.

I left the room before Muhammadi came out of the bathroom. He didn't know about my presence there and that I had read the letter. After a few days I told this story to my friend Muhammad Hussain Mustas'ad. He asked why I didn't take those copies with me. But I was of the opinion that if I'd known those pages were confidential I would have never read them, and taking them would be exceeding my limits.

#### THE GAS PIPELINE FROM TURKMENISTAN AND INTERNATIONAL COMPANIES

After the USSR's defeat and withdrawal, a few republics of Central Asia which were part of the former USSR got their independence. Countries in the region and major Western companies were planning to trade with the Central Asian Republics through the Indian Ocean and to export their natural resources, and so right after the disintegration of the USSR in 1992 the Turkmenistan gas export project was in the planning and survey stage. The Russians never wanted this project to be implemented by Western companies without their presence. On the other hand, Iran was a good candidate.

On April 14, 1992, the Najib government fell and the country was divided. Through Rabbani's government, the governors of Herat and Kandahar Ismail Khan and Gul Agha Sherzai, Pakistan contracted to import and export goods through Herat and Kandahar to Torghundai. But these convoys didn't even reach Kandahar city owing to the dangers in the area. Minor commanders of the governor who operated without any control robbed the convoys.

After the capture of south-west areas by the Taliban, the regional countries were disappointed and this trade stopped completely. A few months after the Taliban captured Kabul, tripartite meetings about this project were held. Programmes were developed in Turkmenistan, Pakistan, and North and South America for the project's technical and financial work but there was still no written agreement

project's technical and financial work but there was still no written agreement. An Argentinian company called Bidas had started a few exploratory and domestic export activities at that time.

The satellite and professional survey of the area indicated the presence of natural resources especially petroleum and gas in the area, including in Afghanistan. This is the reason that the conflicts of major countries reached this area, and they made quick efforts to achieve things.

The newly independent state of Turkmenistan wanted to use its natural resources independently, free from Russian influence. It looked for an international market for these resources. Russia wanted to use the existing pipelines near Dagestan and Chechnya for the Turkmenistan gas route, so that the gas is transported to Europe through Russia, making Russia a transit route for Turkmenistan gas.

In the early 1990s, Carlos Bulgheroni, the head of the Argentinian company Bidas succeeded in making an agreement with the Turkmenistan President Niyazov Turkmenbashi for the exploration of oil and gas and started the activities. But Bidas was not financially strong enough and so the Saudis were included as partners. The company required financial support from the Saudis, but there was still no agreement for the gas pipeline and discussions were in progress. The Saudi intelligence chief Turki al-Faisal assured Niyazov Turkmenbashi and Bidas that they would use their influence on the Afghanistan and Pakistan governments for the extension of the pipeline. Pakistan and Saudi Arabia began efforts for this during the mujahideen government. The civil war and work conditions did not make it possible to plan the pipeline extension. At the end of 1994 there was a Taliban uprising in the south and the Taliban captured many areas in the next year.

Bidas had contacts with the Taliban, Rabbani and Dostum. Meanwhile an American company based in Texas called UNOCAL (Union Oil Company of California) began negotiations with Turkmenistan.

The head of UNOCAL Marty Miller visited Turkmenistan in mid-1995, and met with President Niyazov Turkmenbashi with the help of the US Embassy in Ashkhabad and convinced the president to void the agreement with Bidas. According to Miller, this agreement was a loss for Turkmenistan as Bidas

would take 75 per cent of the profit and only 25 per cent would be paid to Turkmenistan. This agreement was very similar to the agreement that the US had signed with Saudi Arabia during the first half of the 20th century for oil exports. Miller also advised Turkmenbashi that if Bridas does not back out of the agreement, you should file a case against it in the Texas Natural Resources Conflicts Court, the judges there are our people and will make a decision in your favour. If Bridas asks for their expenses, we (UNOCAL) will make those payments.

On the other hand, [missing word] convinced Pakistan to support UNOCAL by offering more profit share. At the end of 1996, when the Taliban captured Kabul, direct discussions were held with them about this topic. The Taliban said that as a transit country we will support everyone who gives our country a good profit and that Turkmenistan and important countries agree with this.

On May 4, 1997, under Taliban rule, the head of Bridas came to an agreement on Turkmenistan gas import through Afghanistan; that a \$2.5 million natural gas pipeline covering a 1200 kilometre distance would be laid from Turkmenistan. But the agreement was not signed as yet. The other companies competing with Bridas for this project were the Saudi company Delta and the American company UNOCAL.

After ten days, the May 14 session of the Economic and Cultural Organisation was held. Member countries included Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Azerbaijan and Afghanistan. During this, there was a declaration of fifteen agreed-on points, including: a train and railway line among member states, paved roads, a gas and oil pipeline from Ashkhabad until Iran and Pakistan, import of electricity and trade between member states.

On May 15, the American media reported that Pakistan and Turkmenistan have signed a gas pipeline agreement with Delta and UNOCAL. According to the agreement, Turkmenistan will export 20 billion cubic metres of gas to Pakistan, increasing to 40 billion cubic metres by 2002. The United States offered the Taliban through Pakistan to give the gas pipeline project to UNOCAL.

Competition ratcheted up between other countries and companies. On July 22

Competition ratcheted up between other countries and companies. On July 22, representatives of UNOCAL and Delta met with the Northern Alliance in Mazar-e-Sharif to gain their support for the pipeline route through the north. The opponents had announced their own capital and warmly welcomed the representatives of the companies, who were greeted by dressed up girls wearing makeup.

A day later, a meeting was held between representatives of Pakistan, Afghanistan and Turkmenistan for the gas pipeline route. The participants included the Minister of Mines Ahmed Jan, Pakistan's transport minister and Turkmenistan's minister for oil and gas.

On August 28, the Afghan government said it would sign an agreement with Bidas soon for the Turkmenistan gas pipeline project.

At that time, Mullah Ahmed Jan went to Argentina, and from there on to Saudi Arabia. During a meeting with Saudi officials, a high-ranking Saudi intelligence official told him to sign the agreement with Bidas because UNOCAL wanted to delay the work, unlike Bidas. America is a superpower, and if you sign an agreement with UNOCAL it will force you to accept everything. You will not be an independent partner. He cited Saudi Arabia's example that they could not do anything about oil agreements without America's approval.

Taliban leaders visited Turkmenistan and Pakistan and held meetings with foreign companies. The competition between Bidas and UNOCAL was a hindrance to starting the work. Turkmenistan wanted to work with UNOCAL, as did Pakistan. Afghanistan was unable to do anything without the agreement of these countries as it was only a member of the project for the transit route.

Mullah Ahmed Jan says the Saudi official's statement that UNOCAL wanted to delay the work was true. According to Ahmed Jan, UNOCAL was more of an intelligence project; on one hand it wanted Turkmenistan's natural oil and gas resources under America's influence, and on the other hand it wanted to stop the pipeline extension during Taliban rule. So they remained in the race until they knocked Bidas out of the competition and later closed their offices in Afghanistan.

When UNOCAL came forward as the member of a consortium, Turkmenistan

when UNOCAL came forward as the member of a consortium, Turkmenistan supported the company. At that time Turkmenistan had won a case against Bridas in Texas with UNOCAL's support and removed Bridas from the competition. Turkmenistan visas for Bridas representatives were even halted for some time.

On October 23, 1997, the Minister of Industry and Mines Mullah Ahmed Jan went to Ashkhabad by helicopter via the Herat border with Turkmenistan and met the Turkmenistan Foreign Minister Boris Şyhmyradow. He invited the Afghan government to work with this new consortium; the government agreed as there was no other option.

On October 25, Turkmenistan announced an agreement with this international consortium, which included America's UNOCAL, Hyundai from South Korea, Honda from Japan, Saudi Arabia's Delta, and a 10 per cent share for Russia's Gazprom. But the Russians denied being a part of the agreement. According to the agreement, the gas pipeline would first route through Multan in Pakistan and then to India. The US and Pakistan also agreed to this new pact.

That December, Mullah Ahmed Jan visited Houston, Texas on the invitation of the head of UNOCAL. After a lengthy meeting they went to France, where they had discussions about the project with the French company Total. The company did not show any interest in competing with UNOCAL and Bridas.

The agreement that was ready to be signed was very beneficial for Afghanistan. According to sources in the ministry of mines and industry, some of the clauses of the agreement were:

- In this major project, excepting the professional staff, all other workers will be Afghan and there will be job opportunities for 60,000 people.
- The gas pipeline will be the property of the implementing company for 30 years, and Afghanistan would be paid on a per cubic metre basis as transit fees, which came to approximately \$350 million a year.
- Afghanistan can export its gas through this pipeline, but this pipeline will be Afghanistan's property after 30 years.

- Gas will be provided to all villages within a 30-kilometre radius of the pipeline, and energy generating turbines will be installed where required and energy supplied to nearby areas.
- A pipeline from Sheberghan will connect to this main pipeline, and the gas entering this will enter the sub-pipeline in the Kandahar limits to be supplied to other cities.
- Afghanistan will help in rehabilitating and cleaning petroleum and oil wells. The Sheberghan gas refinery will be repaired and tens of similar public welfare projects will be initiated.

Before signing the agreement with Afghanistan, UNOCAL opened offices in Kandahar and Kabul in early 1998 and began to plan the implementation of the project.

The Afghan government's support for UNOCAL was reduced when conflict over Osama bin Laden sparked with the United States. This company undoubtedly had a lot of Afghan agents affiliated with the CIA who were appointed to key positions after the US invasion of Afghanistan, including the former Supreme Court head Abdul Salam Azimi, Khalilzad, Hamid Karzai, and Engineer Muhammad Siddique, the minister of mines during the Karzai regime. These Afghans were official employees of Azimi and Siddique's companies, a few were observers and others were advisors.

CIA documents reveal that in 1997, the staff of UNOCAL gave them information about Osama bin Laden in Kandahar. The goals and the objectives of this company make it more suspicious.<sup>[1]</sup>

Finally in August 1998, when America attacked Afghanistan with cruise missiles, UNOCAL officially announced the delay of the pipeline extension. After the US announcement of sanctions on Afghanistan, UNOCAL closed its offices in the country.

After the announcement of the delay by UNOCAL, the involved parties were compelled to contact Bridas again. Bridas had filed a case then against UNOCAL in the international court, but before that Bridas was convicted in

another court in Texas by UNOCAL, acting through Turkmenistan.

In April 1999, a meeting was held in Islamabad between Mullah Ahmad Jan, the Pakistani Minister for Oil and Natural Resources Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan, and the deputy of Turkmenistan's president. The gas pipeline agreement was discussed from its initiation.

In September 1999, Mullah Ahmed Jan learned about Pakistan and Turkmenistan's possible contract with a Chinese company that would take on the gas pipeline project instead of Bridas and UNOCAL. There were similar discussions in progress with Malaysia's Petronas. But everything came to a halt in November owing to sanctions by the UN Security Council.

Mullah Abdul Salam Zaeef, who was the deputy minister of industry and mines, believes that the main reason behind UN sanctions was not making an agreement with UNOCAL. He wrote this in 2016 in an article about the TAPI project:

In 1999, when I was the Deputy Minister of Industry and Mines we had a meeting about this project in Ashkhabad. For three days we met with representatives of interested countries and companies. I had travelled for this project earlier as well, and several others had also travelled and held discussions. It was the last meeting in 1999; on the second day we had a lot of discussions about the role of UNOCAL. Pakistan insisted that UNOCAL should implement the project; Turkmenistan was not interested and preferred Bridas. We initially supported Pakistan's point of view. Turkmenistan's Turkmenbashi specially invited us at night, and during dinner he reminded us of Afghan's benefaction, and shared three key points with us that he insisted he wasn't able to share in the meeting:

- He said two things would be done for Afghans. We can never repay the independence we have. He said two works would be done for Afghans as a gift. In our capacity, we will provide electricity to some areas of Afghanistan.
- How much will this TAPI project be delayed, and at last will it be done through Afghanistan? Even if some countries don't want this work.

- He said: do you understand the sensitivity or not? But we understand completely that we are small and defenceless countries, we are still under the influence of Russians and they never want Americans to enter this area. If you ask for UNOCAL like Pakistan then it is beneficial for us that this project is delayed. Survival and security is our national priority.

The next day we affirmed the recommendation of Turkmenistan and signed a memorandum with Bridas which made the Americans angry.

The US took a stand for one company, in my opinion – this is a limited thought and a basic interpretation. There is no doubt that Central Asia's natural resources were and are a target for Americans. The US has other objectives as well in the region, and the Taliban's government, system, and strict religious structure were a hindrance to them. After the success of the mujahideen, the US considered Afghanistan as a permanent defeat for the Russians and a win for them. The conflict between the mujahideen made it easier for the US, but the Taliban's strong role, hatred of the US and ignoring the west became an intolerable nightmare to them, even though the Taliban had no intention of enmity with the US and never even wanted to surrender.

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<sup>1</sup> From the book Ghost Wars by Steve Coll.

## **Chapter 5: Relations and conflicts with neighbouring and regional countries**

### CONFLICTS AND DIPLOMACY WITH IRAN

After the Taliban uprising, Iran was suspicious from the outset about the Taliban movement. But when there was a battle in Ghazni between the Iran-supported Hizb-e Wahdat militias and the Taliban, and when Hizb-e Wahdat leader Abdul Ali Mazari was killed, Iran considered the Taliban to be their enemy.

Iran openly supported Hekmatyar and coalition forces against the Taliban. Iran openly provided political, financial and military support to Massoud, Dostum, and Hizb-e Wahdat. After the Taliban gained control of Kabul, Hekmatyar and his family members sought asylum in Iran and propagated religious verdicts (fatwa) and war against the Taliban via Iranian radio.

After the conquest of Herat, the Taliban sent many delegations to Iran but a relationship could not be established even though they agreed on a few points. The Taliban wanted a good relationship with Iran but because of their supporting Hazara militia, Iran was pessimistic about the Taliban. Iran did not recognise the Taliban but still opened consulates in Herat, Nangarhar, and Mazar.

The incident of the eleven Iranian consulate staff whose bodies were found in a ditch on September 10 is still unclear to this day. This was a critical incident for Mullah Omar. The involvement of the Taliban was not proven after several investigations; it is possible that it was carried out by a few people who were scared because of the sensitivity of the issue. A few sources state that it happened as per the policy of Iran. In summary, nothing about this incident can be accepted or rejected. In a radio message, Mullah Omar used very strong and threatening statements for those who were involved in this incident.

Iran not only threatened a military attack against the Taliban but also amassed its military on the Nimruz and Herat borders. Their military planes and helicopters

entered our territory a few times but because of the sensitivity of the issue Mullah Omar did not allow us to attack them. However there was an order if that if they carry out an attack on Afghanistan then the Taliban should retaliate. A few American organisations also provided information that Iran has intentions of attacking Afghanistan. The Taliban also sent its forces to the border armed with heavy weapons and armoured tanks.

Iran, like others, wanted to stop the Taliban's advancement towards the defeated Hizb-e Wahdat forces and reduce their military pressure on Hizb-e Wahdat and Massoud forces by engaging the Taliban on several fronts. Mullah Omar requested for the intervention of the United Nations through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In order to boost the morale of his forces and to send a message to Iran, he made harsh statements that were published by well-known media outlets. Mullah Omar addressed Iran in his statements and said that Iranians do not consider us as Muslims nor as infidels. If Iran attacks our forces, we will venture thirty kilometres into Iran.

On the official request of the Taliban, the United Nations special envoy Lakhdar Brahimi visited Iran and then Afghanistan. We were also present at his meeting with Mullah Omar.

#### THE ROLE OF THE UNITED NATIONS IN A POTENTIAL WAR BETWEEN IRAN AND THE TALIBAN

On October 4 at 9 am, Lakhdar Brahimi and the head of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference came to Kandahar in a UN aeroplane. They were accompanied by a few foreigners. The delegation led by Brahimi was first taken to the graveyard of the thousands of Taliban who were killed by General Malik, and then they came to Kandahar city. Brahimi was very sensitive and deft; he cleverly started the discussion with Mullah Omar's temperament in mind. He talked about the culture and tradition of Afghanistan and then, along with the issues of narcotics, he came to the actual topic of the Iran-Afghanistan conflict.

The meeting went smoothly, and the head of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference Ibrahim al Bakar was sitting quietly until the end. When Mullah Omar entered the meeting hall al Bakar began to tremble. I thought that he might be thinking that Mullah Omar would address him harshly like Turki al-Faisal.

This showed the propaganda spread by Turki al-Faisal, who used to say that Mullah Omar does not like Arab rulers. This was not true as the issue of Turki al-Faisal was very different and sensitive. In the afternoon Brahimi and al-Bakar returned to Islamabad.

At a press conference he declared the meeting with Mullah Omar to be positive and beneficial. He told the BBC at the press conference: "I am thankful to Mullah Omar for warm hospitality. My first meeting with him was in a very good environment and successful. We have advanced to reduce the dispute between Afghanistan and Iran. I first visited the graveyard where the Taliban killed in Mazar-e Sharif are buried and still their burial was in process. I will not forget what I saw there. These observations motivate us that we should make efforts to end wars in this country so that there is friendship and collaboration between all those living in the region."

#### THE NORMALISATION OF RELATIONS WITH IRAN

By the end of 1998, the relationship with Iran had become one of enmity. And after the victory of Mazar-e Sharif, eleven Iranians were killed which saw the mobilisation of forces from the two countries at the border. During the conquest of Bamiyan and Mazar, Taliban seized Iranian weapons from Hizb-e Wahdat which had been provided as support by Iran.

After the conquest of Bamiyan, a few Hazara leaders including Akbari joined the Taliban. They were officially assigned jobs in Bamiyan and in other areas. The open enmity of Americans against the Taliban, encouraged Iran to trust the Taliban against the US. They also understood that the murder of Iranian citizens in Herat was not intentional or planned by the Taliban leadership.

During the period of sanctions against the Taliban government, Iran opened its border for food and other important goods. It was a critical route for essential goods. When Mawlawi Wakeel Ahmad was appointed as a minister for foreign affairs, he focused on these relationships even though there were opponents to this among the Taliban. Delegations were exchanged on the issue of the Helmand river. Intelligence agreements were also part of these diplomatic visits. These good relations with Iran remained in force until the collapse of the Taliban government.

## DEADLY BLASTS AT MULLAH OMAR'S HOUSE

On the afternoon of August 24, 1999, I was standing near the main door to my apartment when I stopped the person in charge of security for the sixth area. He was passing in a vehicle and I wanted to ask him some information. I asked him where he was going. Bakht Muhammad said: Someone parked a vehicle near Mullah Omar's house on the main road and there is no one there. Mullah Omar's guards just informed me. I am going to check on whose car this is and why it is stopped there.

That evening, I was going to the provincial guest house which was next to Mullah Omar's house, about a kilometre away from the office. I reversed my vehicle to leave when a blast shook the whole city. At that time our minds went to the US sanctions, and I thought of a US cruise missile or airstrike against Mullah Omar.

On the same day unknown aeroplanes were seen at the Afghan-Pakistan border. Some officials also considered that, but the most critical news was about Mullah Omar's life and death. We forgot everything. I waited a few minutes to confirm whether the target of the bomb or the missile was Mullah Omar's house or some other place. On the radio communication system, everyone was shouting about Mullah Omar's life. In the meantime Mullah Omar said I am alive but other friends and family members are buried under debris.

Like all the other elders I moved towards Mullah Omar's house. We moved the family members to a safe area. We were still looking at the sky as we had no idea whether this was an air or a ground attack. Many people were killed and injured. No one near the main door had survived, which immediately gave a clue about the type of blast. More than ten of Mullah Omar's close friends from the time of the jihad, and two brothers Mullah Abdul Khaliq and Abdul Salam were martyred. One of his wives was injured. The living room was not impacted much by the blast because of the walls. Most of his family members survived but the death of his close friends disheartened him to an extent that he was unable to forget this incident.

When we reached the site, the intelligence chief was standing there and his friends were looking for the martyred friends. Qari Hamid Gul said that the same

vehicle was full of explosives. Bakht Muhammad and Mullah Omar's brothers wanted to tow the vehicle and take it to another location, but someone was present there with a remote control who pressed the detonator. The plan was to cause an explosion as Mullah Omar entered his house. The attack took place on a Thursday, when Mullah Omar used to leave his office early. The planners had made note of the timing, but on that day Mullah Omar went home earlier than usual.

This was the first major security incident after the Taliban came into power. The security of Kandahar had a special status during the Taliban regime. No one thought that such a big incident could take place. Prior to this the Taliban never cared about their own personal security and only took measures to protect public places. But after this incident key officials concentrated on instituting security measures in their organisations.

The US Ministry of Foreign Affairs condemned the incident a day later and expressed sympathy for those affected. Mawlawi Mutawakkil told the media that according to an initial investigation the US was not involved in the attack. Mullah Omar gave an interview to Voice of America and said that there was foreign involvement in the attack but America was not involved. We have many enemies and those responsible for the blast cannot vanish.

The perpetrators were never exposed, but there were suspicions and gossip about a few commanders of Helmand who had support from Iran. Iran – with the support of Hekmatyar and even Hamid Karzai – was also named. It was considered to be the place where the attack was planned.

#### THE BEGINNING OF THE RELATIONSHIP WITH PAKISTAN

After the conquest of Kandahar, a low-level delegation from Pakistan visited Kandahar to receive the remaining goods of a trade convoy that was looted by militias or on a highway prior to the Taliban taking power. This convoy was routed from Pakistan to Torghundai through Kandahar and Herat after an agreement between Kandahar Governor Gul Agha Sherzai and Pakistan's interior ministry. Sherzai was governor in name only and not capable of providing security on the highways like Ismail Khan. This convoy was then looted and some of the stolen goods came into Taliban custody from militias

after the capture of Kandahar. This delegation comprising low-level staff from Pakistan's interior ministry and the ISI visited Kandahar. The Taliban treated the delegation very carefully and in a cold manner, and handed over the remaining goods after they presented documented proof.

Mullah Muhammad Abbas, the head of the Supreme Shura, met the delegation who told him that Pakistan wants to support you and intends to have a good relationship with the Taliban. But Mullah Abbas rudely said that we are fed up of your friendship and support. Do not create more issues among Afghans. Mullah Abbas hinted at the conflict between Rabbani and Hekmatyar.

During Taliban rule, a colonel told this story to the Afghan Ambassador Shahabuddin Dilawar, that initially the Taliban responded to us rudely and in an unsuitable manner. But we knew that the Taliban do not know about power and the enduring nature of war, and eventually they will need someone's support. Initially, the frosty relationship between Pakistan and the Taliban was beneficial for the opposition. But supporters from Pakistan-based Afghan refugees and supporting youth groups freely visited Afghanistan. Tens of injured Taliban militants were taken from Afghanistan to Pakistani hospitals every day which is why Pakistan was deemed a supportive country. Although Pakistan knew about the treatment of injured Afghans during the jihad, militants injured during the civil war were also taken openly to Pakistan for treatment but opponents declared this behaviour of Pakistan to be a sign of its permanent support for the Taliban.

WHY DID PAKISTAN PREFER THE TALIBAN?

A day after the capture of Herat, Burhanuddin Rabbani's supporters attacked the Pakistani Embassy in Kabul and set it on fire. One embassy staffer was killed in the attack and a few were severely injured. Pakistan closed its embassy in response and broke off diplomatic ties with Afghanistan. This adversely impacted the Rabbani government as a key neighbouring country broke off ties with his government and strengthened his rivals.

Pakistan had strong intelligence links with jihadi commanders in Kabul and knew that the protest was organised by the government and everything was done deliberately. The supporters of Rabbani and Massoud thought that the best

response war to pressure Pakistan through the death of many Panjshiri youths in the Herat battle. Pakistan had never practically supported the Taliban until then, and only the people of Pakistan shown support and sympathy.

On the other hand, Pakistan was also suspicious about the role of Iran in this attack, since after the fall of Herat, Iran was worried about its weak role in Afghanistan and so wanted Pakistan to close its embassies and face issues. Pakistan was also doubtful about India's role in the attack.

A few people believe that the mysterious killings of eleven Iranians in 1997 after the Taliban recaptured Mazar-e Sharif was Pakistan's revenge for the attack on the embassy in Kabul, but there is no evidence for these claims.

The attack and arson incident at the Pakistan Embassy in Kabul disappointed Pakistan and kickstarted its efforts to forge a friendship with the Taliban. It expressed interest in an opening an equivalent embassy in Jalalabad. A relationship was established with the Eastern Shura led by Haji Qadeer instead of Rabbani, and it was planned to carry out the tasks of the Kabul Embassy from the Jalalabad Consulate.

All seven mujahideen groups were established in Pakistan, and they carried out their political and military activities from there until the fall of the Najib government. Burhanuddin Rabbani also reached Kabul with Pakistan's support. After the Mujadiddi government, he was successful in the democratic government election in Peshawar – with the consultation of Pakistanis. Pakistan was accused of supporting Hekmatyar during the war between the Rabbani and Hekmatyar militias.

When the Taliban initially appeared in Kandahar, they were welcomed by Rabbani and Sayyaf and called 'angels of peace'. When the Taliban fought against Ismail Khan in the south and Massoud's forces in the capital, Rabbani and his supporters accused the Taliban of having Pakistan's support. At that time, Pakistan and the Rabbani government had a normal official and diplomatic relationship. Pakistan looked at the Rabbani government as their representative government in Afghanistan.

When the objections of Rabbani and his coalition forces increased against

Pakistan, they offered friendship to India against Pakistan resulting in the bloody attack on the Pakistani Embassy in Kabul. This was followed by efforts by a few political and religious groups and people to establish relations with the Taliban. Pakistan was also eager to establish important political and military ties with the Taliban because of their successes and victories. Pakistan initially had honorary consulates in Herat, Mazar, Jalalabad and Kandahar as the actual authority was with the embassy in Kabul. But after the attack on the embassy, the Kandahar Consulate was given powers and a consulate was also opened in Herat. This led to an official relationship between the Taliban and Pakistan, and this was replaced by fundamental and necessary official ties between the two governments during the Taliban regime.

On one hand, the Taliban's unpleasant relations with the world compelled the Taliban to have diplomatic and political ties with Pakistan. But Pakistan always looked to these relationships according to its needs and they never had any religious motives or a strategic partnership. But the public solidarity and the relations of the Taliban with the religious segment of society was a different motivator. The Taliban slowly and gradually moved towards a relationship with Pakistan.

#### CHALLENGING RELATIONS WITH PAKISTAN AND MUSHARRAF'S COUP

In July 1999, when the US imposed one-sided sanctions against Afghanistan, the Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif strongly criticised the Taliban and said that there were a few Pakistani extremists with the Taliban who were wanted in Pakistan. It was not a secret that along with Uzbeks, Tajiks, and Chechens, Pakistani jihadis were also present at Taliban bases and on the front line. They also took part in battles along with the Taliban and most of them were from Kashmiri organisations – and Pakistan had no issues with them.

Many volunteer mujahideen of Kashmiri groups, like the Arab mujahideen, were present in the mujahideen training centres during the jihad against the USSR as well. Hizb ul-Mujahideen, al Badar, Harakat ul-Mujahideen and other jihadi organisation volunteers were known to the mujahideen of Khost, Paktia, Nangarhar and other provinces.

These volunteers were not invited by the Taliban, nor were they officially sent

by Pakistan. They were supporting the Taliban because of their devotion to jihad. The Taliban were not able to differentiate between who was good or bad on Pakistan's request. Whatever their reputation might be in Pakistan, in Afghanistan they were living as expatriate mujahids and Muslim brothers.

Mullah Omar was not interested in the charter and policy of the Sipah-e Sahaba. A few people from this group were in Afghanistan with other Kashmiri jihadis. When a famous Islamic scholar Maulana Muhammad Yousaf Ludhianvi was killed in Karachi, I heard Mullah Omar via the radio addressing Tayyab Agha to tell them – the Sipah-e Sahaba people – that “May Allah make you poor: because of your actions, Islamic scholars at the level of the Umma are being martyred.”

The Taliban thought that Nawaz Sharif's harsh comments weren't because of the presence of a few people in Afghanistan, but rather that he wanted to please America and the West. Through his statements the Pakistani government wanted to stand against the Taliban with Western and public support. Nawaz Sharif also spoke against the Taliban in the presence of Saudi and Emirati rulers. In the end the brother of Nawaz Sharif [Shahbaz Sharif] used harsh words for the Taliban and Afghanistan. This was not suitable for the provincial leader of Punjab. It appeared that Shahbaz Sharif was more sympathetic to and supportive of the West than Nawaz Sharif. Shahbaz Sharif threatened that we will close our border to Afghanistan. Statements of this kind were of great concern to us at time when we were under immense global pressure.

When the Pakistan Army took over the government through a coup on October 12, we were happy that there will no longer be a harsh stance from the Nawaz Sharif government and our issues with Pakistan will be reduced for a while.

After the announcement of the coup, Mullah Omar asked me to prepare an announcement, but the words of the announcement had a touch of welcoming the coup and reproaching the government. When I read the text of the announcement to Mullah Omar over the phone he said that the language used was not correct. We shouldn't reproach the former government or welcome the new one. Well wishes, bilateral support and Islamic brotherhood should be the actual message of the announcement. Our policy should be clear

regarding non-interference in the domestic politics of Pakistan.

I rewrote the announcement but I still termed the coup as a reaction to the opponents of Pakistan. I read it to Mullah Omar a second time and he approved it. I sent this announcement to media houses. The main points were:

The government and people of Afghanistan want peace and a strong government in Pakistan. Yesterday's military coup is an internal issue of Pakistan. This is a reaction to the actions of those foreign connections that are against the sovereignty of Pakistan, its people, military, and the parliamentary government.

#### MULLAH OMAR'S RECOMMENDATION TO MUSHARRAF TO IMPLEMENT AN ISLAMIC SYSTEM

In the period after the coup, Musharraf appointed himself president. Mullah Omar sent him an official letter. This letter was written in Mullah Omar's office and the main point was: "Pakistan is a country of Muslims and the people want Islamic laws. So this is a chance as you (Musharraf) have both government and military powers and no one can stand against you. You can easily announce Islamic Sharia as the official constitution of Pakistan and implement it in your higher courts."

I do not have information about the response to this letter, but Musharraf was probably quiet or he excused himself or gave other reasons.

Pakistani Islamic scholars and the religious class strongly supported the Taliban at that time. Mullah Omar thought himself capable of supporting Musharraf in this regard. But the Taliban later learnt about Musharraf's policy and that he has no interest in Islam or Muslims. He joined hands with the Americans in the invasion against us and also put the sovereignty of Pakistan in danger, which led to this country falling permanently into turmoil. He insulted his medals and his atomic scientists to please others.

Pakistani governments maintained relations with the Taliban for political and technical needs, and for this they considered the world as 'necessary' to them. But the religious class of Pakistan and its people had a strong religious and heartfelt attachment with the Taliban.

Mullah Omar never wanted to interfere in any country's internal affairs, including Pakistan. But he considered relations with religious people in Pakistan to be the same as his own people. Even though Mullah Omar didn't like the acts and policy of Pakistan's religious groups, nor their political role in the current democracy, but he respected Pakistani Islamic scholars and considered them friends.

HIJACKING OF INDIAN AEROPLANE, DECEMBER 22, 1999

Mullah Omar's office in Kandahar received information from the Ministry of Air Operations that a hijacked aeroplane was requesting permission to land at Kabul Airport but it was not allowed. The ministry said that the aeroplane was currently on the Kandahar route. Pakistani officials informed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other important officials that this hijacked plane is from India, and that the official recommendation of the Pakistani government was to not permit the plane to land. Pakistanis believed that in this critical situation, this act could have a negative impact on the Islamic Emirate as well as Pakistan. When Mullah Omar heard about this, after a short delay he told airport officials via radio to allow the plane to land. All important officials heard this message on the repeater radio.

When Mullah Omar ordered to allow the aeroplane to land, the plane had crossed the Kandahar limits and its route was towards the UAE through Iran. Those government officials who were against the landing of the aeroplane were no longer worried as the aeroplane had left Afghan airspace. After a few hours Haji Farid, the in-charge of Ariana Airline in Dubai, informed us over the phone that the hijacked plane had landed in Dubai's al-Minhaj Airport for fuel and food for the passengers, and it would take off again after that. The Foreign Affairs Minister Mawlawi Wakeel Ahmad Mutawakkil and a few other officials emphasised that there was nothing to be gained here and so Pakistan was also against it.

In the late hours of the night, a high-ranking Pakistani military official called Brigadier Sultan spoke to Mullah Omar on the phone and shared their government's advice and reasons. The brigadier said: "On the one hand you are under pressure from the world and there are economic sanctions against you, on the other hand India points at Pakistan for every act. If you allow the aeroplane

to land it will be harmful for Afghanistan and Pakistan. Our relations with India are already very complicated.” Mullah Omar replied that this is our decision, and there are special objectives for our government and country behind this decision.

He clearly told us about these objectives on the radio: If the hijackers are Muslims, we will support them as per the sharia, but if they are Hindus we will hand them over to the Indian government to establish relations with them. These words were heard by all the participants of this special repeater radio and fortunately most of them are still alive.

The head of Ariana Airlines in Dubai’s Al Minhaj Airport probably informed the Indian aeroplane that it could land at Kandahar Airport.

After offloading the dead bodies of one man and one woman, as well as 33 women and children, the aeroplane came to Kandahar. At that point no one was aware of the hijackers or their objectives. But it later became clear that this aeroplane departed from Nepal’s Kathmandu airport towards the Indian capital of New Delhi. The plane was carrying 213 passengers including 11 crew members and a few diplomats. The aeroplane suddenly changed its route towards Amritsar city and departed again after refuelling. Indian officials knew that the plane had been hijacked. After Amritsar, the plane landed in the Pakistani city of Lahore and then left for Kabul.

The plane landed at Kandahar in the morning. I also went to the airport, and to the control tower, where the Foreign Affairs Minister Wakeel Ahmad Mutawakkil was sitting. The tower officials were talking to the hijackers in English. They first asked what type of food the passengers would like to have. They said Kabuli pulao. There was a person with me in the office called Zahir, whose mother was Indian. He was raised in India and fluent in Hindi. We first brought him in to talk to the hijackers and ask them what they want, but after communicating with them it was clear that the hijackers were Pakistani and spoke Urdu.

The hijackers demanded the release of thirty-five Kashmiri freedom fighters including Maulana Masood Azhar from Indian prisons and a huge amount of money. Later on the request of the Islamic Emirate they recanted their demand of money. This had no element of morals and humanity and showed that they

of money. This had no element of morals and humanity and showed that they only hijacked the plane for money – so the Emirate did not support them in this demand and supported their demand for the release of prisoners.

There was immense pressure on India from countries whose citizens were on board the plane. The Red Crescent and the UN contacted the Indian government about the incident. Before the plane landed, the Indian government agreed that for the sake of the passengers and human needs, the Afghan government should allow the plane to land for fuel and food.

Wakil Ahmad Mutawakkil questioned the hijackers. They said this is our last landing, we cannot go anywhere else now and if someone forces us, there will be no plane and passengers. Mullah Omar's stance on this was clear, but this response of the hijackers helped Mutawakkil in diplomatic efforts and handling the media.

Mutawakkil told the press that with India's permission we have allowed the plane to land for fuel and food. But the hijackers are now refusing to fly again and are threatening to kill themselves and the passengers. This is a dangerous situation. India should take positive steps to solve the issue.

Regional and international media and diplomats were focused on the issue. A few wise people raised the issue through the press that if anything adverse were to happen the world's enmity of the Taliban would increase. The Indian government requested global support to solve the issue.

The Russian government suggested calling an emergency meeting of the UN Security Council. The US Foreign Minister declared this act as terrorism and an act against humanity. He said India and regional countries should make efforts along with the Afghan government to release the hostages. By regional countries he meant Pakistan. Afghanistan and Pakistan were under pressure, and Brigadier Sultan's statement proved to be true.

The Emirate established a permanent security group for the security of the aeroplane. They had a special uniform and were armed. They besieged the plane so that no one in another uniform could get close to the plane or that the hijackers do not act in a rogue manner.

There were many members of the Pakistani and international media in Kandahar. It was my responsibility to look after their affairs. Mutawakkil updated journalists about the progress. The organised monitoring and strict security measures of Kandahar airport, and the delicate diplomacy of Mawlawi Mutawakkil satisfied many international observers. The UN Human Rights head Eric de Mul told the media: We are thankful to the Taliban as they care about the hostages and have successfully continued their efforts. Even though they are under immense international pressure, they are very close to resolving the issue successfully.

On December 27, a group of fifty people including the technical staff of the aeroplane came from India to Kandahar by a UN plane. They stayed at the Kandahar Airport guesthouse. After a week of continuous talks, and lengthy discussions with Mullah Mutawakkil, the Indian Foreign Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh brought down three prisoners – Maulana Masood Azhar, Mushtaq Omar, and Ahmed Omar Saeed Shaikh – from the special UN plane. The hijackers and these three released prisoners were taken to Kandahar Corps.

Before his departure, Singh and Mutawakkil held a joint press conference at the Kandahar Airport guesthouse. The press conference was held in the guesthouse hall and attended by tens of regional and international journalists.

Mutawakkil thanked Jaswant Singh for playing a major role in resolving the issue. In response, Singh not only thanked Mutawakkil but also officially invited him to visit India. After their departure in the UN plane, the hijacked plane also left. We went back to Kandahar city in our vehicles. The radios were on and on the first repeater channel, Mullah Omar addressed the Corps Commander of Kandahar Mawlawi Akhtar Muhammad Usmani: “Be careful and do not feel proud that we have resolved this issue. This was a huge test for us and it is only due to Allah’s hidden help that it ended.”

I was very happy that in this situation of international pressure and economic sanctions that Mawlawi Mutawakkil would visit India. This would be a huge diplomatic achievement. But after a week the Western and Indian media relayed this issue to Pakistani intelligence, causing a state of tension. The Indian authorities also reviewed the decision of the Indian Foreign Minister to invite the

Taliban. On the other hand, Pakistan was also worried that if Mutawakkil officially visited India it would be a negative message for Pakistan.

Mutawakkil's opinion was that the hijackers should be handed over to the Red Crescent. But Mullah Omar said that I have promised to release them safely; they are free to go anywhere they want. The western and Indian media published news from me that the hijackers went to Pakistan but I never gave such a statement. The prisoners and hijackers were still in Kandahar; I was surprised by how the media attributed this incorrect news to me.

The next evening a few Islamic Emirate officials were invited to the Pakistan Consulate for dinner, including Wakil Ahmad Mutawakkil, the Kandahar Corps commander Mawlawi Akhtar Muhammad Usmani, Mullah Omar's secretary Sayyed Muhammad Tayyab Agha, the former Foreign Affairs Minister Mullah Muhammad Ghaus and a few others including myself. The military attaché 'Zahid' was our actual host. The consul-general's position was ceremonial and the actual powers were with the military attaché. The consul-general was appointed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs while the military attaché was appointed by the ISI.

Zahid began speaking against India to us in a manner like someone teaches first grade students. He said: Hindus can never be friends with Muslims. Hindus have historically mistreated Muslims he said other things like that. We understood his goal and the task assigned to him by his government. During the discussions Zahid praised Akhtar Muhammad Usmani for the foolproof security of the plane and the airport. Usmani was a jolly person and he sometimes joked during the meeting. He used a proverb that meant: We understand that your personnel were near the airport and closely monitoring the entire situation from two vehicles parked in destroyed buildings. The Pakistani vehicles were parked there with the Emirate's permission since the Pakistanis considered themselves to be a part of the incident. At the end of the meeting Mullah Muhammad Ghaus Akhund asked a few questions that made it seem like he was not fully aware of the situation. He was just trying to get information from the Pakistani authorities and know their perspective on the incident.

A few Chinese delegations visited Afghanistan during the Taliban regime, including officials from the Foreign Affairs ministry, intelligence officials, and representatives from Chinese companies who intended to invest in Afghanistan. These officials also met with Mullah Omar and other Taliban officials.

In terms of economic development, the Chinese had intentions to build highways, a communication system, and rehabilitate cement factories. A few agreements were also ready that were delayed due to economic sanctions.

In the US missile attack in August 1998 an unexploded missile fell in Kandahar's Maruf district. On September 2, this missile was found by the security responsible of the Maruf district. It was transferred to Kandahar. Chinese intelligence officials made contact via the Islamabad Embassy to secretly examine this missile. After a few days, two Chinese engineers accompanied by Chinese intelligence officials secretly visited Kandahar and examined the missile in detail.

Mufti Masoom Afghani received information about the visit. He was the ambassador in Islamabad but at that time he was home due to an illness. He was only providing news from Kandahar to the Pakistani newspaper Zarb-e Momin. He was a spiritual follower of the newspaper's founder Mufti Rasheed Ahmad Ludhianvi. Without obtaining any permission or consulting anyone, Mufti Masoom revealed this secret news to Zarb-e Momin. When the newspaper published this story, it saddened the Chinese and deemed the Taliban incompetent at keeping secrets. On the other hand, the US blamed China for copying their technology but their main concern was Taliban-China relations.

After constant pressure by the US and Russia, Mullah Omar officially ordered the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to concentrate on relations with China, because it is a good choice against two major powers and the Chinese do not have a colonial ideology or policy against Afghanistan. China is an important neighbour of Afghanistan.

On May 26, 1999, a Chinese company signed an agreement with the Ministry of Mines and Industries to establish cement factories in the cities of Kandahar, Pul-e Khumri and Herat. They also started discussions for public trade and construction projects. According to Mawlawi Ahmad Jan "A high-ranking

construction projects. According to Mullah Ahmad Shah, a high-ranking Chinese official told me that you can take advantage of these sanctions. There was a time when the Chinese had no utensils to eat food distributed by western charities and human rights NGOs [...]. We arrived at this condition because of these Western NGOs. When sanctions were imposed against us, our leader expelled all the NGOs from China and the Chinese focused on education and industries. After twenty years China became an atomic power.” He added that while there are Western NGOs in any country they would never get rid of poverty and slavery.

This was followed by an exchange of delegations at the Foreign Affairs ministry level, but this news was mostly kept hidden from the media.

After the collapse of the Taliban government, no one expected the Taliban’s political presence. Their resistance also does not look strong. After 2006, the Taliban started efforts to develop relations with China but when this was discovered by a neighbouring country, these activists were threatened to death. But after the opening of the Qatar office these delegations openly visited China once again. After that delegations from the neighbouring country also visited China, and the Chinese openly accepted their relations with the Taliban.

The Taliban leader Mullah Akhtar Muhammad Mansoor made trips to China and Russia through Pakistan and Qatar. These visits were not hidden from the CIA and he thought they were just symbolic, but these countries actually never had full trust in these delegations nor did they share any strategic issues with them. He therefore sent delegations to other countries secretly from Pakistan and Qatar. But after the death of Mullah Akhtar Mansoor, this process was halted by officials at the Qatar office.

#### RELATIONS WITH TURKMENISTAN

Among Afghanistan’s neighbouring countries, Iran and Tajikistan were strongly supporting the Taliban’s enemies. Tajikistan was an important centre and route for the supply of equipment and a source of support for the Northern Alliance. Tajik nationalism was a factor behind the friendship between Rabbani, Massoud and the Tajikistan government. Uzbekistan also opposed the Taliban. They not only supported Dostum but also opposed the Taliban due to the presence of the Uzbek group, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, in Taliban-controlled areas

Uzbek group, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, in Taliban controlled areas. These fighters remained in Afghanistan after the mujahideen victory like members of other Islamic groups. Under Rabbani's leadership, the mujahideen government forced Tajik rebels led by Abdullah Noori to carry out peace negotiations which failed. Uzbek rebels remained there until the Taliban government was in place, which provided them refuge. Similarly, the Uzbek government hosted negotiations between Taliban representatives and the opposition.

Turkmenistan was a Taliban-friendly country in Central Asia and had no major issues with the Taliban. Kyrgyzstan also wanted close ties with the Taliban but an advanced relationship could not be established. The strong relations with Turkmenistan began with the gas pipeline project, and Turkmenistan was an important trade route for Afghanistan as well.

Turkmenistan officials visited Afghanistan during Taliban rule, and Taliban leaders also visited Turkmenistan. They emphasised mutual relations and support. The Turkmenistan government considered this their right and need to have friendly ties with Afghanistan by remaining impartial between regional and major powers. On the other hand there was no rebel or fighter group present that could use Afghanistan against Turkmenistan.

#### OFFICIAL RECOGNITION OF CHECHNYA

After the takeover of Kabul, a delegation from Chechnya visited Afghanistan led by the Chechen Deputy Minister of the Foreign Affairs ministry Abdullah Yef Yaragi Muhammad Wech. Due to the sensitive conditions and to avoid international criticism, Mullah Omar ensured secret support to them. For the time being their recognition was put to one side.

The Taliban were disappointed by the imposition of international sanctions in 1999, and they had no expectations of negotiating with the US and other key powers. At that time Russia had attacked Chechnya. Mullah Omar requested the Muslim world through the media to support Chechnya. He even addressed local opposition groups to forget about their enmity and help Chechen Muslims.

In early 2000, Chechnya's former president Zelimkhan Yenderbai and the Foreign Minister Adugaf visited Kabul and Kandahar. Mullah Omar welcomed

them warmly and also officially recognised the Chechen government. The delegation showed Mullah Omar the signed documents of the former president showing the acceptance by Russia of Chechnya's independence.

On January 26, 2000, an official agreement of recognition was signed by Afghanistan's Foreign Minister Mullah Wakeel Ahmad Mutawakkil and the representative of the Russian President Zelimkhan Yenderbi. This document was in the Russian, Dari, and Pashto languages. This was picked up by the media after two days. After two weeks, a building was designated for the Chechen Embassy, in the compound area of Kandahar city next to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' guesthouse. But after a fierce war in Chechnya, their representatives were unable to come.

## **Chapter 6: Mullah Omar's notable revolutionary decisions**

The Taliban government in Afghanistan differed in a basic way from other governments in the country, in that the head of the Taliban movement and system was more powerful and had a higher position than the cabinet and the government leadership. A similar system in the region can only be observed in Iran – the one similar point is that the spiritual leader of the Iranian revolution was on a higher position than the president and remained a powerful figure who could not be changed for his entire life.

In an unplanned move, Islamic scholars had given the title of Amir ul-Mu'mineen to Mullah Muhammad Omar in a meeting in Kandahar. After this his status became more powerful, but Taliban leaders never considered this title of 'Amir ul-Mu'mineen' to be 'Khilafat ul-Muslimeen' or Caliph of all Muslims. This title was seen as that of a leader of a group of Muslims, either a small area or a country, or a greater area of Muslims.

Since the Taliban government was fundamentally different from previous governments, this paved the way to change the name of the system and government. A few people, led by Mullah Omar's powerful secretary Mullah Abdul Salam Katib, proposed a plan to change the name. Their reasons were simple. They believed that under the leadership of Amir ul-Mu'mineen it is appropriate to use the term 'Emirate' instead of 'Daulat' for the government. The words Daulat, Emirate, Sultanate, and Hakoomat are actually words of Arabic origin. There was an impression that a sultanate is led by a sultan, a democratic government by a president, and the leadership of an Emirate can be called Amir or Amir ul-Mu'mineen. But this new name spurred the critique and questions of a few Afghans.

A year after the Kabul victory, this plan was accepted by Mullah Omar. On October 26, 1997, the words Islamic government were changed to Islamic

Emirate in an official notification. The cabinet was given the name of Shura, and 'Raees ul-Wuzura' (Chief Minister) was used for the administrative leader of the government. The words 'Shura Wazeerano Marastial' were used for the Deputies of the Ministers' Shura. But after the death of Mullah Rabbani, Mullah Omar announced both deputies as his deputies and the position of Raees ul-Wuzura or 'Prime Minister' was annulled.

In my opinion, the use of the word Emirate for the Taliban government was just a slogan and symbolic, because there were no changes in the ministers' cabinet and the administrative system.

There was all kinds of propaganda in other countries about the word 'emirate'. A few said that emirate means a government for all the Muslims from the world. The same word can also be used for a state or a sub-independent government as well. For example the United Arab Emirates has seven states, and every state is a part of the unity government, and they are seven parts of one government.

#### SUDDEN BAN ON POPPY CULTIVATION

During Taliban rule and until the year 1999, according to our agreement with international NGOs there was a policy in place to reduce poppy cultivation every year. The plan was to initially reduce poppy cultivation by one-third, half, then two-thirds, and ultimately down to zero so a sudden ban would not cause a financial loss to people. The Islamic scholars that Mullah Omar believed in were against poppy cultivation but they accepted this strategy of a gradual reduction. During the second year of this plan – 1998 and 1999 – the results reversed. At that time Mullah Omar was taking the right actions to eliminate evil without paying heed to international sanctions and pressure. This included the destruction of statues, instituting a dress code for non-Muslims, and a few other orders, but the ban on poppy cultivation was from a purely religious perspective.

In the beginning of Taliban rule, Islamic scholars from the region gave reasons for the permissibility of poppy, but Mullah Omar never favoured these. Mullah Omar was convinced to ban it in stages in order to avoid a strong public reaction. According to the agreement, international organisations were committed to pay farmers for stopping poppy cultivation. This stage-wise plan to reduce poppy cultivation was not successful, which made Mullah Omar dubious about the

success of this process.

Opium cultivation began during the Russian invasion in a few districts of the southern province of Helmand. After the mujahideen victory, its cultivation became common in the major parts of Helmand, as well as a few districts of Kandahar and also in the east. Opium factories were established in Helmand, Nangarhar and Badakhshan. The smuggling of opium to Pakistan and Tajikistan was easier than to Iran, therefore smugglers preferred the border areas of these countries. This continued during the Taliban regime. After discussions and reaching a consensus with Islamic scholars, Mullah Omar decided to ban it completely instead of following the reduction strategy.

On the afternoon of July 26, 2000, I was in my office when the WFP's local worker Engineer Fazal Muhammad suddenly arrived. Mullah Omar addressed me via repeater radio: Ibrat! Ibrat! (This was the name of my radio.) I responded: 'yes'. Mullah Omar asked me to make contact via the phone and to take a pen and paper. I understood that there would be an urgent and important announcement. Mullah Omar said to write that from today onward there is a ban on the cultivation of poppy. There will be strict punishment for violators. I asked him whether there was any condition, and about asking international organisations for support as an alternative. He said: "There is no condition and I am banning it only as a religious responsibility. We are not banning it for the world, nor have we needed support from any organisation. Perhaps someone may help the farmers or maybe they won't, but we are doing this as per our sharia responsibility. May Allah forgive us."

Engineer Fazal also heard these words and he was surprised and happy. I finished the announcement and after making corrections, I was thinking about poppy cultivation as it was an international issue that was criticised in the media every day. Banning it without any conditions was an amazing event. This announcement was sent to journalists via fax and telephone. I had interviews with several radio channels regarding this as well.

Officials in the capital were not aware of this yet. I received calls from Kabul late at night and the next day this news was repeated in the media from Kabul. Unfortunately after a few days the western media interpreted this major step of

the Afghan government very negatively. Mullah Omar did not care for their propaganda because he didn't consider them while making his decision. But the publication branch of the Emirate was very disappointed because of this negative propaganda.

A few people said that as Mullah Omar had confiscated a huge amount of opium, he imposed a ban to raise the prices. But everyone was familiar with Mullah Omar. In a few months the cultivation of poppy was stopped completely.

Poppy cultivation continued in a few areas that were under the control of Massoud's militias, because these areas were not under government control, and were only about five per cent of the country. Drug smugglers and mafias from across Afghanistan went to those areas.

A WFP report about smuggling of opium from these areas blamed a few members and commanders of opponent groups. The report mentioned the wife of Burhanuddin Rabbani who was accused of smuggling drugs. Unfortunately after the US invasion and a new government, poppy cultivation resumed and increased several times over. This is still ongoing.

ORDER TO DISMANTLE THE BUDDHA STATUES AND THE VISIT OF ARAB SCHOLARS TO KANDAHAR

The issue of the Bamiyan statues was initially highlighted in 1997. Mullah Abdul Wahid, the Taliban military commander of Ghorband and Shebar Tangi areas, told the media on April 17, 1997 that they would destroy the Buddha statues if they captured Bamiyan.

Kabul Radio also aired a nasheed:

*I will break the enemy of this holy Afghan land,*

*I am from the nation of Ibrahim (Prophet), I will break the statues.*

When the issue of the statues was raised by mullahs and Taliban leaders, it was sent to the judiciary in early 2001. It was then shared with Mullah Omar in Kandahar.

Mullah Muhammad Omar asked for the opinion of Islamic scholars regarding

the statues. They ordered the destruction, and Mullah Omar then ordered the dismantling of the statues. Afghanistan was already facing US sanctions and pressure from around the world. The international media and political circles raised this issue as being akin to a war.

Pakistan sent their Interior Minister Moinuddin Haider to Kandahar who expressed the concerns of his government. Pakistan was probably trying to stop the Afghan government from taking this action because of offers from Western countries. He had a meeting with Mullah Omar where he presented the recommendation of the Pakistani government not to destroy the Buddha statues. He talked carefully about international pressure and negative propaganda.

Mullah Omar briefly informed him that our law is Islamic Sharia and there is an order in Sharia to destroy statues. We are bound to implement our laws. The interior minister said: Muslims like Mahmud Ghaznavi and Abdali were former rulers here but they did not break these statues. Mullah Omar said if I leave them, I will be questioned about them on doomsday. The interior minister intentionally misinterpreted a few statements of Mullah Omar to his superiors and foreigners. Moinuddin Haider was a Shi'a and ideologically he was not against the Taliban.

After a few days explosives were sent to Bamiyan to demolish the statues. The dismantling was halfway completed when a delegation of famous scholars visited Kandahar on the request of UNESCO and through the arbitration of the Qatari government. This delegation was led by Qatar's Foreign Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Zaid al-Mahmood, who was accompanied by the famous religious personality Yusuf al-Qaradawi, the Egyptian Grand Mufti Farid Wasil, the appealing court head Sheikh Abdul Qadir al-Emari and two other Islamic scholars from Egypt, the Environment Protection Unit advisor of the World Health Organisation Muhammad Hisham al-Khayat, Islamic Research Egypt member Sheikh Muhammad al-Rawi, and the Arab writer Fahmi Huwaidi, as well as a few members of the Qatar Foreign Ministry.

The UN Security Council gave a 48-hour deadline to complete their visit to Kandahar. On March 11, 2001, a Qatari airplane landed in Kandahar. This VIP delegation was provided the appropriate protocol. A few military officials were

present to welcome them, and the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs with a few black Mercedes Benz cars was waiting for them at the airport guesthouse.

The guests were taken to a secure guest house of the Foreign Affairs ministry in the compound area located between Kandahar city and the airport. This guest house was fully equipped and had every basic facility.

Abdul Mateen Ibrahim Khel and I were their hosts. We sat with them until the late hours of the night. Abdul Mateen was fluent in Arabic and we had some good discussions. Qaradawi and his friends discussed the current situation in Afghanistan and the Taliban system in detail.

The Taliban welcomed them as respected guests because there were Islamic scholars at an international level among them. They thought that the Taliban had not practically implemented their plan to demolish the statues and so wanted to meet with the Islamic scholars of the Supreme Court.

The head of the Supreme Court was informed that these guests wished to meet him, and since they were there for a short period and could not visit Kabul, he should come to Kandahar. The Supreme Court Chief Justice Mawlawi Noor Muhammad Saqib and other important officials began their journey by road in the evening and reached Kandahar the next afternoon. A few hours were left for the guests to return to their plane. Though this flight was delayed for a long time past the deadline, the delegation still wanted to depart before the evening. We took the guests to the Kandahar provincial guesthouse. The meeting began and a representative of the delegation and Mawlawi Noor Muhammad Saqib, representing the hosts, initiated the discussion. Mufti Abdul Ali Deobandi was also sitting next to him.

Mawlawi Noor Muhammad Saqib welcomed the guests. Yusuf Qaradawi then provided a brief of their visit, that we are not here to debate over the statues. Our purpose is to give you honest advice as we have sympathies for you. The Taliban shouldn't involve themselves in more issues as they are already facing the world's enmity and pressure.

Saqib said: We are officials of the Sharia court. Is it legitimate according to Sharia rules to demolish or leave the statues? Qaradawi said: I am also Hanafi

like you, and I also accept that the actual order is to destroy the statues. But the thing is that in the current time and situation you have some Sharia exemptions. You should prioritise other reforms.

After listening to this Mufti Abdul Ali Deobandi understood that there was no debate over destroying the statues, so he left the meeting.

The discussion continued. Qaradawi's statements were based on scholarly evidence, but Saqib said that we have waited for a long time for this. The present conditions are such that whether we implement our plan or not, the world will not find any difference and everything is going against us. We do not see it beneficial if we stop from doing this. So it is better that Sharia orders are implemented. We are people from the judiciary, it is the duty of the foreign ministry and other officials to tackle our political issues. If there is anything regarding Sharia orders, there is clear evidence for this. Saqib also gave them several references about this and also interpreted a quote of Ibn al-Qaim al-Jawzi for them.

The meeting ended in the afternoon, and there was very little time left to their departure. The meeting with Mullah Omar was not possible. Osama was also allowed to have a short meeting with him, but he was on his way to the airport when the plane departed.

It was clear to Mullah Omar, Islamic scholars, and the Taliban that no one can worship these statues. In Islamic countries these statues are not common or could be an ideological threat to Islam, but it was seen and interpreted differently by the religious class. Buddhism was the religion of this area (central Afghanistan) before Islam. Many lovers of culture are proud of their slogans of infidelity and ignorance, and love those things that were respected before Islam as historical monuments. This act is not allowed according to Islamic Sharia.

If these types of monuments were allowed, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) would have left any statue in Mecca with the same intention. In some Islamic countries there are a few people who love culture and consider their pre-Islamic ignorance to be more respected than the Islamic era. Like in Egypt, a few respect the Pharaoh; in Iran, a few still respect Zoroastrianism and consider it holy. Even in Afghanistan there are lovers of Zoroaster. The Taliban banned the

celebration of Nowruz (New Year) because it is the Eid of Zoroastrians and we only have two Eids in Islam.

#### REFORMING THE INDECENT CULTURE REGARDING WOMEN

In Pashtun and Afghan society, killings due to rivalry and tribal enmity is very unfortunate. Tribal elders always tried to stop this through traditional jirgas. The easiest way to reconciliation is to marry the daughter or sister of the murderer's family with a member of the affected family.

This process eliminates hostility but on the other hand it becomes a game with an innocent, oppressed human at stake, since these women are given like a commodity as compensation. If Sharia rule is enforced then there is no need for such indecent actions. During the Taliban's rule most of these personal conflicts were controlled due to the blessings of Sharia law. If anyone wanted to kill another person then the government implemented the Sharia law of Qisas through the Sharia court. If the criminal was left alive then he is voluntarily forgiven by the victim's family.

Similarly in Pashtun and Afghan society there is an indecent culture regarding widows, as in many families they are not allowed to make decisions about their lives. The family makes a decision about her marriage, regardless of whether she accepts or not. She is either married to a child, or to an old man, or is prevented from getting married. On September 11, 1998, Mullah Muhammad Omar issued a special decree that no one can force women to marry based on the decision of a family or a jirga. Similarly, a woman can marry anyone she likes, or if she doesn't want to get married none of the family members can force her. Additionally, adult girls were allowed to marry of their own will based on Hanafi jurisprudence. This stirred up the anger of the cultured class against the Taliban, and many incidents took place involving girls who secretly visited courts and married men of their choice without the consent of their family. The police stations formally informed those families about these marriages and called on them to accept this decision.

Once a man from Kandahar's Loya Wiyala area came by bicycle to the Kandahar police station with a girl he liked without informing their families. The family of the girl was meeting with another man for her marriage, so to stop this

the couple escaped to the police station. They contacted the court and their marriage was announced the next day. There were hundreds of similar incidents.

#### ADOPTING THE LUNAR CALENDAR

In Afghanistan, Iran, and Tajikistan, it is the culture to officially use the solar calendar. All government work was carried out according to this calendar. It was actually arranged hundreds of years ago by the rulers of Khorasan and Persian-speaking rulers. The first day of this calendar is known as Nowruz. This was a day of celebration dating back to the ancient Greeks and Zoroastrians, and was also liked by sun worshippers because this year was known as the new year of the solar year instead of the lunar year. This year according to one standard is also known as Islamic because it began with the Prophet's migration day on Hijra.

The lunar calendar starts with the rise of the moon; a few months are of 29 days and others are 30 days. In the solar calendar every month has 30 days.

On March 5, 1998, a decree of Mullah Omar was issued stating that from that day onward, all Afghan government work will be carried out according to the Hijri lunar calendar. The Taliban made this calendar official in their departments.

After this decree the Taliban announced a ban on Nowruz celebrations and declared this to not be Islamic. The senior Taliban Mufti Sheikh Abdul Ali Deobandi also announced on the radio that the Nowruz celebration is not Islamic. Similarly, there is no reality to a shrine called Sakhi in Mazar city attributed to the fourth Caliph of Islam Hazrat Ali (May Allah be pleased with him) as Ali's grave is in Iraq's Kufa city and not in Mazar city. These announcements increased the criticism of the Taliban by a few cultural and liberal groups.

#### DISTINCTIVE DRESS AND SYMBOLS FOR NON-MUSLIMS

According to religious jurisprudence, non-Muslims should have a distinct and identifiable dress code so that they are recognised as such and are distinguishable from Muslims. Until 2001, there were only a few Sikhs and Hindus who were living as non-Muslim citizens in Afghanistan. There was

another issue that in the markets, the religious police needed to identify non-Muslims to exempt them from religious rules.

This decree was criticised internationally even though it was only announced and not actually implemented.

## Chapter 7: Downfall

### THE US AND RUSSIAN ALLIANCE AGAINST THE TALIBAN AND INTERNATIONAL MUJAHEDDEEN

After the imposition of international sanctions, the Taliban took steps towards legal and national sovereignty. Mullah Omar strongly believed that the US and its allies would not let the Taliban government to be in a peaceful and sustainable position at any cost. Secondly, in 2000, the CIA along with Russia, France, and Iran also started supporting Massoud and his alliance. This alliance encouraged and increased the United States' enmity towards the Taliban.

Pakistan was also on the back foot, and Saudi Arabia was supporting America. The Saudi intelligence minister Turki al-Faisal swore in a meeting that he would make every effort for the collapse of the Taliban government because Mullah Omar insulted him.

In 2000 the Taliban backed out of their promise with the world to control al-Qaeda. The limitations imposed on them were reduced, and the policy of control was almost ended, which led to many al-Qaeda-affiliated people from Arab countries coming to Afghanistan with their families. The training camps were also reopened where Arabic nasheeds were played and Arab food and drinks were served.

Mullah Omar did not expect that the international pressure would decrease and the conditions would become normal, so he welcomed international jihadis. Opportunities were provided to Uzbeks as well along with Arabs. Juma Namangani was welcomed, but the Taliban were careful about Uighur militants. They were less than a hundred in number and only permitted to live here, but China was still worried about the Uighur. Many officials were not able to recognise them and considered them as part of the Uzbek group since they had no separate group or training camp.

The recognition of Chechnya was also part of the new policy. In early 2001, due to Mutawakkil's efforts, Rahmatullah Hashemi from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs visited the US. When he came back, he conveyed the message of Americans to Mullah Omar to control Osama bin Laden.

Mullah Omar angrily said: Americans are busy making a political and military alliance against us. They have blocked land and air routes for us and are planning our elimination. They are still making demands from us, and for what positive actions should we help them?

In 2001, Massoud visited Europe and the CIA stopped funding the opposition. On the other hand, anti-Taliban commanders in Dubai and Pakistan were organised and meetings were ongoing. Hamid Karzai was busy in Quetta. In Peshawar, the eastern region commanders were organised under Abdul Haq's leadership. The Taliban were aware of all these plans.

At that time the Taliban were expecting a covert attack from the US that would use their technology and money, and the opposition commanders would wage a war against the Taliban. The Arabs and al-Qaeda considered Ahmed Shah Massoud as a main military commander of the invaders at the time, and so they had a plan to assassinate him which they implemented while the Taliban were unaware.

#### EFFORTS TO FORM AN AFGHAN ALLIANCE AGAINST THE TALIBAN

In early 2001, the CIA arranged jirgas in Dubai, Pakistan, Tajikistan, and in the western areas between former commanders and Afghans living abroad who were against the Taliban. There was swift progress in efforts to establish internal military war groups against the Taliban. In the event that they would emerge victorious over the Taliban, the groups would become the national establishment so that US interference was not apparent.

In July and August, commander Abdul Haq gathered the commanders and famous personalities from the eastern and central regions in Dubai. The participants were encouraged to join this coalition with promises and offers of money and positions in a new government. Abdul Haq said to the commanders: America has strong intentions to cause the collapse of the Taliban government so we must take advantage of this opportunity

we must take advantage of this opportunity.

Abdul Haq made their travel arrangements and also gave them some money as a gift. A commander from Kabul who was not aware of the actual topic at hand disagreed with Abdul Haq and refused to take the money. After his return he shared this story with the Afghanistan Consulate staff in Peshawar.

In Quetta, Hamid Karzai and Gul Agha Sherzai met with the commanders of Kandahar, Helmand and Uruzgan and distributed money among them. Abdul Haq's brother Haji Abdul Qader was busy with Massoud, while his other brother Haji Deen Muhammad was engaging with mullahs and former jihadis for this alliance.

Ahmad Shah Massoud, Dostum, and Ismail Khan – who had political and military support from Russia, Iran, and northern countries – were looking forward to their victory over the Taliban, with the expected huge military and financial support of the CIA for the past year. Their friendship with the CIA was new. Mullah Omar appointed Mutawakkil as Minister of Foreign Affairs after the imposition of US sanctions against Afghanistan and tasked him with reducing tensions with western countries. In his effort to do this he also sent a delegation to America which did not return with a positive outcome.

The Taliban were also preparing effectively against this internal US alliance. Arab and foreign mujahideen were good supporters as well, and this support was much needed. A few important al-Qaeda members were also aware of this alliance, and in their meetings a few had hoped for an earlier attack against the US.

#### MURDER OF AHMAD SHAH MASSOUD

In July 2001, three Arabs came to Kandahar as journalists. They introduced themselves as Belgians of Tunisian origin. They lived in the guesthouse of Arabs called Dar al-Isma. They requested an interview with Mutawakkil. While they were being taken there, they were stopped near the Kandahar directorate of the *Amr bil Maroof* in the Mudat Square area. Since they were clean-shaven and wearing trousers, they were taken out of the vehicles.

They introduced themselves as Arabs but the *Amr bil Maroof* had never seen clean-shaven Arabs in Kandahar. The television camera at the back of the car also raised a question. But since they were going to interview Mutawakkil it was not very problematic.

Unusual guests of this kind always received a letter from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to avoid issues from *Amr bil Maroof* and security officials. But they had no documents, and they were eventually released because they were Mutawakkil's guests.

They introduced themselves to Mutawakkil: "I am Abid and my colleague is Karim. We are Tunisia-origin Belgians and we work in Belgium with 'Al-Marsad al-Islami lil-Aalam' news. Their third colleague Abu Hani was Egyptian, and his real name was Muhannad Shabana. During the jihad against USSR he was in charge of Sayyaf's magazine *Al-Bunyan al-Marsus*. He was familiar with former mujahideen, especially Sayyaf.

They then went on to Kabul, and received a letter from the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs there to cross the Taliban area and into Panjshir. Abu Hani introduced these people to Sayyaf. They initially interviewed Sayyaf and then went onto Massoud. The interview was set in the Khawaja Bahauddin area of Takhar. When the interview started they detonated the explosives in their camera and killed Massoud.

On September 9, Russian Interfax news spread the news of the blast targeting Massoud. But we had repeatedly heard about Massoud's death. Even during the war between Hekmatyar and Massoud, Hizb spokespeople spread reports about Massoud's death several times. Trusting this news immediately was very difficult. The attack was confirmed the next day, but Massoud's spokesperson Abdullah Abdullah denied his death. In an interview with the BBC he made a very strange statement: "He is alive but we are not releasing any recordings of his voice."

CIA and Russian intelligence received this information immediately. Amrullah Saleh was specifically assigned the task to communicate with the CIA. He called the CIA base and informed their leadership about his death and asked their recommendation for an alternate leader

#### RECOMMENDATION FOR AN ALTERNATE LEADER.

Mullah Omar and other officials were not aware of the actual situation. I received calls from journalists and asked Mullah Omar for instruction. He said; We are not aware of the reality, we are not involved in this act, and we have no idea about the murderers. We also do not show our happiness about this incident.

I shared these statements with the media.

Mullah Akhtar Muhammad Mansoor was then the air force commander and received a conformation of Massoud's funeral date and time. He prepared the air force for an air attack on the funeral, and requested Mullah Omar's permission as key commanders like Sayyaf, Rabbani, and Fahim were attending the funeral.

Mullah Akhtar Mansoor told his office in-charge Muhibullah Garamsiri: When I asked Mullah Omar that we are ready to bomb the funeral as all the opposition leaders will be there, Mullah Omar said: "Mullah Akhtar Muhammad, you don't leave them be even for death?" Mullah Mansoor instructed the air force command that the operation was cancelled.

#### SEPTEMBER 11 ATTACKS ON THE UNITED STATES

I was in the office in the afternoon when a friend from Germany called. He asked if I was aware of the ongoing attacks in New York. I asked him what kind of attacks. He said I do not understand but an aeroplane has hit a big building by mistake or deliberately, but international television channels are showing a fire in a huge building and worried people running everywhere. Only this news is all over the media. In Afghanistan we only had western radio channels, and the local media broadcast news from time to time. No radio station was broadcasting news at the time, and there was a delay in the broadcast for BBC and Voice of America.

We only had internet at the Emirate's central office and there were no satellite dish facilities there. We received phone calls from different people and we heard updated information that the Pentagon and the World Trade Centre had been attacked.

I informed Mullah Omar via the radio about the attacks on the US but he had already been informed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He said: I already

already been informed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He said: I already have the news but I do not know what is going on. May God have mercy on us.

I went to Mullah Omar's office. Tayyab Agha and other friends were following the news online. I visited the CNN office later and watched the entire incident via satellite dish on CNN and Al Jazeera.

The immediate action was to condemn this incident. We condemned it through the press. Mullah Omar sent a message to Osama bin Laden to announce he was not involved in this incident. Osama declared he wasn't associated with it but on the other hand he added that he is very happy. This statement was unacceptable and a cause for concern for Mullah Omar.

Mawlawi Mutawakkil told the international media that we condemn this incident and request the US to be tolerant until the evidence is found.

When the US blamed Osama the conditions changed. The Taliban faced huge crises, and Mullah Omar and other officials had no solutions.

A few al-Qaeda experts and Afghan professors living outside the country informed us about the increase of monitoring satellites over Kandahar. The presence of US satellites was not new for us, but a satellite that looked like glowing stars was also identified which was observed in the evening. It sometimes stopped and sometimes it moved around. Its light was artificial, it was not constant like that of stars, and sometimes it disappeared. We had discussions about this but we did not believe it completely. It was not possible to ignore it due to the expected US attack.

#### MEETING OF ISLAMIC SCHOLARS IN KABUL REGARDING BIN LADEN

The US President George Bush expressly asked the Afghan government to hand over Osama bin Laden or they would attack Afghanistan. There was different advice and opinions circulating among officials. Mullah Omar said: We do not accept anything if we die or live. We will find a Sharia solution for this.

He then decided to pass on this issue to Islamic scholars and hear what they had to say. A grand meeting of Islamic scholars on the country level was held in Kabul. After discussions over the course of two days, they came to a decision that Osama bin Laden should leave Afghanistan willingly but expelling him by

force or handing him over to others is against Islamic Sharia. They also said that if America attacks Afghanistan, it is obligatory to carry out jihad against the US.

On the other hand, the Americans said that no solution was acceptable to them. If Osama leaves Afghanistan, the Afghan government is answerable to the US. Since he is with them, they would have to hand him over handcuffed along with his friends.

Mullah Omar said that the Americans will not be satisfied even if he leaves Afghanistan. If we resist the US invasion and remain steadfast on our stance, it is better than surrendering to them. We won't tell Osama to leave or hand him over. America is not going to spare us for showing any pliability. Islam, a sense of being Afghan or human pride doesn't allow us to fulfil their demands.

#### PAKISTANI DELEGATION'S VISIT TO KANDAHAR

A month before the US bombardment of Afghanistan, the Pakistan Army chief General Pervez Musharraf asked the Taliban to handover Osama bin Laden or wait for the collapse of the Taliban government.

The Pakistan intelligence chief General Mahmud visited Kandahar and met with Mullah Muhammad Omar in the Emirate's new building. Abdul Ghafoor Afghani, an official of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, served as interpreter. General Mahmud looked similar to images of Allama Iqbal. He was an intelligent man. He gave solid reasons and referred to international and historical issues in his statements. He showed an abhorrence of the west and displayed a great deal of respect for Mullah Omar. He carefully listened to Mullah Omar.

During the discussion General Mahmud said: America is a very big military and economic power, and is looking for any opportunity to come this this region. No chance should be provided to the US. He said that the US is preparing for a strong response to the September 11 attacks and now has an easy excuse. Mahmud gave the example of a wolf and a buffalo – a buffalo was drinking water from the downstream, but the world was looking for an excuse to attack so he said why have you contaminated the water. Another example he gave was that when a bull becomes angry, the best way to protect oneself is to make the bull run around in a big ground so that it tires. There is a possibility to normalise

the environment.

Mullah Omar said: The US has had intentions of eliminating us for a few years. The missile attacks on Khost and economic sanctions on Afghanistan were a start. The US cannot tolerate our presence and system. We looked for a solution and trying for a middle road, but America only talks about the use of power. If we accept their illegal demands, it is not confirmed that they will still leave us alone. We understand that they can badly damage us but their demands are more devastating for our religion and faith and this is a deviation from our goals and objectives. I cannot step back by even an inch against my Sharia responsibilities even if I lose my life and this system. I cannot accept anything that is not permissible in the Sharia. Nevertheless, we were and are ready for bilateral negotiations, but if the US invades we will fight them till the end with full force.

General Mahmud went back to Pakistan after a lengthy discussion. After a few days, Brigadier Sultan, Major Gul, and another general visited along with famous Islamic scholars who had religious and educational influence over the Taliban. This included the head of the Wifaq ul-Madaris (religious schools board) Maulana Saleemullah Khan, Sheikh ul-Hadith Maulana Hassan Jan, Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani, and Maulana Sher Ali. The meeting of Islamic scholars was held in a separate room and none of the Pakistani officials participated. Sayyed Tayyab Agha, a few other friends and I attended the meeting. Taqi Usmani and Maulana Saleemullah did not understand Pashto, and Sheikh ul-Hadith Sher Ali Shah helped a translator.

Mullah Muhammad Omar first welcomed them and then the scholars began their discussion. Mufti Taqi Usmani gave strong reasons for the survival of the Islamic system, the current critical situation and said that this is an Islamic system and enemies are trying to cause its collapse, so every way should be researched to prevent this. He added that all Muslims will be affected by this invasion so we should find a suitable solution to the issue of Osama bin Laden. Maulana Saleemullah Khan talked sympathetically to Mullah Omar and discussed ways to avoid the US invasion.

The concerns and discussions of these scholars was very important, and was based on reality according to my observations. But they had nothing to say after

the short response of Mullah Omar, who spoke to them in a very respectful way.

Mullah Omar said: All of my work is based on the advice of Islamic scholars. You are much more familiar with Islam than I am; we are like your students. But the thing is that all of Allah's prophets were obligated to carry out Allah's religion. Similarly every Muslim leader and I am obligated. I will follow what Islam has permitted; how can I answer Allah about this? Allah has given me thirty mujahideen (referring to the beginning of the Taliban movement) at that time I trusted Allah and followed responsibilities, but today when I am the ruler of a country, how can I turn my back on a shari'a responsibility for the survival of my government?

The Americans will now accept anything over the issue of Osama. There are only two ways: either I hand him over, or they will invade. However even if we handover Osama there is no guarantee that the US will not invade. Can you now give me a religious verdict about his handover?

All of them said that we cannot give a verdict about this. Mullah Omar said: There is no other solution. Handing him over to Saudi Arabia is similar to handing him over to America as they will also hand him over to the US and they are asking for him based on US orders. As I am not permitted by Afghan Islamic scholars, similarly you and actual scholars from the world cannot permit me as this is not allowed as per Islam. I am obliged to give every kind of sacrifice. I do not care about my life and system and I will continue jihad against invaders until the end of my life.

After this response from Mullah Omar, all the Islamic scholars were quiet. Maulana Saleemullah Khan wept and said "May Allah help you and give us martyrdom." After the meeting, General Mahmud requested a one-on-one meeting with Mullah Omar, and they met in a separate room. The translator – who is still living – says that General Mahmud was sitting in front of Mullah Omar and requested to meet Osama as he believed that meeting him would solve many of our problems. Mullah Omar did not like this as he became suspicious, and responded in the negative saying that the conditions are not favourable to meet him.

While leaving, General Mahmud strongly hugged Mullah Omar and said: "If I

am here, there will not be an invasion and if there is an invasion I will not be here.” When Musharraf announced his support for the US invasion of Afghanistan, General Mahmud resigned.

After meeting the Pakistani delegation, Mutawakkil told Mullah Omar once again that the best solution is to hand over Osama bin Laden as Mutawakkil thought that the delegation of Pakistani scholars would find a solution. But when he was disappointed, he personally recommended this. Mullah Omar smilingly said ‘no’ and did not accept this plan.

When we came back to Mullah Omar’s publication office, Mullah Ghazi, a friend of Mullah Omar’s who was an expert in operating Stinger missiles, got angry in a discussion about why Stinger missiles could not hit US planes. We had received information that Stinger missiles could not hit US planes, but Mullah Ghazi termed this a mistake. He told a friend Ahmad Jan Ahmadi: “Friend, we will down ten US jets on the first day.”

#### US INVASION

I went to my village a few days after the Pakistani delegation’s visit. On October 7, I prepared myself to return after the holiday. I left home in the early morning, and near the Speda Chawd area I heard the heavy roar of aeroplanes. People were looking towards the sky. I thought that perhaps an aeroplane had crashed. I reached the office in Kandahar at 8 am.

There was no one in the office. The glass windows were broken and the smell of fresh explosives had made the environment wild. Before getting off the car, I called Tayyab Agha on the first radio channel, using the radio code: Ahmad! Ahmad! He replied in a low tone: Ibrat (using the code), I can hear you, where are you? I said I was in the office. He quickly responded: ‘Come out of the office, the bombardment is still continuing.’ The office was bombed and there was still a chance of bombardment. I quickly left the building.

He later told me his location on the radio. A temporary office was established in a building near the Kandahar sports ground. I went there and after exchanging greetings I first asked about Mullah Omar. Tayyab Agha said that he was fine and only his uncle had been martyred. He moved his family outside the city to

Arghandab. He was not leaving his place and said 'I will die there, where it is written (fate).' But he left the building on his friends' insistence. On the way there was aerial bombardment, but he survived.

The Stinger missiles were not working against US planes. Mullah Ghazi was feeling downcast, and looking fearfully at the sky. There was deadly bombardment by US forces, and in every city spies were captured with satellite phones. A few tribal leaders and former commanders being paid money by the US were waiting for the end results of the bombardment and moving slowly. Mullah Omar was receiving these reports.

Like in other parts of the country, Kandahar's airspace was dominated by radio announcements by US forces. The speakers were not Pashtuns, and even a few Pashto-speaking Americans who were making threatening announcements in incorrect Pashto. They were using abusive language for Mullah Omar. Americans and their supporters are expert at special propaganda against their military and political opponents. They falsely propagated against Qaddafi, Saddam Hussein, Omar Bashir, Hugo Chavez, Chinese leaders, and Iranian spiritual leaders. They are now propagating against the Turkish leader Recep Erdoğan. Their statements about Mullah Omar in Afghan society were meaningless and laughable. For example in one of the announcements it was repeated that Mullah Omar is enjoying himself with his wives. This is not considered wrong in Islamic and Afghan society.

#### THE ARREST AND MURDER OF COMMANDER ABDUL HAQ

On April 4, 2001, Ahmad Shah Massoud had visited Europe on the request of the European Parliament. He openly participated in different meetings and also held secret meetings with US and European intelligence and made commitments. The Taliban leadership received this news that the US and her European supporters want to make an effective coalition force comprising opposition militias and former commanders against the Taliban. This force will have more resources and will be provided more war equipment along with money, and they would even be supported by US Special Forces and aeroplanes.

Meanwhile the Taliban were facing US economic sanctions, enemy propaganda and diplomatic isolation. On the other hand, the Taliban were exposed to this

serious threat. The Taliban focused on this and began efforts to monitor the activities and plans of other groups or actors in the country. This included Hamid Karzai in the southern provinces, Ahmad Shah Massoud and Dostum in the north, and commander Abdul Haq in the central and eastern provinces who were openly engaged in such activities.

Abdul Haq and Karzai were not openly enemies of the Taliban but after the new US project they were quickly preparing themselves. They held meetings in Pakistan, Iran and the UAE and distributed money among war commanders and tribal elders to expand this group. Commander Abdul Haq arranged a secret meeting for important powerful commanders at the Hyatt Regency hotel in Dubai. They made their travel arrangements in advance. Abdul Haq and his brother Haji Qadeer had offices and businesses in various countries including in Dubai, and so it was easy for them to arrange programmes.

A few commanders were invited to this secret meeting who were unaware of the actual topic. This included a key commander of Kabul province who revealed this secret to the Taliban as he did not agree with the issue. This was the reason that the Taliban stood against Abdul Haq from the beginning. When the US invaded Afghanistan on October 7, 2001, after a few months Abdul Haq entered Afghanistan through Pakistan's Parachinar area as planned. He initially entered the Terai Mangal area, moved to the Aryub Zazai area and from there went on to Logar's Azra district. He encouraged his tribal people, tribal leaders and commanders to fight against the Taliban by offering them money.

There were two channels for the Taliban to get information about Abdul Haq. One was very effective which monitored Abdul Haq from Peshawar until Azra district. But later on he was not monitored properly. The other surprise channel was the Logar police and intelligence, which immediately captured Abdul Haq.

#### THE FIRST PLANNED CHANNEL

When the Taliban focused on Abdul Haq after the Dubai meeting, they began efforts to monitor him. Shortly before the US invasion commander Abdul Haq accelerated the distribution of money provided by the CIA to organise his commanders and supporters in Peshawar. The Taliban officially tasked the district governor of Hesarak to join Abdul Haq and monitor his routine activities.

This district governor was present at and monitored meetings with Abdul Haq in Peshawar and reported back to the Nangarhar intelligence directorate in the evening. There were two low-level Taliban officials as well who were meeting Abdul Haq and keeping it secret from Mullah Omar. A former mujahid of commander Abdul Haq was working as a labourer at a honey bees farm in Haripur, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. With the support of a former Hizb-e Islami commander he was convinced to join Abdul Haq and regularly provide information to the Taliban. He reported to the Taliban about Commander Abdul Haq's activities from Peshawar to Azra, and was in contact with the Nangarhar intelligence directorate. After the US invasion, Abdul Haq, like other commanders, wanted to play a supporting role to US forces in the surroundings of Kabul, Logar and Nangarhar. He selected Logar's Azra district and Hesarak in Nangarhar. Abdul Haq was afraid of Nangarhar officials and intelligence from the start, and so he preferred to enter Afghanistan through Parachinar instead of Nangarhar and Kunar. After he reached Azra, the Taliban very carefully monitored Abdul Haq so that he couldn't escape alive. Until then only Nangarhar intelligence knew of his arrival. The Taliban Special Forces reached a few areas of Hesarak to monitor him.

#### ACCIDENTAL CHANNEL

While the Nangarhar intelligence was busy in capturing Abdul Haq in Hesarak, on October 4 the Logar Governor Mawlawi Zia ur-Rahman Madani invited his police commander and said US helicopters had landed in Azra with forces. Until then no one had seen US forces and the Taliban wished to directly face them in battle.

The police commander arranged a war battalion urgently and went to the intelligence directorate. He requested the intelligence chief Muhammad Insha Makhbat for a few heavy machine guns and when he was asked why, he told him about the US helicopters. The intelligence chief said 'If US helicopters and forces have landed, how can I sit here? I will definitely go.' They arranged a few vehicles of militants and moved towards Azra. They reached Logar's Dobandi area and their supporters reached Matokoray. They sent them a message that there are no US helicopters; commander Abdul Haq has visited and is equipping people against the Taliban by distributing money among them.

The police and intelligence chief reached Haji Zarghoon's village. Haji Zarghoon slaughtered sheep for the Taliban. A day before, Abdul Haq had visited Haji Zarghoon and asked him for support against the Taliban in exchange for a huge amount of money. But Zarghoon very rudely called him unconscionable and a traitor to the country.

The next morning a group of Taliban in Dakarai (the mountainous border area between Azra and Zaria districts) entered the Draykalay village of Mangals. A white Datsun vehicle came in their way. A person of a wheat-like complexion who appeared to be 40-50 years of age was sitting in the front seat. He got confused and began trembling. It appeared from his condition that he thought the Taliban were looking for him. He had a handgun. The Talib commander thought he was confused because of the handgun because it was a crime under the Taliban regime. The group commander went to him and said 'Do not get anxious, you will not face any issues from our side', and they let him go. When we reached the village, the locals told us that the person in the vehicle was the famous Nangarhar commander Haji Zaman Ghamshareek.

The Logar intelligence chief told his friends to first perform ablution, and then they would go see the historical and religious sacred items – a cap and shirt that are attributed to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) – at the guesthouse of Haji Fazal Rahman and then pray for the success of this operation.

#### MOVING TOWARDS THE DISTRICT CENTRE

After viewing the saved items, we moved towards Azra and arrived there by 12 pm. The district governor was advised to invite all the important tribal leaders for lunch. Most of the tribal leaders and elders including Haji Bismillah, Haji Badam, and Haji Fazal Rahman came to the district centre. The Taliban received a key piece of information that save for Haji Zarghoon, Fazal Rahman and a few others, everyone had received money from Abdul Haq and ensured of their support for the fall of Hesarak and Azra.

Following the lunch, the district governor – with the advice of the intelligence chief and police commander – told the tribal elders and leaders that the Logar Governor Mawlawi Ziauddin Madani has invited all of you to the district centre for consultations. They were sent to the district centre and the Logar governor

was informed by radio to keep them busy until the search for Abdul Haq was completed. The Logar police and intelligence chiefs then received information that a special battalion from Nangarhar had reached Hesarak to monitor Abdul Haq.

The Logar intelligence chief told his friend Mawlawi Baaz Muhammad that he was going to the Ali Sher Kandawo hilltop to contact the battalion that had come to Hesarak. The special battalion confirmed Abdul Haq's arrival. According to their information Abdul Haq was residing in the Speen Jumat area and Haji Zarghoon village. Abdul Haq had visited the village a day earlier. From Ali Sher Kandawo, the intelligence chief saw a man moving towards Azra from Hesarak. He was affiliated with Haji Fazal Rahman. Makhbat did not recognise him initially, so he forcefully asked him to reveal Abdul Haq's whereabouts. The person got confused and said: Don't say anything to me, I will tell you everything. He said: Abdul Haq is near the Ghagigi village of Hesarak at Haji Doran's house. He has a brown turban and is wearing white clothes. He purchased a SSR Datsun yesterday through someone's reference from Haji Dawood in Jalalabad city. Now he has information that Taliban militants followed him from Jalalabad. He just now told Haji Dorian to arrange a horse to help him escape through the Ghazni route because the Taliban are following him.

Makhbat said: It appeared that Abdul Haq was also aware of our arrival as after crossing us, Haji Zaman Ghamshareek would have told him about us via satellite telephone. He considers himself to be under siege. According to Makhbat, the person was convinced to help us and show us Doran's house. It was almost afternoon. Muhammad Insha Makhbat called his friend Baz Muhammad on the radio to join him with the remaining militants, but he didn't reply on time. In the end Makhbat and four of his men took position near Doran's house, which was Abdul Haq's expected escape route.

The men held their positions until 1 am. There was a heavy roar of US helicopters and monitoring aircraft and we thought they are here to rescue Abdul Haq. Around 1:30 am, the Police Commander Baz Muhammad came with the remaining militants and took position there. Abdul Haq Was captured around 3 am by Taliban militants while he was trying to escape on a horse from the

Doran's house. He wanted to go to the plane area and had a plan to escape by a US helicopter as he was in contact with US officials at the time. A few people were arrested with Abdul Haq, while the remaining men including Haji Doran escaped.

A few minutes before Abdul Haq's arrest, two Datsun vehicles exited the Doran house and Baz Muhammad was expecting to see Abdul Haq. He stopped the cars, but saw Taliban commander Abdul Rahman in one vehicle, and Wardak, an intelligence officer at the Kabul intelligence directorate, in the other. Baz Muhammad instantly understood that they had a relationship with Abdul Haq. Baz Muhammad abused them and let them go.

The people arrested with Abdul Haq included his deputy Major Hamid, a former military official in the Najib government, the military affairs in-charge Commander Shah Wali, and Izzatullah, Abdul Haq's driver. They had a satellite phone and aeroplane guidance light as well. The Taliban took the electronic devices from them. The noise of the US helicopters and planes was in the air, but they were unable to know the actual situation. They thought that Abdul Haq had been arrested or besieged by the Taliban battalion that came from Jalalabad, and so US forces bombed the battalion's vehicles. One of the vehicles was hit, injuring a few people while the rest were rescued.

The police commander immediately took Abdul Haq in his vehicle towards the provincial capital of Logar. Makhbat stayed at Haji Doran's house to search it, and after receiving a radio message from the provincial governor he also went after Baz Muhammad. As they travelled towards Logar, Abdul Haq repeatedly asked to be taken to their leaders in Kabul. Makhbat and Baz Muhammad say that Abdul Haq had no documents that could prove his relationship with the Taliban. There are unfortunately a few famous stories about his ties to the Taliban which are just propaganda.

Their other friend the nephew of Abdul Haq and son of Haji Din Muhammad were arrested in the morning with an aeroplane guidance beacon. The area was under the control of Logar's Kharwar Taliban, who killed Din Muhammad's son without consulting anyone. When Abdul Haq was taken to Logar, the Kabul Interior Ministry ordered the Logar governor to take him to Kabul.

The police commander sent him to Kabul on the governor's order. In the afternoon, a pickup vehicle with an official came onto the highway near Kabul city in the area of La Bin Sara, Qalcha and Shuhada Saliheen. Mullah Zahir, an Interior Ministry official, showed them a written decree of Mullah Omar which simply stated to kill this traitor before entering Kabul and to not pollute Kabul city with his blood.

The vehicles reversed and started travelling on the Sang Noshti main road towards Reshkhori Firqa. Abdul Haq and Colonel Hamid were sitting in the cars and their eyes were covered. Baaz Muhammad was shocked about what to do. Mullah Zahir took them off the road with the intent to kill them. Abdul Haq began shouting loudly. The men were killed there. When Mullah Zahir returned, he pointed his gun at the driver Izzatullah and commander Shah Wali. The police commander stopped him and said: Mullah Omar has only ordered to kill Abdul Haq, why are you killing them? It is worth mentioning here that Abdul Haq's driver and Din Muhammad's son had the same name – Izzatullah.

The driver and Shah Wali remained in Logar prison and were released after the fall of the Taliban government. In the evening Voice of America radio broadcast the news that US helicopters had failed to rescue an important CIA official Abdul Haq.

#### HAMID KARZAI: THE NEXT TARGET AFTER ABDUL HAQ

Hamid Karzai is the son of Abdul Ahad Khan Karzai, who was killed by unknown militants on July 14, 1999 near a mosque in Quetta's Satellite Town area following his return from the US. Abdul Ahad Khan Karzai was a famous tribal leader and the deputy of the Wolesi Jirga during Zahir Shah's rule. He was a strong supporter of Zahir Shah. After the Russian invasion some of the family settled in the US and received American nationality. They worked for US intelligence in Afghanistan and most of their youth were trained by them, including Hamid Karzai who was a reliable CIA official during the Afghan jihad and worked closely with the mujahideen in the war against Soviets.

He was also known as a controller for the distribution of Stinger missiles. Hamid Karzai became the leader of his tribe after his father's death. According to a few

of his friends and relatives, in addition to politics, Karzai was fond of staying up and talking into the late hours of the night. They say he used drugs including pills and marijuana.

He remained unmarried for 40 years. At a time when I didn't know Karzai, the Voice of America Pashto head Spogmai Maiwand told me that Hamid Karzai is an active member of the CIA. The cars of Hamid Karzai and Zalmay Khalilzad are not stopped at the CIA entrance.

According to many observers of the US invasion, Abdul Haq was a priority to the US instead of Karzai. If he wasn't dead, he would have been the head of the first interim government.

Karzai and his father had close ties to Taliban leaders before the conflict emerged between the US government and the Taliban. Karzai was Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs in the Rabbani government and he later escaped to Jalalabad after being beaten up by Massoud's men. This was the reason for Karzai's hatred of Massoud. When the CIA began supporting Massoud, Karzai was instructed to work closely with him. He was only able to do what the CIA instructed him.

After the Taliban captured Kabul, Karzai wanted to work closely with the Taliban. His father was seen at the Taliban's Kandahar guesthouse many times. He had close ties with the first governor of Kandahar Mullah Muhammad Hassan, Herat Governor Mullah Yar Muhammad, the Taliban's first spokesperson Mullah Khairullah Khairkhwa, Mawlawi Ihsanullah Ihsan, and the Taliban's first Minister of Foreign Affairs Mullah Muhammad Ghaus.

When three countries officially recognised the Taliban government, the Taliban looked for the opportunity to expand their diplomatic relations and this required a representative in the UN. Hamid Karzai presented himself for this, but it was clear to the Taliban that this was a CIA plan. Saudi intelligence officials suggested to one of our delegations to select Hamid Karzai as UN representative; the Americans probably told them to do so. I asked the then-deputy minister Mullah Abdul Jalil about this. He said: It was proposed to Mullah Ghaus (foreign minister) and I to select Hamid Karzai as a representative for the Taliban government but Mullah Ghaus simply said, they are the US's people; how will

they represent us?

Abdul Haq was selected as a major commander against the Taliban for the areas of Nangarhar, central Kabul and Logar. He was set to play a key role in leading ground forces with US air support to gain control of Nangarhar, Kunar, and Laghman as well. This task was assigned to Abdul Haq while Kandahar, Uruzgan and Helmand were assigned to Hamid Karzai. Many commanders including Jan Muhammad Khan, Gul Agha Sherzai, and Gharry Akhundzada's family from Helmand were in touch with Karzai for support.

After September 11, Hamid Karzai was busy planning the war against Taliban of Loy Kandahar at the CIA base in Pakistan. A few days after the US invaded Afghanistan, the CIA ordered him to enter the country. He came to Afghanistan with the US Air Force's support from a CIA base in Pakistan. He started from Quetta because he was sure of a US air rescue in case of any danger. He was first seen in the Samurghan desert near the centre of Uruzgan and was followed by the provincial police and intelligence. On November 2, he was with Lal Muhammad, the son of a regional elder Darman Shah in the Darja Gharra area of central Uruzgan. The Taliban attacked him; he was supported by his militants. During the attack the Taliban captured 600 of their weapons that had been dropped to them by US planes. Karzai escaped this attack but was followed by the Taliban.

On November 4, Karzai and a group of his supporters were taken to the Jacobabad base in Pakistan by US helicopters. He lived there at the CIA base for two weeks, and told people by satellite phone that he was in Uruzgan. After two weeks, he came to Dehrawood district in Uruzgan in US helicopters, accompanied by CIA special forces, and went to Dehjwaz hills. The Taliban had lost control of Kabul and Mazar by then and their military position was very week.

The Taliban were supported by the people of Tirinkot including Rozi Khan (Gaemawo Manda area), Khairo Jan (Dek area), Muhammad Jan Akhundzada (Sajjawal), Muhammad Hashim Khan (Sajjawal), Mawlawi Lal Muhammad (Paye Nawa), Mualim Rahmatullah (Khanqay), Khateeb Akhundzada (from Kotwal) and Mualim Abdul Qadir.

Rozi Khan was his military commander. Mullah Tor was also his military person, but neither had the war spirit. They only protected themselves against the Taliban.

After the collapse of Tirinkot city, a group of Taliban from Kandahar advanced to capture Karzai, but faced heavy losses because of US bombardment and did not succeed in achieving the target. Karzai then came to Kandahar's Shah Wali Kot area. He remained there until the fall of Kandahar, when a delegation of the Taliban met him and agreed to hand over control of Kandahar city to Mullah Naqib. Kandahar collapsed, and Hamid Karzai was selected as a leader of the interim government according to the resolution of the Bonn conference. He was transferred to Kabul by CIA special forces in a helicopter.

#### MASS KILLINGS OF THOUSANDS OF SURRENDERED TALIBAN BY DOSTUM AND INVADERS

When the Taliban lost control of Herat and were unable to hold positions on the Kabul front, they were unable to forcibly reopen the Bamiyan route and provide safe passage to approximately 10,000 besieged Taliban in the north and Kunduz. On one hand they were facing extreme bombardment, while the routes were closed and they were close to being besieged. Militants of coalition forces were providing coordinates to US planes and the Taliban bases were targeted precisely. After extreme bombardment the Taliban were crushed and coalition forces advanced.

Dostum and allied forces were coordinating with commander Dawood. They assured the Taliban of protection in case of surrender. The lives of the besieged Taliban were also important for Mullah Omar. The Taliban believed that in the event of surrender they would not be killed because of the existence of international laws, human rights organisations and the constant monitoring of the situation by the US. Messages were also conveyed in Islamabad to international organisations.

In Kandahar discussions were underway on the permissibility or lack thereof of surrender. Senior Mufti Mawlawi Abdul Ali said that if their security is ensured/clear then it is permissible for them to surrender. But in Kunduz many elders considered this wrong, and talked this over with Mawlawi Abdul Ali on a

satellite phone. They later agreed to surrender. But those commanders who refused to accept this decision included Mullah Dadullah, who hid in a house in Balkh with the help of supporters and told BBC in an interview that he had just reached Kandahar.

Dostum and Hizb-e Wahdat were sure that Dadullah had left the area so they stopped their search. This was a successful tactic by Mullah Dadullah. When the Taliban government completely collapsed, he reached Khost with the help of a human trafficker who didn't recognise him, and then went on to Waziristan.

The surrendered Taliban were distributed between Dostum and foreign intelligence. The general military commanders Mullah Muhammad Fazal, Balkh governor and administrator Mullah Noorullah Noori and a few other commanders were handed over to Americans; they remained at Guantánamo until the exchange of prisoners.

Others were killed in stages. During the investigation later when any commanders were recognised, they were handed over to US forces. The surrendered Taliban were killed, and these prisoners were bombed, including those held at the Qala Jangi prison.

In the second stage, thousands of Taliban were loaded onto containers and the doors closed. When the prisoners shouted because of thirst and the lack of oxygen, they fired on the containers. Several people were killed, and the remaining survived from the air that came through the bullet holes. A few prisoners who survived said that many died of suffocation and others fainted because of thirst. The people who had fainted were tossed into the desert and shot in the head. After some time a few international organisations raised this issue and reports were published. As Dostum's loyal militants were the supporters of invaders, their actions were even more devastating.

After a few months of Karzai's rule a delegation visited Mazar. Karzai's advisor Mawlawi Siddiqullah was also a part of this delegation and had a similar story. Abdul Bari Jahani (a writer and poet) said we should hide these incidents as they will damage Hamid Karzai's goodwill.

THE FATE OF AL-QAEDA LEADERS IN TORA BORA

After the collapse of Kabul, the situation in Nangarhar and the adjoining provinces was out of control. The Nangarhar governor and deputy minister of the Ministers' Shura, who was also head of the eastern zone, established three lines of defence between Kabul and Laghman. The first was between Sarobi and Laghman in the Warakhmeen Tangi area, the second between Laghman and Surkhhakan, and the third on the Kabul-Jalalabad highway.

Nangarhar's military officials left the city and only a security commander, some local division commanders and a small unit of militants along with Mawlawi Abdul Kabir remained in Jalalabad.

Mawlawi Abdul Kabir consulted with the Ministers' Shura deputy Mullah Muhammad Hassan, about how after the collapse of Kabul they could not resist more in Nangarhar. Nothing could be achieved except heavy losses while resisting against commanders in the eastern region and US air attacks.

Mawlawi Abdul Kabir then sent a message to Mullah Muhammad Omar that he cannot be contacted directly and also ordered him to leave the city. Mawlawi Abdul Kabir invited his trusted local commander Mualim Awal Gul and two trustworthy people who had close ties with Mawlawi Muhammad Yunus Khalis dating back to the jihad era. It was decided that Mawlawi Khalis should nominate the head of the eastern zone. Mualim Awal Gul will hold control of the Jalalabad office, and after the withdrawal of the Taliban this office would have a name separate than that of the Taliban.

Mawlawi Abdul Kabir sent a message to Osama and Ayman al-Zawahiri through a colleague of the late Engineer Mahmood that your stay here has created problems for you, and so you should go with us to Khost and Paktia through Azra district. They replied that they will remain in Tora Bora. Mawlawi Abdul Kabir responded that first come with us, and if you wish to remain there, then go to the Wazir Tangai area of Khogiani, it is better than Tora Bora. It has a route to the Hesarak and Azra district, and also has a way towards Paktia through the Zazai area. You can also cross into Pakistan from there. But they still picked Tora Bora.

At the time the Defence Minister Mullah Obaidullah who was in Logar said on the radio to leave the city at the earliest and to be careful. He said to not go to

the radio to leave the city at the earliest and to be careful. He said to not go to Logar from the Hesarak route since it was already controlled and being monitored.

Mawlawi Kabir and a group of friends travelled for two days on the Ghazni route near the Pakistan border and reached Khost. He and a few friends went to the Paktia Zadran area. When the Eastern Shura members and commanders entered Nangarhar after two days, they overturned the Taliban office. Under the leadership of Haji Qadeer, the Eastern Shura got control of Nangarhar, and the adjacent provinces of Kunar and Laghman also came under the control of regional commanders.

Haji Qadeer had a meeting with Mawlawi Muhammad Yunus Khalis – who was too weak to speak at the time – to show that Mawlawi Khalis was also supporting him. But after staying in Jalalabad for a short time, Mawlawi Khalis's son migrated and announced jihad against the US invaders.

Mualim Awal Gul, who was commander of the fourth brigade and controlling the armoury, remained at the same position on the advice of Taliban officials and Mawlawi Khalis. The Eastern Shura did not replace him owing to old ties.

When the US Air Force was bombing the Tora Bora area, US officials ordered their local commanders to carry out a ground operation. Mualim Awal Gul sent a message to Sheikh Osama that he was coming to Tora Bora with his forces. He would misfire on the surrounding mountains and give Osama a chance to leave the area before other commanders supporting the US arrived. Osama agreed to this plan but a few friends were still wary.

Mualim Awal Gul went according to the plan and evacuated Arab migrant families from the area with the support of other trusted personnel. Mawlawi Khalis's house was a shelter for Arab women and children. His family helped them until the end and safely evacuated them to their destinations. A mujahid Haji Abdul Ahad took Osama and Zawahiri from Tora Bora Nangarhar to Wazir area and barely escaped the local militants. Mualim Awal Gul took him from Wazir to Nangarhar city.

Afghan and foreign informants were searching for Osama bin Laden. A few key commanders of the Eastern Shura including Hazrat Ali and Zaman Chamsheer

commanders of the Eastern Shura including Hazrat Ali and Zaman Ghannishareek were suspicious of Mualim Awal Gul. Before he safely evacuated the two Arab leaders, Hazrat Ali visited Gul and told him that these people are with you and the American want him at any cost. It would be better if you hand them over. But Awal Gul denied their presence, even while the Sheikhs were sitting in his vehicle.

One of Hazrat Ali's militants was checking every vehicle. Mualim Gul decided that if Hazrat Ali went towards the vehicle or tried to search it, he would attack him. But in the end Hazrat Ali lefty the brigade compound. Mualim Awal Gul then took the Sheikhs through the Behsud bridge towards Kunar. From there on, his loyal commanders took them to safe mountainous area and protected them from enemies.

## Chapter 8: Complete collapse of the Taliban government

### EVACUATION OF MULLAH OMAR AFTER THE FALL OF KANDAHAR

Mullah Omar did not use communication equipment, following the suggestion of some key and close Taliban officials. But when the Taliban lost control over the north, Mullah Omar asked the Taliban in a radio message to resist until their last breath, and was then present on the repeater radio. The central communication radio provided information from across Afghanistan and he sent more forces for defence and resistance. In the end the Taliban left Kabul city. Mullah Omar appointed a few commanders to defend Kandahar. The commanders and leaders who lost hundreds of their fighters in US bombardment said about their experiences: The rule over cities and defending cities through war is now impossible because aeroplanes can easily target known bases and offices.

Mullah Omar accepted their concerns during these discussions. A few main commanders preferred to leave the cities to take up resistance. On the other hand the morale of national militias was increasing. Kabul, the north, and Herat had already collapsed. The extreme bombing by US planes encouraged their weak supporters to fight against the Taliban.

The inconsistent attitude of commanders, and the contacts between a few commanders with the enemy, forced Mullah Omar to say that whatever you may want for yourself, I am willing to handover my authority to you, but those who want to fight in the city should be with me until the end. I will fight until the last breath, which means that I do not see any reasoning in the Sharia to leave the battlefield.

Prior to the collapse of Kandahar, there was a meeting between Taliban commanders and regional tribal elders, according to an eyewitness and participant Mullah Gul Agha, a close friend of Mullah Omar and in-charge of financial affairs. He says: Before the collapse of Kandahar, Mullah Omar held a meeting at the special place of the Kandahar corns. The participants of the

meeting at the special place of the Kandahar Corps. The participants of the meeting include these officials of the Islamic Emirate:

Mullah Obaidullah Akhund  
Mullah Baradar Akhund  
Abdul Razzaq Nafiz  
Abdul Salam Rocketi  
Amir Khan Haqqani  
Mullah Akhtar Muhammad Mansoor  
Mullah Abdul Rauf Akhund  
Mullah Abdul Razzaq Akhund (interior minister)  
Raees of Baghran Mr. Abdul Wahid  
Mullah Abdul Bari Akhund (Helmand Governor)  
Qari Ahmadullah (general head of intelligence)  
and few other friends.

I have forgotten some of the names.

Attendees mostly comprised tribal elders and former commanders. It appeared that they had been invited to a leadership meeting. Karzai had been named in Shah Wali Kot. According to the statements of tribal leaders Mullah Naqib, Amir Muhammad Agha, Mullah Muhammad Karim from Shahre Safa, Mawlawi Atta Muhammad from Baghran, and several other tribal leaders participated; I forgot their names. Mullah Naqib made a very emotional speech that we cannot see the pain and sadness of our people. Americans are engaged in heavy bombing, so we should transfer the government to tribal and jihadi leaders. Most of the attendees agreed to this, including a few of our colleagues through their silence. But Mullah Omar strongly insisted that we will continue our struggle and jihad and opposed surrender of any kind. He said: If we are forced, we will leave the city and populated areas. We will move to the mountains and deserts so we can prepare ourselves.

The attendees suggested a plan to select sympathisers for a few important areas so they could support us in the future – for example, Mullah Rocketi proposed Mullah Karim for Zabul, Mawlawi Atta Muhammad for Uruzgan, and Mullah Naqib for Kandahar.

But Mullah Omar rejected this proposal, saying that we cannot allow our people to work with Americans. It is better that the US appoints its people so that the public begins jihad against them. If we introduce our people to them, this would be supporting the US invaders.

I remember it was an uncivil and rough meeting. The participants wanted to make decisions quickly as there were chances of heavy bombing. Mullah Omar still wanted resistance and jihad. He ordered me to distribute money among Taliban officials to continue jihad. We distributed \$2.5 million at the meeting. A few received \$100,000, others received \$50,000. Money was also sent to people who were not present at the meeting.

Mullah Omar did not like the statements of the attendees, especially the statements about Mullah Naqib were very harsh. He left the meeting and told his friends that they should look for an appropriate solution to protect themselves and to continue their jihad with this money until they meet again.

The famous military commander of the northern fronts Mullah Abdul Razzaq Nafiz, a resident of Uruzgan, was one of the commanders who decided to fight along with Mullah Omar in the city. He was honest, humble, kindhearted, and a strong military commander who played a major role in the victories of Takhar and Mazar. He was very careful about using the Taliban's government funds. After he left Kandahar, he was given a huge amount of money for personal use to and to begin guerrilla war, but he never used any of the money for personal use, even though he had nothing to eat at home. A few elders from the village collected money and gave it to his father to meet expenses.

He had some problems due to the discomfort, sleeplessness and issues he faced during the wars. After the collapse of the Taliban government, he secretly visited Karachi for treatment. In Karachi, the former finance minister Agha Jan Mu'tasim began his treatment. The doctors told him to rest for a few weeks. One day Mu'tasim took him out for a food to an expensive place. After seeing those expenses he got enraged, abandoned the treatment, and returned to Uruzgan and began fighting the invaders. After a few months of war he was martyred in the bombardment by US planes.

During the collapse of Kandahar. Abdul Razzaq Nafiz and a few other

commanders were worried that if other people leave the battle in the city, and we are the ones left behind, the US could probably make a plan to arrest Mullah Omar alive before any resistance could be made. Mullah Omar said: War is not possible in the city so we should go towards Mahalajat in the south of the city and begin our last war. Nafiz said: Mullah sahib! How is this war permissible if our deaths are certain? Secondly, your presence is the lifeblood of the future resistance. What is the need to sacrifice our lives in this unsuccessful war? Why shouldn't we plan to protect you and leave the city? We will gather more friends and organise our work with a new strategy. We cannot do anything here.

Mullah Omar's last statement was that the "enemy should come to the door of this room so that I can attack them." Nafiz responded: "There is a possibility that you do not have any opportunity to attack."

Mullah Omar eventually accepted the suggestions of Nafiz and other colleagues. He sent a message to the Minister of Air Defence Mullah Akhtar Muhammad Mansoor to convey a message to the Arab mujahideen near the airport that we are evacuating the city. We do not want to leave you alone and request you to leave the city. Mullah Omar's request to evacuate the families and children of Arab mujahideen from Kandahar city had been completed a week earlier. Those Arab mujahideen who sacrificed their lives to fight until the last breath, including suicide attackers, remained there. At that time under the leadership of Defence Minister Mullah Obaidullah, Sayyed Tayyab Agha and Haji Amir Muhammad Agha met Karzai in Shah Wali Kot and agreed to handover the city to Mullah Naqib. But later on the Americans did not allow this, and handed the city over to Sherzai and militias.

Mullah Omar and Abdul Raziq as well as other Taliban leaders were at their last base in the Gereshk Adda area near Kandahar city. Mullah Abdul Razzaq Nafiz successfully convinced Mullah Omar to go to Zabul. A day before the fall of Kandahar, Mullah Omar and a few militants went to Zabul and invited a few key Taliban commanders in the Surkhogano area. They discussed how to restart battle and a new strategy. Most of the Taliban commanders who participated in this meeting are no longer alive, for example Abdul Razzaq Nafiz, Mullah Rozi Khan, and Mullah Muhammad Gul Niazi. Mullah Omar gave the instructions and went to the Sirzui and Shinki districts. The Americans were trying to kill or

and went to the STYUN and SHIRKI districts. The Americans were trying to kill or arrest Taliban officials, and they did not even spare the Taliban ambassador in Islamabad and imprisoned him like a military commander.

#### THE ARREST AND HANDOVER OF MULLAH ABDUL SALAM ZAEEF

After the collapse of Kandahar, a few people told Mullah Abdul Salam Zaeef in the host country that as a diplomat you are not in danger so you can calmly live there. Mullah Zaeef still went to the border area and cut off his communication with everyone. One of his trustworthy relatives located him and convinced him to go back to his house in Islamabad, and that he had talked to one foreign country and a few human rights organisations about asylum for you. Mullah Zaeef was invited to Islamabad according to a plan so that the CIA could arrest him.

The name of that person is \*\*\*\*\*, and he is a relative of Hamid Karzai. He is a secret agent of the CIA, but through business and political connections he got close to Mullah Zaeef as a loyal friend. The Ministry for Mines and Industry Mawlawi Ahmad Jan says: I saw an American with \*\*\*\*\* in Kabul wearing Afghan clothes several times, who he introduced to officials as a wireless/cell phone engineer. It is now clear to me that he was a CIA agent.

According to Musharraf's instructions, Mullah Zaeef was handed over to the ISI-CIA in Peshawar. The complete story has been written by Mullah Zaeef in his book. Whatever happened with Zaeef, it was the worst crime for a government organisation, and for Pakistan it was a shameful incident that a nuclear power country could bow down to such an extent.

A few Taliban officials consider \*\*\*\*\* behind the failure and disclosure of the Taliban relations with China. After increased US pressure, the Taliban leadership wanted to send a signed letter by Mullah Omar to the Chinese president through Mullah Zaeef via secret channels with Chinese officials.

It is said that Zaeef gave this letter to \*\*\*\*\*, who informed the CIA, which led to the Chinese suddenly retreating. When Mullah Zaeef was released from imprisonment, \*\*\*\*\* was at Kabul airport to welcome him with a few expensive vehicles. These vehicles were probably purchased with CIA money. Mullah Zaeef knows \*\*\*\*\*'s reality but cannot say anything about him openly.

On the other hand, \*\*\*\*\* told someone that my target was not to hand him over like this that the Americans take him to Guantánamo, but I wanted him cleared after a short imprisonment and to go into business with me in Kabul and continue his life as normal. His statement of excuses is similar to that of Khalid Pashtun's about Mawlawi Mutawakkil. Mutawakkil and Zaeef faced hardship and lengthy imprisonments. But later in Kabul the presence of this kind of Taliban was acceptable for the CIA as they are not a danger anymore and just symbolic figures. Secondly, the CIA also aimed that former Taliban officials of this kind would become a way to attract mullahs and other Taliban to the government and foreign forces.

#### THE FIRST RESISTANCE AFTER THE FALL OF THE TALIBAN GOVERNMENT

When the Taliban left all areas in the country, the resistance against the government was almost negligible. After three months, in March 2002, the Americans began an operation against a huge Taliban base in Paktia's Zurmat Shahi Kot Darra area. This was the jihadi base of Mullah Saif ur-Rahman Mansoor, who had been designated to carry out jihad against US invaders.

Saif ur-Rahman Mansoor was the second-born son of Mawlawi Nasrullah Mansoor, a famous jihadi who was martyred in a terrorist attack in 1992. Here I wish to present important information about the personality and martyrdom of Mawlawi Nasrullah Mansoor.

He was a resident of Paktia's Zurmat district, and the son of minister Haji Ghulam Muhammad Khan. He was famous among key jihadi commanders, and played an important role in reducing the jihadi conflicts between Hekmatyar and Rabbani which is why they accepted Mawlawi Muhammad Nabi as a leader. He was selected as the deputy of the Harakat Inquilab-e-Islami. When Rabbani and Hekmatyar split and Sayyaf returned to Kabul, Mawlawi Khalis also established a new organisation. Mawlawi Mansoor was still Mawlawi Nabi Muhammadi's deputy, but when the organisation became weak due to the presence of careless people, bad acts, financial carelessness, weak leadership, the favouritism and interference of Mawlawi Nabi's sons, Mawlawi Mansoor left the organisation. But his was not accepted as an official organisation because of the other groups in Pakistan that Pakistani officials were equipping with a share of arms and

ammunition. His large organisation was reduced to a small group and he was compelled to look to Iran. At that time Iran also supported the Afghan jihad but its support to Sunnis was very limited.

Mawlawi Mansoor managed his group, offices, madaris, publications, and training programmes in a very active manner, even though he lacked for funds. He was highly capable of utilising the youth in service.

Mawlawi Mansoor, along with others, also trained his sons for jihad. He never sent his sons to foreign universities for higher education. When he came across such opportunities he would tell his sons that you will get your education in the madaris where Afghans are educated.

During our childhood and the jihad against Soviets, we saw the house, offices, and madrassa. He was living a house that rented for three hundred Pakistani rupees, and the door was covered by a curtain. He would leave his house well-dressed, like a prince. His personal life was organised and he was very hardworking. In Peshawar he was busy in education, training, and official work, and in the country he was engaged in battle. He always took his sons with him to the battlefield.

When the mujahideen entered Kabul, all six organisations excepting Hekmatyar played a role in the government. Mawlawi Mansoor also went to Kabul. Paktia was his battleground and he played a major role in conquering Paktia. After the victory commanders from different organisations and tribal leaders established a Shura, Mawlawi Mansoor was selected as governor. He preferred the governorship of Paktia instead of a position as a deputy at the Supreme Court. This was the reason that all the war booty – including armoured tanks – were repaired for a fully-equipped force instead of selling them. This force was led by Saif ur-Rahman Mansoor who was a tank operator and trained many of his colleagues. During Taliban rule Saif ur-Rahman was responsible for operating armoured tanks and cannons.

Mawlawi Mansoor got a monetary share of the province from the Rabbani regime and distributed a huge amount of money among the thieving commanders that were responsible for chaos in the province. This money was

distributed to keep the province peaceful. Mawlawi Mansoor's close friends say that he never spent this money on himself or his family. Even the vehicle he used was purchased for him by a businessman. Mullah Omar cleared his debts during Taliban rule; up until then his sons were unable to repay what their father owed. All six organisations received money from the government; even Ustad Farid, Hekmatyar's deputy president, received donations from the government for a period.

The other special thing about Mawlawi Mansoor was that his character had a national flavour, since he received religious education in Afghanistan from different mullahs and was familiar with the nature of his people. When he visited Zabul and Ghazni during mujahideen rule and held meetings there, everyone felt that very soon he would get the support of the people of the region and Islamic scholars. In Pakistan no one let him come forward, but in Afghanistan he could have resources that would counter the influence of other organisations in many provinces.

Hekmatyar was worried about him, and it was his nature to have his rivals beaten up or murdered. This made Mansoor his target. On the other hand, when it was difficult for Hekmatyar to advance further against Massoud in Kabul, he planned to capture areas from the peace-loving commanders of Ghazni, Paktia, Paktika and Logar who didn't want civil war. The intelligence services of a neighbouring country also supported him in this plan. These provinces were under the control of Harakat – the governors were from Harakat, and most forces were with Harakat but they had no military policy for war. Hekmatyar wanted to take advantage of this opportunity. Mawlawi Mansoor was the administrative controller of these provinces.

While Mawlawi Mansoor was travelling from Kabul to Gardez, with the provincial share of the budget, he was stopped by Hekmatyar. Mansoor had spent a good time with Hekmatyar in Peshawar and they were friends borne of the same struggle. He never thought Hekmatyar will humiliate him and threaten him with death.

There was a war underway between Ahmad Shah Massoud and Hekmatyar in Kabul. Not a single fighter from Mansoor's group was taking part in this war. Mawlawi Mansoor was not interested in these internal conflicts; instead he was

Mawlawi Mansoor was not interested in these internal conflicts, instead he was arranging a force as a third party to bring peace under the leadership of Sibghatullah Mujaddidi. This also included a few jihadi commanders who wanted peace.

In the battlefield of Charasyab, from where Kabul was attacked by mortars, Hekmatyar stopped his vehicle and had him taken down from the vehicle. He was imprisoned for a few hours. Hizb commanders looted money from the car. According to a local Kabul commander:

Before Mawlawi Mansoor's arrival, the men of Toor Mawlawi (Mawlawi Nizamuddin) gave a secret report to Hekmatyar that Mawlawi Mansoor has cash and crosses your check posts. But people close to Toor Mawlawi deny this accusation and call it propaganda. It has been said that while Mawlawi Nizamuddin was with Haqqani, he was actually friends with Hekmatyar and wanted to forcibly control Paktia. This commander says that during the theft of money, a commander of Hizb Zabir Nazir Zazai who was alone fell down on the money bags so that no one could take the money from him. Other Hizb Patakis forcibly removed the bags of money.

Unfortunately these types of robberies under the leadership of a rigid leader like Hekmatyar and at the checkpoint of the well-reputed commander Haji Kashmir Khan shows that along with sparking violence they also fostered murderers and thieves.

After the robbery, this siege was broken with the support of Mawlawi Jalaluddin Haqqani. Mawlawi Mansoor told Kabul television that "They told us that we will kill you, I told them that 'we have knowledge that life and death is only in the hands of Allah.'" Mawlawi Muhammad Yunus Khalis also faced a similar situation when he was stopped by the commander Zardad in the Sarobi area and were later released due to the intervention of Mawlawi Jalaluddin Haqqani's brothers. Mawlawi Khalis was not taken off the vehicle since he was accompanied by his commanders and militants.

In a similar incident, one of Hekmatyar's famous commanders Wahidullah Sabawoon stopped another jihadi commander Peer Sayyed Ahmad Gailani, who was also a part of the Kabul government and wanted to visit Laghman.

Hekmatyar stopped him with the support of Sabawoon. But Gailani's famous commander Shomali Khan broke the siege, and the next day he gave Hekmatyar 12 hours to leave Nangarhar. Hekmatyar's house was then in Jalalabad. The Kochi head of Hizb-e Islami group Haji Abdul Mateen recounted to me that Shomali Khan warned Hekmatyar, and Hizb commanders in Nangarhar did not have the courage to send militants to protect Hekmatyar's house.

Haji Mateen said: I sent 12 militants to his house but after that it was difficult for Hekmatyar to stay there. After the mujahideen entered Kabul, all the government-appointed members from seven jihadi groups, and the main members of these groups, as well as Mujaddidi, were invited to Kabul. They wanted to travel on the Kabul-Jalalabad highway. Hekmatyar sent me a message to attack this convoy near the Chora Galai area of Jalalabad and eliminate them. Mateen said: I refused, but fortunately the convoy did not pass through. Mujadiddi and his cabinet went to Kabul by air.

Within a month of the Charasyab incident, there was a bomb blast on the vehicle of Mawlawi Mansoor on the Gardez-Zurmat route, which killed Mawlawi Mansoor and Mawlawi Zabtu Khan, a famous religious scholar from Logar.

There were two opinions about the murder of Mawlawi Mansoor: one theory is that a mine was placed on the route, and the second is that a remote-controlled mine was placed in his vehicle when he was stopped by Hizb-e Islami commanders in Charasyab. The second theory has more weight because according to Mawlawi Mansoor's security personnel, there were no signs of a buried bomb or its impact under the car.

According to a Kabul-based Hizb commander, when Mawlawi Nasrullah Mansoor was martyred, local commanders congratulated each other via the radio.

Mawlawi Nasrullah Mansoor was a caring, foresighted and intelligent young jihadi leader and Islamic scholar. In Peshawar he had a very good relationship with Hekmatyar and Hizb. But later on, the aggressive and painful attitude of Hizb intelligence personnel forced Mullah Mansoor to depend on Massoud and Rabbani's support to protect his areas from Hizb attacks. Hekmatyar had a plan to forcibly gain control of Logar, Ghazni, and Paktia. He succeeded in getting

to forcibly gain control of Logar, Ghazni, and Farda. He succeeded in getting control of Logar. The governors of these provinces were Harakat commanders and Mawlawi Mansoor was the administrative leader. Therefore it was important for Hekmatyar to kill Mawlawi Mansoor. Mullah Toor was probably also a part of this conspiracy. He was blamed for disorders and thefts in Khost and Gardez. With the arrival of the Taliban, Mullah Toor did not join Mawlawi Jalaluddin Haqqani against the Taliban, instead he took up opposition.

When the Taliban captured the Charasyab area, Mullah Saif ur-Rahman Mansoor was also a part of this force as a commander. I heard from one of his friends that after Hekmatyar's escape, he went to his house and took away the clothes and other goods. He handed these items over to a trusted person and said: Take these to Hekmatyar and tell him that I consider your honour as mine. You stopped and humiliated my father, but my father taught me to consider your honour as my honour.

Saif ur-Rahman was brought up under the guidance of his father, and he emerged as a fighter. He was a kind and just warrior. He offered long prayers at night. He was careful about the use of entrusted vehicles and money. One of his friends says that he did not participate in his brother's wedding because he could not use a government car for personal purposes. He fought as a Taliban commander on the frontline and was injured twice, which led to him being disabled after receiving severe injuries to his hands.

On November 12, 2001, the Defence Ministry announced evacuation and the Taliban militants were leaving Kabul. This evacuation was based on a secret agreement that the Taliban would not be bombed as they left. Two famous commanders were unaware of this at the time – Mawlawi Jalaluddin Haqqani and Mullah Saif ur-Rahman Mansoor. They intended to fight until the end to defend Kabul and protested the decision.

They left Kabul in the end. Mawlawi Jalaluddin Haqqani began resistance activities in Khost, and Saif ur-Rahman Mansoor reactivated his father's base camp in the Shahi Kot mountainous area that was established during the jihad against the Soviets to organise jihadi activities. These commanders safely evacuated the families of the Arab mujahideen and their families who came from the south and east and to a safe place. Mullah Saif ur-Rahman Mansoor, with the

support of Mullah Nek Muhammad from Waziristan and local residents, provided safe sanctuary to Arabs and other foreigners. Mullah Nek Muhammad worked in the Qargha military division as an individual and was a close friend of Mullah Saif ur-Rahman Mansoor.

Mawlawi Jalaluddin Haqqani was seriously injured in US aerial attacks as he was planning attacks against the invaders while at the house of Sirajuddin in Zanikhel village, Nadir Shahkot district. Following this his sons selected jihadi bases on the other side of the border and organised effective operations. Mullah Saif ur Rahman selected the Shahi Kot mountains as a base and also joined hands with foreign mujahideen.

In early 2002, US spies began monitoring this training camp. Mawlawi Abdul Hakeem Muneeb, a former deputy minister of Taliban, was a well-known figure who had played a major role in the Shah Wali Kot war. He was a resident of Zurmat, Paktia. He was close to Rahmatullah Wahid Yar from an early age, and so he considered himself a supporter of Mawlawi Mansoor. He did not have a good reputation in the Taliban movement, his infamy caused by an incident where he had stolen a vehicle. But he still remained an official at a low rank.

Before the US invasion, he had links with the CIA through the former jihadi commander Mullah Malang. When the US attacked Afghanistan, he made statements against Mullah Omar while talking to the media and was actively involved in supporting the invaders. One he talked with the media; he was captured by the Taliban. He made an excuse that Bacha Khan Zadran had tied him up and forced him to make these statements. Saif ur-Rahman Mansoor tried considerably later to arrest him.

Muneeb and a foreign woman were walking in Gardez city and its surroundings to collect information about the Shah Wali Kot base. He later shared this information with US officials. After the battle of Shahi Kot, Muneeb was rewarded with money and an official position. On one hand he cooperated with Americans to attack Saif ur-Rahman's base, and on the other hand, with offers of free Hajj and Umrah to many Paktia residents, the Zurmat sheikhs and regular mullahs became his friends and supporters.

After precise surveillance, an attack was planned on Shahi Kot. During March 2002, after the US airstrikes, Afghan forces were sent to war. Saif ur-Rahman captured hundreds of Afghan army personnel alive and later released them. The American forces faced heavy losses for the first time in this war, and the western media called it a big loss for the US after the Vietnam war. US forces confirmed the destruction of two aeroplanes, the deaths of eight soldiers and injuries to a few others. But according to locals and eyewitnesses of the war, many aeroplanes were shot down and more than a hundred US soldiers killed.

Saif ur-Rahman's brother Fatah ur-Rahman says: In Orya Khel village, which was away from the battle area, I counted seven helicopters hit by the Taliban. We also saw one AWACS E\_3 plane that fell near Gardez city.

Muhammad Qasim Halimi was then imprisoned in Bagram. He says: a guard soldier with me in Bagram was crying on the first day of this war, and saying that our forces faced heavy losses and forty dead bodies have been brought to Bagram until now.

The war continued for two weeks, and it stopped the day after Mullah Saif ur-Rahman's martyrdom. Very few of his friends survived the war. Mawlawi Muhammad Yusuf and Mawlawi Fida Muhammad Jawad were his main commanders and were martyred with him.

After this war, US forces realised for the first time that it is very hard to fight Afghans directly, even with the presence of advanced technology. This boosted the morale of the Taliban and they slowly and gradually later started resistance efforts against the invaders. Mullah Saif ur-Rahman was the first symbol and hero of the resistance against invaders. His death was hidden by his friends to keep the morale of the militants high.

After the martyrdom of Saif ur-Rahman Mansoor, his brothers did not succeed in strengthening his group. Owing to inexperience, weak advisors, and the coordination with a few members of Khuddam ul-Furqan weakened their moral resistance. They were busy in their personal and local conflicts.

The sons of Mawlawi Jalaluddin Haqqani effectively expanded their resistance efforts to half the country. These two families are loved greatly by their

followers due to their effectiveness and their family sacrifices.

#### ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE KHUDDAM UL-QURAN ORGANISATION

After the US invasion and the collapse of the Taliban government, a few people like Saif ur-Rahman Mansoor went to the mountains with the intention of mounting a resistance. A few went to the border areas with Pakistan to live there in secret, a few officials went to Pakistani cities as refugees, and regular Taliban went back home based on Karzai's promise. Americans and their supporting militias arrested these Taliban, and they tried to escape to anywhere they could. Because of this many Taliban agreed to fight against the Americans, Northern Alliance, and local commanders, because of their abuses and humiliation. They understood that if they stay home they will be humiliated and threatened to death. So it is better to not give oneself in empty-handed to the enemy.

On the other hand, the middle-class Taliban officials who had been living in Pakistan during the jihad against the Soviets were asked by Pakistan to support the Karzai government and announce their disassociation from the Taliban. At the time Karzai had very warm relations with Pakistan and his family had recently shifted from Quetta to Kandahar and Kabul. Even in the elections, Afghan refugees in Pakistan voted for Karzai, and the Pakistani government facilitated these elections.

As Pakistan was a member of the US coalition, its policy was clearly to imprison, hand over and convince the Taliban to support Karzai.

Led by Amin Jan Mujadiddi, Mawlawi Arsala Rahmani, Abdul Hakeem Mujahid, Habibullah Fawzi, Rahmatullah Wahidyar, Haji Ahmad Hotak, Sohail Shaheen, and Mawlawi Abdul Sattar Siddiqui announced an organisation called Khuddam ul-Furqan. This was an organisation that had originally been established by Islamic scholars and spiritual leaders after the second Anglo-Afghan war for the protection of Islamic values against British politics. This organisation was active until the communist coup.

Mullah Arsala Rahmani and Haji Ahmad Hotak were the actual founders of this new Khuddam ul-Furqan who used Amin Jan Mujaddidi as a symbol. Arsala Rahmani was an opportunist and an intelligent man. He worked in the Rabbani and Taliban governments as a minister and deputy minister, and was selected as

and Taliban governments as a minister and deputy minister, and was selected as a senator in the Karzai administration. He owned a huge property in Pakistan. Wahid Yar and Rahmani were among those sixty Harakat commanders who were awarded Pakistani nationality by the President of Pakistan Ghulam Ishaq Khan at the end of the jihad against USSR.

Rahmani was a famous jihadi commander from Paktika during the jihad, but later a lot of wealth from Arab supporters and land from refugees was left to him. It is also said that at the end of the jihad he sold a huge amount of weapons and grew rich. He purchased property in Islamabad, Pakistan and also had a cold storehouse for fresh vegetables and fruits.

During the Rabbani and Taliban governments he purchased many houses and shops. Someone asked him why he was eager to return to Kabul. He jokingly replied that I exchanged my jihad for these shops and markets; if I leave these now I'll lose both.

Mullah Arsala Rahmani used Amin Jan Muhammadi for this work, and his achievement was to rid himself of the Taliban label to come to Kabul. After understanding the reality, Mawlawi Abdul Sattar Siddiqui left the organisation. He pledged allegiance to Mullah Akhtar Muhammad Mansoor in 2016 and passed away in early 2017.

They were provided financial support. Those funds were either provided by Pakistani organisations, or Western organisations through Pakistan. Instead of using these funds for the organisation, it became a source of conflict between them. Haji Abdul Rahman Hotak was angered and left the organisation because of receiving a smaller share of the money.

Mullah Arsala had suggested investing this money. His friends told him that they did not have more understanding of business than him, so he should invest it. Arsala Rahmani said: As potatoes are cheap these days, I will purchase thousands of tonnes of potatoes and store them at my cold storage until potato rates in the market increase; we will earn a lot of money. You only have to pay me rent for the cold storage.

When the season passed, potato rates dropped even more and there was a loss, but Mullah Arsala received rent for the cold storage.

but Mullah Asala received rent for the cold storage.

Due to the US invasion, Pakistani pressure and official positions, a few more Taliban officials tried negotiations with the Karzai administration and Americans but failed.

#### THE SURRENDER OF TALIBAN OFFICIALS

In March 2002, a group of Taliban headed by Justice Minister Mullah Nooruddin Turabi went to the Kandahar Governor Gul Agha Sherzai. This group included the former Taliban Higher Council member Mullah Muhammad Sadiq, Herat Police Commander Mullah Abdul Haq (the brother of Mullah Sa'aduddin), the head of administrative affairs Mawlawi Sayyed Muhammad Haqqani, Boldak resident and Ghazni police commander Mullah Obaidullah and a few other low-ranking Taliban officials. When it was clear to Gul Agha Sherzai that America will not forgive these Taliban commanders and they would be sent to Guantánamo as prisoners, he gave them money and told them that the Americans will not leave you so you should disappear.

This strong reaction of the Americans and the humiliation of Taliban family members by local commanders helped this new resistance, and every Taliban leader understood that there was no other way forward as America would not leave them at any cost.

This group gave a letter to Sherzai so that no one should bother them. They thought that Sherzai has a good relationship with Pakistan and this letter would protect them. When Mullah Muhammad Sadiq showed this letter to the Pakistani police, they handed him over to the ISI who gave him to the Americans. He was later sent to Guantánamo.

This letter sometimes helped the Taliban within Afghanistan. A similar letter was provided to Mufti Abdul Hakeem, a resident of Kandahar city, which stated: this Maulvi Sahib is disgusted with the Taliban, he lives at his house, no one should bother him. During Taliban rule, Mufti Abdul Hakeem was the administrative head of Kandahar. He remained at home for a while but after a year he joined hands with the Taliban again and worked as the economic commission head for a period.

Another important official who surrendered was Mawlawi Wakeel Ahmad Mutawakkil. When he saw the situation of Mullah Abdul Salam Zaeef's arrest in Pakistan, he was sure of his fate, that as the Taliban foreign minister Pakistan would not spare him. After a few days of contact, Haji Bashir who had links with Kandahar officials convinced him that after meeting with Americans he will live a regular life in Afghanistan. Khalid Pashtun gave assurances from the Americans' side, but they actually had a deal with the US. When he went back to Kandahar, the Americans handcuffed him and announced his arrest instead of voluntary surrender in the media and declared it a huge achievement. He was imprisoned for two years where he fell sick from tuberculosis. He lost his hair and beard. Although he was treated his body still bears the long-term effect of incarceration.

#### TALIBAN'S DIPLOMATIC ACTIVITIES AFTER THE COLLAPSE OF THE GOVERNMENT

After the collapse of the Taliban government, the Taliban were unsuccessful for a long time in establishing relations with anyone. It was difficult in the absence of a systematic plan or personnel. There was no one from the Taliban Foreign Affairs Ministry who did anything about this, or now has positive and sincere intentions.

The Foreign Affairs Minister Wakeel Ahmad Mutawakkil initially surrendered and was then imprisoned. The first and independent deputy Mullah Jalil was stopped from working in accordance with Mullah Omar's audio message as he was accused of having personal relations with the ISI. Mullah Omar's deputies occasionally allowed him to work on financial contributions. But he paid secretive visits without gaining approval and was not loyal to the Taliban leadership. After Mullah Omar's death he openly supported the Mullah Rasool group and completely cut off his ties to the Taliban leadership.

The second symbolic deputy was Abdul Rahman Zahid, who became infamous among the Taliban on the first day of the government's collapse and was later accused of financial corruption. Unfortunately a dozen financial corruption cases against him were proven. He wasted the time of many groups as a fake Taliban representative. He utilised his old official position for personal and financial gain and made several sorts to pose as a Taliban representative. He once secretly visited Algeria as a Taliban representative to get support for Taliban refugees but

after Mullah Omar learned of this, he apologised and promised to give the amount to the relevant department but never did so. He was never trusted by the Taliban leadership because of his open financial corruption and posing as a fake Taliban representative. It was not possible to have him conduct diplomatic relations.

On the other hand, sending inexperienced and unpopular representatives by the Taliban leadership for diplomatic efforts was another reason for failure and a waste of time.

The first head of the political commission Mawlawi Abdul Kabir was very intelligent and had insight into internal machinations, but he was still unable to implement his plans. A few of his opponents blamed him for his inclination towards peace and negotiations because of his moderate and soft temperament. In his absence a few of his colleagues from the political commission directly contacted the Taliban leadership in secret. Similarly, some of the Taliban had independent meetings and activities; e.g. Mawlawi Abdul Kabir did not know about Mawlawi Shahabuddin Dilawar's meetings with the British man, Michael Semple.

In accordance with Mullah Omar's instructions, Mawlawi Abdul Kabir was trying to build ties with anti-US groups. Initially this task was almost impossible, while establishing relationships with Western circles was relatively easy because these circles are appointed with the CIA's approval. But this was against the purpose of the Taliban, who wanted to build ties to strengthen their resistance while these circles were trying to stop the Taliban from war and stop surrender.

Mawlawi Abdul Latif Mansoor was then appointed leader for a brief duration but he was soon given another important task. Mu'tasim Agha Jan was also appointed for a few months because the Taliban wanted to stop him from access to financial resources. But he was again successful in accessing the financial affairs position, and eventually Mullah Omar disassociated him from the Taliban movement.

When Tayyab Agha was appointed head of this commission, he also carried out the easier tasks and established ties with Western circles, but he also took

careless steps against others with the support of close friends and Mullah Omar's fiends. Unfortunately when the Taliban were getting closer to anti-US forces, these efforts were rendered weak and ineffective because of Tayyab Agha's actions. This was because those groups termed the warm relations of Tayyab Agha with western sources as distancing them, and a few showed their disappointment and complained about this as well.

Tayyab Agha visited Europe for the first time through the Central Asian Republics and conducted high-level negotiations in Germany. On the other hand Mullah Abdul Salam Zaeef and a few other sources established connections between the CIA and Tayyab Agha.

After this task was initiated, other intelligence deals and checks were hidden from the Shura and the leadership for a long time, because of which Tayyab Agha was later accused of disobedience and making decisions independently, since he was not influential at a high level in the Taliban.

But after Mutawakkil became minister, he was the second secretary in Mullah Omar's office. The first secretary was Abdul Salam Katib. His age and previous record did not make him a trusted figure among Taliban leaders. In the Qatar process his carelessness and independent decisions were not acceptable for important Shura members and Taliban commanders. But Tayyab Agha was proud of his work and careless about the Taliban system, and because of this his distance with the Taliban leadership increased until his resignation.

POLITICS AND BEHAVIOUR OF IRAN, PAKISTAN AND SAUDI ARABIA AFTER THE US INVASION

## **PAKISTAN**

After the collapse of the Taliban government, the Pakistani military leadership was in a coalition with America, and US forces were provided military bases for carrying out bombardment in Afghanistan.

Hamid Karzai, Gul Agha Sherzai, Commander Abdul Haq and tens of other US supporters came to Afghanistan from Pakistan with its support and began war against the Taliban with US forces. The houses of these supporters were in Pakistan, and before 9/11 they worked with US support on establishing an anti-Taliban group in Quetta and Peshawar.

But after the collapse of the Taliban government, Pakistan was the same Pakistan when after the mujahideen victory a huge number of officials from the Najib regime and their supporters along with their families entered Pakistan through open borders and sent applications to take refuge through western delegations in Peshawar and Islamabad. After the Taliban victory the fleeing commanders of illegal checkpoints and a few former jihadis also went to Pakistan.

The doors of the neighbouring Central Asian Republics and Iran were only opened for Afghans for a very limited time. But the doors of Pakistan were always open for all Afghans.

After the collapse of the Taliban government, those Taliban who were unable to live in Afghanistan went to Pakistan. Hundreds and thousands of people worked in the Taliban government and they were a part of Afghanistan. America never wanted the enmity of those people and Pakistan also did not want to take action against here people, as Pakistan was doing everything on US instructions as a coalition partner.

Secondly, all of these people were not wanted by the US. The wanted list of Taliban personnel included around 100 people which also included those who escaped death and imprisonment from Afghanistan. Their travel documents, bank accounts, or other identification details were unavailable. Most of them used nicknames, and their photos were also not available.

The people who crossed into Pakistan only went there to protect their honour. Most of them were inactive. They lived in hiding in Pakistan to protect themselves and when they became active again, most of them were pressured by Pakistan. This included the general leadership and Mullah Omar's deputies. The general leaders including Mullah Obaidullah and Mullah Baradar were arrested. Akhtar Muhammad Usmani was escaping from Pakistan and was martyred on the border by US aeroplanes.

The head of the military commission Sardar Ibrahim, Shura member and in-charge of the economic commission Mullah Gul Agha, cultural commission head Ustad Yasir, key Shura members, spokespeople and tens of other Talib

commanders were imprisoned and tortured. A few like Mullah Obaidullah and Ustad Yasir were killed in imprisonments. Others were handed over to the Kabul government, and a few were released from Pakistani imprisonment like Jalaluddin Haqqani's brother and son Haji Khalil and Dr Nasiruddin Haqqani. Rahbari Shura members and the military commission deputy Amir Khan Haqqani were released by Baitullah Mehsud in exchange for Pakistan Army officers and soldiers. A few were released in 2014 according to an agreement with Hamid Karzai's support. Some are still alive.

When General Musharraf's government ended in Pakistan and the Taliban also rose up in the country as a resistance power against all expectations, the mistrust between Pakistan and the US increased. Pakistan became more careful in its stance on the Taliban and somewhat tempered their policy about the Taliban.

In 2009 and 2010, Pakistan began efforts through religious circles to establish indirect relations with the Taliban Shura. In 2010, the Taliban appointed a representative for this but the environment on both sides was rife with suspicion.

At the end of 2010, a major change was observed in Pakistan's Taliban policy when Taliban representatives went to Qatar. Pakistan thought that the world wants to achieve an understanding with the Taliban so why should we miss this opportunity. Pakistan took high-level steps and released many imprisoned Taliban in 2014.

There is no doubt that a few Taliban officials had relations with Pakistani sources right after the Taliban government's collapse, but the relations of this group were personal and with the consent of the Taliban leadership and within the limits of the system. Due to these relations most of them became infamous and untrustworthy among the Taliban movement. However Pakistani organisations were able to make themselves more aware about Taliban activities through them. In the efforts to arrest more Taliban, these ties were used to gain benefits. US intelligence also received benefits because of intelligence sharing by Pakistani departments.

The Taliban later became stronger in different parts of the country, especially southern and western Afghanistan, and captured several areas. Many key Taliban

leaders joined the militants in Afghanistan and the Taliban also found new countries to live in other than Pakistan, which were interested in getting geopolitical benefits from the Taliban. Pakistan realised that they cannot force the Taliban now to implement their decisions, nor can they weaken the Taliban by arresting or expelling them. Instead Pakistan thought it beneficial not to make a key player in Afghanistan their enemy. Pakistan should instead follow a careful and more alluring policy about the Taliban.

On the other hand the fencing on the Pak-Afghan border is beneficial for Pakistan and not for the US, nor can this support in controlling or weakening the war. Because now the map, power and weakening of war is very far from that and these are old tactics. Investing in this project is useless.

Border restrictions and other expensive tactics were not able to slow down the war over the past seventeen years, and to imagine the same after that is madness. But the new environment and changes need new tactics. This war in its current form has only caused regret.

### **IRAN AND SAUDI ARABIA**

Iran had huge conflicts with the Taliban government but it was mysteriously sympathetic to the Taliban after the US invasion because of its anti-American stance. On one hand, Iran had close good official ties through Shi'a groups owing to which Iranian influence increased in Afghanistan for the first time. On the other hand, because of their anti-US policy about US bases and the US military presence, Iran cared about relations with the Taliban and they succeeded in establishing ties with the Taliban leadership and the real Taliban.

In comparison, an important Islamic country like Saudi Arabia was unable to create any influence in the Afghan government, nor did it succeed in establishing relations with actual Taliban. Instead it worked with mysterious fake people in the guise of the Taliban, because Saudi Arabia has no internal policy about the Afghanistan issue and they blindly followed the US policy on Afghanistan. An important country like Saudi Arabia should have focused on an internal policy on a sensitive issue like Afghanistan.

The Taliban can barely close their eyes to Saudi governments and can give them more priority. The Taliban previously prioritised Saudi Arabia among Islamic

countries because of ideology and religion. I remember that Mullah Omar never made any negative statements about Saudi leaders, nor did he like or support any activity against Saudi Arabia.

In 2013, Hamid Karzai's brother Qayyum Karzai, Engineer Arif and a few other Afghans in coordination with US intelligence and with the support of Saudi officials arranged Hajj and Umra visas for a few low-level Taliban. The aim was to gather them in Saudi Arabia and start a peace or negotiations campaign through them. Instead of real Taliban leaders and members, their focus was on gathering people who were not associated with the Taliban, who had surrendered, or were inactive and unreliable.

These Umras are still continuing but the role of Saudi Arabia in Afghan peace is still dubious and this has increased the distance and mistrust between the Taliban movement and Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia has no other achievement besides this.

#### TALIBAN AND INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANISATIONS

During the Taliban rule, all high-level international human rights organisations and NGOs were active in Afghanistan with offices in major cities. After the collapse of the Taliban government, the militants hated every foreigner, especially Western activists and organisations. This led to these organisations facing problems and there was no agreement among them. A few new NGOs were busy with new aims and objectives. Their activities were dubious which created problems for all NGOs. A few low-level Taliban commanders, personnel and members also asked these organisations for bribes. I also received information about a few incidents of this kind.

In 2005 the International Committee of the Red Cross was assured once by a few low-level Taliban on the Kabul-Kandahar highway that its convoy would not be targeted if they provided a tax of \$200,000 or \$300,000 or an equivalent amount.

The agency director Abdul Hannan Himmat had a medicine shop in 2005 under the framework of the Ministry of Information and Culture during Taliban rule, and he was not active among the Taliban at that time. With the support of another friend, he assured Red Crescent staff that we will take your request to

the Taliban leadership and they have agreed to exchange this amount of money.

But the coordinator of this organisation Engineer Nazar Muhammad Mutma'in, who supported international NGOs in Helmand and Kandahar and also worked during the Taliban regime, very cleverly recorded the discussions with Abdul Hannan Himmat.

Himmat and his friend thought that as the Taliban will not attack this convoy – because these types of attacks on highways are uncommon these days – they would receive a huge amount of money while the Taliban leadership was unaware.

Accidentally the local Taliban attacked this convoy at this time. Nazar Muhammad Mutma'in contacted Taliban leaders through other channels and showed them Abdul Hannan Himmat's recorded messages, who was disgraced because of his activities.

At the end of the year, after a meeting with Mullah Obaidullah and Mullah Baradar it was decided to have a bilateral agreement with the Red Crescent. Their representatives contacted the Taliban leadership. Mullah Obaidullah and Mullah Baradar told me to write a detailed letter to the organisation after consensus with a few people. Along with Abdul Latif Mansoor and Haji Mohibullah (famously known as Haji Lala, and a coordinator for the Taliban leadership), I wrote a letter in Pashto at the house of Mawlawi Hamidullah Nani. In this letter we mentioned ensuring support to them in security issues, and requested a bilateral agreement for treating our war wounded militants. The Red Crescent was ready for this. The letter was taken by Dr Rahmatullah from the Taliban side for English translation and he then sent them the translated letter.

A link was later established between the Red Crescent and Taliban leadership. Around thirty Korean Christian female preachers were released from the Taliban prison in Ghazni through the same organisation's support. There were again efforts by a fake group of demanding ransom and they failed because the Red Crescent had a direct link to the Taliban.

The story began when the former deputy of foreign affairs in the Taliban Abdul Rahman Zahid tried to take \$100,000 from the Red Crescent in the name of

route security for the release of the Korean women. He tried to use the Taliban leadership's name but he did not know that the organisation has direct links with the leadership. Then Mullah Baradar told us about this story: When the representative of this organisation informed me that one of your representative has such demands, I took his number and when I asked him on whose behalf was he asking the Red Crescent for money, he said as a representative of Mullah Baradar. I told him that I am Mullah Baradar. He was confused after hearing this.

In 2012-13, a mechanism was adopted for international humanitarian organisations under the leadership of Mullah Akhtar Muhammad Mansoor, and the interaction framework was somewhat improved. But there were still many hindrances. As I was an unofficial advisor to Mullah Akhtar Muhammad Mansoor, I helped him in humanitarian and political affairs.

A famous regional journalist informed me that an Afghan and a Pakistani as representatives of the Taliban are meeting with humanitarian organisations based in Geneva for the past five years. When we investigated this issue, we identified these people. One was Sami ul-Haq, a resident of Nangarhar, and the other was Faisal, a resident of Pakistan who was affiliated with the Kashmiri group Jaish-e Muhammad.

Unfortunately because of the appearance and limitations of actual Taliban leaders, many fraudulent people have started many fake processes in the name of the Taliban.

We met with representatives of this organisation and in reality, they had the ability to make direct contact with international human rights organisations and this was a good opportunity. Akhtar Muhammad Mansoor told me to continue my work and there is a possibility of success. The head of this organisation [Markachi?] was an aged British man who was intelligent and experienced. He had worked with Kofi Annan in Syria while working with the UN and this person was an opportunity for us. We held meetings with WHO and UNHCR in the Middle East through this organisation and made progress to an extent. But a few members of the military commission, a few religious people and some of their supporters had a different point of view and they were very careful about

this. There were discussions on utilisation of these NGOs for intelligence purposes by Western intelligence. Secondly, the activities of some people in the organisation of these NGOs was also suspicious. Different evidence was presented based on this.

But these organisations are not for intelligence purposes, nor are they created by intelligence agencies, but they have a clear mission. If their framework is misused then there is no issue with accusing its administration.

Everyone talks about the incidents regarding polio vaccination campaigns. The famous story is of Shakeel Afridi who spied for the CIA about Osama bin Laden under the cover of polio vaccination campaigns.

A story about WFP during the Taliban government is still discussed by a few Taliban leaders. In the last years of the Taliban rule the WFP had established free bread bakeries for widows and poor women in Kabul. The bakers were also women and these bakeries were monitored by the Ministry of Social Affairs. The administrative head of this ministry Khan Dowran was a former military officer during the Daud Khan regime. He was a commander during the mujahideen era and later became a general in the mujahideen government. He was famous as Haji Khan Dowran among the Taliban. He was not a mullah or a Talib but a religious person of a high character.

When the WFP closed these bakeries for a period as a protest, these widows and poor women protested in front of the ministry. Masooda Jalal was monitoring this programme from the WFP's side. He had good relations with the Taliban government as well. Khan Dowran says that he went to the protest, and Masood Jalal sent someone to him to say that these women were making too much noise, to kindly control them or care them so that they move away from there. Khan Dowran says he and his subordinate wanted to control and scare the women but they were not aware that the NGO workers had secret cameras with them as part of a plan.

Even today this image is very famous of a black turbaned person hitting women, and it gives an impression that this is an official Talib of Amr bil Maroof. But Amr bil Maroof rarely punished women, and they hit them on their heads when these women have not covered them, while all the protesting women's heads

were covered.

The Taliban had a mechanism for polio vaccination under the health commission's framework but there were many issues on the ground. The military commission had authorised every district military commander to decide about polio vaccinations, because of which these campaigns were not successful in Kunar, Nuristan and other areas because the local Taliban were against it. In some provinces the Taliban supported the polio vaccination programme.

In reality this gave a very bad impression of the Taliban to international organisations as it showed the strong disorder within the Taliban.

I held discussions with the leadership about this, and was given strong promises. But these issues persisted practically until I was with the Taliban movement. Work areas between NGOs and health commissions were also not properly distributed which led to misunderstandings.

There were blindly issued verdicts and propaganda against the active ingredients used in polio vaccines without any investigation, which was not appropriate without any clear evidence by authentic doctors.

In Hanafi jurisprudence, a Mufti can't issue a verdict without the consultation of an expert in the same field. For example, to declare any medicine as religiously prohibited and to issue a verdict about this, it is required to have evidence from and consult with doctors that religiously prohibited materials are used in this specific medicine.

But the propaganda here was just based on allegations and assumptions. A Salafi mullah wrote a magazine article about the religious prohibition of the polio vaccine which was shared by many Taliban but the evidence was baseless and based on fantasies and emotions.

We showed them verdicts on the vaccine from Al-Fiqh al-Islami International, Darul Uloom Haqqania Pakistan and the verdict of Maulana Abdul Ghazni from Chaman. These references are reliable for the Taliban but people of this kind still insisted on their beliefs. However the central government and Taliban leadership had no opposition to vaccination campaigns.

## **Chapter 9: Formation / Structure of new groups for resistance and latest processes**

### THE FIRST AUDIO TAPE OF MULLAH MUHAMMAD OMAR

In early 2003, Mullah Muhammad Omar sent an audio tape to his mujahideen and Taliban deputies, stating his appointment of Mullah Baradar Akhund as his first leader and Mullah Obaidullah as his second leader for a new jihadi process and resistance. I listened to this cassette. Mullah Omar appointed Mullah Baradar Akhund as leaders of the Taliban movement and his deputies. In another statement he mentioned ten names of Shura members, including Mawlawi Akhtar Muhammad Usmani, Mullah Saif ur-Rahman Mansoor, Mawlawi Jalaluddin Haqqani, Mawlawi Abdul Kabir, Mawlawi Hamdullah Nanay, Mullah Muhammad Hassan Rahmani, Mashar Mullah Muhammad Hassan Akhund, Mullah Akhtar Muhammad Mansoor, Mullah Dadullah, and Mullah Amir Khan Haqqani. When Mullah Omar learned about the martyrdom of Saif ur-Rahman Mansoor, he appointed his cousin Abdul Latif Mansoor as a Shura member. Later, on the recommendation of friends, the number of Shura members increased from time to time. In this tape Mullah Omar used harsh words for Mullah Abdul Jalil and Mullah Nooruddin Turabi because of a little disobedience. These harsh statements were later removed from the tape for the sake of goodwill.

After that the messages of Mullah Omar, tapes, and letters about every important incident, appointments and other instructions, came to the special circle that only included Mullah Baradar and Mullah Obaidullah.

In 2004, military, cultural and financial commissions were established, followed by the appointments of people responsible for jihad for the provinces. In 2005, the structure was more organised and a few of those made responsible who were in hiding until then appeared.

### EFFORTS TO ESCAPE FROM EXTREME POLITICS

As a spokesperson of Mullah Omar, I held an online press conference in 2005 with well-known international media houses. I told them about the upcoming policy of the Taliban movement. The representatives of FP, Reuters, and a few other international media outlets contacted me. To ensure that this upcoming policy is clear, sensible, and is not without limits, I associated our struggle as limited to Afghanistan. I repeated our old stance about the events of September 11 and condemned this incident once again. This press conference led a few al-Qaeda friends and Taliban commanders to express their concern, but on the other hand it strengthened the foundation of limited struggle and regular politics.

Following this, in 2006, 2007, and 2008, I organised the Eid messages of Mullah Muhammad Omar and organised it partly from 2010-2012. In these messages I mentioned negotiations with invaders, suitable proposals for withdrawal, and similar political statements, and sent them to Mullah Omar who approved these messages. I had organised the Eid message from 1999-2001, so Mullah Omar trusted me in putting it together and making additions to these messages. But these messages were criticised in a few Taliban circles.

On the other hand, the regional al-Qaeda leader Hafiz Sultan, using a made-up name, sent a letter of reproach to the Taliban leadership in 2007, declaring the limitations of the current jihad and resistance in Afghanistan and the use of the term 'Afghan struggle' as unfaithfulness with international jihad. Hafiz Sultan was the overall in-charge of al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and worked under the pseudonym Mustafa Abu Zaid. He was killed in North Waziristan on May 21, 2010 along with his family members in a drone attack.

I was considered the person behind the soft policy statements of Mullah Omar and so Mullah Obaidullah and Mullah Baradar asked me to give a suitable response to the letter. I read the letter and kept it with me for a detailed reply. While returning, there was a strict security check in progress. I quickly read the letter again and chewed it up so it would not be found on a security pat-down. The gist of the letter was in my mind. In a detailed response, I wrote about the compulsions of the Taliban movement and on the other hand provided justification about the current needs and conditions. I tried to convince them; but I never had any news of their response or reaction.

## WEAK RESISTANCE

The absence of Taliban leadership, recruiting young new men, and individual actions became the cause of bad incidents, suspicious killings and punishments. Acts like the burning of schools, killing people accused of spying without a trial, and annoying people in one way or another were carried out in different parts of Afghanistan in the name of the Taliban.

Even though Mullah Omar and the Shura issued instructions in 2007 and 2008, many people and minor commanders do not follow these. This was disobedience to the leader. I am witness of a dozen deaths of young and old people in my area which cannot be justified by the local Taliban and leadership in Sharia. These activities became an excuse for many to join Arbakis and support the government and foreign forces. Sometimes the crime of one Arbaki led to the killing of his family members.

Whenever we complained about these activities to the Taliban leadership they promised to investigate and also said there is a likelihood of such incidents in a war like this, but we will try to control it. Unfortunately the impact and responsibility of this is not so small that it can be declared as having occurred in the confusion of the battlefield. The murder of one innocent person directly impacts the overall goal. Sometimes Afghans were treated harshly, like in 2007, during an exchange with Italians the Afghan translator Ajmal Naqshbandi was killed and the Italians were released. This was a very grave incident but no one listened to us until Ajmal's last breath.

With time it became obligatory to follow rules, and courts were established. The issue of the murders of spies was very complex and for this reason some control was brought to bear. Similarly, a positive moral approach and rules were introduced about common and public spaces and educational institutions. But carelessness and irresponsibility can still be observed in the Taliban about the killings of government officials and bomb blasts.

The need for lenience, forgiveness, and carefulness is still felt in this war. In a few areas the regional Taliban commanders have a very positive attitude towards people but in a few people this is still not the case.

At the outset Mullah Omar was not a fan of suicide attacks, but when these attacks increased he issued a decree that the suicide attackers should not be too young and the tactic only used in special places where no other action is possible. He opposed these types of attacks in public places until the end.

#### *AKBAR AGHA'S JAISH UL-MUSLIMEEN*

Muhammad Akbar Agha was a resident of Jelahor (Arghandab) village in Kandahar. He is the cousin of the former Taliban governor for Khost Haji Abdullah Agha (Torak Agha). Akbar Agha also participated in the jihad against Soviets and also served as a low-level military commander in the Taliban. During the Taliban rule, the Pakistan Consulate was across the road from the Taliban office. At that time Mullah Omar ordered that no one would go to the Pakistan Consulate without the prior permission of the department of Foreign Affairs. A black 4x4 vehicle was at the consulate door and dropped off a black-bearded person there. One day I asked about the person. Friends told me that they are relatives of Tayyab Agha, his name is Akbar Agha and he has a special relationship with Pakistani officials dating from jihad days. He does not visit the consulate as a representative of the Taliban.

I heard Akbar Agha's name after 2005, when he established a military group called Jaish ul-Muslimeen. With the support of a few Kashmiri groups and men, especially the Jaish-e Muhammad Kashmiri group, they were trying to begin activities. They had no influence in Afghanistan but had ties with inactive former Taliban officials. They also organised a few small commanders. In a few statements he said that Mullah Omar cannot work anymore and the movement's activities are impossible as Pakistan also does not want him so people should stand with me. At that time many considered it a joke as to how Taliban fighters would join this untrustworthy person while Mullah Omar was present.

Akbar Agha's resistance order was very simple because he thought that Pakistani officials would strengthen him against the Taliban, as a few sources had promised. There were a few important incidents for which the Taliban did not take responsibility; Akbar Agha called journalists and claimed these, which circulated Jaish ul-Muslimeen's name in the media.

Akbar Agha was accused in the incident of kidnapping foreign women in the

north, in which Akbar Agha and the Afghan mafia was involved. This worsened the situation as Akbar Agha had openly communicated on the telephone, and foreigners pressurised Pakistan and gave evidence. This was why Pakistani agencies handed over Akbar Agha to the Americans, and why he was later handed over to the Afghan government. With this, the Jaish ul-Muslimeen also disbanded.

#### CONTINUATION OF THE EDUCATION PROCESS

In 2006 we succeeded in drawing the attention of the Taliban leadership to taking positive steps for educational institutions. Even though it seems like it has been a success now, at that time it faced fundamental obstacles. The leadership was unable to plan out a strategy compatible with conditions while on the other hand many regional fighters were still not following Mullah Omar's instructions. The policy of a few Taliban commanders for years had been to close schools, and this might still be the case.

But the one thing that we succeeded in at that time was to develop a positive focus towards education. At the end of 2006, after lengthy discussions with Mullah Baradar and Mullah Obaidullah, it was decided that the Taliban would use their curriculum in areas that were completely under their control. At that time the Taliban had partial control over very few districts. There was progress on this front and after two years the education and training commission was established.

There was an advanced program in mind but the controller of the financial budget Mu'tasim Agha Jan opposed this and considered this amount to be more suitable for war.

At that time a small group of leaders brought videos of the killings of government supporters and soldiers to Mu'tasim. In exchange Mu'tasim gave them money. These unknown militants also included a few who burned girls' schools down and received money from Mu'tasim.

The different regions and zones posed another difficulty. The Taliban from a few areas the Taliban's policy was neglected. A few places like Logar and some of Ghazni areas the Taliban's policy was of neglect. A few openly opposed this policy like the Taliban of Zabul and Helmand. Their opposition was due to their

policy, and the Taliban of Zabul and Herat. Their opposition was due to their mood and temperament, and not based on ideology, belief, or an Islamic edict. I issued a policy to the spokespersons' committee that they will not take reports of burning girls' schools or clinics so that they would be discouraged and avoid such activities in the future.

#### SPOKESPERSONS' COMMITTEE

In 2006, the Taliban's military and political spokesperson Mufti Latifullah Hakeemi was arrested and handed over to the Kabul government. Mullah Baradar sent me a message to help him on this front. I told him that I could not take on this responsibility, but I could announce a few political and regular statements. I did not agree to issue military statements because of fear; and I also considered a few activities of Taliban military operations to be irresponsible and wrong. He told me to prepare a strategy and that would be fine if I only made political announcements.

According to the instructions of the leadership, I introduced two people as spokespersons: My old friend Qari Yousaf was appointed military spokesperson for the south-west and north-west. Dr Hanif, who was introduced by the cultural commission and was a former colleague of Ustad Yasir, was named as the military spokesperson for the southern, eastern, and north-east provinces. Deputy spokespeople were also appointed who would replace them in the event of arrest or death.

We established a new media policy and received approval from the leadership. As an example I will mention the important points about Hizb-e Islami and Hekmatyar here.

In the spokespersons committee we adopted a policy of 'no comment' regarding Hizb-e Islami and Hekmatyar, and fortunately this policy was practised even after me. We believed that because of his mood and a few other reasons, Hekmatyar strongly criticised the Taliban from time to time. If we responded to him, it would damage the actual goal of fighting this huge international invasion. On the other hand if we got involved in this contest, we would all suffer losses and it would benefit our enemy. A few Taliban leaders also stopped us from giving statements in favour of Hekmatyar's policies against the invaders. They said they could not trust Hekmatyar as he always changes his statements. If he

said they could not trust Hekmatyar as he always changes his statements. If he stops the resistance and switches sides then our endorsement of his statements will be a source of satire against us.

Unfortunately, later on due to articles on the internet, Facebook contests, and the harsh propaganda by young Taliban supporters and Hekmatyar supporters worsened the environment as Hekmatyar considered these articles to be Taliban policy. In reaction he used very inappropriate language. The cultural commission of the Taliban requested these Facebook youth to avoid this but to no avail.

When Hekmatyar talked against the Taliban then his statements were promoted by government sources and western media. They wanted to spur on Hekmatyar and his supporters against the Taliban.

The small spokespersons' committee was very organised and successful in terms of activities. However financial constraints had a negative impact. At that time the Taliban movement was facing financial difficulties and on the other hand we had no direct personal ties with the leadership. At the time of the Emirate we were directly in contact with Mullah Omar, and after the collapse of the Emirate we were in touch with the leadership as common friends. But unfortunately it is very usual to have links through personal friendship. This meant there was no focus on my appointed committees. They were not even given a hundred dollars as satellite telephone expenses every month, and so I requested them to have some patience. But they were still in danger when they had no satellite credit card; they went to nearby cities and used a cell phone. At that time mobile phone services in Afghanistan were not as advanced, but in Pakistan mobile phone companies had wide coverage.

These spokespeople were traced by their cell phones; one near Jalalabad city, and the other was arrested in Pakistan.

Afghan intelligence released Dr Hanif from prison as he was suffering from cancer. After a few months, a group of militants entered his house in Jalalabad at night and martyred him along with two of his cousins. His younger brothers were imprisoned in Pakistan and released after a year. The second spokesperson was arrested in Pakistan and released after seven years of imprisonment in a condition of being unwell and having had surgery on his eyes at a young age.

After the arrest of the spokespersons their deputies carried on their work. At the end of 2007 I left this work and started my private life, and halted my relations with everyone. In 2012, Mullah Akhtar Muhammad Mansoor asked me for support, but I did not accept any responsibility. I helped and advised him on political affairs temporarily.

In 2015, Mullah Akhtar Muhammad Mansoor was selected as leader by the Taliban Shura. I shared this information with the media. He was martyred by a US drone the following year. After this I preferred to stay home and I do not have any job in the Taliban now.

Working as a spokesperson of the Emirate or the Taliban leader is very difficult, as the Afghanistan media is directly or indirectly under the control of the West, which means our voices do not reach the world as we want. Sometimes local media representatives attributed false statements or exaggerated statements to the Taliban. During the crises in the Taliban government I was the spokesperson for the leadership, and at that time the international media including Reuters, AP, France Press, BBC, and Voice of America published our statements. Pakistani newspapers similarly published our news. After the collapse of the Taliban government we went underground and if anyone attributed some false news to us we were unable to deny or correct it. During the Taliban government it was attributed to me that the hijackers went to Pakistan; but they were in Kandahar and I never said anything about this to anyone. I was surprised.

In 2006, the Pakistani journalist Saleem Safi contacted me on the phone and asked me about the possible support of Pakistan. I told him that Pakistan supports America and NATO by providing a logistics route and military airports. But instead Safi wrote that Mutmain says 'Pakistan is our enemy.' There was a huge difference between our statements. He interpreted this for the interest of Pakistan which led to anger among the Pakistani religious class.

There was a news item published with my reference that said Americans are converting Afghans to Christianity. I never thought this, I had instead said that Americans want to colonise Afghanistan and control our valuable resources. They only utilise religious emotions as a weapon.

#### IMPRISONMENT OF MULLAH OMAR'S DEPUTY

In January 2007, Mullah Obaidullah was busy purchasing weapons when he was arrested by Pakistani intelligence in Balochistan. According to Mullah Omar's instructions, Mullah Obaidullah served as his second deputy. But he had also participated in the jihad against the Soviets as a close friend of Mullah Omar and so was very influential among militants, he was also responsible for war issues.

He was very courageous and a strong-willed man. Once he said in a meeting that if you want to be independent in the war against the US invasion, all leaders sitting here including myself should be ready as of now for imprisonment and death. Then those who remain will win this war and our sacrifice will provide them a foundation, determination, and a spirit for battle.

According to his fellow prison inmates he was tortured for a long time to admit that he is Mullah Obaidullah, the Taliban's deputy leader, but he denied all this.

An eyewitness in prison Amin ul-Haq says that he was thrown from a high wall to the other side amid us. But he still remained quiet. After a few days I had a chance to speak to him. He said these colonels tell me to accept that I am Obaidullah, if you own up to it the Americans will give us a reward. I told myself that you will never get this award.

Until then his photo was not available and people did not recognise him. After some time he was identified with the help of other prisoners and spies. This type of torture reveals that he sacrificed his life because of this. But after his death Pakistani officials sent a messenger to their family saying that he passed away because of heart disease. He died on August 5, 2010 in a secret prison. His family and the Taliban leadership only learned about his death after a long time.

#### THE ARREST OF MULLAH ABDUL GHANI BARADAR

After Mullah Obaidullah's arrest, Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar was the only administrative head of the Taliban and he received specific instructions from Mullah Omar. But later by a decree of Mullah Omar, Mullah Akhtar Muhammad Mansoor was appointed as Mullah Baradar's deputy.

Mullah Baradar was a modest, serious, and quiet person. He was present during the collapse of the Taliban government and took part in direct combat with US

the collapse of the Taliban government and took part in direct combat with US forces and local militias. In 2003 he was seriously injured in Uruzgan. His friends secretly took him to a hospital in Balochistan for treatment. He had not fully recovered when Mullah Omar appointed him deputy in an audio message.

Even during his tenure as a deputy he participated in battle and once faced heavy bombardment in Kandahar's Panjwai district. He was very similar in some ways to Mullah Omar, with his serious, quiet and simple nature. He lived a very simple life.

After Mullah Obaidullah's arrest in 2007, Shura members advised Mullah Baradar to be very careful. In 2009, he selected a part of Karachi to reside. Instead of telephone calls he mostly used text messages and was only in contact with a few important people. But it is said that he was found out based on very high-level espionage. One of his sons was getting a religious education in a famous Pakistani madrassa, and it is said that his son was followed from the same madrassa since it was under the influence and monitoring of Pakistani intelligence. He was arrested in early 2010 when he secretly visited another place without informing his family. It is thought that he was under strict surveillance.

After his arrest he was badly tortured in the beginning. In 2013, a few Taliban messengers were officially allowed to meet him. This delegation included Mawlawi Shahabuddin Dilawar who said: Mullah Baradar told me that I have been tortured too much; I would not wish such torture on my American enemies because a human is at least a human. is at least a human.

Mullah Muhammad Omar told Shura members and other Pakistan-based important Taliban personalities through messengers to not have gatherings in Pakistan or trust Pakistani officials.

During 2006 – 2011, Pakistan arrested many Taliban officials and a few close friends of Mullah Omar were also arrested after a strong chase. At that time Pakistani officials thought it was possible that Mullah Omar was in Pakistan, and were suspicious because of the presence of his close relatives in Karachi. But these relatives last saw Mullah Omar in 2011 when they were in Kandahar and were unaware of his whereabouts. This investigation led Pakistan to arrest a few

close friends of Mullah Omar to get a clue about him or his messenger. One of those friends was Mullah Gul Agha, a Helmand resident and a friend of Mullah Omar from the Soviet jihad era. During Taliban rule he stayed in his office as a very trustworthy friend.

Gul Agha says that he was tortured terribly for a few months for Mullah Omar's locations. When it was confirmed that Mullah Omar was not in Pakistan, then they tortured me and asked about his messengers. I knew about a few of the messengers but I withstood the torture and did not accept anything. After I recovered, the Americans began their investigation I became seriously ill because of tuberculosis and was taken to the hospital. The doctors said he is very sick and will only live for a short time. His weight went down from 110 kg to 50 kg.

Gul Agha says that on the recommendation of the doctor they released me and dumped me in Quetta. I went to my brother who was living in a rented house in Quetta and entered the guesthouse. A few children saw me inside and told my brother that some unknown person is in the guesthouse. When my brother came he asked me who I was. I said I was Gul Agha, but he said Gul Agha wasn't here and had been in person for a long time. After looking closely he recognised me. He was happy that I was there but saddened by my current condition.

Gul Agha recovered after a long treatment but his health is not like it was before. He is an ailing Taliban leader working in Helmand and Kandahar as a financial in-charge of the Taliban.

#### THE ILLNESS AND DEATH OF MULLAH MUHAMMAD OMAR

After all the Taliban had evacuated Kandahar, Mullah Omar left the city with a few friends. He went to Sarkhogano in Zabul and held a meeting there with regional Taliban commanders and distributed money among them to restart jihad activities. Most of these commanders are no longer alive, including Mullah Abdul Razzaq Nafiz, Mullah Rozi Khan and Mullah Muhammad Gul Niazi.

Mullah Omar then intended to begin jihad along with his small group in Zabul. It is said that he participated in a few armed clashes but in the end a few of his friends told him that your presence is a lifeline for the entire Taliban movement. Your military operations are not as important as leadership. Due to the advice of

our military operations are not as important as leadership. Due to the advice of his friends, and with the support of a few devoted friends, he selected a mountainous area to live. He initially selected a house of one of his devotees, and after a while selected another house and chose a small and simple room. A bathroom and a place for ablution was also constructed beside this room. Mullah Omar remained in this house until his death.

In 2003, Mullah Omar sent an audio tape to his mujahideen and Taliban leaders in which he appointed Mullah Baradar Akhund and Mullah Obaidullah as his deputies for a new jihadi process and resistance. I listened to this cassette. In another statement he appointed ten people as Shura members.

I listened to a second tape by Mullah Omar in 2007 on which he used harsh words for Mullah Bakht, a brother of Mullah Dadullah. Mullah Bakht later became famous with the name Mansoor Dadullah. Two of Mullah Dadullah's close friends – Mullah Nasim and Mullah Abdul Bari – accused Mullah Bakht of the martyrdom of Mullah Dadullah in an American aerial bombing. After a few days of torture, Mullah Bakht wanted them to name high-ranking Taliban officials' involvement in the martyrdom of Mullah Dadullah. In the list of these officials were the names of those Taliban leaders who had not joined the Taliban after the fall of the government. Mullah Omar received this information and thought it was a conspiracy to eliminate all important Emirate members. He sent an audio message in two parts. In one message he told the friends of Mullah Dadullah that he was a real mujahid and martyred in the same path. I don't know his brother and I do not allow him in the Taliban movement. I have not seen a person as blatant like 'Mullah Bakht – Mansoor Dadullah'. The friends of Mullah Dadullah Akhund should sit together and select a leader among yourselves.

The second message was for Baitullah Mehsud in Waziristan. In the message he said that this cruel person captured two Taliban and is forcibly making them acknowledge different falsified statements. You release these people from him and investigate them freely. If they are criminals then punish them according to Sharia law, otherwise release them. Baitullah Mehsud then tried to free these people from him but when Mullah Bakht (Mansoor Dadullah) learned about this he beheaded them both and escaped from Waziristan.

The friends of Mullah Dadullah appointed their leader. Mullah Mansoor Dadullah got the support of a few Kakar youth based on tribal links. He was seen in the Zhob and Qilla Saifullah area of Balochistan along with his militants in vehicles. It is said that a few elders of the Kakar tribe also supported him and gave assurances to the government about him. His supporters attempted a failed attack against Maulana Muhammad Khan Sherani of Zhob. On February 11, 2008, he was injured in a clash with Pakistani security forces and arrested. On January 14, 2015, he was released by Pakistani officials along with other Taliban. Four days later, he went to the Khak Afghan area of Zabul and on January 18, 2015, he revealed the reasons for his return to the media. On November 11, 2015, he was killed in Khak Afghan along with four militants in a clash with the Taliban. His funeral prayers were performed by the Taliban special group leader Peer Agha.

A few of his friends say that he was vengeful, prone to mischief and enjoyed brutality and murders. He was easily deceived. He initially became suspicious about his brother's death because of letters he received from Afghan intelligence, but he later denied this. When he was imprisoned in Pakistan, there were other imprisoned Taliban with him. They said: we told him not to talk about Mullah Omar in front of us but he told one of his friends that if he got a chance he would definitely kill Mullah Muhammad Omar.

At the end of 2009, I listened to a video message of Mullah Omar. His voice was very weak and it looked like he was sick. He was talking with difficulty. The video was about the removal of Mu'tasim Agha Jan. Mullah Omar said in this message to Mullah Baradar that Mullah Agha Jan and Mullah Abdul Jalil should no longer have positions in the Taliban. Mullah Omar was angry because Agha Jan withdrew money from Afghanistan Bank and did not give the money to the Taliban movement. Secondly, he used financial resources for his personal use. Mullah Omar's anger was caused by his secret relations and cooperation with the neighbouring country.

Mullah Baradar and his deputy Mullah Akhtar Muhammad Mansoor removed him from financial affairs and appointed him head of the political commission for the sake of goodwill. But Agha Jan began efforts from this platform for a position in financial affairs. At that time Tavvab Agha received permission and

authority from Mullah Omar to get funds from Middle Eastern countries but Agha Jan was creating hurdles. There was conflict between Mu'tasim Agha Jan and Tayyab Agha. Mullah Baradar sent a message of complaint to Mullah Omar and asked for feedback.

WHO WAS MU'TASIM?

A few months after the conquest of Kabul, a few cultured friends were at the Information and Culture Directorate in Kandahar. A tall young guy entered our room with Mutawakkil. He sat there quietly for almost ten minutes but did not say anything until the end. He got up and left the room without making his excuses. Mutawakkil laughed that Agha Jan has been asking me for a few days to take him to the Information and Culture Directorate so he can learn to talk to poets and writers. I brought him here but he's escaped from the gathering.

Agha Jan Mu'tasim's real name was Abdul Wasih, and he was introduced to Mullah Omar by his jihadi friend Mullah Gul Agha during Taliban rule. He was initially Mullah Omar's bodyguard but later gained his trust. From then onward he was very obedient to Mullah Omar. While with friends, he once said that the "Amir ul-Mu'mineen is a very merciful personality." His friends laughed because in our terminology this word is used for God.

This obedience was the reason for his appointment to different important positions. But after the collapse of the Taliban government, he made jokes about Mullah Omar walking on the beach in Karachi.

According to my observation, he was uneducated, and fond of power and luxury. Unfortunately his attitude was dictatorial and was dependent on others in government affairs. But in the Taliban movement his worst defect was the misuse of funds which led to Mullah Omar's anger. But in general he was talented and motivated, and had control over money which was his positive side. But unfortunately there were a few annoying elements in his personal life.

His close friends tell strange stories about him. Most of his friends say that he used to beat his father because he didn't agree with him. His close friend Mullah Bakht ur-Rahman Zakiri says: he once went to Andhkoy district in Faryab as part of a delegation. He abused the police commander there, and was beaten up

by the police commander and his colleagues.

Mullah Ahmad Jan, a friend from Tayyab Agha's office, says: I was driving with Mu'tasim from Kandahar to Kabul. Mullah Omar asked him on the radio who dug up the grave of Ismat Muslim in Khirqa Sharif graveyard. This is very cheap and not Islamic.

He flippantly replied: I did this because Mullah Ghazi told me to do so. Mullah Omar switched the radio off in anger.

These stories are from his friends who are still in touch with him and do not have any rivalry, and they repeated these stories as a joke.

Beating up, threatening, and abusing officials was the norm for Mu'tasim. A few of our close friends objected to why Mullah Omar gives importance to Mullah Khaksar and Mu'tasim as they were sometimes involved in such shocking and negative acts that were outside the scope of their work.

After the collapse of the Taliban government, Mu'tasim transferred the financial budget of the Taliban and never gave it to Mullah Omar. He got the support of a few people in exchange for money and expenses. He had special officials who were given special salaries that were three times more than that given to Taliban officials.

When Mullah Baradar sent the message about Mu'tasim, Mullah Akhtar Muhammad Mansoor said how will we answer Mullah Omar as he told us not give him any position but we appointed him the leader of the political commission.

In an audio message, Mullah Omar announced his removal from financial affairs and accused him of disobedience and interference in financial matters. Mu'tasim then went to Karachi. In August 2010, he was severely injured in a militant attack. After some time he first went to Kabul and later to Turkey.

The audio message had a sense of depression along with what seemed like anger. At one point in the audio message Mullah Omar said: Which leader would find it acceptable that the financial affairs in-charge uses trust funds for personal use?

It was very clear from this message was that his voice showed the signs of a respiratory tract or chest infection or the symptoms of illness. A few close friends of Mullah Omar still have these audio cassettes.

Mullah Omar's messenger used to first go to another district, then he shared the message with the other messenger, and sometimes the host took Mullah Omar on a motorcycle to meet with the messenger tens of kilometres away. The messenger similarly received Mullah Omar's audio tapes. This was done within two months it sometimes it took more time as well. When there was a new incident, the messenger then tried to exchange messages within a week or ten days.

Mullah Omar was severely ill in 2013. His host first brought in a reliable local doctor but the disease could not be controlled. He told the host that this person needs detailed tests and treatment. The messenger had not visited during those days and the host wanted to inform his family and the Taliban leadership about his condition. The host travelled and informed his family about Mullah Omar's health. He told Mullah Omar's son Mawlawi Muhammad Yaqoob and his stepbrother Mullah Abdul Manan. They planned to visit Mullah Omar and left home in the late afternoon and travelled through the night. The next day they received the news that Mullah Omar had passed away.

Mullah Omar passed away on April 24, 2013. His son and brother went there after a few days and buried him. They said that his body was undamaged but there were effects of the severe illness.

According to Mullah Omar's son and brother, they had been aware of his illness for a year but did not consider it to be serious. The host said that Mullah Omar had a chest infection for a few years and the medicine given by local doctors had no positive effects. Mullah Omar was also not interested in the treatment and considered this to be normal. When the illness grew in severity, he did not allow us to take him somewhere else. By the end his whole body was in pain which was the symptom of extreme tuberculosis. He never complained about the disease until his death.

Mullah Omar left behind four wives, fourteen children (one daughter and thirteen sons.) When Mullah Omar went to Zabul at the end of 2001 he preferred

to live alone and except for his messengers, he never met any of his family members or Taliban leaders until his death.

His elder son Mawlawi Muhammad Yaqoob says: Mullah Omar had a brief conversation with me in 2001 over a satellite telephone. I was too young and my heart melted after hearing his voice; I cried. In the last messages he asked the family members for patience, to be steadfast and have a religious life, and instructed them to provide religious education for their children.

#### INFORMATION OF MULLAH OMAR'S DEATH TO THE TALIBAN LEADERSHIP, THE MEETING OF ISLAMIC SCHOLARS AND THE BEGINNING OF CONFLICT

After the death of Mullah Omar, his son Mawlawi Yaqoob and stepbrother Mullah Abdul Mannan first informed Mawlawi Abdul Hakeem, the head of Dar ul-Ifta, and the head of the judiciary Mawlawi Haibatullah Akhundzada. They told them that in the absence of an Amir, the activities have no Sharia limit so we should appoint an Amir in secret or openly. Sheikh Abdul Hakeem, Sheikh Abdul Salam, Mawlawi Haibatullah Akhundzada, Mawlawi Yaqoob, Mullah Abdul Mannan, the former in-charge of Mullah Omar's office Abdul Salam Katib and Mullah Omar's messenger gathered. They invited Mullah Omar's deputy Mullah Akhtar Muhammad Mansoor and informed him of Mullah Omar's death.

He said this is not the authority of a few people to take every decision about this major event; all Shura members should be involved in this process. Mullah Abdul Manan and the other Sheikhs there told Mullah Mansoor that if it is done that way then Mullah Omar's death will not be a secret. The conditions are very sensitive as the Americans have announced the troops' withdrawal. The announcement of Mullah Omar's death can increase issues so we should keep this secret and select a new leader. When the conditions are favourable then we will announce Mullah Omar's death and general allegiance will also take place. Mullah Mansoor was eventually convinced by Mullah Abdul Manan that a few important members and a famous Islamic scholar from the central provinces should also be involved in this process.

Mullah Akhtar Mansoor intended to inform many people, but after being convinced by Mullah Manan and the Sheikhs it was decided to inform the former Chief Justice Mawlawi Noor Muhammad Saqib, who was a member of

the Rahbari Shura. The military commission head Mullah Abdul Qayyum Zakir and his deputy Amir Khan Haqqani were invited along with Mullah Omar's host with whom he lived for twelve years.

The second meeting was set in a week's time. A week later, the person also arrived who had hosted Mullah Omar. In the second meeting there were four more people: Mawlawi Noor Muhammad Saqib, Mullah Amir Khan Haqqani, Mullah Abdul Qayyum Zakir, and Mullah Omar's host. There were ten people at the meeting. Mullah Omar's host was first asked to recount everything that had transpired. He recounted the whole story and said Mullah Omar had never recommended anyone. Until his death he instructed the current Emirate structure and never gave a hint for the appointment of a new person as Amir.

The four Islamic scholars – Mawlawi Abdul Hakeem, Sheikh Abdul Salam, Mawlawi Haibatullah and Mawlawi Noor Muhammad Saqib as a representative of all those present, held a separate meeting later. After two hours of discussion and consultations in a separate room, they invited all the attendees. They first spoke about the Emirate's Sharia status, and then said: after consultation, we have decided to select Mullah Akhtar Muhammad Mansoor as an Amir, as during Mullah Omar's life he was selected as his deputy and we do not see anyone else who can unite us. If we select anyone else now, this will create concerns and doubts in people and Mullah Omar's death will no longer be a secret.

Sheikh Abdul Salam then took Mullah Mansoor's hand with the intention of pledging allegiance. The other three Sheikhs also pledged allegiance, followed by Mullah Abdul Qayyum Zakir, Amir Khan Haqqani, Mullah Omar's host, and the others present. Mullah Manan refused to pledge allegiance, and when the Sheikhs asked him to, he said: "Our family status and the deputy of the Emirate should also be clear." Abdul Qayyum Zakir grew serious and told Mullah Manan that you are junior; don't interfere in these matters and pledge allegiance. Mullah Abdul Manan then did so; the Sheikhs told him that you will be given a suitable service and your family will not be left behind in the Emirate.

According to his messengers, during his lifetime Mullah Omar wanted his stepbrother to only look after his family, and that he shouldn't have any major

position in the Emirate. Until Mullah Omar's death his brother Mullah Manan had no official position in the Taliban. But he was later appointed by the new leadership as a member of the Rahbari Shura and a member of the military commission in a few special affairs.

Mullah Akhtar Muhammad Mansoor was unanimously selected as a leader of the Taliban in this meeting. The participants swore an oath that the death of Mullah Omar will be kept secret until a suitable time.

A few months after this meeting there was a conflict between Mullah Abdul Qayyum Zakir and a few important military commanders of the south. Zakir wanted to dissolve and merge a few military groups. He also wanted to evaluate the number of weapons with the Taliban on a country level which was a very difficult task. This process created a conflict between Zakir and Taliban commanders. News of this reached Mullah Mansoor, and he opposed this act of Zakir's as he had received complaints from many commanders. He recommended to Mullah Zakir to avoid activities like this since they create issues. This decision was also supported by important Shura members, and Mullah Zakir threatened to resign. Mullah Akhtar Mansoor told him that you shouldn't resign as the situation is sensitive and we have the secret of Mullah Omar's death. Other key members of the Taliban also requested him to not resign, but due to Abdul Qayyum Zakir's insistence his resignation was accepted and he was requested for support as a member of the Shura.

Zakir remained home for a few months, and then he threatened the four Islamic scholars and those who were aware of Mullah Omar's death that he had concerns about the movement and complaints against the leadership, and if his concerns were not resolved he would expose the death of Mullah Omar. In response Amir Khan Haqqani said: "this is very childish that if someone doesn't accept what you say then you will reveal a secret; if they accept you will not say anything."

Eventually a jirga was held through Islamic scholars between Mullah Abdul Qayyum and Mullah Akhtar Muhammad Mansoor. Mullah Qayyum presented his ten demands and objections, as well as the demand to make him the head of the military commission. Mullah Mansoor accepted his demands but denied this. Mullah Mansoor said if you accept me as a leader, then you have to work on the

position assigned by me. I cannot assign a position to a person who asks for it.

The mediating Islamic scholars told Mullah Zakir that you are guilty because your nine demands have been accepted, so forget about this single demand. Mullah Zakir was not convinced and went away. Until mid-2014, he talked about Mullah Omar's death only in certain circles, which sometimes led to the news leaking outside. In early 2015, this news was discussed in many gatherings and it also reached Mansoor Dadullah and a few other people.

A few local intelligence sources and the media also raised this issue several times, but the Taliban never officially accepted this, which eventually led them to be quiet. Eventually Mullah Abdul Qayyum Zakir – while in the presence of his friends and a few commanders – began a praying ceremony for the deceased Mullah Omar during the month of Shaban. This news quickly spread among the Taliban and Mullah Akhtar Muhammad Mansoor was compelled to announce Mullah Omar's death.

Following this consultation of Islamic scholars, other trusted Taliban members who were not aware of Mullah Omar's death were brought into the news. They were first told the whole story of Mullah Omar's death and secret allegiance, and they were consulted for a future plan.

They suggested that his death should be announced after Ramadan, and an Amir should be selected. A meeting of the following Rahbari Shura members was held after Eid ul-Fitr:

Mullah Muhammad Hassan

Mawlawi Ahmadullah Nanai

Mawlawi Abdul Kabir

Mawlawi Abdul Latif Mansoor

Mawlawi Noor Muhammad Saqib

Mullah Amir Khan Haqqani

Hafiz Abdul Majeed

Mullah Gul Agha

Khalifa Sirajuddin

Mawlawi Amir Khan Muttaqi

and from the Islamic scholars group, Mawlawi Haibatullah Akhundzada

Sheikh Abdul Hakeem  
and Mawlawi Farid Mahmood.

Mullah Abdul Manan and Abdul Qayum Zakir also joined the meeting but they left at the time of allegiance. Mullah Abdul Razzaq, Mullah Hassan Rahmani and Mullah Muhammad Rasool declined to participate.

On the first day, Mullah Akhtar Mansoor sent a message to the participants through Mullah Muhammad Hassan (the deputy of Ministers' Council during Taliban rule) that everyone should openly vote and I give my voting authority to the present Shura members. I also give you my authority; anyone you select is my Amir.

The meeting continued for two days. Mullah Abdul Qayyum Zakir said that Akhtar Mansoor should not be the candidate. The members told him that this is not possible just because of your demand. We will pledge allegiance to the person who is selected by the majority of Shura members. Mullah Akhtar Mansoor was unanimously selected as Amir after discussions, but Mullah Zakir refused to pledge allegiance.

Mullah Manan and Mullah Zakir left the meeting. Mullah Manan said he needed more time and could not pledge right then. The Shura invited Akhtar Mansoor and said that the majority selected you as an Amir. Mullah Akhtar Mansoor said: If the participants of this meeting agreed, I will accept your offer but all of you have to promise that you will not leave me on my own and will support me in every work. The participants promised to support him and later pledged allegiance.

The next day, with the consultation of the brother and son of Mullah Omar, the Taliban officially announced his death. Mullah Mansoor addressed a meeting of hundreds of governors and commanders and explained the upcoming strategy of the Taliban movement. The attendees also pledged allegiance to Mullah Mansoor. Among those members who were absent, Sheikh Mawlawi Abdul Rasheed also agreed to the appointment of the new Amir. From Qatar, except for Muhammad Tayyab Agha and Mawlawi Nek Muhammad, all the members including the Rahbari Shura members announced their allegiance to the new

Amir. This included eighteen members of the Kanbari Shura, all the Taliban governors, heads of commissions and military commanders who pledged allegiance. The audio and video messages of all Taliban officials were published on the Taliban official webpage for several weeks.

On August 12, the al-Qaeda leader Ayman al Zawahiri announced his allegiance to Mullah Mansoor through an online voice message. After that a few Taliban officials went as a delegation to Mullah Zakir, who said that he is neither opposing nor pledging allegiance, and still needs some more time for the latter. On the other hand Mullah Yaqoob secretly met with Mullah Akhtar Muhammad Mansoor and gave him his assurances.

Mullah Omar Mujahid's family held a short prayer ceremony. In this ceremony Mullah Yaqoob gave a short statement: Mullah Omar has not recommended anyone including any of the family members. He passed away because of tuberculosis.”

His statement was recorded and published on Facebook and on the Taliban's official site, making the propaganda of Manan Niazi and Mansoor Dadullah more ineffective among the Taliban.

A few supporters of Mullah Manan said he would pledge allegiance if he was made deputy of the movement. But the Taliban leadership opposed everyone's conditional allegiance. On September 15, 2015, due to the continuous efforts of Islamic scholars and mediating Taliban, Mullah Abdul Manan and Mawlawi Muhammad Yaqub unconditionally pledged allegiance to Mullah Mansoor in a meeting.

Mullah Rasool, Mullah Hassan Rahmani, and Mullah Abdul Razzaq neither participated in the allegiance meeting nor did they make a pledge to the new leadership. On the day that the new Taliban leader was announced, Mullah Muhammad Hassan and Mullah Rasool announced their opposition against the new leader in the media at an official gathering with Pakistani officials in Islamabad.

Most of the former Taliban who rebelled against Mullah Omar, like Mansoor Dadullah, Abdul Razzaq, and a few others, showed their sympathy for the

former leader as a tactic so as to expose the new leadership to issues. On November 3, 2015, Mullah Rasool announced the formation of a separate militant group but Rahmani and Abdul Razzaq did not support him. At the end of January 2016, Hassan Rahmani shared his written and signed allegiance to the new leadership through the media. He was very ill at that time, and passed away a week later at a hospital in Karachi.

ALLEGIANCE STATEMENT OF MULLAH MUHAMMAD HASSAN RAHMANI

*I, Muhammad Hassan Rahmani, a mujahid of courageous Afghan Muslims wished for and still wish for a pure Sharia system in Afghanistan. For fulfilling this wish I have utilised my strengths and abilities. Similarly, to fulfil this wish I heartily pledge allegiance to Amir ul-Mu'mineen (leader of the faithful) Mullah Akhtar Muhammad Mansoor and I will remain obedient to the new leader in line with Sharia.*

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

زه ملا محمد حسن رحمانی د افغانستان د  
 مسلمان او غږیوور رولیس یرجیانه، چه د  
 د ژوند له پیل نه بیا تراوسه پوری به  
 افغانستان کې د یوه سرچیه شرعی نظام د  
 پلي کېدو په ارمان وم ابریم، او همدی ارمان د  
 تکمیل په لاره کې چې ترخپل وس او توانه پوری  
 زیار ایستلی دی، او همدی ارمان د ترسره کېدو  
 په منظور د اسلامی امارت د نوری امیر محترم ملا  
 اختر محمد منصور صاحب سره په ټولو شرعی امورو  
 کې د مکمل اطاعت په موخه د زریه له کوی  
 بیعت اعلانوم..... والسلام  
 محمد حسن رحمانی

2016 - جنوری - 25  
 2016

A month earlier, the Taliban leader received a video showing the Pakistani Taliban leader Mullah Fazlullah in a meeting with hundred of militants announcing his allegiance to Mullah Akhtar Muhammad Mansoor in Pashto and Arabic.

Mullah Abdul Qayyum Zakir preferred a policy of neither pledging nor opposing, but because of the continuous efforts of his friends he also made his pledge on March 30, 2016 with the following statement:

*“In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful”*

*Greetings to all Islamic Scholars, Mujahideen, seniors and juniors of Afghanistan Islamic Emirate.*

*Respected brothers, you understand that the Islamic Movement of Taliban was initiated in Afghanistan under the leadership of respected Amir ul-Mu'mineen (Leader of the faithful) Mullah Muhammad Omar Mujahid for establishing a pure Islamic system. We and you have sacrificed thousands of lives for this system and we had many achievements to establish Islamic Emirate in Afghanistan, against the wishes of the infidel world. As crusaders of the world and invaders were intolerant towards this holy system so a new test started for Islamic Emirate. Amir ul-Mu'mineen (respected leader of the faithful) with the help of God failed the plans of the infidel world. After the news of Mullah Omar's death spread I had a few reservations in line with Sharia for independence, unity, betterment of system, problem solving and success of the Islamic Emirate. Praise be to Allah! Due to the efforts of friends we agreed to address these reservations in line with Sharia. May Allah bless and reward them.*

*Respected Mullah Akhtar Muhammad Mansoor is our leader and I pledge allegiance to him. I will remain obedient to the new leader in line with Sharia.*

*Your brother*

*Al Haj Hafiz Mullah Abdul Qayyum Zakir*

*30 March 2016*

The Mullah Muhammad Rasool group was not so strong, but in the name of a separate Taliban group to weaken the movement, internal and external sources extended their support to this group. It was not able to sustain itself for long. Mullah Rasool disappeared instead, and it is said that he has been arrested by Pakistan. Mansoor Dadullah has already split with the Taliban. Their media person was Abdul Manan Niazi, whose photos of meetings with Afghan security forces and the Kandahar police chief were swiftly revealed.

In July 2016. Mullah Dadullah's son-in-law Mullah Muhammad Sadiq was

beaten up by Manan Niazi and his friends. He went to the Taliban leadership and revealed the secrets of Manan Niazi and his friends. He said: “Manan Niazi told me that the family of Dadullah should live wherever they like so that we attract militants because of their trust on this family. But I said to him why do you not bring your families here. During the discussions on this topic I left the gathering and I was on my way when Manan Niazi and his men came and badly beat me up. I escaped from there and also rescued Dadullah’s family members from there.”

Mullah Sadiq added that we had a conflict with Manan Nazi and the Defence Ministry called us and advised us to follow his orders.

MULLAH AKHTAR MUHAMMAD MANSOOR AS A MILITARY, POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE LEADER

Mullah Akhtar Muhammad Mansoor was the son of Haji Muhammad Jan. He was born in 1968 in the Bandi Taimoor village of Kandahar’s Maiwand district. He took part in the jihad against USSR and when he the Taliban movement began, he had a year left to complete his religious education. When the Taliban captured Kandahar for the first time, Mullah Mansoor was appointed in-charge of Kandahar airport. After the conquest of Kabul, he was appointed as Minister for Aviation and the head of the Air Force. As the Taliban government collapsed, he fought until the end at Kandahar airport and later evacuated on Mullah Omar’s instructions.

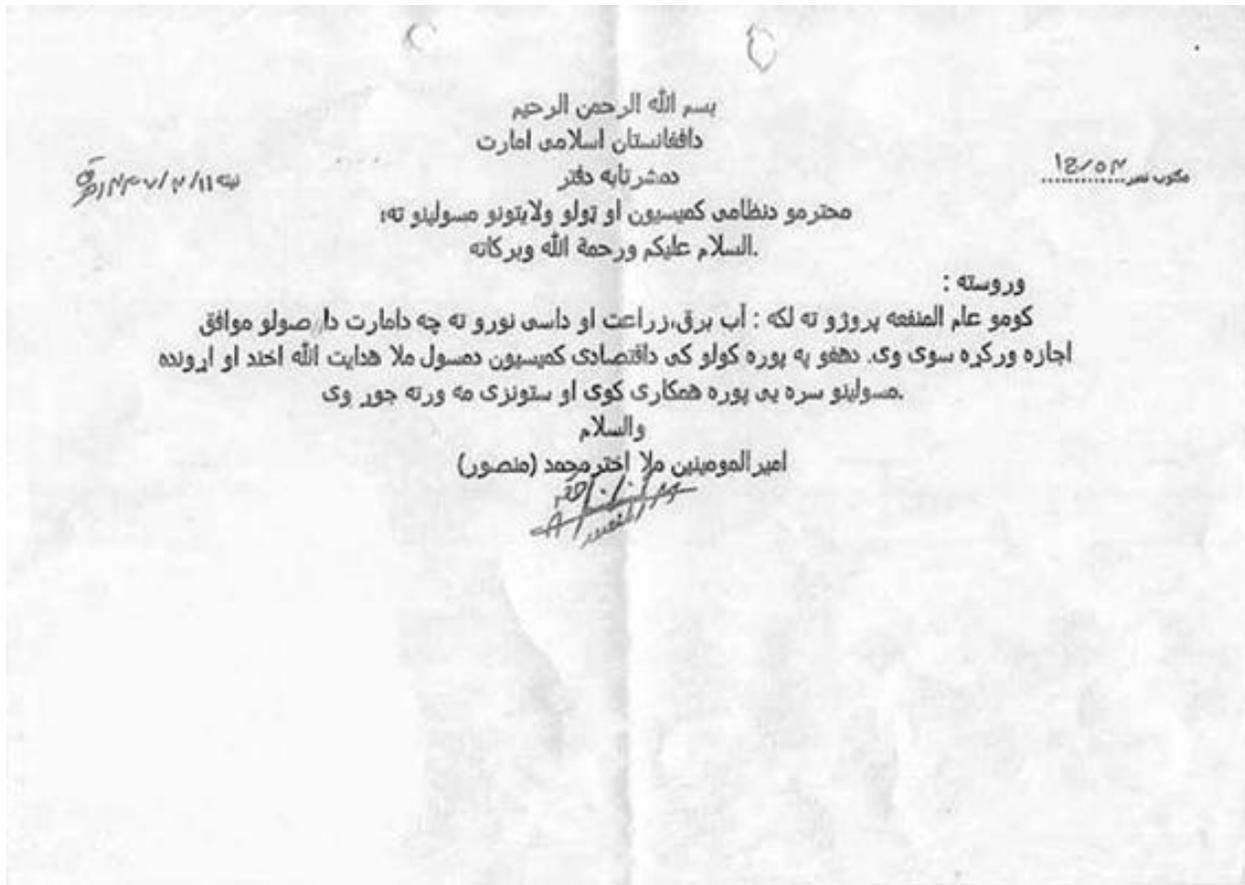
After the end of the Taliban regime and the ensuing resistance movement against invaders, he was initially a member of the Shura and military in-charge for Kandahar. He also worked as an advisor to Mullah Baradar and Mullah Obaidullah. After Mullah Obaidullah’s imprisonment in 2007, he was appointed as Mullah Baradar’s deputy by a decree issued by Mullah Omar. After Mullah Omar’s death, he was the second Taliban leader who was sworn allegiance as Amir ul-Mu’mineen by the Afghan Taliban, the Pakistani Taliban, and the al-Qaeda leadership.

From the outset Mullah Akhtar Muhammad Mansoor was involved in consistent planning, foreign relations, and coordination of the movement. When he was the military in-charge of Kandahar, he successfully carried out several attacks

against US forces. He conducted unique operations in Kandahar city. There were two successful jailbreaks at Kandahar prison and many Taliban escaped.

Thanks to his support, the citizens of Turkey, Russia and a few other countries who had been arrested by the Taliban for supporting the government in military and non-military affairs, were handed over to their countries. This paved a way for new opportunities to establish relations with these countries.

After the imprisonment of Mullah Baradar in 2010, Mullah Muhammad Omar appointed Mullah Akhtar Muhammad Mansoor as his deputy and the overall in-charge. He brought about changes in the Taliban's military, political and administrative systems and paved the way for negotiations. In military affairs, he called on the Taliban to support development and public interest projects. He provided strict rules about civilian casualties for military Taliban. He developed rules like the government for public interest projects within the framework of the economic commission; like international organisations and NGOs will also fulfil legal procedures with the Taliban and then continue work.



A letter from Mullah Akhtar Muhammad Mansoor to the military commission and people responsible for the provinces to support and permit public interest projects including water, electricity, agriculture and others, and not create hindrances.

He established an intelligence commission to monitor the war and enemy, and a department to protect and monitor civilian casualties. He also established an NGOs commission to deal with international NGOs.

Mullah Mansoor established a very positive foundation because of his long-term experience with the Taliban, and improved the negative aspects that had become the norm in the Taliban movement. For example, giving important positions to people in special areas, giving authority to one class, or irrelevant suspicion about subordinates and looking at their work with suspicion.

It came as a surprise to many when Mullah Mansoor appointed Khalifa

It came as a surprise to many when Mullah Mansoor appointed Khadim Sirajuddin Haqqani as his deputy. According to the in-charge of Mullah Mansoor's office Mawlawi Muhibullah Garmsiri, Mullah Mansoor had said: the Haqqani family is very influential in his area. On the other hand, there were regional and international efforts to separate him from the Taliban with the name of the Haqqani Network but Khalifa stood firm like a mountain and kept himself attached to the Emirate. Therefore, he deserves this position.



Letter signed by Akhtar Muhammad Mansoor to establish the leadership office.

Similarly, he ignored the difference in the Taliban movement between religious mullahs and modern educated people when he selected Sher Abbas Stanekzai as the head of the political committee against the Shura's recommendation. Mawlawi Muhibullah Garmsiri says: Mullah Mansoor told me that after the resignation of Tayyab Agha from the leadership of the political committee, the Shura rejected my recommendation to appoint Sher Abbas Stankezai as the head. He said: we should not be dependent on Stanekzai's profession and relevant

diplomacy education; he deserves to lead this committee.

Mullah Akhtar Mansoor was the only Taliban leader during the period of resistance who established an office for administrative work called 'Leadership Office'. The office organised the leadership's decrees, instructions and official documents.

#### VISIT OF TALIBAN REPRESENTATIVES TO QATAR AND THE INAUGURATION OF THE TALIBAN OFFICE

In 2005, Mawlawi Shahabuddin Dilawar and a mid-level Taliban official met a mysterious British man Michael Semple in Peshawar's Tehkal area. The meeting was held in a vehicle belonging to a former jihad commander from Kunar called Commander Deedar. Semple is a British man married to the daughter of a retired Pakistani military officer. His wife is a dancer, and his intelligence network is spread throughout Pakistan.

After this meeting, it was heard frequently from Mawlawi Dilawar at gatherings that the Taliban leadership should allow the Taliban to live in a third country as impartial Taliban; but the purpose was unclear.

Mawlawi Shahabuddin supported the peace process with the Karzai regime. But when the symbolic peace commission was established under Sibghatullah Mujaddidi, and the son of Mujaddidi visited Pakistan and held meetings with a few former Taliban, and told them that America does not want peace but if the Taliban want to surrender they should do so through our commission, these statements had a clear message. Michael Semple started meetings once again.

Afghan Engineer Wahidullah Halimi, a German national, then visited Pakistan. Halimi has close ties with German intelligence. He also remained close to the Qatari royal family for years, and has an engineering company in Qatar. Halimi established a link between Tayyab Agha and German intelligence for the first time. With Halimi's support, Tayyab Agha secretly visited Germany and increased his relations with the German government. Mullah Abdul Salam Zaeef established ties between the CIA and Tayyab Agha. They then agreed to open a Taliban office but did not decide on a location.

In 2011. Mullah Dilawar asked my friend for information about illegal

immigration to Germany, and it appeared that initially they wanted to live in Germany. Later on, because of an agreement between the CIA, Germany, and Qatar, it was decided to open the Taliban office in Qatar. Mullah Omar and members of the Shura were unaware of this entire process.

In 2010, Tayyab Agha sent a message to Mullah Omar and requested to take a few Taliban friends to Qatar and exchange Guantánamo prisoners with the support of the Germans. Mullah Omar was very serious and careful about prisoners. He told the messenger: If there is a possibility of an exchange of all the Taliban prisoners held in Cuba, I allow you to do this work.

Excepting for this, Mullah Omar never said anything about the Qatar office or peace negotiations, and they also never requested his permission for peace talks.

After my book was published in Pashto I spoke to Tayyab Agha in detail about this, and he termed it incorrect that Mullah Omar was not told about the office. He said: “We kept Mullah Omar updated regarding all of the process.” But when I asked him about evidence and documents, he failed to provide authentic information, and so his claim cannot be considered genuine. He agreed to everything I mentioned about him in this book except the Qatar office, like bringing in people of his choice, not accepting the Shura vote, disregarding the instructions and advice of Mullah Akhtar Mansoor, and all the parts I have mentioned about the Qatar office.

At the end of 2010, the political commission head Tayyab Agha selected a few Taliban friends of his choice and took them to Qatar without them being chosen by Mullah Akhtar Muhammad and the Shura. Tayyab Agha’s reasoning was that he had straightforward permission from Mullah Omar. On the other hand, Mullah Abdul Salam Zaeef also selected a few people of his choosing for the Qatar office.

In early 2013, Mullah Omar was severely ill, and most tasks were carried out by Mullah Akhtar Mansoor who supported Tayyab Agha without any interference. Tayyab Agha also never accepted any interference in his work. He was sure that his messages would still reach Mullah Omar directly as the messenger never informed him of his illness.

Mullah Omar passed away on April 24, and the Qatar office was inaugurated almost two months later. The Shura agreed on the opening of the Qatar office, but the pressure and interference of Afghan officials led to its closure. Mullah Omar's messenger and people close to him took advantage of Mullah Mansoor's calm nature, as Tayyab Agha was also not aware of Mullah Omar's death. The messenger and people close to him sent their close friends, relatives, and business partners as delegation members. Tayyab Agha told other officials that they are here because of Mullah Omar's permission.

Tayyab Agha had resigned from the Shura and considered himself in direct contact with Mullah Omar, so he appointed people of his choice in the Qatar office. If Mullah Mansoor or the Shura introduced any other person, hindrances were created for him. Mansoor sent instructions on major political issues and did not interfere in financial issues or administrative and general diplomatic activities. Hence non-essential people selected by choice occupied this office.

The other issue was the lack of domination of the leadership and the Shura over this office. They had not taken the Taliban leadership into complete confidence, and so had no authority about military issues. Secondly, their mistrust of the common Taliban was a major issue. They were blamed in different ways. For example it is commonly said that Jan Agha Ahmadzai has a dozen heavy vehicles and he provides logistics support to NATO bases from Pakistan to Afghanistan for money, while NATO logistics vehicles were burned by the Taliban and even the drivers were severely punished.

It was well known about Shahabuddin that in the Paris meeting he became friends with Masoom Stanekzai, which is why his two sons received government educational scholarships. On the other hand, he had friendly ties with Afghan and Pakistani intelligence officials. After Mullah Akhtar Muhammad Mansoor became the leader, a financial affairs investigation commission was established under the leadership of Mawlawi Abdul Kabir. Mullah Muhammad Younas was sent to Qatar for a financial audit and he returned dissatisfied about transparency in financial matters. The office members talked about his businesses and properties in Dubai.

The secret sympathies between Qatar and Kabul-based Taliban had worried the

Taliban leadership, because on one hand the peace process was launched by Afghan rulers with the backing of foreign intelligence agencies. On the other hand, Masoom Stanekzai was appointed as the head of Afghan intelligence from within the leadership ranks of the peace council. The Taliban leadership grew more suspicious. A former Taliban official told a former Taliban intelligence official in Kabul that I have heard Stanekzai saying: Send him to Qatar so that we can send the allotted cash with him as well.

Mullah Akhtar Muhammad Mansoor was angry with Tayyab Agha and Abdul Salam Zaeef because as representatives of the Taliban movement they received money from a few countries and invested in their projects in Kabul.

The other issue was the disputes between members of the office. A few accused Tayyab Agha of hiding his secret relations with American intelligence from them. They said: Tayyab Agha held meetings with US representatives in a closed room alone without us present.

Tayyab Agha knew of Mullah Omar's death six months prior to the announcement made by the Taliban. He was scared of accountability, because for two years he had been involved in several activities in Mullah Omar's name. He was also feared the mistrust of international players. He was ready to announce his separation and was relying on those people who promised to support him in the future.

Since 2014, Mullah Akhtar Mansoor had been disappointed with the Qatar representatives in how they were establishing basic and secret relations with the world. He openly said that they cannot hide their ties to the CIA, nor can they play a fundamental and long-lasting role in these relations. Mullah Akhtar Mansoor meant relations with anti-US countries. He initiated efforts for these relations to establish a permanent secret channel, and succeeded to an extent. But after his martyrdom these channels were neutralised by representatives of the Qatar office.

After Mullah Mansoor's death, the Qatar office process grew more weak. The people in contact with Tayyab Agha leaked information of Qatar representatives and even provided this to a few media outlets. Tayyab Agha was in touch with the main members of the Qatar office.

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The office members were also not capable to expand their activities further, and as time passed they were losing the trust of the leadership. Their representation is now only symbolic and near collapse. The Taliban leadership does not trust them or hold them accountable. These representatives are only limited to a few meetings and a few distracting announcements, and this office appears ineffective and close to collapse. If there are any changes in this office it will be evident in the future.

The Qatar office was facing many troubles when my book was originally published (in Pashto) in 2017 as the leadership and the military commanders didn't trust members of the office. Several members joined Sayyed Tayyeb Agha after he resigned as head of the office. Other members were also confused. The leadership was upbeat when the former Guantánamo inmates joined the office after they received passports and were involved in administrative work for the office. This created trust among the Taliban in the Qatar office as those prisoners had served in key positions during the period of Taliban rule during the 1990s. Two of them had been military commanders and enjoyed the support of thousands of fighters. Mullah Khairullah Khairkhwa had served as the Interior Minister and Governor of Herat. He was also head of the geographical zone made up of Herat, Nimroz and Badghis.

Mullah Muhammad Fazal was a known military commander and army chief. Mullah Noorullah Noori had been Governor of Balkh and head of a zone made up of several northern provinces. Abdul Haq Waseeq had been deputy intelligence minister.

The freed Guantánamo prisoners had two distinctions. They were known among the Taliban and enjoyed sympathies, and they had suffered a lot at the hands of Americans. They had rendered sacrifices of imprisonment in American detention, which enhanced their respect among the Taliban fighters. They were not doubted like Maulvi Shahabuddin Dilawar and several other members for having secret contacts and sympathy for the government in Kabul. The office was further strengthened when Mullah Baradar was appointed as head of the office and earlier five Guantánamo inmates were inducted in the office.

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Mullah Baradar was released in October 2017 from Pakistani jail on request of the US envoy Zalmay Khalilzad. One of the reasons for his release was that he would help the US in the peace process. The personality of Baradar and his joining the peace process was an effective step that pushed the symbolic process. This gave credibility to the peace process and the office gained more powers as Mullah Baradar had served as deputy to Mullah Muhammad Omar, who had a widespread influence among the Taliban. Talibs started giving importance to the political office after Mullah Baradar went to Qatar. The Qatar office turned into a centre of trust when several members of the leadership council became involved in the political office. But even then it was a difficult task to satisfy the political and religious personalities of the Taliban on all the policies of the office.

The leadership has rejected several decisions of the Qatar office and the office is now taking care of the sensitivity of the religious and military Taliban leaders. Several members of the Qatar office favoured an extension of the ceasefire with the US but the military leaders and more generally the leadership didn't accept this proposal. It is believed that the Qatar office and the leadership may wait for a suitable time and new tactics if the temporary ceasefire is converted into a permanent ceasefire.

A weak ceasefire before the agreement with the US was based on this tactic so the military commanders were assured that prisoners would be released immediately after the agreement. These prisoners are fighters of the military leaders who also anxiously await their release. There would be a possibility of a permanent ceasefire if the US were to honour its commitments and intra-Afghan dialogue.

#### SERIOUS OBSTACLES TO ACTUAL PEACE NEGOTIATIONS

Since the movements in the name of peace began, the main problem seems to be with the ambiguous definition of peace and positive understanding. The words peace and negotiation are very strategically used by the US, its Afghan friends and officials, while the Taliban follow a purely religious strategy. They first look at every peace agreement as permissible or not, and then move towards negotiations with the opposition.

In this context, along with faith and ideology, the presence of the invaders is a fundamental evidence of the resistance. So every peace process which does not have an end to the invasion, or the withdrawal of the invaders on the agenda, seems impossible to achieve any result.

By Talib, I do not mean a Talib who is practically participating in the resistance against America like the Taliban leadership, the majority of the Rahbari Shura, the military commission, military commanders, and their religious scholars.

The word peace in the current process is just used as a tactic. It is evident that the current peace slogans in Kabul and Qatar are just a waste of time and a source of finances. The money spent for this is just wasted, and its positive outcomes are neither evident, nor can it pave the way for a rational process.

The people busy in this process only repeat these slogans to keep them engaged and to have a job. They are not aware about the roots of actual peace. They are not devoted and also do not have any rational and practical plan.

The disgruntled former Taliban in Kabul are passing their time with these two disguised slogans. One is a slogan for peace, and the other is a slogan against Pakistan. These are just words that they use to get a role in the government and to live in Kabul. They are no longer loyal to their movement, and they are not committed to these slogans. They consider this a need for their personal interest.

The peace commissions and councils of Kabul are to date just involved in intelligence and propaganda activities against their opponents, who are military and political powers. Since this commission was established under Mujaddidi's leadership, this peace slogan was just to change the mindset of the public and the world. They practically motivated the Taliban to surrender, and as propaganda they announced the made-up surrender of militants.

An example of this was that a deputy of this Shura was asked by his relatives to find a job for them in the government. He said: if you purchase a few old guns, we will make videos of you and declare you surrendered Taliban. We will give you money and our propagandist campaign will be done.

This shows that he has arranged hundreds of other fake announcements and activities, which makes the real peace process and plan appear ambiguous.

activities, which makes the real peace process and plan appear ambiguous.

There is no doubt that the ongoing resistance does not have as many resources and equipment as the mujahideen did in the previous jihad eras. It is rife with issues and hardships. The Taliban are not dependent on resources and equipment, but they have an ideology and belief, and so cannot imagine that a Talib who began this activity based on jihad and ideology would surrender for money or material objects.

If an agreement with the Taliban is based on the fundamental issues, then there is a possibility of true peace. This includes a type of system, order, foreign authority, verbal occupation or gradual reduction of forces to zero.

The first stage before the implementation of peace is absolute mutual understanding and to come together, which is essential for both parties even without peace. Take the example of the exchange of prisoners, which is not possible without mutual understanding. The Taliban agreed with the US for an office in Qatar. Even though this office was not fully active, but Taliban representatives at a known location were able to exchange their important prisoners with the Americans, and this process is still ongoing.

Clearing up misunderstandings is the duty of the Qatar office. This office was not opened by Taliban officials with the intentions of implementing peace. Creating absolute mutual understanding is the duty of this office. For this office, peace talks are optional and not fundamental.

Mullah Akhtar Muhammad Mansoor was in reality ready for true peace which is possible peace. The peace still defined by Americans and their Kabul-based supporters is not possible and no Talib leader will agree to it until death.

#### THE BORDER AREA OF AFGHANISTAN AND DAESH

The creation and expansion of Daesh is not my area. I do not want to go into detail about Daesh in Iraq and Syria. However, I would like to say that initially when this group appeared in Iraq, we heard the stories of the oppression of Iraqi Sunnis here as well. The Taliban were also happy about their uprising and considered it a positive reaction against Western policies in the region.

Later on their presence in Iraq and Syria was a huge blow to the fundamental

Later on, their presence in Iraq and Syria was a huge blow to the fundamental existence of al-Qaeda in their region. Their cruel behaviour towards al-Qaeda and the public was also exposed. It disheartened many here. After the announcement of the Caliphate they forcibly wanted the world to accept their Caliphate. Initially this was considered madness and later it was termed a conspiracy.

They only controlled a few Iraqi cities. The capital Baghdad was also not in their control, but they considered obedience to Daesh obligatory for Muslims living thousands of miles away. In reality Daesh has no presence in Afghanistan, but government circles and the Western media propagated it more through the media.

The Taliban considered the announcements of this group on the eastern border to be important, and because of the fear that the enemy would make it into a big issue, the Taliban remained quiet. But gradually the Taliban felt the need to negotiate with the Daesh leadership in Iraq and make them understand the sensitivity of the current situation. Mullah Akhtar Muhammad Mansoor sent a letter full of respect and sympathy to Baghdadi, the founder of Daesh. In this letter he mentioned the current situation of Afghanistan, the joint sacrifices of Arab and Afghan mujahideen, and the enemy's conspiracies.

Baghdadi was requested that the thirteen years of resistance against invaders was carried out in very hard conditions, and the enemy is waiting for internal divisions. The Islamic Emirate is present here so you shouldn't announce a permanent organisation. But Adnani, the spokesperson of Baghdadi, responded badly and used very offensive language against Mullah Muhammad Omar. After this, the Taliban leadership – on the suggestion of Islamic scholars – declared this to be trickery and a conspiracy to sabotage the Taliban's thirteen years of resistance. This is why the Taliban began military activities against Daesh.

At that time in Pakistan's border areas, the Pakistani Taliban were split into factions and engaged in bloody conflicts. Those people and groups who were unable to get a prominent position in the Pakistani Taliban and were also financially weak announced their support for Daesh and garnered media attention. The Bajaur-based Mawlawi Muslim Dost of Nangarhar's Kot district also announced his support for Daesh and paved a way for the group in

Nangarhar. Daesh also announced their allegiance online and appointed Hafiz Saeed Khan Orakzai as an Amir for the Khorasan area.

Saeed Khan was an infamous person because of kidnapping and other mafia-like activities. He followed the Panjpir jurisprudence of Hanafis who are rigid in religious matters. His other friend Shahidullah Shahid, the former spokesperson of the Pakistani Taliban, follows the Ahle Hadith school of thought. It was not compulsory for their members to follow a specific jurisprudence.

On the other side, a few people in the Taliban military lines who were facing punishment, or scared of reprimand because of their irresponsible activities, found a new name and joined Daesh. This included a few people from the eastern region, Logar, Zabul, and from the north, but they later became weak and most of them left the group.

The first meeting of Saeed Khan Orakzai and his Afghan supporters was held in the Spin Ghar area of Nangarhar. Their first base was in Spin Ghar's Mamandarra area. The first war with them started in this area, when the deadline for the Taliban to leave this area expired. They were later active in the Deh Bala, Achin, Kot, and Charpahar areas. Mawlawi Muslim Dost of Kot, Mawlawi Aziz, Dr Saba Gul, Mawlawi Ismail, and Mawlawi Islamuddin of Charpahar were their first Afghan friends. On the other side of the border, Saeed Khan, Shahidullah Shahid, and Abu Bakar of Bajaur Agency were members of the group. They later had activities in other districts of Nangarhar and the government did not bother them. Then a permanent Taliban force came, and they were pushed back to a small area with the support of locals.

Initially the Taliban leadership instructed that if they repent after arrest, release them, and during the battle the Taliban should mostly fire in the air so that they leave the area. But later, owing to their cruelties, the Taliban attitude towards them became rigid. When the Taliban evicted them from an area, the Afghan government bombed the Taliban. Then a time came when the Taliban attacked Daesh, and US helicopters bombarded both groups and the battle stopped. The Taliban were facing a very complex situation. There were US planes in the sky, the land was under the control of the Afghan intelligence and military, and Daesh was in the villages and mountains. To face all of them at once was a new

test. Many Daesh commanders did not surrender after defeat even though Taliban announced forgiveness for those who surrender. They joined the Arbakis instead or gave themselves up to government intelligence. Most of their injured were treated at the Nangarhar Public Health facility, including the important commander Omar Abdul Khaliq.

At that time a wayward Taliban commander Saad Emarati also announced his support for Daesh. In Zabul, a few Uzbeks under Mansoor Dadullah's leadership also announced their support for Daesh and war against the Taliban. But when they took away Hazara women from vehicles on the Kabul-Kandahar highway and to Zabul's Arghandab area, it created a terrible ethnic disaster. Pashtuns on the border area with the Hazaras were also facing issues. The Taliban were compelled to stop this uncultured and illegal act and after a battle with Daesh, a few women were released while they killed a few of them. This war went on to a second stage as well which saw Mansoor Dadullah being killed. A few of his Uzbek supporters surrendered and were imprisoned while others were killed.

The Taliban doesn't look at the people who left Daesh as the enemy anymore because of internal conflicts, even though they inflicted heavy losses on the Taliban. Mawlawi Muslim Dost also split with Daesh. He was the first preacher and Mufti of Daesh in Afghanistan but after Daesh killed his nephews he announced his separation from the group. He also accused Daesh of planning to kill him. The key points of his announcement were as follows:

Around two years ago I announced my separation from Daesh because they imprisoned a few people from the Kot and Shinwaro areas of Nangarhar. I tried to release these prisoners but they did not accept and threatened to kill me. Daesh wanted to brutally kill these prisoners. After that they killed my nephews; one was Tariq, who was killed in the Khalis Family area of Jalalabad, and the other was Ismail who also went to Syria. The Daeshis of Syria and Iraq killed him because he went to Syria without Saeed Khan's permission.

The Taliban initially started to struggle very carefully against Daesh but we now observe a few bothersome activities in the strategy against Daesh, like the vague introduction and definitions of Daesh. The Taliban movement is a religious movement, and like a particular religious school they cannot impose their

specific definition of secondary issues on people. In the war against Daesh, a few young people, and people with less religious knowledge, also term those people as Daesh who oppose innovations in religious affairs or whose belief involves carefully defining and teaching monotheism legitimately. Opposing these activities according to religion is also not acceptable. These issues practically damage the Taliban's military work. The Taliban leadership's principled policy is also against activities of this kind.

On the other hand, the US was happy for Daesh in Iraq, if only to disturb the firm and complex basis of al-Qaeda. Similarly, America, the Afghan government, and a few other countries were happy that Daesh will internally damage the strong thirteen-year resistance of the united Taliban in Afghanistan. This new project was consequently propagated at a high level. The insulting words used by Iraqi Daesh against Mullah Omar were spread widely by supporters of the Afghan government.

The mysterious, still-ongoing support to Daesh by a few Hekmatyar supporters was also observed. Haji Hayat, a former Hizb commander from Logar's Azra district, recruited youth for Daesh in Hekmatyar's Shamshatoo camp in Peshawar and sent them to Afghanistan to fight against the Taliban.

There was also news that a Hizb delegation including former Hizb commander Haji Hayat, Sharafat and the former Hizb intelligence head Haji Malik Qarar met Masoom Stanekzai, the head of the National Directorate of Security Stanekzai, who said to Haji Malik that why don't you restart your previous activities. He was implying the murder of people in Peshawar.

This was followed by a dozen Taliban supporters' killings in a few parts of Peshawar's Shamshatoo camp and other parts in the city during the day hours. But it is not clear whether Hizb commanders were acting on Hekmatyar's direct instructions or they were ordered to do so by someone else. However, during the initial war between Daesh and Taliban, Hizb's Shahadat newspaper published an article stating: If this was a war between the government and the Taliban, we would have supported the Taliban but if the war is between the Taliban and Daesh, we support Daesh.

After the requests of locals and the protests of local government officials and

After the requests of locals and the protests of local government officials, and also to satisfy countries in the region, the Americans and Afghan government announced operations against them as well, and a few battles took place. One delicate and mysterious process which is still evident is the support to Daesh against the Taliban by Afghan intelligence, regional countries, and a few western countries. The Taliban have many documents about this but do not want to talk about it openly. Sometimes this group suddenly gets weapons and money, and then its members are motivated to advance to the north. This creates more suspicion that there are efforts underway to transform these people into a threat for China and the former Soviet countries.

In April 2017, prior to the Moscow conference for Afghanistan, the US announced the use of a huge bomb in Nangarhar's Achin district against Daesh, which many analysts said was just a propaganda message.

During the sixteen years of its invasion, the US kept the use of their bombs and forces a secret. There is no one to ask the US about the bombs used daily. So what is the need for showing the type of bomb used now? On the other hand, the size and effects of this bomb are also not clear.

The Taliban leadership is more worried about their regional intentions along with internal conflicts. They want to reach a positive position at the end of their resistance. They fear another game in Afghanistan against the current resistance and the future of Afghans that can take Afghans to face more unending roguery in the future.

#### THE LAWLESS LAND

For over a century, the tribes on the border of Afghanistan and Pakistan have used internal principles and tribal traditions to solve their conflicts and issues. But after Pakistan came into being, these tribes mired in conflict at large required the interference of the representative of Pakistan's government, or political agents appointed by the federal government. These political agents make decisions according to the Pakistani law for the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) known as the Frontier Crimes Regulations (FCR) which is a special set of laws only applicable to FATA. This law gives considerable importance to regional maliks or tribal elders. But in 2018, the Pakistani parliament approved a bill which made all the tribal areas part of the Khyber

parliament approved a bill which made all the tribal areas part of the Feroz Khan Noon Pakhtunkhwa province. The tribal people are split in two about this decision, as a few support it while others want a separate tribal province. But if either of their demands is accepted, this will end the old FCR law from the tribal areas which was in force since the time of British rule in the subcontinent and the Pashtun tribal belt.

Waziristan in the tribal belt holds great importance, and garnered the world's attention after September 11, 2001. One is the South Waziristan agency whose capital is Wana, and the other is North Waziristan with Miranshah as its capital.

Most of Waziristan's people belong to the Wazir tribe. The second major tribe is Mehsud (Maseed) in South Waziristan and the adjoining areas, and the third major tribe is the Dawar tribe including a few Sulaimankhel who live in the adjoining areas of South and North Waziristan.

During the British colonial era, there were wars between Pashtun tribes and British forces, and so these areas were known as Yaghistan – lawless land. The national mujahideen used to live there and commanders would organise fighters from there. These people were very intelligent and strong warriors. They also had personal conflicts and enmities but had a jirga system to resolve conflicts. They also had considerable trust in Islamic scholars and famous Sufis.

Long beards, turbans, long hair, and sandals with stripes, and a gun on the shoulder of every third person was a part of their culture.

A hundred years ago, after the return of the Afghan King Amanullah Khan, the conflict between him and Islamic scholars increased. The famous spiritual family Hazratana also migrated to Waziristan for a period.

This area also remains a shelter for Hindi mujahideen during the wars against Sikhs, led by Sir Sayyed Barelvi and Shah Ismail Shaheed.

After the independence of Pakistan, people of these areas engaged in fierce wars for the independence of Kashmir. The conquered area of present-day independent Kashmir is a result of their battles.

Waziristan had important Afghan mujahideen bases including refugee camps,

training camps, and madrassas during the jihad against the Soviet invasion.

This area was proud of its famous Islamic scholars. One of the famous jihadi scholars was Mawlawi Jalaluddin Haqqani, who had the largest base in the centre of Miranshah in North Waziristan. He had a madrassa, a military university, and many training centres in Miranshah. He had friendly relations with the locals and Islamic scholars. He organised the war against the Soviets in Khost province from there and conquered the province.

During the Taliban rule and the collapse of the Taliban government, Mawlawi Haqqani's family and supporters took advantage of their influence in the area and strengthened their resistance.

After the US invasion, Afghanistan-based Arabs and the families of militants from Central Asian Republics moved to South Waziristan through their local supporters to avoid any harm.

Mullah Nek Muhammad, who lived as a fighter with the Afghan Taliban in Kabul and was a friend of the famous commander Saif ur-Rahman Mansoor played an important role in moving these families to South Waziristan and convincing local people to give their support.

I do not want to discuss and go into detail about the 17 years of issues of Pakistan and Waziristan because that would require a separate book. I only wish to present a summary here:

When reports of foreign fighters became well known, the Musharraf government forced tribal elders to find a solution for the issue. Discussions, jirgas, and agreements took place so that Pakistan could expel these people or control the militants. Nek Muhammad was advised as a Pakistani national by Pakistani circles and local supporters that if he wishes to reduce problems, he should separate himself from Afghan issues and end his relations with the Afghan Taliban and al-Qaeda. Mullah Nek Muhammad was in favour of every step to protect his guests with the condition of safety for refugees.

According to my observation, the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) was creased out of the same need and Mullah Nek Muhammad declared its leader. An agreement was signed with the Pakistan Army based on the mediation of tribal

agreement was signed with the Pakistan Army based on the mediation of tribal elders and a few Islamic scholars. But this agreement did not hold for a long time. After the death of Mullah Nek Muhammad, the conditions deteriorated. The refugees turned to the Mehsud tribe, and people led by Abdullah Mehsud and Baitullah Mehsud under the TTP's umbrella supported these foreign fighters.

Abdullah Mehsud was a friend of the Afghan Taliban. After the US invasion, he was arrested by US forces and imprisoned at Guantánamo.

After Mullah Nek Muhammad's death, Abdullah Mehsud (whose actual name was Muhammad Alam) was released from Guantánamo and came to his area. He became famous because of his imprisonment; the jihadi youth of his areas liked him. On the other hand, on the basis of his tribe and age, Baitullah Mehsud was considered eligible for the leadership of the TTP. Abdullah Mehsud wanted to separate himself from these issues, and so he went back to Helmand and joined the Afghan Taliban in the war against Americans.

He kidnapped a Chinese engineer before leaving Waziristan in a bid to release his friends from the Pakistan Army. After a while, he was secretly returning to Waziristan and stayed with his friends overnight at the house of a mullah in Zhob. The Pakistan Army carried out a raid and he was killed in an exchange of fire.

I have heard an amazing story about Abdullah Mehsud from one of his close friends, that in his young age he was very handsome but had a religious mindset. One of his uncle's daughters was very beautiful and she wanted to marry him, but their fathers did not agree. Their marriage bid was not successful because of Pashtun rivalry. When the girl married someone else, she committed suicide. This incident disheartened Muhammad Alam. He was unable to take any step against his father and uncle because of his religious beliefs. He vowed that he would not marry anyone else. He started to dislike his area, and decided to go for jihad and changed from Muhammad Alam to Abdullah Mehsud. Baitullah Mehsud was then selected as the leader of the TTP in Waziristan and other tribal areas.

There was enmity and conflict between the TTP and Pakistan's Army but

Baitullah Mehsud still had good ties with the Afghan Taliban. Afghan Taliban were also released in their prisoners' exchange with the Pakistan Army. In 2007, during the exchange of imprisoned Pakistani generals, Baitullah Mehsud was successful in releasing Haji Khalil (Jalaluddin Haqqani's brother) and Dr Naseer (Jalaluddin Haqqani's son) and a few other Afghan Taliban in the prisoners' exchange.

There was considerable chaos in the Pakistani tribal areas in the name of the Pakistani Taliban. The lack of organised leadership, insubordination, and conspiracies caused the word Taliban to be defamed in Pakistan. In every tribal agency, unidentified illiterate people began militancy under the name of the Taliban. Verdicts were issued for murders. Thieves worked under a new name and were involved in robberies and thefts. Different commanders came up in Orakzai, Mohmand and Khyber Agency. They didn't have an Amir or Mufti. They implemented their own decisions and sent warning letters to businessmen and asked them for money. They used the names of provincial and district governors from the Afghan Taliban. The Afghan Taliban tried their best to investigate these issues, and it was proven that these activities had been carried out under the Taliban's name by these thieves.

This chaos also impacted organised groups in Waziristan. Murders, arresting tribal leaders, and harassing people continued in the area. This disappointed the people of Waziristan and lowered their morale. Tribal people were humiliated in the name of the Taliban and they later faced difficulties because of military operations.

After the death of Baitullah Mehsud, there was a very difficult period while Hakimullah Mehsud and Wali ur-Rahman Mehsud were leading the TTP. They carried out many strong attacks on the Pakistan Army but he and his friends had very bad behaviour which worsened the situation of Waziristan. Continuous drone attacks also riled people.

The ties between the Afghan Taliban and Waziristan were ending at the time. The militants of tribal agencies were operating of their own will. Rivalries increased in Waziristan due to callousness. After the deaths of Hakimullah and Wali ur-Rahman Mehsud the conditions worsened for the Pakistani Taliban.

Bloodshed ensued because of internal conflicts and wars. Their alliance was broken and they stood against each other. This was a good chance for Pakistan to defeat them.

They were then divided in divergent groups. Half of them joined Daesh, and the remaining were unable to stand up to their strong stance. Their targets and operations caused hatred of them to increase among the people of Pakistan.

#### THE ZABUL BATTLE

The famous Taliban commander Mullah Dadullah's brother Mullah Bakht, or Akhtar Muhammad, named himself as Mansoor Dadullah after Mullah Dadullah's death in Helmand. The details of his bitterness with the Taliban are also explained elsewhere in this book. I will discuss the details here about the later war and his death.

In 2014, Mullah Mansoor Dadullah first returned homeless to the Warma Mai area of Paktika. A local commander there called Abdullah Hunar had recently pledged allegiance to Daesh. Mansoor Dadullah wanted to get the support of people there and turn the place into his camp, but Abdullah Hunar created issues for him. On January 19, 2015, for the second and last time he moved from Balochistan to Zabul's Khak Afghan area and he wanted to get the support of the Kakar tribe to strengthen himself. On January 1, 2015, he openly stated his return and the reason behind it to the media.

In 2015, when the Taliban announced Mullah Omar's death during the days of Eid, Mansoor Dadullah considered this to be a good opportunity and announced rebellion against the new Taliban leader and began different propaganda activities through videos. The Taliban leadership had no plan of military action against him since he was not a force to be reckoned with and was only limited to making statements. A few other people also had similar statements to make; some of them surrendered to the Taliban later, and a few disappointed ones became quiet later.

Mansoor Dadullah did not have a huge group or fighters at the time, but he wanted to fortify himself over regional Taliban commanders on the basis of tribal affiliation. The Kakar tribe in this region was divided into four sub-tribes. From each sub-tribe there was one Taliban commander and there four in total –

From each sub-tribe there was one Taliban commander, and there four in total: Khalid, Abdullah Haqmal, Hanafi and Norani. The powerful commanders among these were Khalid and Haqmal. When the conflict between the Taliban and Mansoor Dadullah increased, Khalid supported the Taliban and Haqmal tried to stop the war and stayed neutral. He later tried to protect Mansoor Dadullah.

A few people lived with him including Abdullah Naeem from Paktika, who was a villager from Abdullah Hunar's area, three people of the Kakar tribe from Badghis, the Taliban commander Mawlawi Rahmatullah and three militants, Mullah Qalandar, a nephew of Mawlawi Khalis from Jalalabad, three Chechen, and one Kashmiri who had joined him. Mansoor Dadullah met people at Abdullah Haqmal's house.

Mawlawi Muhammad Yunus Khalis's son Mullah Qalandar was imprisoned by the Taliban during battle, and he was later forgiven by the Taliban. He says: a person called Hafiz Sultan visited Mansoor Dadullah and was considered to have ties with Kandahar officials. This Hafiz Sultan was later seen in fake peace meetings in Turkey wearing a cap and covering himself with a shawl.

A person called Abdul Rahman or Rahmatullah Wardak also visited Dadullah and advised him. He was probably the same Rahmatullah Wardak who introduced himself as an official Taliban representative during the fake peace meetings in Turkey.

According to Mullah Qalandar, two people – Azam Lala and Abdullah Samim Kakar of Helmand – also visited Mansoor Dadullah.

The Taliban leadership sent delegations through regional mullahs and tribe members to convince Mansoor Dadullah to end his enmity and to stop opposing the Taliban movement militarily. As a Taliban commander, he should be obedient to the Taliban leadership against foreign invasion. The Taliban would provide him every possible resource and a position of his choosing.

Even though Mullah Muhammad Omar had said in his lifetime that the Taliban should not keep Mansoor Dadullah in the movement, and so he was not a part of the Emirate and would not be a part of it in the future. But the second Taliban Amir Mullah Akhtar Muhammad Mansoor not only wanted to include him in the

Mullah Mullah Akhtar Muhammad Mansoor not only wanted to include him in the movement but also give him an official position. When Mansoor Dadullah was released from a Pakistani prison, Mullah Akhtar Muhammad Mansoor gave him cash to transport his militants, and when he was in prison, the Taliban leadership provided money to his family for financial expenses.

On the other hand, Mansoor Dadullah announced his independent activities and group, and also declared mutiny against the Taliban leadership. Uzbek and other foreign fighters from four districts of Kabul had then announced their affiliation with Daesh. There was a large group of militants led by the former Uzbek film star nicknamed Usman Ghazi, who also announced their affiliation with Daesh.

A few Uzbeks, Uighur, and Central Asian militants who reached Zabul with the support of the local Afghan Taliban commanders after the US bombing and strong military operation of the Pakistan Army totalled about 200 to 300 in number. The Taliban considered them to be oppressed minority immigrants, and never expected such issues to arise from their side. The Taliban also supported their families financially according to the instructions of the Taliban leadership.

They were scattered in four districts of Zabul under Taliban leadership, including Arghandab, Mezana, Daychopan, and Khak-e Afghan, but their central base and most of their elders were in the Khak-e Afghan district.

According to the supporters and fighters of Mansoor Dadullah and Mullah Qalandar, the eyewitness to this battle: A week after the official announcement of Mullah Omar's death, Mansoor Dadullah held a meeting with the Uzbek Daesh leadership in the presence of former mediators in the Kharani Bazargi area of Khak-e Afghan.

According to Mullah Qalandar, Mansoor Dadullah wanted to wield influence with the Kakar tribe. His ties with the Uzbeks were not good because they had a permanent military plan and did not give him much importance. The same Uzbek organisation was also joined by Daesh supporters from other countries so they could organise and fight the Taliban.

Mullah Qalandar says that if the Taliban had not begun an operation, there was a possibility of conflict between Mansoor Dadullah and the Uzbeks because both sides were trying to become a military power in the area and neither accepted the

sides were trying to become a military power in the area and neither accepted the other. Each side had Afghan sympathisers.

Similar issues came up for the Taliban in other areas as well, and they strategically convinced and made many who were hesitant happy. They had the same policy here, but until the kidnapping of Hazara women they created the tools for war. The Taliban leadership sent a delegation of regional Islamic scholars and local Taliban elders to Mansoor Dadullah. It also sent a delegation to Uzbek fighters under the leadership of Haji Gul – the deputy of Emirate intelligence – to convince them about regional sensitivities, to stop individual activities and the kidnapping of men and women. Jannat Gul had spent time with the former Uzbek commander Tahir Yuldashev and had friendly relations with Uzbeks dating back to the past. But these efforts failed.

The kidnapping of women by Uzbeks in the region and other foreigners began when Uzbeks in the Mezana area stopped three public transport coasters carrying passengers of the Hazara tribe on the Kandahar-Kabul highway. These militants wanted the release of their Uzbek and foreign prisoners in exchange for the kidnapped Hazaras. They were first successful in these efforts when the government released their prisoners in exchange for the captive Hazara. But the government began an operation at the location where they planned to exchange prisoners and arrested three Uzbek men and one injured woman.

In response, Uzbeks and their local supporters kidnapped a public transport vehicle of Hazaras living in the Sang Masha area on the border of Ghazni and Zabul. The vehicle was full of Hazara men and women. This was brutish and created huge issues among the locals because Sunni Pashtuns and Shi'a Hazara were living together here and had agreed on tribal principles to live as neighbours.

The Hazaras took women and children of a Kakar family hostage on the border of Ghazni and Zabul. This family belonged to the largest Kakar sub-tribe (Abdullah Zo Kakar.) The Kakars requested Mansoor Dadullah's support but he was unable to do anything. The tribal elders requested the Taliban, and the Taliban told the Uzbeks to release the Hazara women as soon as possible, as this was not allowed in Islam or Afghan culture. But the Uzbeks involved in the incident had already sworn loyalty to Daesh and refused to accept the Taliban's

incident had already sworn loyalty to Daesh and refused to accept the Taliban's orders. This caused the majority of the local population to go against Mansoor Dadullah and foreign militants.

The Taliban decided to free the prisoners and sent a large force who besieged these militants in early November 2015. There was a fierce war against the Uzbeks who resisted, and there were heavy losses. Most of the hostages including men and women were released, but seven women that they had taken to Arghandab were killed and their corpses were burned. This act revealed that they are real followers of Daesh. Mansoor Dadullah, Uzbeks, and their local supporters fought together against the Taliban in this battle. Mansoor Dadullah received serious injuries to his right eye and left leg, and he then disappeared from the area.

The Taliban began a house search for the remaining militants and Hazara women. On the third day they went to the house of commander Abdullah Hunar, the supporter of Mansoor Dadullah. The women and children had left the house three days ago, and Mansoor Dadullah and two of his friends were hiding there. They shot at the Taliban and after a six-hour gun battle the war ended with the killing of Mansoor Dadullah. He was killed on the afternoon of November 11.

#### THE FUTURE OF THE TALIBAN MILITARY AND POLITICS, AND SYSTEMATIC ISSUES

Even though the Taliban succeeded in overcoming extreme crises and continued their organised resistance, but there lies a permanent practical and technical problem ahead. Taliban fighters and commanders can fight with courage and devotion but they need to develop advanced tactics and plans, and they still not precise and intelligent enough to disturb the plans and tactics of the opponents.

The Taliban teach their fighters about the common rulings of Islam and jihad as ideological training. They are taught very little about their behaviour with people and their peers, and their rivals during war. They are mostly unaware of necessary actions to take during war. Many times people go against the Taliban because of the carelessness or inept harshness of Taliban militants.

The Taliban are very careless about intelligence technology, even though they have seen a few serious events. They do not avoid the use of the telephone, internet, and cameras under any condition and this facilitates the enemy in

searching, killing, or capturing Taliban militants and leaders.

These days, it is very hard to win a war without the presence of strong media support. The Taliban do not have an effective media until now that communicates their voice to people. People only see those young fighters with guns slung over their shoulder who have no other activity except war.

The senior and general leadership of the Taliban are sometimes unaware of every Taliban group's activities and behaviour which is why in a few areas some Taliban militants operate according to their will and are involved in unnecessary activities. They treat people inappropriately and are sometimes involved in oppressive behaviour.

The Taliban do not have consistent and systematic plans in political and diplomatic affairs. For example, if a person has established a communication channel then the shura and Taliban leadership cannot supervise it.

In politics, many Taliban look for short-term benefits and a daily salary. They do not give importance to fundamentals or long-term plans to establish ties, and so are unsuccessful in maintaining a sustainable, strategic, and reliable friendship with anyone. For example, if during a visit to one country, when the country makes an offer of educational scholarships to train fifty professional cadres, but they prefer a few hundred thousand dollars support in return, then the same Talib personally looks for scholarships for his children.

The Taliban do not educate or cannot convince their followers about the importance of modern education in the twenty-first century, which gives rise to the fear that the Taliban will remain a fighting group forever and not be capable of bringing about an organised system. In the previous Taliban government, the world never blamed the Taliban for this as they suddenly came into power from the madrassas, and so needed former communists in professional roles. But if after 25 years if the Taliban has not trained any professional engineer, doctor or economist, then this means that the Taliban does not even have a peon to run the government in the modern era, and they do not even have anyone who can understand the economic and complex technical plans of the enemy. There are still a few people in the Taliban leadership who do not consider it necessary to have information about modern education and skills in the world. If Taliban

have information about modern education and skills in the world. If Taliban officials have a plan for administration then the only path is training professional cadres and providing higher education to youth, along with waging war against foreign enemies.

Computer and English language courses are not studies. Businessmen, senior citizens who are uneducated, and even the disabled can complete these courses. It is now essential in this day and age to train your youth in modern sciences and provide quality education at a university level. These days a nation left behind in this field falls behind in every field.

Mullah Akhtar Muhammad Mansoor was a leader in the Taliban who intended to systemise and modernise the Taliban movement besides the struggle against the US. He also took a few practical steps in this regard. This intelligent and foresighted Talib leader also tried to include a few Afghans from other areas in the Taliban leadership instead of from specific areas. The appointment of Khalifa Sirajuddin Haqqani as his deputy was also a part of these efforts.

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Mohammad Tahir Aziz Gumnam: *Kandahar Assassins*  
Stories from the Afghan-Soviet War  
David Kilcullen: Foreword



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Assassinations are a near-daily occurrence in Afghanistan. Whether by rogue Afghan security forces or by lone individuals roaming the cities and districts, the threat of a target killing is very real. *Kandahar Assassins* offers an unparalleled view of this phenomenon from the perspective of the assassins. Published in 1986 in Pashto and a perennial classic in Kandahar's bookstores, *Kandahar Assassins* tells the story of two well-known assassins who operated in the southern city during the 1980s war. The stories of 'Lame Ghazi' and Commander Ghaffari involve ambitious raids and plots carried out within the Afghan-controlled city. This book offers a corrective to the idea that assassination is a new phenomenon in Afghanistan. Mohammad Tahir Aziz Gumnam was a doctor working in Pakistan at the time, allowing him access to a variety of figures within the Afghan mujahedeen. Originally from Kandahar, Gumnam offers insight as an Afghan who was close to both the events and the people he describes. Judging from this book, the style and manner of assassinations in southern Afghanistan doesn't appear to have changed much. *Kandahar Assassins*, therefore, offers a unique perspective on the world of these target killers and how they carry out their operations. It is an essential read for any soldier serving in Afghanistan as well as those seeking to understand the

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Ryan Crocker: Foreword



## An Undesirable Element: An Afghan Memoir Dr Sharif Fayezi

This is the incredible story of a relentless educator named Sharif Fayezi, born in 1946 in Herat, Afghanistan, who bore witness to the Communist invasion of 1979, the Iranian revolution of 1979, and who authored a ground breaking PhD dissertation that forever linked the best American poetry to Afghanistan by proving that Walt Whitman had read and been inspired by Rumi. It is the story of how Sharif pursues education above all else and becomes a professor at Kabul University only to flee illegally to Iran when the Soviets invade, where he becomes caught in the violent Islamic revolution as a professor at Mashad University. Surviving the Afghan and Iranian governments' ruthless campaign to silence academics and their students, as well as the Iran-Iraq War, he becomes a prominent voice of resistance against the Taliban and extremism in the 1990s, writing hundreds of articles, and ultimately returns to Afghanistan as a signatory to the 2001 Bonn Conference and as the Minister of Higher Education. He completely overhauls the Afghan education system, restores co-education to the country and establishes six new universities. He is almost single-handedly responsible for the incredible strides the Afghan education system has made since 2002.

*“An Undesirable Element is a fascinating tour through the tumultuous years that helped create modern Afghanistan. Fayez survived Soviet Afghanistan and revolutionary Iran, only to find himself watching from exile as his country devoured itself. Improbably, he returns after 2001 to help resurrect Afghanistan’s devastated higher education system, giving an insider account of the challenges of building education in a land dominated by warlords and fundamentalism. The result is a poignant reminder of how much Afghanistan has endured, and the flicker of hope that remains despite it all.”*

— Anand Gopal, author of *No Good Men Among The Living*

*“A compelling read, An Undesirable Element recounts an Afghanistan many have forgotten. It serves as a rallying cry to once again imagine all that country might be. It’s a tale as extraordinary as the land from which it comes.”*

— Elliot Ackerman, author of *Green On Blue*

*“An Undesirable Element moves fast as flames and offers a luminous account of the last half century of Afghan conflicts and redevelopment. Trevithick’s oral history of Sharif Fayez’s story is a trove: from a kiss on the head by the Afghan former King Zahir Shah, Fayez’s life intersected with the future leaders and quiet supporters of his country—both heroic and tyrannical—from Columbia University to a Post-revolutionary University in Mashad, Iran. Fayez is a modest but robust storyteller whose eventual position as Afghanistan’s first Minister of Education after the Taliban is only one of the strange twists and turns his story offers. His deft handling in the rebuilding of Afghanistan should be read by anyone interested in how one can use patience and determination to bring hope to a country reduced to rubble.”*

— Adam Klein, editor, *“The Gifts of The State: New Afghan Writing”*

*“The term visionary tends to be misapplied to those who are merely headstrong. But it is a perfectly apt description for Sharif Fayez, the most important figure in education in 21st-century Afghanistan, yet one that history may have neglected without his memoir. Such an omission would have deprived future generations of Afghans from understanding how Fayez, perhaps more than any single person, created hope for the country’s young minds at the turn of the millennium and, in so doing, altered a nation’s destiny.”*

— Martin Kuz, Freelance journalist

Buy on the Kindle Store <http://www.amazon.com/Undesirable-Element-Afghan-Publishing-Originals-ebook/dp/B00P60ZU8Q>



## Obedience to the Amir: An early Text on the Afghan Taliban Movement Mufti Rasheed Ludhianvi

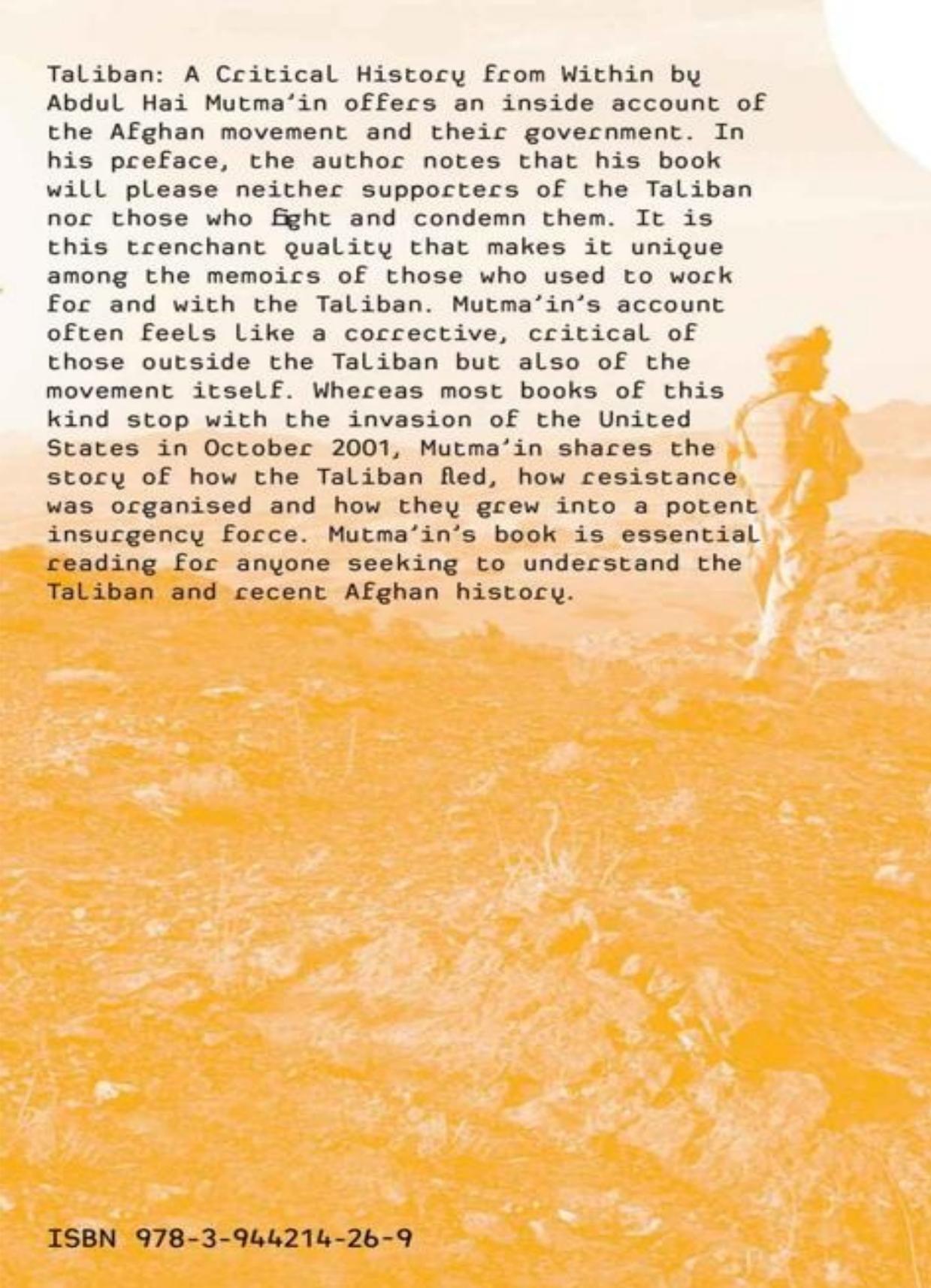
In the last year of the Taliban's government in Afghanistan, visitors to Mullah Omar's office in Kandahar received a parting gift. As they left, the movement's supreme leader asked them to take a slim volume from a pile beside the door. He told them that if they wanted to know how the Taliban were meant to behave, they should read the book. The books which Mullah Omar handed out were Pashto and Farsi translation of *Eta't Amir*, or 'Obedience to the Leader'. Mufti Rasheed published the original in Urdu after having toured Taliban-run Afghanistan. Mullah Omar's endorsement indicates that he believed that Rasheed had captured the essence of the Taliban Movement. Michael Semple and Yameema Mitha have translated this important primary source and added a commentary and appraisal.

*"In war, and especially guerrilla war, the best organised party is likely to win. While numbers of fighters and weapons count, organisation determines whether the leader can use them. This book is the guide the Afghan Taliban used to organise themselves differently from other Afghan groups. Anyone who wants to*

*defeat them or negotiate with them should understand the organisational principles that guide them.”*

— Barnett R. Rubin, Center on International Cooperation, New York University.

Buy on the Kindle Store <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Obedience-Amir-Taliban-Movement-Publishing-ebook/dp/B0183VF0HA>

A person is walking away from the camera on a dirt path in a rural, hilly landscape. The person is wearing a light-colored shirt and dark pants, and has a large backpack on their back. The background shows rolling hills and mountains under a clear sky. The entire image has a warm, orange-yellow tint.

Taliban: A Critical History from Within by Abdul Hai Mutma'in offers an inside account of the Afghan movement and their government. In his preface, the author notes that his book will please neither supporters of the Taliban nor those who fight and condemn them. It is this trenchant quality that makes it unique among the memoirs of those who used to work for and with the Taliban. Mutma'in's account often feels like a corrective, critical of those outside the Taliban but also of the movement itself. Whereas most books of this kind stop with the invasion of the United States in October 2001, Mutma'in shares the story of how the Taliban fled, how resistance was organised and how they grew into a potent insurgency force. Mutma'in's book is essential reading for anyone seeking to understand the Taliban and recent Afghan history.

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