

**INDEPENDENT REPORT FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT (DFID)**

**TESTING HYPOTHESES ON RADICALISATION IN AFGHANISTAN**

**Why do men join the Taliban and Hizb-i Islami?  
How much do local communities support them?**

**Report 14<sup>th</sup> August 2009**

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**Note: This is an independent consultancy report and does not represent  
official British Government policy**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study focuses on Afghanistan and is one of a series that DFID has commissioned to examine frequently given hypotheses for radicalisation. Radicalisation is here defined as *'the social processes by which people are brought to condone, legitimise, support or carry out violence for political or religious objectives'*. The focus in this study is on why men join armed groups that present as religiously motivated, and how much support there is for this from their wider communities.

This study takes as its starting point the findings presented in DFID's Strategic Conflict Analysis for Afghanistan (SCA), undertaken in 2008. The SCA provided an overview of why men join armed groups in general. This study builds on SCA findings on motivation in two ways. First, by conducting face to face interviews with 'ordinary people' in insurgency areas it allows for a more nuanced understanding of why there is considerable public support for the two main groups fighting the government (the Taliban and Hizb-i Islami). In addition, it enables an assessment of whether 'radicalisation' in an HMG sense is occurring because it focuses only on areas where either the Taliban or Hizb-i Islami operate or have control. Thus it was possible to come to some conclusions about whether men join these groups because of their strong religious ideology or for other reasons.

This study is organised in terms of hypotheses that reflect frequently given explanations for radicalisation in different parts of the world.<sup>1</sup> Six of these hypotheses have also been tested for other countries including Pakistan and Bangladesh. In Afghanistan we developed two new hypotheses to allow for issues raised by respondents in the field study to be taken into account. The 'Afghanistan-only' hypotheses deal with government corruption and with the presence of foreign forces (hypotheses number 2 and 4). Eight hypotheses are therefore tested in all.

The 'evidence' against which each hypothesis was tested comprised field research, interviews with experts and a literature review. The field research findings are presented in the main body of this report. The literature review is at annex 1. Those consulted and interviewed are at annex 3.

The research team from CPAU interviewed **192 people either individually or in small groups in three insurgency areas**: in Wardak (where both Hizb-i Islami and the Taliban are operating), in Kandahar (Taliban only) and in the wider Kabul area (Hizb-i Islami and the Taliban). They interviewed a diverse range of people, including government officers, tribal elders, religious leaders and scholars, youth groups, women's groups, traders and businessmen as well as Taliban combatants and Hizb-i Islami commanders.

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<sup>1</sup> In 2006 DFID identified a 'long list' of 17 hypotheses that accounted for frequently given explanations for radicalisation. A sub-set of these were then tested for Bangladesh, Pakistan, Jamaica, Guyana and Somalia with additional hypotheses added to take account of the specificity of each country. As noted, in the case of Afghanistan we selected six of the original DFID hypotheses and added two additional ones. The additional hypotheses are Hypothesis 2 and Hypothesis 4.

## **BROAD FINDINGS**

Prior to presenting findings under each of the hypotheses there are ten main findings that cross-cut the hypotheses. These are:

1. *Religious motivation is only one of several reasons for joining or supporting the Taliban or Hizb-i Islami.* A religious message does resonate with the majority but this is mainly because it is couched in terms of two keenly felt pragmatic grievances: the corruption of government and the presence of foreign forces.

2. *There was almost no support for government amongst those interviewed.* Less than 6% of respondents (10 out of 192) attributed something positive to the government; all the rest were opposed. Most of those expressing support for the government (6 out of 10) were Hazara; their support was principally inspired by fears of resurgent Pashtun nationalism and the threat of Taliban rule.

3. *The majority of respondents expressed support for the Taliban - at least the 'good' Taliban - and/or Hizb-i Islami.* However, our assessment is that this support is primarily a way of expressing opposition to the government, which is seen as both politically partisan (favouring the Northern Alliance and excluding southerners) and as a puppet, propped up by the US and international forces. Given the absence of political parties and any viable opposition there is no other way for people to express their alienation from, and opposition to, current political arrangements. In this context the Taliban and Hizb-i Islami represent the only alternative power blocks capable of achieving political change. Respondents wanted to see these two groups brought into government but there was less evidence that they wanted either group to *be* the government.

4. As noted by the SCA and other studies, this research confirmed that *young men join the Taliban or Hizb-i Islami for a number of personal reasons in addition to broader structural grievances regarding the government and foreign forces.* These include:

- for cash due to unemployment - or underemployment (some were with the Taliban on a call-up only basis, i.e. not full-time);
- for status reasons - to have a weapon and a cause;
- because of genuine religious belief (this was the most respected reason for joining as it was felt not to be about individual aggrandisement);
- for self protection – they had little choice but to take sides;
- to leverage armed support for an ongoing dispute, usually over land or water, with another family or lineage member. Inevitably such action did not settle the issue; it raised the stakes.<sup>2</sup>

5. *Most radicalisation appears to happen after young men join a Taliban group.* The evidence from the field study is that young men become Taliban combatants for a mix of reasons (religious sentiment may be one) but their peers then 'radicalise' them into presenting their cause only in terms of jihad and only with reference to Islam. In

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<sup>2</sup> There were many examples of men joining the Taliban or even the government and then using the militia at their disposal to continue a local conflict. Coalition forces were also sometimes co-opted: 'When a rival is very powerful then people bribe translators to give wrong information to Coalition forces so their place gets bombed'. (Sorobi resident)

other words the real process of radicalisation appears to happen after they have become combatants. (This was also a finding in Pakistan)<sup>3</sup>

6. *The sort of Islam that Taliban combatants are radicalised into is not a scholarly, learned Islam; it reflects the populist messages of jihadi videos.* Combatants could not quote the religious texts (specific suras from the Qur'an or particular hadees); rather they took a line and then prefaced it with 'the hadees say' or 'the Qur'an says'. We do not have equivalent data for Hizb-i Islami because combatants and supporters hid their affiliation when interviewed. However, other research suggests a proportion of them will be well educated in theological terms – as befits the intellectualist/Maududi/Muslim brotherhood orientation of Hizb-i Islami as a party.

7. *Taliban and Hizb-i Islami combatants and sympathizers made little common cause with Islamist movements outside of Afghanistan.* Only three respondents (out of 192) made a reference to the west's 'global' attack on Islam by mentioning events in other countries (Israel, Gaza, Sudan). The majority of respondents regarded all foreign governments with suspicion even if they were Muslim. In addition to the US and Britain (which headed the list of 'uninvited guests'/'occupiers'/'infidels') suspicion was highest for Pakistan (the government rather than the people) but also for groups of 'Chechnyans and Arabs' that were sometimes seen passing through an area and appeared to have relations with local Taliban. Interestingly, the term 'Al Qaeda' was mentioned by only one respondent. This was even though everyone was specifically asked to name groups involved in the insurgency, 'visibly' and 'behind the scenes'.

8. *Respondents confirmed the nature of the Taliban presented in the literature, i.e. that it is a broad movement with groups with different agendas and varying degrees of allegiance to a central command.* These various groups were seen to identify as Taliban in order to gain respect and legitimise their actions in the eyes of local people. The consistent reference to the 'good Taliban' and then to various groups of 'bad Taliban' allowed respondents to distinguish those they supported from those they didn't. This perception of heterogeneity accounted for why it was difficult for respondents to answer with an unconditional 'yes' when asked whether they supported the Taliban or not: they always wanted to qualify their answers and say they supported the good Taliban only. Although as one man said 'The people even prefer bad Taliban when the alternative is government'.

9. *Respondents could not understand why the Coalition forces were in Afghanistan.* They reasoned that their objectives were clearly not to bring security to local populations, as their mere presence exacerbated violence and increased the numbers of civilians killed in air strikes. They also rejected the idea that Coalition

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<sup>3</sup> One of the findings of a previous study in Pakistan is that many of those recruited in to jihadi groups like Lashkar-i-Taiba are not particularly religious when they get recruited – they may be ordinary farmers or traders. Radicalisation then occurs through intense religious indoctrination in the course of training. However, a major difference noted with Pakistan is that the recruits that come out of this training are well versed in Deobandi interpretations of religious texts. This doesn't appear to be the case in Afghanistan; none of the Taliban combatants appeared to have much religious learning; what they did have was access to jihadi videos and messages. For a discussion of radicalisation in Pakistan see Ladbury and Hussein, 2008 and 2009.

forces were serious either about democracy or, separately, development. Democracy could not be an aim as the Afghan population had never been consulted about the occupation in the first place. And although western publics had been consulted about the recent surge ordered by President Obama the Afghan parliament and people had not ('So if this is western style democracy we don't want it'). The development efforts of international agencies was seen as delivering only very small projects which didn't have significant impact and employed few people (demand for projects that created local employment was huge). The lack of clarity on US and Coalition motivations led to speculations about 'real' motives. These are discussed under hypothesis 3.

10. *All respondents had ideas about what should be done to bring security.* The responses were remarkably consistent across all groups and can be summarised as follows:

- *The government should formally bring the Taliban and Hizb-i Islami into the democratic process and allow the leaders to stand for election.* The leaders must first come off the UN black list (on the basis that some very violent warlords and abusers of human rights were already in government yet some on the black list were not guilty of such crimes). As one respondent said: 'Even though the Taliban have a restricted idea of Islam and women's rights they didn't commit crimes against humanity but the Northern Alliance did, and many who committed such crimes are now in government.' And: 'If there are trials then it should be for both parties'.
- *The military objectives of foreign forces should be made publically known.* Two quotes reflect the general sentiment: 'They say there are here to root out Al Qa'eda and Osama but we all know that these people are not in Afghanistan'. 'There should be a legal agreement between the Coalition forces and the government which specifies what they are here for and what they are allowed to do – currently they have no legality from the government or the people of Afghanistan. This ambiguity about their mission and objectives has created a lot of suspicion in the minds of the public – some say they are here for revenge, some say they are after historical relics, some say it is oil or uranium. If their mission is known and people can understand their mission then it would be a lot easier for them as well as the people of Afghanistan'.
- *The government should then negotiate the withdrawal of foreign forces.* But 'They should leave in a gradual way, not suddenly or we will have another civil war'. 'The international forces should leave gradually not abruptly so we don't repeat the mistakes of the 1990s.' 'The international community need a political road map not a military one.'
- *Civilians and development aid must replace the military and military aid.* 'We don't want to be cut off from the world'; 'Development must be in rural areas not just urban ones'; 'Development should be bottom up and start at the grass roots, in communities'; 'The west can help set up a multi-party system where political parties have a role in governance'; 'We need mature political parties that are not based on ethnic and language differences'. 'We want civilians not military. As civilians they should concentrate on our economic and social wellbeing. If we are economically independent there will be no fighting over water and resources and we will not be harmful to the world'.

## FINDINGS RELATING TO THE HYPOTHESES

HYPOTHESIS	SUMMARY FINDINGS - FIELD STUDY
1. Events in Palestine, Iraq etc., <b>a perceived global attack on Islam etc.</b> ... encourage support for extremist action	<b>There is some evidence for this hypothesis.</b> A religious message <u>does</u> resonate with the majority in insurgency areas but this is mainly because it is couched in terms of two more basic grievances: the corruption of government and the presence of foreign forces. There was no evidence from the field study of common cause being made with Islamist movements outside Afghanistan.
2. The perception of the <b>government as corrupt and partisan</b> means people look elsewhere for a more moral form of governance	<b>The evidence strongly supports of this hypothesis.</b> Government corruption and partisanship at provincial and district level was consistently cited as a major reason for supporting the Taliban and Hizb-i Islami in all field study areas and particularly in Kandahar. However, whilst many appreciate the moral form of governance shown by the ‘good’ Taliban, this it is not a unconditional endorsement for the Taliban movement as a whole due to the numerous categories of ‘bad’ Taliban.
3. Failure of the state to provide <b>security and justice</b> , and people’s experience of predatory and oppressive security sector institutions (including the police), are influential drivers towards extremism	The evidence <b>strongly supports this hypothesis</b> , with one proviso: it is necessary to add: ‘the failure of the state <b>and Coalition forces to provide security</b> ’. Most respondents were unclear about what international forces are doing in Afghanistan. They do not believe it is to bring security, defeat the Taliban, support democracy or bring development, as they experience none of these. They argue the British are here for revenge and the Americans to pursue regional objectives. Although the Taliban don’t deliver security (they attract fire by foreign forces and this endangers local populations) they do deliver justice. They are seen to do this reasonably well and attract support as a result.
4. The <b>behaviour of foreign forces</b> (rather than their presence per se) encourages support for groups that use violence against them	The evidence <b>supports this hypothesis</b> to a great extent – although the presence of even well behaved foreign forces would be opposed. Aerial attacks, and the way house searches are carried out at night cause particular resentment. Respondents wanted foreign forces to be subject to legal rules and to be accountable for their behaviour. Although wanting an end to occupation respondents wanted Coalition forces to leave gradually and on the basis of political negotiation. ‘The international forces should leave gradually not abruptly so we don’t repeat the mistakes of the 1990s.’
5. Government failure to provide <b>basic services</b> (health, education, water, sanitation) allows extremist groups to meet these needs and build support	The evidence <b>does not support this hypothesis</b> . Although basic services are deemed inadequate government does at least provide some, at least in some areas - education and health care for example. This is in stark contrast to insurgency groups including the Taliban who do not provide any. The government was acknowledged as a service provider – though respondents wanted better quality services and much larger projects that would provide employment.
6. <b>Underemployed young men</b> with frustrated aspirations and a limited stake in society are particularly susceptible to radicalisation	Unemployed young men do indeed join the Taliban and Hizb-i Islami as one means of earning an income and gaining status. As noted, there was a huge demand for employment opportunities from men and women. But it may be more correct to say that <b>young men are susceptible to being mobilised</b> (in the sense of joining any armed groups that will provide an income) rather than <b>being radicalised</b> (we had little evidence that young men are specifically drawn to groups with a strong religious ideology). Our finding was that men tended to be radicalised by peers after they join up.

7. <b>Madrassas</b> provide a limited education which leaves their students particularly vulnerable to extremist narratives	The field study <b>does not allow for a definitive statement on this hypothesis</b> as we do not have sufficient data. The evidence we do have suggests that madaris per se are not a major cause of radicalisation - though they expose young men to social environments that may radicalise. Mullahs walk a difficult path - some genuinely support Taliban ideology and preach against the government and Coalition forces in the Friday prayers. Others support the Taliban to survive; still others are pro-government.
8. <b>Women</b> generally play a moderating role against extremism, and if more empowered could do this more effectively	The evidence <b>supports this hypothesis to some extent but only for educated women</b> . The majority of poor and little educated women are in no position to play a moderating role even if they wanted to; their lives are taken up with surviving the conflict and their affiliations tend to mirror those of male family members. Some educated women in professional jobs in Kabul have participated in peace negotiations since 2001. The literature review reveals that what is now needed is the development of a powerful domestic lobby for women's rights that both represents poor rural women and is strongly supported by (at least some) men.

### MAIN MESSAGES FOR THE INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY

These messages are based on findings of the field study, which was undertaken in Wardak, Kandahar and specific areas of wider Kabul. They are not necessarily relevant for other provinces, even those where the Taliban and/or Hizb-i Islami are fighting government and Coalition forces, as situations can differ significantly. They should therefore be read as 'issues to consider' by all actors supporting development in Afghanistan.

1. **Prioritise justice and sub-national governance.** In insurgency areas demands for justice and good governance outstrip demands for basic services (education, health, water, sanitation). International donor support should reflect this. It doesn't matter if any one donor programme doesn't as long as the overall government and international effort does.
2. **Stay in the background on most things - particularly justice.** Afghan expertise exists and should lead. If help is needed from outside then resourcing experts from other Muslim countries may be a good contribution. (This is not to negate the value of DFID and other donor supported justice initiatives in particular provinces, it is a general point relating to national justice sector reform).
3. **Pay more attention to how services are provided.** There is little point in providing services (whether through government, Provincial Reconstruction Teams or NGOs) if they incite more rage than appreciation due to the poor quality work that private contractors leave behind, the bad behaviour of the private security companies towards local populations and the added risk of violent attacks and civilian deaths that PSC presence can mean. This indicates a need for much greater scrutiny of companies during bidding and award processes and increased quality control when works are carried out; plus better monitoring of the behaviour of private security companies during project implementation. (We appreciate that this is a huge task as it basically means increasing the capability of contractors to deliver quality work and getting high quality monitors, ideally Afghan. Another message is therefore: **be**

**realistic** about what can be achieved on service provision - given significant human resource constraints.)

4. **Think about women in every single investment.** There are no blue prints; nothing is easy. But women in insurgency areas have lost their mobility, their networks, their access to paid employment, their children's schools, as well as husbands and family members because of the violence (not the Taliban per se). In Kabul women still have few institutional mechanism through which to organise and mobilise for their political, social and economic rights. Although it is a gross simplification to divide women into these two groups (educated/urban vs. uneducated/rural) it may be helpful in planning interventions that include them.

5. **Keep going with capacity and institution building.** Building the capacity and effectiveness of state institutions (the army and police and central and provincial ministries responsible for budgeting, planning and service delivery) is an essential task. This is despite the fact that most respondents interviewed for this study did not think the current government was worth supporting. This is a tricky one as they saw donor support – backed by military force – as propping up a corrupt government and keeping it in power. However, donors are not supporting the government so much as building the infrastructure of the state which will continue whoever comes to power. This may not convince those opposing the government in insurgency areas but it is a justified argument. If there is a message for donors it is: Keep going.

6. **Think nation building as well as state building.** This is an easy thing to say but a hard thing to know how to do. One finding from a global study on citizenship is worth mentioning: *that notions of citizenship usually start with feelings of responsibility and accountability towards neighbours. A notion of state citizenship develops later.*<sup>4</sup> Our findings (this study) confirm the urgent need for people to re-establish feelings of trust towards each other at a very local level – years of conflict have extinguished this. Whilst you can't force people to have a relationship with the state you can facilitate their ability to organise and mobilise locally around issues that concern them. Helping to build back trust at local level is a critically important contribution to nation building and state building.

7. **Fund larger projects including in peaceful areas – using local contractors, a local workforce and Afghan security institutions, which also employ locals.** There is no evidence from this study (or the literature) that providing basic services in insurgency areas win hearts and minds particularly if they are 'protected' by foreign forces. In other words, small-scale development projects, though appreciated by those they immediately affect, will never compensate for the wider perception that the Coalition forces are part of the occupation and cause civilian deaths. Two things are therefore worth considering: larger projects that provide employment (including in peaceful areas as a demonstration effect), plus security provided by Afghan forces. Large visible infrastructure projects that provide local employment and are implemented, monitored and protected by Afghans will signal a commitment by

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<sup>4</sup> One of the findings of a review of five year's of global research on citizenship (the work of the DRC on citizenship supported by DFID) found that feelings of citizenship start near to home, with rights and responsibilities towards neighbours; they are later extended to the state, sometimes a generation or two later. See 'Taking a citizen's perspective'. Eyben and Ladbury, 20006

government to localise opportunities and normalise security arrangements – a very important message for populations who currently feel politically and economically excluded – and occupied.

**8. Build the environment for work and jobs.** There is a massive demand for employment. Although we know that long term employment is about the institutions and systems that underlie growth (judicial, legislative, banking etc.), any intervention that visibly provides jobs now (i.e. over the next 0-3 years) will enormously build morale and a belief that things are going to get better. Agriculture will remain a mainstay of the economy whatever happens to poppies. Comprehensive investments in agriculture and water are key.

**9. Don't lump all the Taliban together and then demonise them.** Local people in insurgency areas distinguish good and bad Taliban and they support the good Taliban. Appreciating this distinction, even if the international community does not fully share it, is important. There is a need to disaggregate the category 'Taliban', and to signal that the government and the international community recognise there are both good Taliban groups but also very bad ones – and it is the latter that are a threat to both local people and to Afghanistan as a nation.

**10. Monitor trends – but select the methodology carefully.** After a dearth of conflict analyses post 2001 we now have a glut. But there is still very little information about how ordinary people are *thinking in insurgency areas*. This and other one-off studies help at a particular point in time but perceptions will change and these need to be monitored and explained. Data in Afghanistan is very limited so must be collected from scratch. The methodology used is critical. Polling can help capture changing perceptions but the way questions are asked, and the way results are often aggregated and presented can result in a distorting picture. Focus groups are useful for extremely homogenous groups when participants feel they can speak in front of others. But they should not be used in insurgency areas as a stand-alone method.<sup>5</sup> In short the way that research is conducted must take account of the fear inherent in a conflict environment. This study shows it can be done as long as flexibility is part of the research plan.

**11. In terms of reconciliation** it is worth bearing in mind the remarkably consistent hopes of respondents to this study, i.e. that they wanted:

- The government to formally bring the Taliban and Hizb-i Islami into the democratic process and allow them to stand for election;
- The behaviour of foreign forces to be subject to 'legal rules'; and their political road map be made publically known;
- A new government to negotiate the withdrawal of foreign forces, but in a gradual and negotiated way;
- Civilians and development aid to replace the military presence. (Adding that international agencies have a much-needed role to play in Afghanistan's development.)

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<sup>5</sup> It is worth noting that this study started as a 'focus group' based study. But on the first day respondents approached the field team and asked to be re-interviewed alone. We then changed our research strategy. In the end, over half the respondents were interviewed either alone or with only one other person. See interview groups at annex 4.

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

### Study purpose

1.1 DFID supports long-term programmes to help tackle the causes of poverty. As part of this objective DFID seeks to understand and help address the insecurity of the poor in main partner countries. This includes understanding how state and non-state actors operate in ways that may increase insecurity through ideologically and politically motivated violence. In order to aid this understanding, and beginning in 2006, DFID commissioned a series of studies that try to understand the underlying causes of radicalisation in different countries. This report on Afghanistan is part of that series which also contains studies on Pakistan, Bangladesh, Somalia, Guyana and Jamaica. All studies seek to better inform HMG policies and approaches in countries that have been identified as vulnerable to terrorism or instability. HMG efforts in these countries are intended to reflect a nuanced approach to both preventing the emergence of militant movements, and to tackling radicalisation when it occurs.

1.2 'Radicalisation' is a term used within HMG and elsewhere to describe the social processes by which people are brought to condone, legitimise, support or carry out violence for political or religious objectives. In Afghanistan it is not always possible to distinguish between ideological insurgency groups and apparently non-ideological actors: commanders, strongman, narcotics traders, community policing forces and so on. One of the ongoing tasks of this study was therefore to understand what radicalisation sensibly means in the Afghanistan context. The Terms of Reference are at annex 5.

1.3 The 2008 Strategic Conflict Assessment for Afghanistan provides a good overview of the factors underlying radicalisation in general. It maps the different actors engaged in conflict and their political objectives and then identifies factors that encourage young men to take up arms. The SCA notes that men join armed groups to earn money, defend their culture, country and faith, for status reasons, to protect their families, and to respond to the instructions of elders. Another study, by Bhatia and Sedra (2007) interviews combatants in six different parts of the country. By looking at the tribal, political and economic history of conflict in each region they contextualise the circumstances under which young men join armed groups today.

1.4 This study builds on previous analyses but differs from them in two main ways: (i) it is based on interviews with a targeted group of 'ordinary people' in insurgency areas, including some active combatants. It therefore allows for a nuanced understanding of why diverse populations support the insurgency - or not; (ii) it was set up specifically to identify whether 'radicalisation' in an HMG sense is occurring. By focusing on the Taliban and Hizb-i Islami *only* the study allows for a concentration on whether those that support or join groups with a strong religious ideology do this primarily for religious reasons.

### Methodology

1.5 This study tests a number of frequently given hypotheses for radicalisation against the evidence base. The study uses three types of evidence: a literature review, interviews with experts and a field study. The literature review is at annex 1; experts consulted and individuals interviewed during field research are at annex 3. The main body of this report presents findings from the field study.

1.6 An Afghan research organisation, Cooperation of Peace and Unity (CPAU), undertook the field study. The group had previous experience of carrying out research in conflict areas and on sensitive subjects, including religion.<sup>6</sup> Interviews – either individually or in small groups – were undertaken in three areas affected by fighting between the government/Coalition forces and the Taliban/Hizb-i Islami. Field work was undertaken in Kandahar province in the south, Wardak province to the west of Kabul, and in the wider Kabul area. In Kabul the research teams worked mainly in Sorobi (where insurgents had killed 10 French soldiers in 2008) and in IDP camps where they interviewed villagers who had escaped the fighting in Sangin, Helmand. Interviewing also took place in a Hazara area of Kabul affected by violence. As anticipated the Hazara respondents largely supported the government and the Coalition forces and in this respect they differed from the majority of respondents who were from Pashtun tribes.

1.7 The study methodology needed to do several things: *minimise risks* to the field team and their respondents; get a *wide range of voices* which, though not representative in any statistical sense would ensure there was no bias towards any one group; and use an *open question format* that allowed respondents to talk about the motivations of different groups in the conflict without prompting them by using the hypotheses. Brief remarks on each of these are given below; for a more detailed discussion of the field study environment see annex 2.

1.8 **Minimising risk** was a primary concern both because of frequent and unpredictable violence in field study locations. Risks were minimised by careful selection of field team members, by role-play training sessions that made researchers work hard at gaining trust, and by the decision to interview only in those areas where CPAU had NGO contacts that could facilitate their introduction to the target groups. Although DFID were keen that the team interview in Helmand, Kandahar was eventually chosen because of CPAU's better contacts there. The **diversity of respondents** was achieved through targeting individuals from pre-determined groups (see box 1) and by a flexible approach to interviewing: respondents often preferred to be interviewed individually because of their fear of informers. Of all groups targeted only members of the ANA and ANP were missed: despite requests they declined to be interviewed. The other disappointment was that only 11% of respondents were women. More women could have been interviewed had permission been granted by the MoE to interview teachers in schools (see annex 2 for discussion) and had the team been able to work with women's organisations in Kandahar and Wardak. But at the time of the field study this was not a safe option.

1.9 Only **open questions** were used in the interviews (see box 2). It was only after all the interviews were completed that interview discussions were analysed in terms of the hypotheses. This lengthened the analytical task but ensured that in discussing motivations respondents were not led by answers implicit in the hypotheses.

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<sup>6</sup> CPAU have undertaken previous research on conflict and also on the role of religious leaders in Afghanistan, including their influence over peace processes. See bibliography for CPAU publications

**Box 1. Groups targeted for interview**

1. Members of Hizb-i Islami	6. Government employees
2. Taliban combatants and commanders	7. Members of the ANA (army) and ANP (police)
3. Former Taliban government officials +/or Commanders	8. Members of local NGOs
4. Provincial Council Members and tribal elders	9. Women's groups and youth groups
5. Mullahs and religious students	10. School teachers
	11. Farmers, shopkeepers and businessmen

**Box 2. The 8 questions asked of all respondents**

1. What is the main conflict going on in your area – the one that most affects your security?	5. What is the impact of the conflict on this community?
2. In your opinion, why are the leaders fighting? (Check: Are they acting alone or is there anyone in the background?)	6. What should the government do to end the conflict?
3. Why are the foot-soldiers fighting?	7. What should the international community do?
4. Who do you support...Why?	8. What do you think will happen in the end?

1.10 Using this methodology CPAU interviewed **192 people in 46 separate interviews over a six-week period**. This study is therefore limited in size and does not purport to be representative or comprehensive. However, our assessment is that coverage is the best that could be achieved within the budget and timescale available, given the challenges of the research environment.

**Radicalisation: an appropriate term?**

1.11 As mentioned, the research focused only on insurgency areas and only on support for the Taliban and/or Hizb-i Islami. This was on the basis that if 'radicalisation' in an ideological sense is occurring it was likely to be in these areas and with regard to these groups.

1.12 Whether the term radicalisation is appropriate however, *even with regard to these groups*, is arguable. The term radicalisation is little used in the Afghanistan conflict literature; 'mobilisation' is used instead because it more accurately reflects the mix of ideological and pragmatic objectives normally found to explain why men join armed groups. However, because this study looked only at groups that present in terms of their religious credentials, we expected that religious sentiment would play a more significant part in explaining why people join or support them. Our findings suggest that radicalisation as a social process does occur but it mainly takes place after men join up rather than before. Most of the 16 Taliban combatants interviewed had joined for a mix of reasons, including but not only because they felt Islam was under attack by the west. However, by the time we interviewed them they had learned to present their cause *only* in terms of Islam and conceptualised their struggle *only* in terms of 'jihad'. For this group of combatants therefore radicalisation – in the sense of a preparedness to use violence for ideological/religious objectives – was much in evidence. Their religious language and didactic arguments were in sharp contrast to the language used by all other respondents.

1.13 Our interim assessment is therefore that men are *mobilised* for different reasons to join armed groups. But if the armed group they join is the Taliban they then become *radicalised* by their commander and peers (and possibly, although we have no evidence for this, during training). We did not get enough information from Hizb-i Islami supporters to make an equivalent assessment for this group. This was partly due to the secrecy surrounding membership of this group but it was also because the comments of known affiliates were mainly geared towards politics (the readiness of Hizb-i Islami for government; bringing back Hekmatyar), not religion. The question of religious motivation is discussed in more detail under hypothesis 1.

### **Acknowledgements**

1.14 We are grateful to all those that have contributed to this study: to respondents in Wardak, Kandahar and Kabul and to the NGOs that helped facilitate contacts with them. Our thanks also to Peace Direct who managed the CPAU contract from London. Insights from other researchers in Afghanistan and their friendly collaboration helped inform the field study and the literature review. Finally we are most grateful to the DFID Kabul office and to colleagues in London for wide ranging support and for co-ordinating feedback meetings. Whilst taking on board ideas and comments made throughout the study we remain responsible for the analysis, and the recommendations made.

## **2.0 FIELD STUDY FINDINGS**

### **INTRODUCTORY POINTS**

#### **The good and the bad Taliban; perceptions of Hizb-i Islami**

2.1 *Taliban*. Before discussing the findings that relate to each hypothesis it is useful to look at how respondents characterised the Taliban, and to particularly note the consistent use of the terms ‘good Taliban’ and ‘bad Taliban’. Such a distinction reflects what previous studies have emphasised: that the Taliban is a broad movement of Taliban-styled groups, many of whom act independently and sometimes in opposition to the dictates of the high command (the Quetta and Peshawar shuras) or the examples of behaviour set by the spiritual leader, Mullah Omar.

2.2 For most respondents there was only one category of good Taliban but several types of bad Taliban. The **good Taliban** were attributed with characteristics that were mentioned consistently across geographical areas. These were: their genuine religious piety (which meant they could be trusted); the fact that they attacked only foreign forces but never Afghans, the fact they delivered justice quickly and fairly, and the fact that they supported the education of girls. This last point was unexpected but respondents reported that individual communities have negotiated with good Taliban groups to continue girls’ education in several areas under Taliban control.

2.3 **Bad Taliban** came in several forms. Most often mentioned were the ‘Government Taliban’, the ‘Pakistan Taliban’ and the ‘American Taliban’; there were also Taliban groups they associated with criminal activities, e.g. narcotics. All these groups were bad in the sense that they were seen to be keeping the insurgency going for their own financial and/or strategic regional interests and they did not have the people of Afghanistan as their central concern. The different groups of bad Taliban

are most relevant to the discussion under hypothesis 3 (on security and justice) and are further elaborated there.

2.4 *Hizb-i Islami* was less discussed than the Taliban not least because of the group's secrecy. Well known Hizb-i Islami commanders never openly identified themselves in interviews even though their responses indicated strong support for the organisation and their leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. Hizb-i Islami members clearly thought that their party were the only opposition force capable and ready to take over the running of government; they did not think the Taliban were equipped to do this.

2.5 Ordinary people tended to say that Hizb-i Islami and the Taliban were collaborating - this was the general perception in Wardak and Kabul where both organisations were operating. However, some acknowledged this might be a temporary marriage of convenience whilst others noted that there were differences between their leaders. Respondents distinguished the two groups in terms of their political and religious ideology: 'Hekmatyar does not want to make all the world his enemy, he does not mind women getting education and he believes in elections. But the Taliban want relations with Islamic countries only and don't believe in elections, they prefer a shura system of government' was the summary made by one (pro-Hekmatyar) respondent in Wardak.

2.6 The Taliban had two characteristics that made them popular with a large number of people: they dispensed justice (discussed under hypothesis 3) and they were seen as inclusive – anyone could join if they believed in the central Taliban objective: to establish shari'a as *the* system of government. In contrast Hizb-i Islami was seen as secretive, less inclusive but as being ready to share power with the current government, at least as an interim strategy. Although study respondents painted a picture of brotherly cooperation between these two groups<sup>7</sup> the literature questions this; their very different world-views and tactics suggests that both groups want absolute control, and neither would countenance power sharing in the longer term.

### **Testing the hypotheses against findings from the field study**

2.7 The following paragraphs test each of the hypotheses against field study findings. Work by other researchers that addresses the wider political context, and that helps contextualise issues raised by field study respondents (for example, on justice, services, unemployment, the role of women etc.) are discussed in the literature review at annex 1.

## **1. EVENTS IN PALESTINE, IRAQ, ETC, A PERCEIVED GLOBAL ATTACK ON ISLAM GIVE RISE TO WIDESPREAD INDIGNATION AND RESENTMENT WHICH ENCOURAGES SUPPORT FOR EXTREMIST ACTION**

### **Summary**

2.8 **There is some evidence for this hypothesis** - opposition is due to a perceived attack on Islam but it is an attack that is perceived to be happening within the country

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<sup>7</sup> The Taliban combatants in Wardak noted: 'We have brotherly relations with Hizb-i Islami as a whole; we don't have any differences and if there are difference this is between Hekmatyar and Amir-ul-Momineen (Mullah Omar) and we hope they will resolve them'.

by foreign forces. There was little evidence of common cause being made with Islamist movements outside Afghanistan.

### **Main findings**

2.9 Many respondents talked of a western ‘crusade’ against Islam and Afghan traditions – with religion and culture presented as complementary and interdependent. Religious messages therefore did have resonance for the majority. However, our assessment is that this is primarily because they were couched in terms of respondents’ two more pragmatic grievances: the corruption of the state and the occupation by foreign forces. The way in which religion was frequently enfolded into one or both of these deeper grievances is reflected in the words of a Hizb-i Islami commander: ‘This is not an ordinary war, it is a holy war (jihad)– it started in defence of our cultural values, our national identity and our liberty. So if it costs our development, even our blood, we will continue fighting it’. Jihad, in the sense used here, is not about fighting an infidel enemy simply because he is an infidel but rather to regain and retrieve something that the enemy has denigrated and taken away, i.e. the values/identity of Afghan citizens and the country’s liberty and sovereignty. This message had mass appeal, whether respondents were particularly religious or not.

2.10 Anger on religious grounds was more frequently expressed in Wardak where there was more *ideological* support for the Taliban and particularly Hizb-i Islami than elsewhere.<sup>8</sup> The greater religious/ideological sentiment in Wardak is reportedly due both to a more serious approach to Islam in that province and to the greater politicisation of the population. It has long been associated with strong Muslim Brotherhood activity – hence the significant support for Hizb-i Islami.<sup>9</sup> Thus, Coalition forces were always referred to as unbelievers or infidels (kafir) in Wardak but as ‘uninvited guests’, ‘occupiers’ or ‘Coalition forces’ in Kandahar and Kabul.

2.11 There was little evidence of pan-Islamic sentiment in any location. Few respondents made any reference to a ‘global’ attack on Islam; only three respondents (out of 192) mentioned western attacks against Muslims in other countries. Nor was common cause made with Afghanistan’s nearest Islamic neighbour - Pakistan - where the government (though not the people) was seen as a major threat to Afghanistan’s stability. Al Qaeda was mentioned by name only once, although several groups in Kandahar mentioned ‘Arabs and Chechnyans’ that ‘appear to travel through our area and have relations with Taliban groups’. All foreign groups were viewed negatively and as potentially responsible for the continuing insurgency. The implication was that if they were Taliban they were bad Taliban.

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<sup>8</sup> Many teachers in Wardak schools are reportedly solid Hizb-i Islami supporters since the party has always been active in the state school sector - it draws on a much more educated class than the Taliban. Hizb-i Islami members are extremely active in politics and have many members in senior government positions even though their leader, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar remains in hiding and on the UN Security Council black list. Taliban respondents in Wardak distinguished themselves ideologically from Hizb-i Islami who they called ‘Wahhabis’. Taliban respondents saw themselves as traditionalist Muslims epitomising a brand of Islam most often blended with cultural norms.

<sup>9</sup> Respondents also mentioned how they got their news from the large number of radio stations they can pick up from the Kabul area. As one respondent noted: ‘The first question we ask each other every morning is ‘did you hear the news last night’’.

2.12 Religion was given as the *primary* reason for fighting only by active Taliban combatants.<sup>10</sup> For this group of men the purpose of the war was specifically to get rid of the current constitution and replace it with shar'ia. 'Infidels have invaded our country, they overthrew the Islamic Caliphate of Islam (a reference to the period of Taliban rule) and the implementation of shari'a and since the aim of these infidels is the spreading of obscenity and to stop the government from implementing shari'a that is why we fight'. These Taliban combatants saw Hekmatyar as their only friend, since all the other one-time jihadi commanders had sold out by joining government.<sup>11</sup>

2.13 The rhetoric of this Taliban group, and particularly its didactic tone, contrasted with the language of all other respondents. However, it was somewhat similar to the rhetoric of religious and jihadi groups in Pakistan interviewed for previous studies.<sup>12</sup> But there was one major difference: the Afghan Taliban group was much less learned and scholarly. Those interviewed in Pakistan could quote sura from the Qur'an and specific hadees to back up their arguments but the Taliban in Afghanistan simply said 'the Qur'an says...' followed by the argument they wanted to put forward. It seems likely that most of their religious training has been from the Taliban's own extensive propaganda machine via their combatant peers and not from study with a theological scholar. As discussed in the literature review, the Taliban have invested heavily in technology for radicalisation purposes and are now extremely adept at both the technical side and in creating powerful propaganda messages.<sup>13</sup> It may also be that new Taliban recruits undergo religious/ideological training – but if they do then does not compare with the theological rigour of equivalent training in Pakistan.

**2.14 The main conclusions from examining hypothesis 1 are:**

- A religious message does resonate with the majority but this is mainly because it is couched in terms of two more basic grievances: the corruption of government and the presence of foreign forces;
- There is no evidence from the study of common cause being made with Islamist movements outside Afghanistan;
- Most radicalisation appears to happen after young men join a Taliban group;

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<sup>10</sup> We cannot say whether this group of Taliban combatants in Wardak are typical of other Taliban groups – but they seem to represent what Ruttig refers to the highly indoctrinated and ideological 'inner circle' of Taliban as distinct from the 'outer ring' of local fighters who are fighting for non-ideological reasons, often to do with tribal grievances or economic gain. Van Bijlert notes that in Uruzgan there are many non-ideological Taliban commanders who were linked to the former Taliban regime but were not necessarily ideologically motivated at that time either. See Van Bijlert 2009 (forthcoming) referencing Thomas Ruttig, 'Die Taleban nach Mulla Dadullah', Berline: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, June 2007 (SWP-Aktuell 31/07), pp. 2-3.

<sup>11</sup> Those who were seen to have sold out were mainly Northern Alliance members and/or those that had managed to get powerful positions in government. They mentioned Sayyaf, Rabbani, Gailani, Mujadidi (head of the upper house) and Shinwari (head of the Council of Clergy and formerly Chief Justice). Here they implicitly reference another grievance: the Bonn Agreement that left out both Hekmatyar and the Taliban. The issue of perceived political and economic exclusion is discussed in more detail under hypothesis 2 ('Partisanship').

<sup>12</sup> For example, members of Lashkar-y Taiba and the women of Jamia Hafsa attached to the Red Mosque, Islamabad. For discussions of interviews with these groups see Ladbury and Hussein 2009.

<sup>13</sup> Guistozi discusses the Taliban's proficiency in the area of the internet and propaganda in his book 'Koran, Kalashnikov and Laptop, 2007. The CPAU researchers themselves reported that film clips from the internet (for example from Abu Ghraib or from YouTube that depict western attacks on Muslims) are regularly sent to people's mobiles in Afghanistan.

- The sort of Islam that Taliban combatants are radicalised into is not a scholarly, learned Islam; it reflects the populist messages of jihadi videos.

## **2. THE PERCEPTION OF THE CURRENT GOVERNMENT AS CORRUPT AND PARTISAN AND MEANS PEOPLE LOOK ELSEWHERE FOR A MORE MORAL FORM OF GOVERNANCE**

### **Summary**

2.15 **The evidence strongly supports of this hypothesis.** Less than 6% of respondents (only 10 people out of 192) indicated support for the government. Government corruption and partisanship at provincial and district level was consistently cited as a major reason for supporting opposition groups.

2.16 The one dissenting voice was that of Hazara respondents. The six Hazara interviewed all supported the government. They feared resurgent Pashtun nationalism and saw Coalition forces as a bulwark against the return of a Taliban government. Whilst recognising government corruption they were not won over by the Taliban alternative. For them the Taliban were fighting ‘...not for Islam but for the domination of the Pashtun tribes, as they have been doing for the last 250 years’.

### **Main findings**

2.17 It is worth looking at charges of corruption and partisanship separately, and then asking whether the Taliban or Hizb-i Islami appear to offer a more moral form of governance.

2.18 *Corruption.* Respondents gave many instances of government corruption, mainly citing instances at the provincial or district level with which they were familiar. Corruption covered many things including nepotism (the appointment of incompetent or warlord types to government posts, including as governors), fraud (the pocketing of provincial or district development funds) and government personnel involved in rent extraction (e.g. illegal goods trafficking) who protected themselves and their enterprise with armed militia.

2.19 Government corruption was mentioned in all three areas but the list of government crimes was longest in Kandahar. The general perception was that the province was controlled by Ahmed Wali Karzai (AWK), the President’s younger brother, who used it as his personal fiefdom. According to respondents he controlled narcotics trafficking and was guilty of major extortion, land grabbing and control of the defunct justice system. ‘Karzai’s brother has grabbed thousands of hectares of government land and built different townships on it and sold them to warlords and drug dealers and this creates hatred in peoples’ hearts against the government’. ‘There is no accountability in the courts if you are caught. So people say ‘let’s loot a market’ because they know they can get away with it’. ‘There are jirgas but they are mandated to solve legal conflicts between individuals not criminal/penal issues or terrorism.’ One of the reasons it was difficult to run group interviews in Kandahar was that respondents were afraid of AWK’s secret network of informers and of reprisals from his militia if they talked openly. Similar stories of corruption were reported from Helmand before the current governor took over.

2.20 Kandahar was thus presented as a state within a state, where religious and tribal leaders had been sidelined and power had been centralised. This was greatly

resented, including by tribal leaders themselves. As one respondent said: 'If the government had taken tribal leaders and the ulema on board they could help resolve the current crisis, but they have been sidelined. Even now, if the son of a tribal elder in Kandahar blows a whistle during the night people will come to Kandahar'. Tribal leaders themselves were aware of their marginalisation: 'We don't have a proper system of governance. The right job is not given to the right person in Kandahar, qualifications are not taken into account, its all nepotism. And if there are honest people in government they have no support from higher circles'. 'In Kandahar we need reform...the removal of leaders and a change in the mindset of the people so they can help change themselves and society' (Achakzai elders)

2.21 *Partisanship*. In addition to frequent accounts of corruption the government was also accused of partisanship. In both Kandahar and Wardak there was a feeling that the south and Pashtuns had been politically excluded since the Bonn Agreement in 2001.<sup>14</sup> Several respondents said that this political exclusion combined with the corruption of Ahmed Wali Khan 'created the need for the Taliban to come back'. As a Durrani Pashtun AWK was seen as having consistently marginalised Ghilzai Pashtuns (which the Taliban in Kandahar largely are) to the extent that 'you cannot find a Durrani in a Kandahar prison'. This accounts for why some respondents maintained that the Taliban would not have got a foothold had it not been for AWK. Faced with such injustice people fastened on to the Taliban as only alternative power centre they knew.

2.22 In Wardak government partisanship was cited in various forms. To give one example: respondents were angry when they saw photographs of Ahmed Shah Masood in Afghan army (ANA) vehicles. (Masood was defence minister for the Northern Alliance.) His photograph in army vehicles convinced respondents that the army was still a Northern Alliance stronghold that discriminated against southerners. As one young man said: 'If it is a national army it shouldn't be a faction.'<sup>15</sup> Others were more bloodthirsty: 'If the Taliban take a driver captive and they find he has a picture of Masood in his vehicle they will kill him'.

2.23 These intense feelings about the corruption and continuing partisanship of government were compared to the behaviour of Mullah Omar, recognised as the Taliban's spiritual leader by most (but not all) respondents. Mullah Omar's openness to people of all tribes was contrasted to the nepotism of government figures like AWK: 'In Kandahar you cannot find a Ghilzai in a high ranking or even a low ranking government position, even in schools. If you do find one then he has been approved by the President's brother'. On the other hand Mullah Omar '...is Ghilzai but he has a Popolzai (Durrani) deputy. This shows the Taliban don't resort to playing the ethnic and tribal card'. Many respondents associated the Taliban with

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<sup>14</sup> As one of the youth group said: 'Unfair distribution of power to different tribes is the real issue in Kandahar' Interestingly however, this Kandahar youth group, who were all under 25, had a different take on tribal identity to older respondents – they saw it as potentially divisive. 'Tribal shuras are a barrier to becoming one nation, these traditional structures divide us into different tribes and we have to overcome this'.

<sup>15</sup> Clearly the government have made efforts to even up the number of southerners in the ANA and ANP and this is acknowledged, if not appreciated. 'Those from the south are paid extra for joining the ANA and ANP, to even up the force so its not all northerners. Karzai said we have only a few people from Kandahar in our rank and file, he was encouraging Kandaharis to join up'.

inclusion and the government with exclusion. What the Taliban represented for them (the good Taliban at least) was a group driven by an inclusive religious ideology that unites across tribes.

2.24 Respondents in Kandahar and Wardak also felt economically discriminated against – even though government and donor resources are reportedly weighted in favour of insurgency areas. Complaints about the poor standard of government services were common as were mentions of the small-scale nature of Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) and National Solidarity Programme (NSP) projects. This is discussed in more detail under the hypothesis on services.

2.25 Did the Taliban and Hizb-i Islami promise a more moral form of governance from the perspective of those interviewed? The answer to this is that the good Taliban certainly did but the bad Taliban did not. Respondents were well aware that men joined strongmen and criminal groups for their own personal gain and the behaviour of these groups – which included looting local villages – gave the good Taliban a bad name. Even so, the government’s record on corruption was deemed so extraordinarily unjust that ‘The people even prefer bad Taliban when the alternative is government’. As one respondent explained: ‘The Taliban lack the knowledge and ability to use their potential popularity amongst the people – although the people support their cause they are not happy with their kidnappings and looting.’

2.26 Overall, our assessment is that despite widespread opposition to the government, and the perception that it survives and is propped up only by the existence of foreign military, support for the Taliban and even Hizb-i Islami is largely due to the lack of alternatives. Given the absence of political parties and any viable opposition there is no other way for people to express their alienation from, and opposition to, current political arrangements. In this context the Taliban and Hizb-i Islami represent the only alternative power blocks capable of achieving political change. Respondents wanted to see these two groups brought into government but there was less evidence that they wanted either group to *be the government*.

2.27 The **main conclusions** from examining hypothesis 2 are:

- Support for government in field study areas is very limited - less than 6% of respondents attributed something positive to the government;
- Most of those expressing support for the government were Hazara whose support was principally inspired by fears of Taliban/Pashtun domination;
- The majority of respondents expressed support for the Taliban (at least the good Taliban) and/or Hizb-i Islami;
- However, our assessment is that this is primarily a way of expressing opposition to the government and the presence of foreign forces and not so much a positive and unconditional endorsement of these two groups.

### **3. THE FAILURE OF THE STATE TO PROVIDE SECURITY AND JUSTICE, AND PEOPLE’S EXPERIENCE OF PREDATORY AND OPPRESSIVE SECURITY SECTOR INSTITUTIONS (INCLUDING THE POLICE), ARE INFLUENTIAL DRIVERS TOWARDS EXTREMISM**

#### **Summary**

2.28 The evidence **strongly supports this hypothesis**, with one proviso: in the case of security it is necessary to add: ‘the failure of the state **and Coalition forces**’

as it is the combined failure of both these groups to provide security that is remarked upon by respondents.

### **Main findings**

2.29 This hypothesis allows for a discussion of several security-related issues raised by respondents, for example, perceptions about who is responsible for the continued insecurity and why the Coalition forces are in Afghanistan. The issues of security and justice are dealt with separately.

2.30 *Perceptions on who is responsible for the continuing insecurity.* A number of different forces were seen as responsible for the continuing insecurity: these can be broadly divided into two groups: internal/Afghan and external/foreign.

2.31 There were several internal conflict-exacerbating groups. The main state predators were seen as the ANP (police) whose behaviour was usually described in negative terms: 'they loot our houses and bully us'. Although the ANA also came in for negative comment this was mainly because they were seen as 'Northern Alliance men', it was not due to their behaviour. Private security companies (PSCs) guarding convoys were also seen to exacerbate insecurity and were particularly disliked: 'The security companies treat any attack on a convoy as being perpetrated by local communities and they threaten and humiliate us. Once they forced us to bring their wives out of the house and said they would not be safe if the convoy was attacked'. Some of the larger private companies are said to be owned by wealthy members of the Northern Alliance and government ministers. Private security companies are therefore viewed as yet another example of the unjust use of power by northerners and 'government cronies'.

2.32 The Taliban and particularly the many forms of bad Taliban were seen as a major cause of insecurity. Drug mafia militia who identified as Taliban were referred to as 'Government Taliban' if they were believed to have government connections, as was the case in Kandahar. 'The presence of drug mafia and traffickers is also a reason for insecurity as lack of security gives them a good environment to operate so they want this situation to remain so they can do their business easily'.

2.33 The two external/foreigner groups associated with the insecurity were the Coalition forces and Pakistan. Coalition forces were generally seen as exacerbating insecurity. This perception was based on experience: as soon as foreign forces are stationed in an area the number of clashes between foreign forces and the Taliban increase and the numbers of civilian casualties rise. 'Coalition forces should either go back to their countries – or if they remain here they should provide us with security. But they are using us as human shields and instead of guarding us they are guarding themselves'. (Women's group, Kandahar)

2.34 Pakistan was seen as interfering for strategic reasons: several groups said the Pakistan government wanted to keep Afghanistan weak and the best way of doing this was to fund the insurgency so that the attention of both the government and Afghan people was diverted to security issues, giving the economy no chance to recover. Respondents saw the 'Pakistan Taliban' as clients of the Inter-Service Intelligence agency (the ISI) whose purpose was to foment the insurgency in Afghanistan and

thereby keep the country embroiled in conflict. ‘Pakistan does not want to have the outright success of the Taliban, they just want instability.’<sup>16</sup>

2.35 One of the questions that came up in almost every interview was: ‘What are the Coalition forces here for – given that they are not here to bring us security?’

This is an important issue as respondent’s lack of clarity about the reasons for the Coalition presence led to the development of theories to explain it. Such theories travel quickly in an oral society and are soon believed as fact.

2.36 *Why are the Coalition forces here?* Many respondents asked this question: ‘Why don’t the US want peace in Afghanistan? If they wanted it they could achieve it in a short time. They could be very precise in their attacks in 2001 when they overthrew the Taliban so why can’t they do the same thing now?’ ‘There are open convoys of Taliban coming from the other side of the border, why don’t the Americans notice it?’

2.37 These remarks summarise the basic problem that most respondents had with the Coalition presence: the world’s most advanced military superpower (the US) had at their disposal the best technology in the world and the support of thousands of military troops from NATO countries – so why hadn’t they won the war against the Taliban? The obvious answer to many was that the US were not trying to win the war; they were here for other reasons, as were the British.

2.38 These reasons did not include bringing democracy. Most respondents were critical of all policies coming from the west, and this particularly what they saw as the west’s double standards on democracy: ‘When people elected Hamas the US did not accept them. It was the same in Turkey with Erbakan and in Algeria with the Muslim Brotherhood. And we see it here too, the west are imposing their own version of democracy.’ And: ‘Western countries force us to accept this government as the elected government but when it comes to the actions of their troops they do not ask and consult with our government – they go to their tax payers and ask them, not to our government. They are preaching democracy but they have not consulted the Afghan parliament or the government. Have they ever asked the elected government if they want another 17,000 troops?’ (Government officer, Wardak)

2.39 The Coalition forces were not seen to be here for reconstruction or economic development either. ‘If they were they would have come riding bulldozers and in that case we would have taken them from one place to another on our shoulders. But they came with tanks and that shows they are here to fight us’. Other comments indicated disappointment with the size of internationally funded development projects, discussed later.

2.40 With no obvious reason to explain the US and Coalition presence respondents had their own explanations. The first was that the British were in Afghanistan for

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<sup>16</sup> Interestingly, even the Taliban combatants did their best to distance themselves from Pakistan. Appreciating that any association with Pakistan would diminish their support amongst local populations they strongly denied receiving funding from the ISI. They acknowledged only that ‘some Islamic parties in Pakistan support us... but since our fight in Wardak began in 2005 we haven’t got a single rupee from Pakistan’.

revenge - having lost three Afghan wars the British were here for another go. Since the idea of revenge is a familiar one in Afghanistan this was a perfectly understandable motive. The British were also known to give copious amounts of military and development aid to Pakistan and were therefore seen to be taking their revenge in two ways: directly by fighting in Helmand and indirectly through supporting the (bad) Pakistan Taliban, with British funds transferred to them by the ISI/Pakistan government.

2.41 The perceived reasons for US presence were expressed reasonably consistently by different respondent groups. As the world's superpower the US needed to be militarily engaged in the region to advance their strategic interests. These were given as the protection or exploitation of resources (e.g. oil, uranium) and dealing with powerful SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organisation) countries, particularly China and Russia. 'The presence of the Taliban is a blessing for the US as it is an excuse for the US to be here, otherwise other countries would all ask the US to leave the region. So the Taliban legitimises the US presence'. The frequent references to the 'American Taliban' must be seen in this context. It referred to groups of bad Taliban that the Americans were seen to be supporting in order to keep the insurgency going.

2.42 The Taliban and Hizb-i Islami, like the government and Coalition forces, were seen as incapable of providing security. Although respondents reported that the good Taliban never hurt local people this was not true of the more numerous groups of bad Taliban, who were out for their own interests. There was therefore no sense in which any side – the government, the Coalition or the insurgents - won points for security provision. The situation with justice was different as the Taliban were seen to be effectively plugging a justice gap.

2.43 *Justice.* Respondents in all areas complained about the lack of an accessible and accountable formal justice system. Two comments reflect others: 'There is no accountability in the courts, even if you commit a capital crime you get released after bribing' (youth, Kandahar). And: 'In the last seven years of this government not a single case has been resolved in the state court of this district' (Wardak). Respondents indicated that there was also a problem with shuras and jirgas – the traditional mechanisms for dispute resolution. This was because the tribal elders, who adjudicate cases, had lost a lot of their authority to warlords and strongmen during the Soviet era (when power shifted to military men) and they now remained somewhat marginalised. There was therefore a dual problem: the formal court system didn't work and shuras/jirgas were seen as less authoritative forums for resolving disputes than they used to be.

2.44 The Taliban have stepped into the justice system vacuum in the areas they control. This was seen as a benefit in all three field study areas; in fact justice was the one thing the Taliban were accredited with doing well. 'The Taliban have effectively demarcated the districts into different constituencies and every week they resolve three or four disputes within each district'. (Wardak) 'When the shura cannot help us we take the problem to the Taliban or Hizb-i Islami and they solve it very fairly and justly' (Sorobi). 'There is no point in following up a death. If it has been caused by the government or private security companies or the Coalition forces you will get no justice...this is one of the reasons people support the Taliban'. (Kandahar)

2.45 The general perception was that the Taliban had indeed captured the justice market and were perceived to be reasonably efficient and fair – at least when compared to the formal system which was neither. There was no mention of unreasonable or unjust punishments. When women respondents in Kandahar mentioned the Taliban and justice it was to endorse the general message: that ordinary people support the Taliban because they provided justice in contrast to the formal justice system and the courts. The issue of justice is well covered in the literature, and is further discussed in annex 1.

**2.46 The main conclusions from examining hypothesis 3 are:**

- Many groups are seen as responsible for *causing* insecurity, including the government, the Taliban, Coalition forces, Pakistan, the ANP, private security companies, drug mafias etc.
- Most people are unclear about what the Coalition forces are trying to achieve. They reason it is not about the Taliban, democracy or development. Rather they argue the British are here for revenge, and the Americans are here to pursue regional objectives. A war in Afghanistan is seen to suit all these parties very well
- The Taliban don't deliver security – they are part of the problem - but they do deliver justice. And because of the corruption associated with the courts and the declining authority of tribal elder arbitration in jirgas/shuras the Taliban have stepped into a justice vacuum. They are seen to do this well and to attract support as a result.<sup>17</sup>

**HYPOTHESIS 4. THE BEHAVIOUR OF FOREIGN FORCES (RATHER THAN THEIR PRESENCE PER SE) ENCOURAGES SUPPORT FOR GROUPS THAT USE VIOLENCE AGAINST THEM**

**Summary**

2.47 The evidence **supports this hypothesis** to a great extent – although the physical presence of foreign forces is also a problem. Any form of foreign rule would be opposed.

**Main findings**

2.48 The two behaviours which most angered respondents were aerial attacks and house searches. Both were seen as to some extent avoidable and both therefore raised questions about the apparent lack of any Coalition force accountability. This 'lack of a legal limit' caused great consternation amongst many respondents.

2.49 Aerial attacks left those that survived feeling powerless: sandwiched between two warring factions they felt they had been punished for being in the middle. Internally displaced respondents who had escaped from Sangin<sup>18</sup> reported that many of their village had been killed in air attacks and for this they blamed the government

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<sup>17</sup> Frazer Hirst reports that many local people in Helmand think there are severe drawbacks, as well as benefits, with Taliban justice. See Hirst, 2009.

<sup>18</sup> They were now living in an IDP camp in Kabul. The situation was particularly desperate for women in this camp. Still in purdah – now restricted to the space within a tent – they had to send their children out begging in order to feed themselves and their families, who now included many orphans and disabled family members.

and Coalition forces more than the Taliban - because it was Coalition fire power that had caused the majority of deaths. Saying sorry did not help: 'Whenever foreign or government forces commit such atrocities they come and say sorry it was a mistake. But how long do we have to suffer their mistakes?' When asked what the international forces should do to help improve security one group responded: 'Stop air attacks as a first step'.

2.50 Perceptions of the excessive use of force by Coalition forces were also mentioned in relation to 'their violent and humiliating ways of conducting house searches in the middle of the night.' It is difficult to convey the strength of feeling expressed by respondents about *the way* house searches were done. 'If they are here to protect us it is our protection that they violate when they enter our houses without permission and the bastard interpreter tells us 'don't move'. But they are stamping our honour and dignity under their boots.' Even the bad Taliban compared favourably: 'Even bad Taliban respect our traditions and norms – their bad activities are putting mines on roads and kidnapping, but they respect our norms. Not like the Coalition forces where men do body searches of women.'<sup>19</sup> Body searches were one of several reasons given by locals in Sorobi when explaining why the 10 French soldiers had been killed in 2008. They were also the reason why several respondents asked that western troops be replaced by troops from Islamic countries 'who will respect our norms and traditions'.

2.51 The issue that links both the issue of air strikes and house searches is the feeling that the occupation has no legal limit and that Coalition forces are unaccountable to anyone. 'The presence of foreign troops should be regulated by a legal framework – there just doesn't seem to be one.'

2.52 Some foreign troops were seen to behave better than others. The Canadians in Kandahar were commended, as were the Turks in Wardak ('Even a mine is not planted if we know they are Turkish'). In Sorobi respondents still talked warmly about the Italians ('They used to talk to us and build schools for us, they were relaxed with us') and regretted their replacement by the French. Other troops – particularly those seen to be causing most civilian deaths and as pursuing their own agendas – were deeply unpopular. Respondents were sad when better behaved Coalition forces getting retaliation as a result of the bad behaviour of others.

2.53 Whilst respondents could give many examples of bad behaviour by Coalition forces, and whilst they wanted an end to occupation they did not want a sudden withdrawal. 'We don't support foreign troops but we don't want them to be forced to leave, we want a negotiated settlement so that they leave on the basis of political negotiation'. 'If foreign troops leave suddenly it will not be to our benefit – it needs to be done carefully.' Older respondents recalled the slow descent into civil war and warlordism after the Soviets left in 1989 and did not want a repeat of that period. The main demand was for Coalition forces to be brought under the writ of Afghan law and the Afghan parliament. Since they were not leaving imminently they should at least be accountable for the rest of their stay.

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<sup>19</sup> Johnson and Leslie capture the deeply negative impact of house searches in Afghanistan in the context of the wider honour system. 2008:49ff.

2.54 The **main conclusions from examining hypothesis 4** are:

- Aerial attacks, and the way house searches are carried out by Coalition forces cause deep resentment. The implication of what respondents said is that news of one ‘bad’ house search or air attack can instantly undo goodwill built up over time through other activities
- Some Coalition forces were seen as much more respectful than others
- Respondents wanted foreign forces to be subject to legal rules and to be accountable for their behaviour
- Although wanting an end to what they saw as an occupation respondents did not want Coalition forces to leave suddenly lest the country again become engulfed in a civil war. ‘The international forces should leave gradually not abruptly so we don’t repeat the mistakes of the 1990s.’ ‘The international community need a political road map not a military one.’

#### **HYPOTHESIS 5. GOVERNMENT FAILURE TO PROVIDE BASIC SERVICES ALLOWS EXTREMIST GROUPS TO MEET THESE NEEDS AND BUILD SUPPORT AS A RESULT**

##### **Summary**

2.55 The evidence **does not support this hypothesis**. Relatively few respondents mentioned basic services (meaning education, health, water, sanitation). Their infrequent mention suggests that respondents have low expectations of government provision. But it was acknowledged that the government does provide some – schools at least. This is in contrast to insurgency groups including the Taliban who do not provide any.

##### **Main findings**

2.56 Services were little mentioned by respondents as a source of grievance. This was initially surprising. Their limited mention was certainly not because basic services are plentifully provided – in many parts of the country coverage of health, water and sanitation is dire (figures are given in the literature review). It is more likely that people’s expectations of services from the government are still low - they are simply not used to getting them.

2.57 There is evidence that demand for services will grow, and expectations of quality will increase, as service coverage is extended. Indeed, it was in areas where services were newly being provided – for example through the National Solidarity Programme (NSP)<sup>20</sup> and PRTs - that there were most complaints. One very frequent complaint was the poor quality of work carried out by contractors working for government and PRTs. ‘When Coalition forces come to a village they sit with the elders and give them promises about what they will build or give them – but then they leave them at the mercy of contractors or do nothing and just go. They are here only to invite bombings and retaliation of Taliban and to give us broken promises’. (Kandahar) Apart from quality issues relating to the lack of quality control over contractors there were also comments about the quality of education and health services provided by government. As the youth group in Kandahar commented:

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<sup>20</sup> The National Solidarity Programme (NSP) was created in 2003 by the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and to develop the ability of Afghan communities to identify, plan, manage and monitor their own development projects. NSP contracts with 29 facilitating partners (NGOs and donors plus UN-Habitat) to work with local communities to implement NSP activities.

‘Although government build a school they don’t care for the quality of education or care in that building, it’s just a building’.

2.58 In Wardak religious leaders also complained about restrictive NSP on project selection. They had wanted to build a madrassa with NSP funds but had been told that NSP funds could not be used for mosques or madaris. The religious leaders had insisted that madaris have a social function as they provide free board and lodging and therefore should be allowed – but they lost this argument. They noted: ‘Islamic relief organisations were giving us quality services based on our needs but these foreigners are imposing their own choices on us’.

2.59 The most relevant complaint in the context of this study related to employment. The demand for employment was huge from both men and women and most services provided little. Respondents asked why government and international aid agencies were not investing in big projects – dams, electricity, major roads, agriculture. When it was pointed out that this was partly due to security concerns there was a feeling that this was a weak argument – respondents said local people would negotiate with the Taliban to guarantee security if a large project were to come to their area. Alternatively, it was suggested that big projects could be implemented in more secure areas to provide a demonstration effect – ‘at least then we will know they are serious’ (meaning the government and foreigners are serious about providing economic development and jobs in the long term).

2.60 It is important to point out that women also wanted employment. A group of widows interviewed in Kandahar were attending a literacy course. They said their primary reason for attendance was not to learn to read but to collect the wheat and oil rations that they were entitled to as learners. This group of women continually asked the research team to help them get jobs: ‘We don’t want to be treated like beggars’.

2.61 As noted above, respondents looked to the Taliban or Hizb-i Islami for justice but not for basic services. Most respondents had lived through the period of Taliban rule (1996-2001) when there had been almost no service provision apart from madaris. ‘There was security during Taliban rule but there were no social services and the economy was stagnant.’ On this issue therefore, and despite very low coverage of basic services in many areas, the government still fare much better than the Taliban. As an NGO manager summarised: ‘The current regime is corrupt but it still offers some basic services - which the Taliban didn’t.’

**2.54 The main conclusions from examining hypothesis 5 are:**

- Limited service provision by government was not (yet) acting as a stimulant to radicalisation in the areas surveyed
- The government was acknowledged by some as a service provider. However *how* services are provided was critical – if they resulted in poor quality infrastructure or if new buildings were not staffed, or if private security companies behaved badly towards locals or endangered them because their ‘protection’ meant that civilians got killed, then respondents were highly critical. *How* services are provided can therefore fuel grievances
- Respondents wanted much bigger projects that would provide employment
- The Taliban and Hizb-I islami were not providing services and there was no expectation that they would do this. They were not garnering support in this way.

## **HYPOTHESIS 6. UNDEREMPLOYED YOUNG MEN WITH FRUSTRATED ASPIRATIONS AND A LIMITED STAKE IN SOCIETY ARE PARTICULARLY SUSCEPTIBLE TO RADICALISATION**

### **Summary**

2.55 Unemployed young men do indeed join the Taliban and Hizb-i Islami as combatants – but they join other armed group too. It may be therefore more correct to say that **young men are susceptible to being mobilised** (in the sense of joining armed groups for money and status reasons) but there is **less evidence they are particularly susceptible to being radicalised** (in the sense of being drawn *specifically* to groups with a strong religious ideology).

### **Main findings**

2.56 It is first worth noting a general finding from other radicalisation studies. These indicate that when asked most people will say that unemployment and poverty/inequality are two of the main reasons for radicalisation. This was also the opinion of the majority of those interviewed for this study. However, if unemployed men were particularly vulnerable to radical messages we would find that rates of radicalisation were higher in poor areas or where inequality and unemployment are most pronounced. What we find, however (and this applies to all countries) is that rates of poverty, inequality and unemployment have only a weak correlation with radicalisation rates (the number of young men joining groups with radical ideologies).<sup>21</sup> This doesn't negate the importance of unemployment as one underlying cause; but it emphasises the importance of keeping it in perspective and looking for other factors that are also important stimuli.

2.57 As noted, the majority of respondents thought that unemployment was a principle reason for young men joining the Taliban. Membership had several attractions for unemployed young men, not least the chance to earn a wage that reportedly topped ANA and ANP wages in some areas: 'If you are in the police you earn up to 100 dollars a month but if you are with the Taliban you can earn up to 300 dollars'. It was difficult to verify remuneration rates given. These seemed to vary by income source, and thus by province and even district. In Helmand Taliban income was seen as coming principally from poppy producers, in Kandahar from narcotics traffickers, and in Wardak from kidnappings and 'tolls' from security companies and suppliers using the main roads. The field team also gleaned that the amount of money at the disposal of a Taliban commander depended on the relationship between him and the provincial or zonal Taliban leadership, i.e. how much was kept by the group and how much passed up to, or received from, the higher command.

2.58 Status was also an important issue for joining the Taliban for young men. The title 'Taliban' not only gave an air of religious piety (talib=religious student) but also authority. As one of the Taliban combatants put it: 'Now I am Taliban people listen

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<sup>21</sup> Christine Fair et al look at the employment background of recruits to jihadi groups in Pakistan. They find that recruits are from a range of backgrounds with the majority having a better education than average – and particularly if recruited to fight in Kashmir. They attribute this to the recruiting strategy of groups like Lashkar-y Taiba that operate a 'horses for courses' approach, ensuring they have reasonably skilled people for difficult insurgency environments. See Asal, Fair and Shellman, 2008

to me'. One group of young men in Wardak confirmed the importance of status in another sense: 'If we join the ANA no-one will offer their funeral prayers but if we join the Taliban we will be called martyrs'. Adding 'And it is better to join the Taliban than sit idle'. This group of young men were not combatants at the time of the interview but were obviously thinking of joining up. The step was not seen as a big one. As they said: 'We have been born during war, it has always been war, we know how to fight, fighting has become a profession'.

2.59 Rather unexpectedly the 16 combatants interviewed insisted that they had not bettered their economic situation by becoming Taliban and that this was not the reason men joined them: 'We are dying from hunger ourselves so how can we pay another man?' They insisted that they had become combatants for religious reasons only. However, when asked about how they managed financially their story of hunger and poverty seemed suspect: 'We collect taxes from the road, and we confiscate vehicles from security companies and then sell them back. Traders give us contributions. In areas we control we get ushr (agricultural tax) and zakat (charity) from the people, with which we buy ammunition. The arms with us are from jihad times.' When the interviewers pointed out that the arms had all been collected up (during demobilisation processes) they said: 'No, they didn't collect all our arms and anyway now there are arms dealers and we buy from them'. It could have been that much of their income was passed upwards, to higher levels of Taliban leadership. If it was not then being Taliban sounded like a very lucrative job option.

2.60 It is important to emphasise that not all Taliban combatants are unemployed before they join up and not all are young men. One trader in Sorobi said he joined the Taliban when the border with Pakistan closed, prices went up and he needed the extra cash to feed his family. So he moonlighted as Taliban in the sense of being on call to take part in incidents as required. On age: nine of the 16 Taliban combatants interviewed were between 18 and 25, the rest were a variety of ages, the oldest about 55. Taliban groups therefore comprise men of different ages and employment backgrounds, including but not only the unemployed.

**2.61 The main conclusions from examining hypothesis 6 are:**

- Young unemployed men join Taliban groups for a variety of reasons, including to earn an income and to increase their status; they know how to fight and it is better than sitting idle;
- Taliban combatants themselves maintain they are not financially remunerated and they are fighting for the sake of their religion only. Given their varied sources of income however this is either wrong, or it means they pass their earnings up the chain of Taliban command, and do not keep it themselves.

**HYPOTHESIS 7. MADARIS (PLURAL OF MADRASSA) PROVIDE A LIMITED EDUCATION WHICH LEAVES THEIR STUDENTS PARTICULARLY VULNERABLE TO EXTREMIST NARRATIVES**

**Summary**

2.62 The field study does not allow for a definitive statement on this hypothesis as we do not have data on the educational background of informants, mapped against their sympathies. However, the evidence we do have – including from CPAU's study

on Afghan religious civil society – is that the evidence **does not support this hypothesis.**

### **Main findings**

2.63 We begin this section with brief points about religious education in Afghanistan. The general context is explored in more detail in the literature review.

2.64 The subject of madrassa education has been much explored, not least because madaris are often presented as ‘breeding grounds for terrorists’. They are particularly associated with the Taliban because of their name (talib=religious student). As in other countries, madrassa education in Afghanistan is narrow in the sense that it is primarily a religious education that prepares students, the majority boys, for religious duties and jobs at various levels. These range from teaching in a village madrassa to becoming a highly qualified theological scholar or university teacher. Parents send their children to madaris for a variety of reasons, including because they provide board and lodging. Women respondents in Kandahar gave another reason for sending their children to madaris, one we had not heard before: ‘If we send our children to secular schools they may be victims of a suicide attack but if we send them to a madrassa they will be safe as they will not be targeted by the Taliban’.

2.65 The link to radicalisation, when there is one, is usually not the madrassa per se but the social environment provided by the madrassa and the mosque. Mosques bring large gatherings of men together, particularly for the Friday prayers. It is here that sermons about jihad can have a radicalising effect. In theory, madrassa students may be more vulnerable to these messages than those that have attended state schools, or those that have had no education at all. However, as in other countries, we cannot confirm this is definitely the case. What we can say is that it is probably more important to look at the role of the clergy rather than focus on madaris. It is important to understand where their sympathies lie because ordinary people listen to what they say and respect their opinions.

2.66 Mullahs have had to tread very carefully since the resurgence of the Taliban. Either they must positively support the Taliban, in which case their status is raised, or they will be targeted (as discussed in the literature review, many who have refused support have been killed). Respondents in Wardak observed: ‘They are sometimes diplomatic and sometimes they are being threatened by the Taliban – because the Taliban can at any time label a mullah an infidel...’. Respondents in an IDP camp in Kabul noted: ‘Mullahs in government controlled areas are looked upon as spies’.

2.67 The Taliban combatant group acknowledged that some mullahs have remained pro-government: ‘It is hadees that ulema are the followers of the Prophet so in that sense true ulema can never stand with infidels and Americans. But there are some ignorant ulema who, even though they know Islam and are scholars they are now bad ulema because they have joined with government.’

2.68 In insurgency areas ordinary mullahs are therefore in a difficult position. Whilst the Taliban have elevated their status in one sense - by calling the insurgency a religious war - they have also undermined their authority by interjecting themselves into communities and presenting themselves as the religious leadership. Also, the interpretation of shari’a that some groups of Taliban impose is not necessarily the

interpretation that mullahs subscribe to. By imposing their own interpretation of shari'a the Taliban override the mullahs' authority. The Taliban have therefore marginalised mullahs as a group in much the same way as they have marginalised tribal elders.

2.69 As all field study interviews were in areas controlled by the Taliban or Hizb-i Islami it was no surprise to hear that mullahs were using their sermons to preach against the government and Coalition forces. 'Mullahs and Islamic scholars do preach against the coalition forces – this has great influence on young men in particular.' (Kandahar) However, this may not always imply unconditional support for the Taliban. It may be that mullahs, like people generally, support the Taliban mainly in the absence of a viable alternative - or in order to stay alive.

**2.70 The main conclusions from examining hypothesis 7 are:**

- There is no evidence from this study that madrassa students are more vulnerable to Taliban narratives than their peers (though they might be)
- It is important to understand the position of the clergy. Mullahs walk a difficult path. Some genuinely support Taliban ideology and have become 'Taliban mullahs'. They are reported as preaching against the government and Coalition forces in the Friday prayers
- The support of others may be for more pragmatic reasons, including survival.

**HYPOTHESIS 8. WOMEN GENERALLY PLAY A MODERATING ROLE AGAINST EXTREMISM, AND IF MORE EMPOWERED COULD DO THIS MORE EFFECTIVELY**

**Summary**

2.71 The evidence **supports this hypothesis to some extent but only for educated women**. The majority of women interviewed were little educated and some were very poor. They were not in a position to play a moderating role even if they had wanted to; their lives were fully taken up with the everyday business of surviving the conflict and taking care of family members and children.<sup>22</sup>

**Main findings**

2.72 This section starts by looking at who different groups of women did support and why.

2.73 Twenty-one women were interviewed in the course of the study (12 in Kandahar and 9 in Kabul – this included some from Wardak). They fell into two main groups: a group who were very poor and who hardly ever went out of their houses, and a group of educated women who had full-time jobs in Kabul or Kandahar. The conflict had impacted on these two groups in different ways. For very poor women it had greatly increased their role as carers – including for orphans and those who had been injured or disabled in attacks. But it had also resulted in even greater

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<sup>22</sup> The women in insurgency areas interviewed for this study largely abhorred all violence whatever its source or ideology. Many had lost husbands or children, including through air strikes by foreign forces. The majority had additional responsibilities for looking after orphans and the disabled; many had lost their means of livelihood and lived in constant fear that other family members would be killed or wounded, thus further jeopardising their future. For most women interviewed – and this applied even if their families were aligned with one side – all violence was 'extremist'.

restrictions on their physical mobility than before. As one woman in Kandahar said: 'Women are the real victims of war, men can evacuate and flee but women cannot leave the house'. Indeed, this group of women rarely went out; the situation for women in the IDP camp in Kabul was particularly awful. Purdah meant that they were effectively confined to their tents and had to send their children out to beg for food.

2.74 For this group of women life had returned to what it had been like under Taliban rule: 'It is like the Taliban times for women now, we are in the same situation as then. We cannot come out of the house to earn extra money or get an education'. 'The only difference is that our honour was safe then but it is not now'. Despite this many of these women supported the Taliban, as did their families and communities. They appeared to have no fear of Taliban interpreted shari'a: 'The Taliban should be given a share of government so we have shari'a law' (women's group, Kandahar).

2.75 The five educated women interviewed – four teachers and a government officer – vehemently opposed the Taliban on the basis of their previous experience of Taliban rule with its restrictions on women's education and employment. The Hazara women teachers also opposed the Taliban because they feared for their safety should the Taliban ever seize power again. Although this group of educated women lived in constant fear of family members being kidnapped or killed they had kept working despite the lack of security.

2.76 The field team did not ask women respondents whether they could see themselves acting as moderators. However it is clear that this question could currently apply only to the educated women. The others were not in a position to act as moderators as they had no public life, and no public voice, at all. For them the conflict had closed down their social worlds so that they now rarely if ever left the house, even to visit family members. Their social isolation was also enforced by their own neighbours' disapproval. As the group of widows said: 'When we come to this literacy class it is to have the rations but still people talk bad things about us - the neighbours. We are sometimes told we will be beaten by the Taliban but we have no choice, we need the food rations.'

2.77 The issue of women's empowerment – and their potential moderating role - is discussed in more detail in annex 2.

**2.78 The main conclusions from examining hypothesis 7 are:**

- The majority of poor and little educated women are in no position to play a moderating role even if they wanted to; their lives are taken up with surviving the conflict
- The conflict means their social worlds have become even narrower than before; they are largely confined to their houses and have no public voice
- Educated women in professional jobs in Kabul and some provincial capitals are in a better position to act as moderators and more inclined to support the government as a bulwark against the Taliban. Other studies document their roles in political structures since 2001 and are referenced in annex 1.

## **ANNEX 1. THE AFGHANISTAN CONFLICT LITERATURE: A REVIEW OF FINDINGS RELEVANT TO THIS STUDY**

The main part of this report presents the findings of the field study undertaken in Wardak, Kandahar and wider Kabul. As mentioned, the aim was to extend and build on findings from the Strategic Conflict Assessment (SCA) and other research work on the reasons why men joined armed groups with a strong religious ideology, and the extent to which local communities support them.

The aim of this annex is to look at the conclusions that other authors have come to, thereby situating this relatively small study in the context of other research findings on the underlying grievances that may account for mobilisation/radicalisation. The review that follows looks at selected arguments in the literature that relate to the grievances implicit in the hypotheses. The first issue discussed – on categorising armed groups – helped define the parameters for the field study.

This annex looks at what other research studies say about:

1. Categorising armed groups: which groups are ‘ideological’ and which are not
2. The call to ‘jihad’: its resonance over time and today
3. Grievances around security
4. Grievances around the justice system
5. The issue of basic services – can they win hearts and minds?
6. Madaris and the ulema
7. Unemployed young men
8. Women as moderators?

### **1. CATEGORISING ARMED GROUPS: WHICH GROUPS ARE ‘IDEOLOGICAL’ AND WHICH ARE NOT?**

#### **Summary**

*Other research studies have done a good job in categorising non-state armed group in Afghanistan and charting their historical relationships. This work was used to define the parameters for this study and decide which groups to concentrate on.*

1.1 Given the plethora of non-state armed groups in Afghanistan despite disarmament and demobilisation processes, the first question we asked in preparing for this study was whether it is possible to distinguish groups with political or religious ideological objectives from groups with purely pragmatic ones. This distinction is important to radicalisation in a PREVENT HMG sense insofar as ‘ideological’ groups are seen as potentially more likely to team up with groups with internationalist agendas like Al Qaeda that threaten the west.

1.2 Researchers on Afghanistan categorise non-state armed groups in a number of ways: by the type of leader (warlord, strongman, tribal leader), by their political objectives (local defence, regional hegemony, state control), by their military strength (the broad number of affiliated militias they can call on), by the tribal composition of the majority of their support (Pashtun, Tajik, Hazara, Uzbek) and whether they are Sunni, Shi’a or Shi’a/Sufi.<sup>23</sup> Some writers also distinguish between ideological and non-ideological groups, i.e. between those that present in terms of a religious agenda and those that are fighting for other reasons – to maintain control over narcotics trafficking for example, to defend the community (arbakian

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<sup>23</sup> Guistozi’s work is referenced extensively throughout this section because of the effort he puts into categorisations of this kind. As an historian he traces the complex process of alliance-formation, ideological shifts in emphasis and military tactics of politico-military-religious groups over time.

fall into this category)<sup>24</sup> - or to maintain autonomy in a particular region (e.g. Ismail Khan in Herat).

1.3 The table below aims to identify the *main* politico-military groups in Afghanistan today.<sup>25</sup> It is based on Guistozzi's tables and incorporates elements of Bhatia's categorisations.<sup>26</sup> It includes the three main Sunni groups, the two main Shia groups, Gailani's Sufi/Royalist party, one secular group (Dostum) and the Taliban.

**Box 1. Main politico-military groups in Afghanistan today**

Name	Leader	Religious background of leader	Ethnicity of members /sympathizers elected to parliament in 2005
1. JAMI'AT-I ISLAMI	Rabbani	Political Islamist; Sunni	86% Tajik, 6% Pashtun
2. HIZB-I ISLAMI	Hekmatyar	Political Islamist; Sunni	66% Pashtun, 25% Tajik
3. DAWAT-I ISLAMI (formerly Ittehad-e-Islami)	Sayyaf	Political Islamist; Sunni.	100% Pashtun
4. JUNBESH-I MILLI ISLAMI	Dostum	Regional, secular	91% Uzbek, 9% Turkmen
5. HIZB-I WAHDAT	Khalili	Shia, pro- Khomeini, mainly moderate	100% Hazara
6. HARAKAT-I ISLAMI	Mohseni	Shia traditionalist, anti Iran	50% Tajik, 50% Hazara
7. MAHAZ-I MILLI	Gailani	Sectarian Sufi traditional, Royalist	100% Pashtun
8. THE NEO TALIBAN (broad umbrella movement)	Mullah Omar	Islamic fundamentalist; Sunni	4 ex-Taliban in parliament. Most Taliban blacklisted by UN Security Council so denied candidature.

1.4 Is it now possible to distinguish the 'ideologues' that might use religion to recruit followers, and thus radicalise them, and the non-ideologues? Only to an extent, as all the above groups have a religious/sectarian identity with the exception of Dostum's party Junbesh.<sup>27</sup> However, a useful distinction is made by Guistozzi who divides the 'political Islamists' from the rest. The 'political Islamists' are those that want shari'a as the sole source of law for the Afghan state – this applies to the three main Sunni group leaders (Rabbani, Hekmatyar and Sayyaf).<sup>28</sup> The Taliban under Mullah Omar also have the implementation of

<sup>24</sup> See Mohammad Osman Tariq for a discussion of the arbaki (community policing/defence) system as it currently operates in southeastern Afghanistan. (LSE Destin, 2008)

<sup>25</sup> Even these categories are not absolute as there has been much swapping of sides over time and many temporary alliances have been forged between ideological and non-ideological commanders to pursue joint objectives. For example, the teaming up of Hizb-i Islami, Hizb-i Wahdat (both Islamist) with Dostum during the civil war period against Jamiat and Ittehad-i-Islami (then led by Massoud). See Guistozzi 2007b.

<sup>26</sup> See Guistozzi 2007b:185,189 and 2008:36. Bhatia cites additional politico-military/religious parties but the table presented in the text above is to illustrate the difficulties of classification, rather than to make a comprehensive list. See Bhatia 2008:72-110

<sup>27</sup> Inevitably it is more complex than this. Even the neo-Taliban and Jami'at are not exclusively 'religious' when choosing their affiliates. Bhatia describes them as being 'at the peak of a broad network of affiliated militias and groups' referring to the fact that such affiliates include (non-ideological) community militias and strongmen-criminals. (Bhatia 2008:78)

<sup>28</sup> Despite the shared 'intellectual' background of the main Sunni group leaders (Rabbani, Hekmatyar and Sayyaf were all at university at the same time) this has not prevented excessively violent conflict between them – as well as some swapping of sides. Guistozzi discusses the foundations of their parties and their historical relationships and ideology in 'Afghanistan', 2009a.

shari'a as a principal objective.<sup>29</sup> Guistozi then separates out the main Sunni parties from the Taliban on the basis that the former seem prepared to share power with technocrats and western elements whereas the Taliban seem intent on grabbing power in Kabul and ruling without any collaboration with other groups - as they did between 1996-2001. He therefore designates the three Sunni parties as 'moderates' and the Taliban as 'radicals'. He notes that the designation is also apt in terms of their treatment of women. All the 'moderates' accept, to varying degrees (though Sayyaf's group may be an exception), that women should be educated and should work. In contrast, the Taliban's position on women is largely segregationist, with brutal punishments for alleged transgressors. (However, as the field study shows, the Taliban's position on many things is something of a moveable feast due to the lack of a centralised command, with local 'good Taliban' striking deals with local communities, including on gender issues, for example girl's education.)

1.5 Does this help us identify who is ideological and who is not? We have made some headway. It seems that we can classify the Taliban as the 'most' ideological group as they seem disinterested in power-sharing, and might therefore be expected to continue armed conflict against the government – and anyone else that opposes them – even whilst other Islamist group members are bought in to the election process. However, the Taliban's position could well change if they are offered the chance to come off the UN blacklist and stand for elections. Evidence from recent interviews with Taliban leaders suggest this is exactly what some want – and it is a demand that is being considered by the US.<sup>30</sup> This would mean 'reclassifying' some Taliban factions as 'moderates' along with Hizb-i Islami and other Sunni politico-military groups. If this occurred then the Taliban may split (or present as splitting) between those prepared to gain power through elections and work with others, and those with no interest in power sharing. The latter are likely to include those with wider internationalist goals - the Dadullah network in the south and Sirauddin of the Haqqani network in the south-east. These Taliban-affiliated factions reportedly see the conflict as part of a wider international jihadist struggle and are therefore unlikely to be content with being absorbed into the political process, even if given the opportunity.

1.6 This discussion highlights the complexity of the political and ideological landscape of Afghanistan today. But it also greatly helped define the parameters for this study. It was clear from both Guistozi and Bhatia's work, and from the SCA, that if we wanted to investigate whether radicalisation was occurring then we should concentrate on the most high profile religious groups currently engaged in armed struggle against the government and Coalition/ISAF forces. This meant focusing on the Taliban who control much of the south-east and south-west of the country (but are also consolidating support in pockets in the north and west) and Hizb-i Islami (Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's party) which operates in wider Kabul and adjacent provinces as well as in districts in the north-west and north-east.<sup>31</sup> We selected field study sites accordingly.

## 2. THE CALL TO 'JIHAD': ITS RESONANCE OVER TIME AND TODAY

### Summary

*Other research studies indicate that the concept of jihad was extremely important during the Soviet era (1979-89) but that it lost some of its potency during the civil war period. It is now*

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<sup>29</sup> According to Guistozi the Shi'a parties have not consistently demanded a shari'a based law and judiciary. Guistozi 2009a:5

<sup>30</sup> The US ambassador has said he would be prepared to discuss the establishment of a political party or even election candidates representing the Taliban as part of a wider political strategy. Jason Burke: 'America floats plan to tempt Taliban into peace process'. The Guardian, 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2009

<sup>31</sup> For a geographical representation of where the Taliban and Hizb-i Islami are engaged in armed struggle against the government see Guistozi 2009a, Map 2.

*experiencing a resurgence, not least due to the proficient use of propaganda by the Taliban who link the Soviet occupation of the 1980s to the US/Coalition occupation today.*

2.1 DFID's Strategic Conflict Assessment (SCA) reflects the findings of other research when it says: 'Many AOG (armed opposition group) fighters are driven by the belief that their culture, country and faith are under attack by an international intervention sent overwhelmingly from predominantly Christian nations...'.<sup>32</sup> The occupation of Iraq, the perceived support for Israel at the expense of the Palestinians, the treatment of prisoners at Abu Ghraib, incarcerations in Guantanamo Bay and other acts of perceived western impunity are mentioned as having a radicalising effect in several studies. Van Bijlert notes that the release of former Taliban officials in Guantanamo Bay has in fact led to the emergence of a new class of Taliban 'notables': the Guantanamo returnees.<sup>33</sup>

2.2 However, the SCA also notes that there would be opposition against foreign forces whatever their ideology. This is on the basis that Afghans have always responded violently to the presence of foreign troops, including to the British with whom they fought three wars.<sup>34</sup> Nor is animosity towards 'outsiders' reserved only for foreigners, it also derives from 'an exceptionally sensitive perception of threat which is most commonly applied to other tribal and ethnic groups'.<sup>35</sup> Thus, even when the Soviets were driven out of Afghanistan in 1992 the country did not unite but became engulfed in internal conflict as individuals rallied to the calls of elders and warlords to prevent the ascendancy of other groups. In short a sense of threat by others is part of the Afghan conflict dynamic and will be resisted whether it has an ideological component or not.

2.3 There is some agreement that religious ideology, manifest through the call to jihad, was most potent in the 1980s when it rallied thousands of men to take up arms against the Soviet presence. The call to jihad also drew thousands of volunteers from Pakistan who joined their co-religionists to oust the Soviets. Ample funding by the US, Iran and the Gulf States led to Afghanistan growing a sophisticated military infrastructure as training camps were set up along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. Hizb-i Islami is reported to have been running around 250 schools with 43,500 students during this period.<sup>36</sup> Boys as young as 12 were sent to these madaris, which doubled as places of education in literalist/deobandi interpretations of Islam and as entry points for military training.<sup>37</sup> By the time the Soviets withdrew the mujahadin (i.e. tribal elders and mullahs turned jihadi commanders) had become heroes, not just in the eyes of Afghan and Pakistani populations but in the eyes of western nations as well – since in driving out the Soviets from Afghanistan the mujahadin had achieved a US strategic objective.

2.4 However, the concept of jihad is said to have lost some of its legitimacy in the subsequent period as the once 'glorious' mujahadin became enmeshed in a brutal civil war. Its pulling power was reduced even though (or perhaps because) Islamist and Taliban

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<sup>32</sup> Baraket et al, 'Strategic Conflict Assessment', DFID 'Understanding Afghanistan', 2008:36

<sup>33</sup> Van Bijlert (2009 forthcoming) mentions this with regard to Oruzgan. It was also mentioned by respondents to this field study in Sorobi. Reportedly, Guantanamo returnees had come back to Sorobi and had publically spoken of the torture they had experienced whilst in prison. As one respondent put it: 'Most of the commanders in this area are ex Bagram or ex Guantanamo detainees. They did propaganda after they came back. A lot of young men joined them. And then the Abu Ghraib incident happened and showed their claims of torture were true'.

<sup>34</sup> The Anglo-Afghan wars fought against British colonial rule were 1839-1842, 1878-80 and then 1919, after which Britain signed the Treaty of Rawalpindi and Afghanistan became independent.

<sup>35</sup> Baraket et al, SCA 2008:35

<sup>36</sup> Rubin, B (ed) 'The Fragmentation of Afghanistan, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 2002:215. Referenced in the CPAU study 2007:29

<sup>37</sup> Bhatia and Sedra 2008:194-5

commanders have tried to portray themselves as 'real' mujahadin in the intervening period in a bid to legitimise their claim to power.<sup>38</sup> But having lived through five years of a Taliban government (1996-2001), the resurgence of the neo-Taliban from 2002 onwards, and continuing strongman tactics of Islamist groups, Afghans are well aware that appeals to 'jihad' can be used to mask self-serving interests and do not always reflect the sort of Islam they want to live by.<sup>39</sup>

2.5 That said the call to jihad still affects a section of the population and is now being used to rally support for a holy war to drive out Coalition forces. As Guistozzi notes, the link is continually made between the Soviets and the US/Coalition as occupying forces in Taliban propaganda. There are hundreds of religious cassette and CD titles in Afghanistan's bazaars, a Taliban magazine, a radio station (Voice of Shura) and a website ([www.alemarah.org](http://www.alemarah.org)). The videos and DVDs contain typical jihadi-type messages: for example, that the US invaded Afghanistan in the same way as the Soviets did and that therefore jihad should be waged against them; that the conflict is part of a global Christian war against Islam; that the Kabul government is a mere puppet and the only legitimate authority are the ulema; that ANA soldiers are not allowed to pray, that US soldiers desecrate the bodies of Muslim soldiers by burning them, and so on.<sup>40</sup> Estimating the radicalising impact of pan-Islamic propaganda is difficult, although as Guistozzi notes, sales of jihadi videos soared in 2006 indicating the salience of their messages. He concludes that reliance on pan-Islamic themes for propaganda purposes might help win over sections of the population towards the insurgents, even if it doesn't lead to direct recruitment.<sup>41</sup>

### 3. GRIEVANCES AROUND SECURITY

#### Summary

*The wider research literature broadly confirms the findings of the field study: that security remains the paramount concern for local populations and that despite ongoing reform efforts with regard to the army and police neither the government nor Coalition forces (including in the form of Provincial Reconstruction Teams) are seen as capable of providing it.*

3.1 Security remains the biggest problem in the country according to Afghan perception surveys.<sup>42</sup> In areas of intense fighting, particularly the south and east, 45% of respondents to a recent poll said violence against foreign forces could be justified because of the insecurity they cause to civilians through air strikes or shelling.<sup>43</sup> This suggests that public opposition to US or NATO/ISAF forces is greatest where they have most presence. From people's perspectives, insecurity increases whenever Coalition forces move into their area.

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<sup>38</sup> Evidence that tanzim and particularly Taliban leaders try to keep alive the idea of the 'real' jihad, is exemplified by a night-letter posted on an NGO compound in Jalalabad in 2004. This read: 'To the brave Afghanistan Mujahid Nation! The USA, the head of unbelievers and the root of crime...attacks the seek Muslim countries to capture them and then creates its own evil government....If Jihad was obligatory against the Russian forces then is it nor obligated against US forces terrorist acts?' Quoted in Bhatia 2007:97

<sup>39</sup> In consequence the term 'jihad' is most frequently used today to refer to an historical period (the 1980s) and not to the activities of the Taliban or any other Islamist group since that date. For example, Bhatia and Sedra (2007) divide the analysis in their case studies into four historical periods: (i) Jihad, (ii) Civil war; (iii) Taliban era; (iv) Post 9/11.

<sup>40</sup> For a fuller list of jihadi messages see Guistozzi 2007a:121

<sup>41</sup> Guistozzi 2007a:123

<sup>42</sup> See for example, Asia Foundation 2008:7 and the survey by the Human Right Research and Advocacy Consortium (HRRAC), March 2009

<sup>43</sup> ABC News/BBC/ARD Poll, 2009:5

3.2 The most obvious manifestation of state and international failure to provide security is the continuing existence of hundreds of armed groups despite two processes aimed at disarming them: the DDR process which aimed to disarm official militias, and the DIAG one which aimed to disarm the unofficial ones.<sup>44</sup> These processes were meant to be complete by 2005 as those with armed group connections were not allowed to stand for election. However, a census in 2006 showed up the shortfalls of the disarmament processes- it found there were still 2000 ‘illegal’ militias with an estimated 180,000 members and other studies identify other forms of armed group that significantly increase this number.<sup>45</sup> The problem is not just the continuing numbers of armed men in the country – although this indicates the government has no monopoly on the use of force - but the fact that members of armed militias have infiltrated so many of the institutions of the state, from the ministerial level down to the district.<sup>46</sup> Guistozzi discusses the range of ways that individuals, including those in district authorities and the police, use their ability to enlist the support of armed groups - what he calls their ‘deterrent power’ - to further their interests. This has a direct impact on ordinary individuals who dare not gainsay those they know they have an armed group at their disposal. The fact that many individual commanders were either elected to positions in government in 2005 (having sidestepped the vetting process) or used their ‘deterrent power’ to get a parliamentary seat despite massive rigging (e.g. Sayyaf) leads ordinary people to think that the government is either unable or unwilling to bring armed leaders to account.

3.3 Commentators report positively on the increasing effectiveness of the Afghan National Army (ANA) but the same is not true of the Afghan National Police (ANP).<sup>47</sup> The police force – a pivotal security institution – has had problems with militia capture since 2001 and this has direct impacts for ordinary people. Wilder (2007) reports that after the fall of the Taliban in 2001 Northern Alliance commanders filled the district and provincial police with private militias who had little or no police training or experience. Meanwhile Jami’at-i Islami controlled the National Security Directorate, and there are reports of both police and NSD alignment with particular politicians during the elections.<sup>48</sup> This is one of many daunting factors facing police reform (a process supported by approximately 25 countries and several international organisations).<sup>49</sup> From a people’s perspective however, the partisan and corrupt behaviour of some local police officers and their known affiliation to armed groups in the area, exemplifies the corruption and weakness of government as a whole – and is another reason to look elsewhere for a group that can fill the policing gap.

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<sup>44</sup> For an analysis of DDR and DIAG shortfalls see Stapleton 2008, Rossi and Guistozzi, 2006, Dennys 2005 and Bhatia and Sedra 2008. (DDR=disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration; DIAG=Disarmament of Illegal Armed Groups.)

<sup>45</sup> For example, a good number of the 63,000 Afghan Military Force that were meant to have been disbanded in 2005, but probably went underground, 20,000 or so private security guards, many of whom are linked to politicians, the arbaki tribal militias in the south east, militias kept (legally) by governors and the anti-Taliban militias. See Guistozzi (2009d) quoting Sylvie Brand ‘Warlords and weapons – gunpowder for Afghanistan’, Agence France Presse, 28<sup>th</sup> March 2007

<sup>46</sup> Guistozzi 2007c:5ff

<sup>47</sup> The ANP consists of several different component institutions, including the uniformed police, the border police, the civil order police and the counter-narcotics police. Wilder 2007:vii

<sup>48</sup> Discussed by Guistozzi in 2007c:6

<sup>49</sup> The literature on the police clarifies why reform is so difficult. This includes the high rate of illiteracy of recruits (making training difficult), weak internal vetting and monitoring processes, involvement with the drug trade, fiscal sustainability issues after foreign funding ends, the tendency to deploy police more as paramilitaries than police and lack of a coherent effort by donors. Some donor supported quick-fix policing initiatives have been controversial. For example, the creation of ANAP, a force of 11,000+ who were recruited locally, given 10 days training and then deployed, initially to the 6 provinces most directly affected by the Taliban. This drew criticism not least because these involved men who could very quickly swop sides. For a comprehensive analysis of the issues involved in police sector reform see Wilder 2007.

3.4 Research studies also analyse the role of Provincial Reconstruction Teams in terms of their impact on security, even though, as Stapleton points out, PRTs were never meant to afford security to the Afghan population.<sup>50</sup> However, Stapleton argues that there was nonetheless an *assumption* that PRTs would create an enabling environment for reconstruction and development and this in turn would improve security. This is echoed in the PRT manual (2007) which describes a PRT as ‘...a civil-military institution that is able to penetrate the more unstable and insecure areas because of its military component and is *able to stabilise these areas* because of the combined capabilities of its diplomacy, military and economic components’.<sup>51</sup> (emphasis added). The point for ordinary Afghans is that the PRTs in insurgency areas have not brought security – in fact security has got worse in many PRT areas. As Stapleton observes: ‘The assumption that reconstruction and development would buy stability in Afghanistan created a chicken and egg situation in which the ‘egg’ of improvements to human security has so far not been laid’.<sup>52</sup>

#### 4. GRIEVANCES AROUND THE JUSTICE SYSTEM

##### Summary

*There is extensive and high quality work on the justice system in Afghanistan, with a focus on its manifold deficiencies. However, the conclusion that emerges from most studies is that it is essential and practically feasible to develop ‘a hybrid model of Afghan justice’ that articulates a collaborative relationship between formal and informal justice institutions.*<sup>53</sup>

4.1 Research studies on the justice system show that the formal justice system, i.e. the courts, are seen as ineffective, slow and corrupt with settlements favouring those that can pay the most.<sup>54</sup> In some provinces, Helmand for example, there are no formal courts outside the two main towns (Lashkar Gah and Gereshk) and even these are little used.<sup>55</sup> Afghans therefore tend to use community based conflict resolution systems – shura and jirga. Research shows that 80%-90% of disputes, civil and criminal, are resolved in this way.<sup>56</sup>

4.2 Shuras do not try to resolve conflicts by applying only one law, even shari’a. Rather they use a combination of Islamic principles based on different schools of jurisprudence (Hanafi for Sunnis and Jafari for Shias), customary law (epitomised by Pashtoonwali and the Hazara, Tajik and Uzbek equivalents) and elements of law from the formal system.<sup>57</sup> Some

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<sup>50</sup> PRTs were set up as joint civilian–military initiatives in 2002, ostensibly to provide reconstruction and development activities, which would extend the central government’s authority and provide a security dividend. By 2007 25 PRTs led by 13 nations were located in provinces throughout the country.

<sup>51</sup> Noted by the World Bank (2007) ‘Service Delivery and Governance at the Sub-national Level in Afghanistan’ and quoted by Azarbaijani-Moghaddam et al, 2008:53

<sup>52</sup> Stapleton 2007:47

<sup>53</sup> This is the message of a comprehensive study on justice – ‘The Afghanistan Human Development Report 2007’ by Wardak, Saba and Kazem from the Center for Policy and Human Development, Kabul University. It is also the message of all the other authors referenced in this section.

<sup>54</sup> Field study by CPAU (2007:24) and also discussed in the TLO study by Marie and Karokhail, 2009:6

<sup>55</sup> In Helmand only five criminal cases per week are lodged with the court and Gereshk handles only two or three a month. Hirst 2009:1

<sup>56</sup> The Afghanistan Human Development Report 2007, which focuses on justice, estimates that only 20% of disputes are settled through the courts. According to the 2006 Asia Foundation study 16% of Afghans said they would go to a government court to resolve their dispute (Barfield et al, 2006: 3). There will be differences by province. Hirst estimates that only 1% of cases are lodged with the courts in Helmand. Hirst 2009:1.

<sup>57</sup> Suhrke and Borchgrevink note that Afghan law, and Afghanistan’s various constitutions, have been variously influenced: by the Napoleonic code, by Egyptian modernists, by socialist principles introduced by the PDPA during the Soviet period amongst others. Most recently its application has

cases are forwarded to the formal courts, but in this case ‘...both parties tend to expect the worse due to corruption and incapacity within the courts to deal with the cases’.<sup>58</sup>

4.3 In Taliban controlled areas Taliban allied mullahs act as judges. This undermines the authority of the tribal and religious elders who normally help resolve disputes. The Taliban mullahs dispense speedy justice – a good thing – but there are many drawbacks. These include intimidation and requests for money, a system seen to be partial to Taliban sympathisers, threats and even killings of tribal and religious elders and a high proportion of executions for crimes not perceived as warranting such severe punishment.<sup>59</sup>

4.4 Aware of the drawbacks as well as the strengths of the informal justice system the government initiated a justice sector reform process in 2001 with western donor assistance. There were significant problems with initial western support: it was seen as imposing a western legal template and sections of the ulema said it was not a consultative process. The first legal adviser given by the Italians to Karzai (Italians were given the role of justice sector reform) had drafted a law closely patterned on the Italian legal code without consulting Afghan officials. Resenting this exclusion the officials asked Karzai not to sign this into law but the Italian government stood by their consultant and threatened to withdraw funds unless the draft was approved.<sup>60</sup> Suhrke and Borchgrevink argue that this incident exemplifies a broader perception: that western donors have no desire to engage with Islamic law or comprehensively engage with Islamic jurists and want to impose their own values, based on the Christian tradition.

4.5 The issue of judiciary reform has therefore turned into something of a ‘clash of civilisations’ debate (or ‘a clash of two goods’ as Barfield calls it).<sup>61</sup> The position of some western donors and human rights experts is that implementation of Afghan traditional law can be extremely harsh on women and children and leads to the sort of human rights abuses associated with the Taliban. Others argue this is a false dichotomy, they argue that the issue is how to integrate the best of the traditional Afghan judicial systems with human rights law, and that accommodation is possible.<sup>62</sup> This is the position taken by Ali Wardak et al, authors of ‘Afghanistan Human Development 2007’, a major analysis of the justice system which gives practical propositions on how the two systems might link in future. Suhrke and Borchgrevink hold that mullahs would be open to legal reform as long as it could be done within the framework of shari’a and without high profile western involvement. They suggest that help from Muslim majority countries with experience of integrating Islamic and western principles in their own law reform processes -like Turkey, Egypt and Pakistan- are much more likely to be welcomed by the Afghan clergy.

4.6 Evidence from DFID supported work in Helmand indicates that traditional and human rights based systems can merge and complement each other in practice. The Prisoner Review Shura and the formation of Community Council Justice Committees in some districts

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been influenced by the literalist and restrictive interpretation of Islam imposed by the Taliban during their 1996-2001 rule. Suhrke and Borchgrevink 2008:215

<sup>58</sup> CPAU report (2007b:24), discussing responses from respondents in Kunduz and Sayedabad to the formal judicial system.

<sup>59</sup> Hirst discusses the pros and cons of different systems of informal justice from the perspective of ordinary people in ‘Support to the Informal Justice Sector in Helmand’ a report to DFID, April 2009

<sup>60</sup> Suhrke and Borchgrevink 2008:213

<sup>61</sup> Barfield et al, 2006

<sup>62</sup> Barfield notes that the two systems are already interdependent in any case. He says that local officials have been known to jail disputants until they agree to have their cases settled by customary means and actors in the informal system use the threat of turning the problem over to the state courts as a way to gain cooperation. In theory, says Barfield, the formal system trumps the informal but in rural areas the reverse is more often the case. Barfield et al 2006:22

of Helmand are a case in point.<sup>63</sup> On a larger scale the Afghanistan Human Development Report 2007 outlines how a hybrid model could work on a national and local level – the proposal involves complementary interaction between the formal district courses, ADR institutions and the Human Rights Unit.<sup>64</sup>

4.7 The question this raises is whether the current ineffectiveness of the justice system is itself creating support for radical/military groups. Many studies, including this one, suggest that the Taliban have been able to step into the justice vacuum and in insurgency areas are garnering support as a result. As Marie and Karokhail note: ‘Even if the Taliban are not really liked, they are *able to provide one single important service to the local community they so very much desire: justice and security*. Until the government will be able to offer the same, it is unlikely to receive popular local support’.<sup>65</sup> (emphasis in original).

## 5. THE ISSUE OF BASIC SERVICES – CAN THEY WIN HEARTS AND MINDS?

### Summary

*Statistics on coverage of basic services confirm that they are critically needed to address basic development and livelihood needs. But wider studies confirm a finding in the field study: that is shouldn't be automatically assumed that ad hoc provision of small scale services will win hearts and minds for the government or Coalition forces. The data shows that as more services are provided demand increases, including for service quality. Neither the government nor donors can assure quality yet.*

5.1 Coverage of basic services in Afghanistan – health, education, water, sanitation – remain extremely poor and this is reflected in Afghanistan's Human Development Index: <sup>66</sup> the country ranks 174<sup>th</sup> out of 178 countries, ahead of only Burkina Faso, Mali, Sierra Leone and Niger. UNICEF reports that only half as many girls as boys are enrolled in primary school and even fewer girls make it to secondary school (5% girls, 25% boys). This makes for extremely high illiteracy rates, reportedly 57% for men and 87% for women.<sup>67</sup> Health indicators are similarly dismal particularly for women and children: ante-natal care coverage (for example) is only 16% and the World Bank reports that 40% of Afghan children under five are malnourished.<sup>68</sup> Water and sanitation coverage figures vary but DFID's most recent figures indicate that the population with access to a safe water source is 41%; although still low this is a significant increase from 2005 when it was 31%.<sup>69</sup>

5.2 The main problem for the government is that it is least able to provide services in the very areas where it most needs to win friends, i.e. areas where the insurgency is active. It is very difficult for NGOs to operate safely in these areas and the providers therefore tend to be contractors who bring their own security (i.e. armed guards) with them. But private security companies will return fire if attacked and this immediately endangers the local population who are caught in the middle. They are then liable to blame the security forces ‘protecting’ the service. The same problem can occur for PRTs as noted by Stapleton (see 3.4, this annex).

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<sup>63</sup> See Hirst's report, *ibid*, 2009

<sup>64</sup> See Afghanistan Human Development Report 2007:126-132

<sup>65</sup> Marie and Karokhail, 2009.

<sup>66</sup> The HDR covers three variables: life expectancy at birth, educational attainment measured by adult literacy and combined primary, secondary and tertiary enrolment ratios, and GDP per capital.

<sup>67</sup> Bernard et al, ‘Women and Nation-Building’ Rand 2008:38. Based on figures from the UN Children's Fund, October 2007.

<sup>68</sup> Bernard et al, ‘Women and Nation-Building’ Rand 2008:38. Based on figures from the UN Children's Fund, October 2007.

<sup>69</sup> This increase is partly attributed to the National Solidarity Programme which DFID supports and which has put over 9,460 water and sanitation projects in place across the country – reportedly benefiting over 9 million people. (Communication from DFID Kabul office)

5.3 Some commentators also maintain that *who* provides the services is important from the point of view of local populations.<sup>70</sup> They maintain that the problem of government legitimacy is compounded because of the large percentage of development assistance (up to 40%) that is provided through NGOs, UN agencies and contractors rather than government.<sup>71</sup> It is then these agencies – and not the government - that communities turn to for services when they realise reconstruction and development activities are taking place in their area.

5.4 There is a big question about whether services, especially when small in scale, really ‘win hearts and minds’ in terms of increasing support for the government or Coalition forces. This is an issue analysed by DFID in its Country Governance Analysis.<sup>72</sup> The evidence from other studies suggests that this depends. If a local population are already siding with the government then services appears to affirm their allegiance. But if a population are already siding with an opposition group (for whatever reason, including for self-protection) then no amount of services are necessarily going to persuade them to swop sides. Guistozzi gives an example of a village provided with 16 wells by different aid agencies. The villagers were demanding more wells whilst bitterly complaining that some of their members had been arrested for alleged support to an armed opposition group.<sup>73</sup> They therefore separated the two acts (getting foreign funded wells; supporting the opposition), whereas the government and western donors tend to see these as having a causative relationship. In short we cannot assume that services, even if provided en masse, will inevitably win over those populations who have already decided their chances are better with the opposition. What they may do, if effectively and fairly provided, is to solidify support from those who are wavering or already on the government side.

5.5 Other reports note that ineffective service delivery (for example, clinics or schools being built but not staffed)<sup>74</sup> also reduces the government’s credibility in the eyes of local people. Indeed, much of the literature on services in Afghanistan focuses on analysing the failures of the state and the state building effort, including the ‘confusing and incoherent’ array of new institutions at provincial and district levels.<sup>75</sup> Such reports are well argued but they don’t always take full account of the baseline, i.e. that only a skeleton structure of civil servants existed in the provinces after 2001 and the task of improving governance through institutional change at provincial level was inevitably going to be a long and monumental process given the many problems, including tribal and strongmen capture of key ministries. Even with the ANDS now in place – with its provision for security, law, order, economic growth and poverty reduction - and progress on sub-national governance underway, there is likely to be a considerable time lag before the majority of Afghans feel the result of this better co-ordinated effort.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> This is the position of Barakat et al, SCA 2008:37

<sup>71</sup> The figure of 40% comes from a report by the Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief (ACBAR) and is reported in the SCA 2008:37.

<sup>72</sup> The CGA points out that even though service delivery has considerably improved in some areas since 2001 ‘...Government has failed to receive full credit for these advances and therefore improvements have not necessarily translated into improved legitimacy.’ It identifies some of the reasons for this, including the issue of who provides, gaps in the way services are being rolled out and the weaknesses of sub national governance. Afghanistan CGA, DFID, August 2008:11-12

<sup>73</sup> Guistozzi 2007a:198

<sup>74</sup> There are reports of infrastructure being built by PRTs but lying idle because of the lack of line ministry budget for staffing. One example: in Patkia there were no staff for five PRT built clinics because they were not in the Ministry of Health’s public health funds. (Azarbaijani-Moghaddam et al ‘Afghan Hearts, Afghan Minds’.2008:54)

<sup>75</sup> See Nixon 2008 for an informed critique of sub national state building in Afghanistan, AREU, 2008

<sup>76</sup> The state’s ability to meet the public’s expectations of service provision - which are likely to increase once security is assured - is not a short-term problem. As the Political Economy analysis (PEA) notes,

5.6 Given the widespread perception that the government and international community have made little headway in providing services since 2001 the question is whether the Taliban or Islamist groups like Hizb-i Islami are providing services and garnering support as a result. There is little evidence for this either historically or currently. Under Taliban rule (1996-2001) the state had technical control but didn't run public services in a centralised way. As the Political Economy Analysis undertaken for DFID notes, the Taliban 'dismembered' the service providing ministries by replacing staff with their own supporters and thereby, in effect, abandoned the idea of providing social welfare to citizens.<sup>77</sup> Guistoizzi summarises: 'In terms of re-establishing a working Afghan state, the Taliban's ideas seem to have been pretty simple. Religious law and madrasa-trained religious judges provided a judiciary; state administration was cut to a minimum both in Kabul and in the provinces; no state budget existed; the educational system was cut down to religious madrasas and a limited number of state schools, very few of which admitted girls...' <sup>78</sup> The Taliban therefore set no examples in terms of state provided services at that time and there is no evidence they have done so since.

5.7 Mentions of service provision by Islamist groups do exist in the literature. As noted, Hizb-i Islami is reported as having provided services in the refugee camps they controlled during and following the Soviet era and there are reports that they still do this.<sup>79</sup> However, they do not provide basic services to the population in general.

## 6. MADARIS AND THE ULEMA – A ROLE IN RADICALISATION?

### Summary

*Although madaris have been extensively researched in Pakistan for their 'radicalising' role there is relatively little work on this in Afghanistan. More attention has been paid to the role of mullahs who, although marginalised in some contexts are still listened to by ordinary people. The wider literature confirms the findings of the field study: the resurgence of the Taliban has forced many mullahs to take sides so there is now a clear dividing line between pro-government and pro-Taliban mullahs.*

6.1 Madaris in Afghanistan are part of the social fabric of the country. Their importance in recent years and the amount of funding they have received, has varied depending on the role they have played for different power holders. During the Soviet period in the 1980s the number of madaris in Afghanistan and Pakistan grew exponentially.<sup>80</sup> They were well funded by the Gulf States and Pakistan and had an important role in preparing boys for jihad against the Soviets. Many were based in refugee camps along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border run by politico-military organisations like Hizb-i Islami and Pakistan based jihadi organisations. Although primarily sites of religious/theological instruction they were also part of the jihadi process: students (talibs) received their religious education there and then went on to become mujahadin.

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the power of the government to transform the economy on which the long term sustainability of future development plans rest is very weak – given that the informal sector (narcotics and other illegal traded goods) drives the economy. Middleton et al, *ibid*: 51

<sup>77</sup> Middlebrook et al in PEA:21, quoting Rasanayagam 2007

<sup>78</sup> Guistoizzi notes the Taliban did have *some* concept of services. Whilst the bulk of their resources were dedicated to the military they carried out some repairs to infrastructure and in 1999 re-established a postal service and a provisional telephone service with Pakistani numbers. Guistoizzi 2008:31.

<sup>79</sup> Mentioned both by Azarbaijani-Moghaddam et al 'Afghan Hearts, Afghan Minds' (2008:51) and also by Guistoizzi 2007a:38-9

<sup>80</sup> These were Sunni madaris and this section concentrates on these. For a discussion of Shi'a religious education see Adelhah 2007 'Shi'a Religious Schools in Afghanistan: preliminary observations'.

6.2 After the Soviets were ousted the funding for madaris in Afghanistan decreased significantly and their numbers declined during the civil war period. When the Taliban took power in 1996 madrassa education rose to prominence again, this time as the main channel for education – but for the most part, only for boys. When Taliban rule ended in 2001 the number of children and young men being educated in madaris again dropped, most obviously because of the lack of government funding and the reopening of secular state schools.<sup>81</sup>

6.3 Today there are few state run madaris outside of provincial capitals, not least because the government is aware that some may be supporting the neo Taliban. This is also the view of Afghan reformers and western agencies.<sup>82</sup> Yet studies indicate the vast majority of madaris are private establishments opened by a religious scholar as a small business. Their size and curricula varies from place to place. They offer instruction in Islamic subjects including, but not only, the Quran, the hadith (the authenticated sayings of the Prophet) and fiqh (principles of Islamic jurisprudence). In rural areas people are very poor and madaris struggle financially – they often survive through money and food collected by religious students visiting villages and going door to door. Religious students (talibs) also attend other religious functions where money, food and clothing are given to fund madaris and mosques.<sup>83</sup>

6.4 There is no substantive evidence that the vast majority of these private madaris, operating at a very local level and often attached to a mosque, are radicalising – though they definitely impart a traditional/deobandi interpretation of Islam. Religious students, many of whom go on to become mullahs, religious teachers and religious scholars are regarded as traditional and conservative and as resisting both western style development and western style education. This means there is a marked difference in worldviews between the educated elite and the ulema.<sup>84</sup> However, their extreme conservatism doesn't automatically mean they support the Taliban or other Islamist armed groups; some reportedly profoundly disagree with the Taliban's interpretation of Islam and support the government. That said madaris in areas that the Taliban control will now be linked to the Taliban, either out of genuine support or because they have no choice.

6.5 If radicalisation at madaris is occurring it may be in specific madaris in Pakistan rather than in Afghanistan.<sup>85</sup> Many Afghan families continue to send their children to study in Pakistan as the madaris there are more prestigious, better endowed financially (by the Pakistan government and Islamic charities) and better renowned for their Islamic scholarship than those in Afghanistan. Educating a son in a Pakistani madrassa therefore gives him a better chance of finding a religious job on return. There is some evidence that Hizb-i Islami continue to run madaris in Peshawar and then recruit students directly into their tanzim.<sup>86</sup> However, it is getting more difficult for Afghan religious students to study in Pakistan; they now need a visa and other documentation and the madaris have stopped giving everyone free board and lodging.<sup>87</sup> This implies that the numbers attending madaris in Pakistan is likely to fall in future.

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<sup>81</sup> This is one of the findings of the study on religious civil society undertaken by CPAU. This study is one of very few on religious society in Afghanistan today and this section draws significantly on its findings. CPAU 2007:28-34

<sup>82</sup> Suhrke and Borchgevinck note: 'The private madaris are seen by reformist Afghans as well as Western donors and many in the UN aid system as institutional carriers of religion and a potential source of religious radicalisation'. Suhrke and Borchgevinck 2008:222

<sup>83</sup> The CPAU study, 2007a:33.

<sup>84</sup> The CPAU study, 2007a:28

<sup>85</sup> Discussed by Guistozi 2007a:38-9

<sup>86</sup> Interview with the authors of the CPAU study on religious civil society during March 2009

<sup>87</sup> The CPAU study, 2007a:30

6.6 The Afghan government are aware of the potential radicalising effect of madaris and are also keen to broaden the educational experience of students attending religious schools.<sup>88</sup> In 2007 the Ministry of Education, then under Hanif Atmar, approved a plan to build a network of government-approved secondary madaris that will be developed as centres of excellence in Islamic education but will also teach science, English and IT.<sup>89</sup> However, this plan seems to be shelved for the time being due to a lack of funding.

6.7 The interesting question here is not so much about madaris per se but who the clergy support, i.e. the mullahs and religious teachers and scholars that make up the ulema. They are an important group. Even though the power of mullahs has been undermined by years of war and insurgency and the displacement of populations they retain the respect of ordinary people, and can bring people together across tribal divisions; they also train the next generation of mullahs. As noted in the field study, today they walk a difficult line, as the Taliban have both empowered the clergy as a group but also undermined them. Some clergy support the government, whilst others support the Taliban and other Islamist opposition parties.

6.8 Guistozi traces the Taliban's tactics with regard to the clergy in southern Afghanistan. He reports support for the Taliban from clerical networks as early as 2003 in Zabul province; by 2004 some clergy were preaching against the government in northern Helmand and by 2006 support for the Taliban was apparently widespread in southern Afghanistan.<sup>90</sup> But it is difficult to tell whether this support is voluntary and based on the Taliban's religious ideology and vision for the country, or forced as a result of death threats. The Taliban have brutally killed mullahs who oppose them. For example, Kandahar had a concentration of pro-government mullahs up to 2006 but the Taliban killed many and this forced others to flee. Of the twenty clerics killed by the Taliban between 2005 and 2006 twelve were from Kandahar; this effectively silenced ulema opposition there.<sup>91</sup>

6.9 It is therefore very difficult to ascertain how much real support there is for the Taliban from the majority of the ulema. In some areas, Paktia and Khost for example, the clergy reportedly remain hostile to the Taliban because of the strength of local Sufi networks. Tablighi (preaching) networks do not seem to have supported the Taliban either. Whilst the Taliban have raised the status of some mullahs (by making them judges for example) they have undermined the authority of others. As noted, some clergy see the Taliban as ignorant theologically and do not agree with their interpretation of Islam even though they themselves mainly follow the Deobandi school.

## 7. UNEMPLOYED YOUNG MEN

### Summary

*The wider research literature confirms the broad findings of the field study: that young unemployed men are exceedingly vulnerable to being 'mobilised' but it is difficult to know how many of them join groups like the Taliban or Hizb-i islami primarily because of a prior religious conviction.*

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<sup>88</sup> The Afghanistan plan has equivalents elsewhere in South Asia. In Bangladesh for example there are private Qomi madaris but also 'Aliya' madaris - these are part of the state secondary system and teach secular as well as religious subjects. Aliya madaris are based mainly in rural areas and have achieved virtual gender parity as a result of the stipend system for girls for which Aliya schools qualify. Discussed in the Bangladesh study on radicalisation, Ladbury 2008:18

<sup>89</sup> The CPAU study, 2007a:28

<sup>90</sup> The issue of clergy support for the Taliban is discussed in more detail by Guistozi 2007a. This section draws on his work.

<sup>91</sup> Guistozi 2007a:45

7.1 The unemployment situation in Afghanistan is dire. Thirty years of violent conflict and civil war has meant that thousands of men and women remain illiterate and have few employable skills. Many of those that have made it through school and on to university cannot find jobs.<sup>92</sup> Although three quarters of the population work in agriculture it has remained poorly supported by transport, irrigation and electricity infrastructure due both to the ongoing insecurity and to the lack of government and donor investment in these sectors.<sup>93</sup> Even as this scales up (as it is now doing) it is unlikely to have a significant employment impact in the near future due to the time it takes for improvements to be felt by the general population, and to ongoing structural weaknesses in the economy.<sup>94</sup>

7.2 The research literature identifies several reasons why young men are drawn to join armed groups: the need to protect their families, the 'pride, purpose and honour' that comes with having a gun, and the need to earn an income, not least in order to get married.<sup>95</sup> The political-military nature of the Afghan environment means there is no shortage of armed groups to join. In the field study we concentrated on the two religion based politico-military groups most obviously opposed to the government and Coalition/ISAF forces but these are just a sub-set of a much larger contingent of armed group possibilities. These include the Afghan army and police, hundreds of private security companies (protecting foreign contractors, donors, local businessmen), militias attached to governors, militias attached to regional warlords and strongmen, community militia (arbakian) and poppy traffickers and other illicit trading groups.

7.3 With the exception of arbakian all these groups provide an income. Bhatia and Sedra note that economic incentives were a primary reason for joining an armed group by all the 345 combatants interviewed in their field study.<sup>96</sup> (Note: their study looked at motivations across all armed groups, not just ideological ones.) They found that salaries varied between groups and according to location; they also differed according to the individuals' relationship to the commander and their position. Kandahar armed groups, including the Taliban, pay better than those in other areas, '...supposedly due to the intersection of the profitable security contracts as well as to poppy harvesting.'<sup>97</sup> Bhatia stresses that it is not just the unemployed that join armed groups; in many insurgency areas businesses had become unviable so traders/shopkeepers also moonlight for armed groups to increase their overall earnings.<sup>98</sup>

7.4 However, it is not normally a case of choosing the group with the best conditions and joining up. Whether the armed group is legal (such as the ANP or ANA) or illegal (the Taliban, Hizb-i Islami, narcotics militia) the entry point is usually always through family and tribal connections. For illegal groups the degree of choice that young men have varies; Bhatia and Sedra found that force was used a great deal in all of the six regions they researched, including of children.<sup>99</sup> A proportion of the combatants they spoke to felt they had no choice

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<sup>92</sup> Ghaous Bashri, Deputy Minister for the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, quoted in an interview 'Afghanistan: Economy, violence hit prospects for youth', February 2009, IRIN, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

<sup>93</sup> Middlebrook et al, 'Political Economy Analysis' carried out for DFID, 2008:27

<sup>94</sup> For an overview of Afghanistan's current political economy see section 5 in Middlebrooke et al, 'Political Economy Analysis', 2007:25ff

<sup>95</sup> Barakat et al, the SCA, 2007:31 and 40

<sup>96</sup> These were Ghor and Paktia provinces; Kandahar city; Kunduz, Takhar and Baghlan; Jalalabad and Hazarajat. See Bhatia and Sedra 2007.

<sup>97</sup> Bhatia and Sedra 2007:241

<sup>98</sup> Bhatia and Sedra 2007:241

<sup>99</sup> As one young boy told Bhatia in Ghor province (though this was not necessarily to do with an Islamist group): 'I had no choice, I had to go, even when I needed to collect wheat. All the time the commanders used force; if no force, nobody would fight. Maulvi Moussa had special people to use force, maybe 20 people with new AK-47s'. Bhatia and Sedra 2007:202

but to join up. Many others volunteered to fight but whom they joined was often predetermined by tribal or family associations.

7.5 The importance of tribal and family ties is emphasised in other studies. They implicitly question the individual actor orientation of many western debates around radicalisation that assume men make individual choices, and are drawn to groups either because of their religious ideology or a desire for status in the form of superior weapons and pay rates. Rather, they indicate that young men are rarely individual actors, roaming around and waiting to be ‘picked up’ by armed groups with the best offer. They are intricately part of family and tribal groupings and *usually* act as members of their immediate tribal/kinship group, often on the basis of instruction by elders,<sup>100</sup> although there are inevitably exceptions to this.<sup>101</sup> So although young unemployed men are indeed vulnerable to joining armed groups this is not an open market – which group they side with is circumscribed by a large number of factors, including the advice of their tribal elders. Whether they are ‘more’ vulnerable to ideological messages than older recruits is therefore difficult to ascertain, as their own proclivities are not usually the primary factor determining which group they join.

7.6 The connection between the narcotics trade and funding for the Taliban and other groups is also discussed in the literature. The link appears to be more complex than is often presented. The SCA summarises the argument normally given, and then counters it: ‘...the international community’s assumption that poppy cultivation and trafficking supports the insurgency is considerably overstated and reflects the classical fallacy...in which one occurrence following another is presumed to be the result of the first. Rather than being related to one another the rise in poppy cultivation and insurgency reflect the weakness, relatively meagre territorial control, perceived illegitimacy and administrative lack of capacity of the Afghan state. Poppies are not the insurgent’s blank check they are perceived to be’. The SCA goes on to consider the many other sources of funding that different groups use to support their militant activities making the point that narcotics is only one of many funding sources.<sup>102</sup> The field study carried out for this study confirmed this finding, although there is a great deal more to be learned about how income derived from either farmer/producers or traffickers is collected, channelled and used both within the country, by neighbours and internationally.

## 8. WOMEN AS MODERATORS?

### Summary

*Research studies suggest that historically male leaders have defined their vision of the Afghan state in terms of their position on women’s rights. Mobilisation by women has played little part. Today there is a huge chasm between urban educated women and the vast majority of rural women. For women to become moderators (whatever that means) there needs to be a powerful domestic lobby for women’s rights that brings urban educated and poor women into the same universe. Such a lobby also needs the support of men.*

8.1 A starting point for many authors discussing gender issues in Afghanistan is the formal legislation on women’s role and status and its relationship with the reality on the ground. Kandiyoti, for example, notes that historically the formal rights of women have in Afghanistan have yo-yoed as male rulers have used laws relating to women’s rights to stamp

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<sup>100</sup> Bhatia and Sedra examine the motivations underlying mobilisation in six regions – but they do not distinguish ideological and non-ideological groups. Bhatia and Sedra 2007:185-297

<sup>101</sup> One exception noted by Guistozi is young men who have returned to Afghanistan after being bought up in refugee camps in Pakistan. He suggests they are likely to be less respectful of tribal elders and less likely to follow their instructions. Guistozi 2007a: 40

<sup>102</sup> Barakat et al, the SCA, 2007:41-2

their ideology on the state and demonstrate their position as reformists, modernists or conservatives. This is true, for example, of modernisers like King Amanullah (ruled 1919-28), who was influenced by movements taking place in other Muslim majority countries at the time (particularly Turkey and Egypt) and introduced a progressive body of legislation around women's rights in the 1920s, including a family law that banned child marriage, required judicial permission before a man could take multiple wives and removed some family law questions from the jurisdiction of the ulema. His wife, Queen Soraya, opened the first girls' school in Kabul and education was made compulsory for all.<sup>103</sup>

8.2 But such reforms, whether progressive or reactionary, were the projects of rulers, not the citizenry and certainly not the result of mobilization by women. As Kandiyoti notes in her analysis of positions on women taken by rulers from Amir Abdurrahman Khan (1880-1901) onwards: 'Both modernist measures and conservative reactions have been instigated primarily by men contending for state power, with limited mobilisation for social change among women'.<sup>104</sup> It is worth noting that the practice of male leaders using Afghan women to articulate their ideology of 'how the state should be' was also apparent in justifications given by the Bush administration for attacking Afghanistan after 9/11.<sup>105</sup> As Johnson and Leslie point out '...the West needed a narrative to justify war. For many, certainly simple retaliation was enough, but not for all. Others had to be brought on board by an appeal at a different level: this was to be a humanitarian war, a war fought only for the best of motives and the best of intentions.... For this it was necessary that the Taliban were portrayed as the personification of evil, and Afghans, particularly women, as their victims.'<sup>106</sup> Laura Bush made six major speeches at that time, all of which maintained the war was to rescue Afghan women.

8.3 Today – as in the past - the formal legal system gives little indication of how the vast majority of women live their lives. This is not to undervalue the important provisions for women's gender rights under the 2004 Constitution - men and women are declared equal under the law and there are reservation quotas in both houses of parliament.<sup>107</sup> However, as Kandiyoti notes, women's actual life options continue to be determined by their membership of, and embeddedness in, local communities and families. These are not static – the fact that a quarter of the population of 25 million people has been internally displaced or has moved to other countries (principally Pakistan or Iran) over the last 30 years means that these communities have experienced dramatic change with implications for women and men's roles and behaviour. Despite – and sometimes because of - these changes research studies emphasise the importance of differentiating the options that some urban educated women have (including those who have been educated abroad) and the options for the majority of illiterate rural women, including those directly affected by violent conflict. The latter group may never have left their village.

8.4 Do women have a role as moderators? This question currently makes sense only for urban, educated women. Studies show that some women have made important contributions

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<sup>103</sup> Kandiyoti 2005:20

<sup>104</sup> Kandiyoti 2005:4

<sup>105</sup> This is also discussed by Cloud who concentrates on the imagery of women circulating in the US media at the time of the 2001-2 decision to attack Afghanistan and the impetus this gave to the idea that Afghan women needed to be rescued. Cloud, 2004:285-306

<sup>106</sup> Johnson and Leslie, 2004:102

<sup>107</sup> Article 83 stipulates that women should hold one third of the seats in the upper house (a 17% quota), and 25% of seats in the lower house (or at least two seats from each province). This is one of several legal provisions seeking to guard women's rights in the constitution. Another is Article 31 that obligates the state to appoint an attorney for the destitute, including destitute women. However, as there are not nearly enough state attorneys and women do not know their rights they often go unrepresented. Discussed in Rand 'Women and Nation Building 2008:72

towards peace, for example, through participation in humanitarian operations and Loya Jirgas.<sup>108</sup> Although it was thought that women would not have the courage to attend the initial Loya Jirgas, and men would not tolerate their presence, women did attend and took bold stances against the reinstatement of warlords, nepotism and corruption. The case of Malalai Joya has become well known and is described in several articles.<sup>109</sup> However, the literature suggests that women's participation in politics is not currently translating into real influence; several reasons are given for this.<sup>110</sup> It may also be because men have not supported them. We could find nothing in the literature that documents the outcomes of initiatives that have seriously tried to consult and engage Afghan men, including tribal leaders and the ulema, on women's rights issues.

8.5 There is little evidence of rural women taking an overtly political role. Women are not involved in dispute reconciliation mechanisms (jirgas and shuras) where they are represented by men even when litigants. This is not, as is often claimed, to do with women's low literacy rate and educational level – the vast majority of men who participate in jirgas and shuras are also illiterate and this does not stop them rising to positions of high office in the tribe or as clergy. It is more to do with Pashtunwali traditions and practices, which remain deeply rooted.<sup>111</sup> Kandiyoti notes that women in rural areas do have other decision-making roles that are economically and/or socially important (matchmaking and life cycle rituals for example). And that seniority and age, religious learning and membership in powerful lineages can confer considerable authority on women.<sup>112</sup>

8.6 The 'green shoots' of political participation that exist therefore mainly concern those in the urban centres and mainly (though not inevitably) women that are educated.<sup>113</sup> The interesting question is whether there are institutional mechanisms that can bring the many different worlds of Afghan women together and whether men will join them. As Azarbaijani-Moghaddam summarises: 'Women have as yet to create a powerful domestic lobby—a real women's movement or broad-based women's coalition in Afghanistan that can represent poor and marginalized women and provide an alternative support base for all women, unsupported by male dominated families and communities. Such groups have to demonstrate outreach beyond Kabul.'<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> See Bernard et al, 'Women and Nation-Building' Rand Center for Middle East Public Policy 2008:30ff

<sup>109</sup> In the 2003 Loya Jirga Malalai Joya, then 25, criticized the mujahidin as being responsible for the civil war that devastated the country and led to the Taliban take-over. She received many death threats subsequently but was later elected as an MP by her province Farah. Bernard et al, 2008:62

<sup>110</sup> For example, the lack of women in senior positions, the absence of a united front for women's issues and the presence of warlords in parliament that make women fearful of arguing against legislation that is detrimental to women's interests. See discussion in Governance and Social Development Resource Centre (GSDRC) summary of the literature on 'Gender issues in Afghanistan', 14<sup>th</sup> May, 2009:2-3

<sup>111</sup> One recent study by Shinwari looked at whether rural Pashtun men and women wanted women to be involved in jirgas; 91% said 'no', with little difference between male and female responses. Although Shinwari's survey was in FATA not Afghanistan his findings may apply. Shinwari 2008:67

<sup>112</sup> Kandiyoti 2005:27

<sup>113</sup> Even within Kabul the few really strong groupings of women that have emerged, and have focused on particular issues, such as women's rights and empowerment, have reportedly been particularly vulnerable to intimidation and threat. See 'Afghanistan Country Governance Analysis', DFID 2008:16

<sup>114</sup> Azarbaijani-Moghaddam, 2009:66-67

## **ANNEX 2. THE RESEARCH ENVIRONMENT: DIFFICULTIES OF GAINING TRUST IN AREAS AFFECTED BY VIOLENT CONFLICT**

The methodological difficulty of conducting research through focus group and individual interviews in areas where violent conflict is occurring is little documented. A note on the issues faced by the research teams in wider Kabul, Kandahar and Wardak is given here. The purpose of this note is not to list the difficulties encountered, but rather to note that in insurgency areas even a well prepared research programmes can throw up unexpected problems that must be managed as they arise. Team members must also learn to read the security situation in order to ensure, as far as possible, their own safety and the safety of those they talk to.

As part of the preparation for the research we spent two days doing role-plays. These were partly to familiarise the research teams with the question areas but they were mainly to give them practice in gaining the trust of highly sceptical groups and individuals. It was rightly anticipated that the tricky part of all interactions was getting the agreement of informants to be interviewed in the first place, due to their fear of being reported on by one or other side. In the role-plays, one team would play the community and the other the interviewers. The 'community' decided who they were (tribal leaders, government officers, women residents etc.) and could then be as obstructive as they liked; the interviewers had to deal with it. The 'community' then reported back on how they could have done better. These role-plays made the point that this piece of work was not a simple case of data gathering but a complex process of gaining trust. The fact that there were only eight main questions was a bonus as the teams could spend their time listening and exploring different views; they did not have to rush participants on to the next question. When it was possible to take notes – and it was in most cases – the team took down what participants said verbatim.

CPAU rightly anticipated that gathering focus groups together would be difficult, both because of the sensitivity of the subject, but also because a heterogeneous group were unlikely to talk freely in front of each other. They therefore made sure they had facilitating NGOs to provide them with introductions in areas with which they had not previously worked - this applied particularly to Kandahar. However, on arrival in Kandahar they found their NGO contact had been suddenly called away. The team then had to make contact with an NGO that was previously unknown to them and ask for their help. Fortunately this was given. The NGO concerned (Helping Afghan Farmers Organisation – HAFO) was providing support to small farmers and the research team were assumed to be visiting agronomists. They were also allowed to use the NGO venue – which turned out to be a huge bonus and quite safe; visitors did not attract attention, as farmers were coming and going all the time. The help given by HAFO saved the day but it inevitably meant the CPAU team had to spend more time in Kandahar than originally planned as introductions to respondents had to be made from scratch.

Language, dress and tribal identity were critical in all venues and again, particularly in Kandahar where none of them came from. All team members spoke Pashto well - a prerequisite. However, only one out of three had a beard when they arrived and none were in Kandahari clothes. A visit to the market solved the clothing issue but beards took longer to grow. ('Next time I will start 10 days before'.) The other issue was tribal identity. One Kandahar research team member was Kakar, a Ghilzai tribe. This was received positively by respondents. However, this individual was also recognised as the cousin of a deputy minister, initially a huge drawback as the team were concerned it would fuel fears that they were government spies. Fortunately this fear came to nothing.

The situation in Kabul was easier. Informants in Sorobi and in IDP camps were all keen to say whom they supported and why. The research team initially thought that the study would

be most straightforward in Wardak because the team members there were all Wardaki. However, whilst their tribal and family connections opened doors the fact they were indigenous to the area raised questions amongst family and sub-tribe members about what they were *really* doing. Such suspicions continued after the field-work ended. For this reason the research team eventually concluded it was easier to work in areas where you were not known: although gaining entry was more difficult you did not have to continue living with the feelings of suspicion that the research generated.

The three study teams were all led by experienced research staff. One team member was a member of all three area teams and could therefore make comparisons between Kandahar, Wardak and Kabul - this was invaluable for the analysis. Most of the researchers had highly developed community development skills from conducting peace reconciliation training; they also had considerable experience of relating to mullahs due to previous research on religious civil society. Each team included a relatively new researcher as it is CPAU policy to use every research experience to build the capacity of newer staff.

Two permissions to interview were required: by the Ministry of Education in Kabul and by the Taliban in Wardak. The woman researcher on the team had begun interviewing in schools in the Kabul area as a way of eliciting the views of men and women teachers who were minorities (Hazaras, Tajiks, Uzbeks) in a relatively safe environment. The MoE heard about this and insisted that CPAU formally apply to interview in schools; they did so but unfortunately approval was not granted.

Obtaining permission from the Taliban to interview combatants was also initially problematic even though one of the researchers had a Taliban contact from school days. Negotiations lasted three days. The researcher was asked to go to two different venues where the Taliban contact didn't turn up. Eventually his Taliban contact asked to come clean and say who was behind the research, and to whom he was ultimately reporting. Unsure what response would gain entry he decided to bank on the Taliban's reported propensity to welcome publicity: 'You are fighting and dying and the foreigners don't understand why. You can be sure that whatever you tell me I will pass to the British embassy and they will pass to the Americans.' This message was then relayed to the Taliban in Pakistan. Two hours later the answer came: the meeting is agreed and we have been instructed to talk freely.

In summary: undertaking research in insurgency areas is not impossible in the Afghan context but it is difficult. It requires good preparation, flexibility, patience, huge tenacity (because people *will* refuse to be interviewed) and sufficient time. The key advantage national research organisations have are their networks – their individual contacts and the local NGOs they know that can help facilitate meetings in areas with which they are unfamiliar. That said – and as evidenced by the problems the field team had in Kandahar when their NGO contacts suddenly evaporated - things *will* go wrong and putting them right takes time. Research in insurgency areas therefore needs a cushion of time against unpredictable events. Also important, if obvious, is that researchers must continually try and assure the safety of their respondents and themselves; this means, for example, choosing venues that cannot easily be attacked by suicide bombers and changing the venue for interviewing on a daily basis if necessary. Most importantly they need to communicate to suspicious respondents that they are genuinely interested in understanding their point of view, and deeply value what they say. It was this quality, perhaps more than any other, that accounts for the high quality of data CPAU obtained for this study.

### **ANNEX 3. PEOPLE CONSULTED – AND LIST OF FIELD STUDY RESPONDENTS**

#### **People interviewed**

Fahadullah Fahad	Deputy Director General, Programs. Office of Administrative Affairs and Council of Minister's Secretariat, Kabul
Mr. HF	Senior diplomat in Taliban Government
Barbara Stapleton	Deputy to the Special Representative of the EU to Afghanistan
George Noel-Clark	Political Adviser, Office of the Special Representative of the EU to Afghanistan
Jonathan Goodhand	Senior Lecturer, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London
Andrew Wilder	Research Director, Feinstein International Centre, TUFTS University (discussion by phone)
Antonio Giustozzi	Afghanistan political economy expert, Crisis States Research Centre, LSE, University of London
John Butt	PACT Radio (discussion by telephone and email)
Martine Van Bijlert	Co-director, Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN)
Paula Kantor	Director, Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU)
Masood Karokhail	The Liaison Office (TLO)
Ehsan Zahine	The Liaison Office (TLO)
Mirwais Wardak	Director, Co-operation for Peace and Unity (CPAU)
Idrees Zaman	Research Director, CPAU
Christian Denny	Representative, CPAU Europe
Mudasser Siddiqui	Director, ActionAid Kabul
Sippi Azarbaijani-Moghaddam	Independent Development Consultant, Kabul
Asmatullah Mansour	Director, Afghan-Youth Peace Organisation

#### **DFID/HMG/ISAF**

Alan Whaites	Head, State Building Team, DFID Kabul
Richard Jones	Conflict Adviser, DFID Kabul
Lorna Hall	Afghanistan team, DFID London
Mark Bryson-Richardson	Political Councillor, FCO
Lisa Bandari	FCO
Brett Bulling	Second Secretary Political (Human Rights), FCO
Colin Hicks	Second Secretary Political (CT/Reconciliation), FCO
Simon Diggins	Defence Attache, FCO
Sherwood McGinnis	Political Advisor, ISAF

#### **Non HMG participants at feedback presentation, Kabul**

Konrad Huber	USAID
Brad Arsenault	USAID
Monica McQueary	USAID
Mohammad Sabir	USAID
Eva Gross	Free University Brussels/CIDA
Sherward McGinnis	ISAF
George Noel-Clarke	Office of EU Special Representative
Paula Kantor	AREU
Matt Waldman	Oxfam
Gorm Pedersen	Danish Embassy
Sandra Jensen	Danish Embassy
Essa Shamal	Danish Embassy
Sippi Azarbaijani-Mogaddam	Consultant for DACAAC/CIDA/HTSPE/DFID

## Respondents interviewed for the field study (192 people in 46 interviews)

WARDAK	RESPONDENT/S	NO. IN GP
1	Shopkeepers	2
2	Trader/ businessman	1
3	Ex Talib	1
4	Farmers	2
5	Current and Armed Hizb-i Islami Commander	1
6	Current Hizb-i Islami insurgents	2
7	Informal interviews with Jihadi Commanders, scholars, teachers	10
8	Informal interviews with students, farmers and unemployed people	10
9	Teachers (Focus Group)	10
10	Armed Taliban (Focus Group)	16
11	Members of Provincial Council	5
12	Shopkeepers	3
13	Ex Taliban/ Taliban sympathizers	3
14	Religious scholar	1
15	Ex commanders of Mujahadin	3
	TOTAL RESPONDENTS WARDAK	<b>70</b>
<b>KANDAHAR</b>		
16	Deputy director of Kandahar Provincial Council	1
17	Head of the department of rural rehabilitation and development	1
18	Head of the department of Women Affairs	1
19	Head of the department of Information and Culture	1
20	Helmand Governor spokesman	1
21	Education Department representative	1
22	Provincial Manager of Afghan Development Association (ADA)	1
23	Jihadi Commanders	2
24	Elders and Scholars	3
25	Ex Taliban combatants	2
26	Sympathizers of Taliban	2
27	Previous member of Hezb-i Islami party (Khalis Hezb)	1
28	School Teacher	2
29	Traders / Businessmen	2
30	Shopkeepers	2
31	Social activists and members of civil society	2
32	Internally Displaced People	2
33	Achekzi Shura (Focus Group)	12
34	NGO staff (Focus Group)	10
35	Women attending literacy class (Focus group)	12
36	Youths (Focus Group of youths of Kandahar Youth Union)	10
37	TOTAL RESPONDENTS KANDAHAR	<b>71</b>
<b>KABUL</b>		
38	Focus group in Sorobi (mullah, commander, teachers, district shura soldier of ANA)	11
39	Focus group in Sorobi (8 shura members, two mullahs, one health worker, 4 four young men from insurgency constituency)	15
40	Focus group IDP camp – women’s group from Sangin, Helmand	5
41	Focus Group IDP camp – men from Sangin, Helmand	8
42	Focus group – Hazara teachers in a school (4 women, 2 men)	6
43	Focus group – IDP camp – men’s group	6
44	Focus group in Sorobi (mullah, commander, teachers, district shura soldier of ANA)	11
45	Focus group in Sorobi (8 shura members, two mullahs, one health worker, 4 four young men from insurgency constituency)	15
46	Focus group IDP camp – women’s group from Sangin, Helmand	5
	TOTAL RESPONDENTS KABUL	<b>51</b>

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## ANNEX 5. TERMS OF REFERENCE

### **Research study on radicalisation in Afghanistan (and comparing factors in Afghanistan and Pakistan – a separate study, completed August 2009)**

This terms of reference covers two related studies:

1. Testing the evidence base for hypotheses on radicalisation in Afghanistan (main study)
2. Analyzing the benefits of taking a joined up Afghanistan-Pakistan approach in understanding causes of radicalisation (subsidiary study)

#### **Background**

1. DFID has been thinking more systematically about the links between the insecurity of poor people, and achieving the MDGs. *Fighting poverty to build a safer world: a strategy for security and development* (March 2005) says that insecurity is a major impediment to achievement of the MDGs, and that in consequence DFID will increasingly seek to address the insecurity of the poor as part of its poverty reduction work. This includes understanding how state as well as non-state actors operate in ways that may increase insecurity through ideologically and politically motivated violence.

2. Our premise is that many of the structural factors that increase the risk of ideologically motivated violence also matter for development: unmet political and economic aspirations, lack of jobs for skilled labour, weak states and poor governance. There is no evidence that poverty alone directly contributes to ideologically motivated violence or that those who perpetrate this violence are from poorer communities. Nevertheless those that coordinate and direct such acts often exploit the issue of poverty, and related issues such as marginalisation and disenfranchisement, as a means of mobilising popular support and legitimising their actions.

3. The two reports commissioned under this study will build upon previous research undertaken by DFID in the region and beyond (Pakistan, Bangladesh, Somalia, Guyana, Jamaica), to better inform HMG policies and approaches on countries identified as being more vulnerable to terrorism or instability. HMG efforts in these countries are intended to reflect a more nuanced approach to both preventing the emergence of militant movements, and to tackling radicalisation when it occurs. The research will take as its analytical starting point four key factors underpinning radicalisation and politically motivated violence identified in our research to date:

- i. a sense of injustice, alienation or inequality relative to others, often based on a genuine grievance which may reflect structural inequalities and processes of exclusion;
- ii. an ineffective or blocked political system that prevents participation and is unresponsive to demands for reform, and no hope that things will change;
- iii. an alternative, legitimising discourse that promises change and justifies violence; and,
- iv. Government failure to provide services including security and justice.

#### **Study 1. Testing the evidence base for hypotheses on radicalisation in Afghanistan**

4. 'Radicalisation' is a term used within HMG and elsewhere to describe the social processes by which people are brought to condone, legitimise, support or carry out violence for political or religious objectives. As a term 'radicalisation' sounds straightforward but in practice it can involve individuals and groups with a mix of objectives and motivations. In some cases religion might be used to motivate young foot-soldiers but their leaders may be after political power; in other situations young men may take up arms due to allegiance to elders and codes of honour. And in still other circumstances the opportunity for material gains (wages, plunder) may completely blur the line between ideology and the need to make a

living. Moreover, *who* counts as a 'radical' is not always clear-cut as this depends partly on the context and very much on the position of the speaker. Many see the (neo)Taliban as both 'radical' and 'radicalised'. But it is less clear whether both terms are sensibly applied to tribal leaders using violence to wrest land or lucrative trade from an armed neighbour; to political parties with armed wings that oppose the government; or to ordinary men and women who want peace above all else but support a 'radical' group because it gives them a semblance of security.

5. The fact that 'radicalisation' is not one thing is nowhere more true than in Afghanistan. It is not always possible to distinguish between ideological Islamist insurgency groups and apparently non-ideological actors: commanders, strongman, narcotics traders, community policing forces and so on. One of the first tasks of this study must be to define what radicalisation sensibly means in Afghanistan and thereby to decide study parameters.

6. The Strategic Conflict Assessment for Afghanistan provides a good overview of the factors underlying radicalisation, in a general sense. It maps the different actors engaged in conflict and their political objectives – an essential starting point – and then identifies factors that encourage young men to take up arms. The SCA notes, for example, that men join armed groups because:

- they are jobless and need money (including to get married);
- they like the status of being Mujahid and of being issued with a weapon;
- some are young men returned from Pakistan who grew up away from the tempering influence of elders;
- they believe their culture, country and faith are under attack by predominantly Christian states;
- neither government nor foreign forces are investing in ways that promise a long term and secure future, or even peace;
- the value system obligates men to protect their families and wider kin/tribal members;
- political groups with armed wings target young men (e.g. students) in certain parts of the country.

7. What the SCA doesn't do – and what this study must therefore focus on - is:  
a) the relative significance of these factors for *different types of insurgency*. There is some analysis of the motivational factors operating for armed groups in different parts of the country (see Bhatia and Sedra 2008)<sup>115</sup> but there is a great deal more to be understood in this area, and particularly in Helmand;  
b) what is actually going on in communities, amongst ordinary men and women who are not active combatants but who live in an area where there is an ever present threat of violence. We know relatively little about where their sympathies lie and what factors account for their support or opposition to the causes of violence in their area.

8. A key evidence base for this study is therefore the views of ordinary people, women and men, young and old, in different parts of the country. Much as we have done in Pakistan, we need to find out whether ordinary people are passive supporters or, at the other end of the continuum, vehement opponents of militant causes and/or the tactics used. And we need to determine why there are differences of view in different localities. This in turn involves understanding how the balance of power in different communities is changing and what is happening to traditional power brokers and systems of reconciliation.

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<sup>115</sup> Bhatia, M and M. Sedra 'Afghanistan, Arms and Conflict, Routledge 2008. This study gives six provincial case studies that examine the different factors affecting conscription and support/opposition for violence in different geographical areas. It does not include Helmand Province.

9. The study will also need to pay attention to historical trends in causes identified in the SCA, and particularly to the role played by religion. There has been a tendency by HMG and others to see insurgencies in PREVENT countries as primarily religiously inspired. The complex number of overlapping causal factors in Afghanistan makes it a good country to test the continuing accuracy of this view.

#### **Purpose of the work**

10. The main purpose of the work is to build an evidence base that will throw light on some of the hypotheses that are routinely put forward to explain the phenomenon of radicalisation. Through analysing the extent to which these hypotheses are borne out by evidence, the consultant will analyse the implications for development and poverty reduction. Specifically, the work will enable DFID, and broader HMG and other development partners, to:

- i. understand the factors affecting extremism and radicalisation in Afghanistan and the linkages with poverty defined in its broadest sense<sup>116</sup>;
- ii. test the same 8 hypotheses as were investigated for Pakistan and Bangladesh plus any that are subsequently identified as of critical relevance in the Afghanistan context. The consultant should use the significant evidence base that already exists in the academic and 'grey' literature as well as field based research;
- iii. understand the implications of radicalisation and extremism for the effectiveness of the state, development and poverty reduction in Afghanistan; and identify practical, programmable strategies for addressing these drivers of extremism and radicalisation in Afghanistan.

#### **Study 2. Analyzing the benefits of taking a joined up Afghanistan-Pakistan approach in understanding causes of radicalisation (separate subsidiary study – August 2009)**

11. Studies on radicalisation have so far taken a country-specific focus with relatively little attention paid to the spill over from, and to, regional neighbours. Any comprehensive study of radicalisation in the region would need to take account of several countries, including Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, China, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Iran (and for funding, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states). However, as a first step, there may be a value in looking at the factors jointly affecting - and maintaining the use of violence in - Afghanistan and Pakistan.

12. The purpose of this secondary study is to draw out the main commonalities and differences between Afghanistan and Pakistan in terms of the factors affecting radicalisation – and then to assess the value added of taking a regional approach.

13. The starting point should be the hypotheses examined in Study 1 (for Afghanistan) and in the Pakistan Radicalisation studies (Ladbury and Hussein, 2008 and 2009). It should then go on to look at other factors affecting commonalities and differences, drawing on the existing literature and interviews with key informants. Factors worth paying attention to are likely to include:

- historical legacies (e.g. the nature of governance in the two countries, the role of religion, how the power of state and non-state actors has been accrued and maintained – and how these factors play into affect insurgency motivations today);
- current geopolitical factors (e.g. the role of the FATA);
- commonalities and differences in objectives, motivations and tactics used by insurgency groups;

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<sup>116</sup> Poverty defined to include income poverty, lack of voice, powerlessness, access to services and insecurity.

- the role of international players – perceived contribution to radicalisation and potential contribution to de-radicalisation;
  - the current role of national governments;
  - the relationship between the state and the army and the relevance of this for radicalisation;
  - the role of civil society and perceptions and priorities of the population in general, including women.
14. The work will enable DFID, and broader HMG and other development partners, to:
- i. Understand Afghanistan and Pakistan through the same radicalisation lens and appreciate commonalities and differences in causes and potential solutions;
  - ii. Decide whether a more regional approach adds value to an understanding of what is going on in the region as a whole (and might therefore be adopted as an analytical lens more widely).

### **Deliverables**

15. The output will consist of a two reports to DFID.
- **Study 1** should be of no more than 25 pages, excluding a high quality executive summary and appendices. The report should address the issues listed in paragraph 6 above and should be based around the hypotheses previously investigated and any additions.
  - **Study 2** should be of no more than 15 pages with a 1-2 page summary. It should address the issues listed at paragraph 13 above and any relevant additions.

### **Inputs, Timing and Management**

16. The bulk of work will be carried out by a senior-level consultant with extensive experience in delivering strategic and policy analysis to UK Government departments; understanding drivers for political or ideologically motivated violence; and assessing links between political violence and development.
17. An NGO, Peace Direct will contract a local research organisation in Afghanistan to carry out the field-level research. The field workers will be trained and mentored by the senior consultant.
18. The intention is that this work will be in 6 stages over four months (March – June 2009). For budget purposes the first three stages will be complete by 31<sup>st</sup> March; the last three stages should be undertaken between April and June, subject to review after first three stages at end March 2009.

Note: Paragraphs 19-20 referred to work to be carried out prior to March 31<sup>st</sup> only so have been omitted.

21. The senior consultant will lead the overall project and will be responsible for ensuring delivery of high quality research and outputs from an identified credible research institution in Afghanistan. The senior consultant will develop a methodology to address the key research questions and will guide the work of the field team and where appropriate other experts in this regard.
22. There will be close collaboration with Whitehall departments on this study. Meetings will be held with key interlocutors in FCO, MOD, Cabinet Office, OSCT and others, as appropriate, and facilitated by DFID. The consultant will be responsive to feedback and comments from other government departments on the scoping and drafts of the study and be available for presentations as required.
23. The consultant will be managed by Cindy Berman, the DFID Social Development Adviser for South Asia, and will also work closely with Lorna Hall, DFID Afghanistan's

Whitehall Policy Manager. Whilst in Afghanistan, the consultant will work closely with Alan Whaites, Team Leader of State Building Team and Richard Jones, Conflict & Humanitarian Adviser. Communication with MOD, FCO will be facilitated by DFID interlocutors.

24. Payments by DFID will be made on fixed price basis. An interim invoice must be submitted by March 31st. An invoice will be submitted once Phase 1 has been completed. Subsequent phases of this research will be agreed upon at the end of Phase 1 depending on the outcome and review and feasibility of subsequent phases in the available time and budget.

### **Security**

Sarah Ladbury will be under the duty of care of the DFID Afghanistan office and therefore will be subject to the same travel arrangements/restrictions that apply to staff here. She is not intending to travel outside of the restricted areas of the DFID / HMG compound, office and environs. Local researchers will be contracted by a UK NGO Peace Direct and will be subject to their own duty of care arrangements. The local research NGO, CPAU has established security arrangements for their local research staff, who will be piloting research methodology in the Kabul area for the first phase of this work.