

Terrorism Monitor

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Al-Qaeda's Next Generation

By Sebastian Gorka

As the violent attacks in Iraq have multiplied, it is becoming evident that the moniker "al-Qaeda" has been unwisely overused, adding to the potentially dangerous misrepresentation that the U.S. and its allies are facing a monolithic and unitary foe responsible for all Islamist violence on the globe. In fact, responsibility for attacks across the world points toward a completely different analysis. Based upon information from a variety of European sources, including the German foreign intelligence agency, the Bundesnachrichtendienst (BND), Terrorism Monitor introduces the next generation of Osama bin Laden's network.

Generation One: Down but not out

The majority of agencies and open-source analysts agree that the original organization that was al-Qaeda has been severely degraded as a result of the military operations in Afghanistan that disposed the Taliban regime. From the very first point at which bin Laden became involved in recruiting and training fighters to resist the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan to his usurpation of the Bureau of Services for Mujahideen and its transformation into the Base (al-Qaeda), bin Laden required a safe-haven in which to operate his headquarters. He needed a home to the many training bases that his guerillas (and then later, terrorists) would pass through. His migration from Pakistan to Sudan and then to Afghanistan after 1989 testifies not only to his operational flexibility, but also to his need at every point to have a physical center for his organization.

While much has been made of the institutional and human weaknesses that led to the American security and intelligence failures prior to the 9/11 attack, it seems clear that the post-9/11 response has been to this point effective. Although bin Laden is still

at large, six of the twenty-nine recognized top leaders of the original al-Qaeda structure are now dead and seven are in custody. The sheer fact that almost three years since the heinous hijackings, despite all its bluster and bin Laden's various pronouncements, the organization has been unable to execute an attack of similarly catastrophic proportions, speaks to the operational weakness of the network. However, investigations of the still significant but somewhat smaller-scale bombings in Bali and Madrid indicate that the tactical initiative has moved to new, younger groups of fundamentalist terrorists that are less strictly linked to the original cadre of mujahideen fighters.

Generations Two and Three: an even harder-core adversary?

Demographically and socially, the core membership of the original al-Qaeda network is made up of individuals in their 40s or 50s, people tied to one another by the common experience of having fought the Soviets in Afghanistan in the 1980s. In fact, their link to this war imbues (or at least imbued) them with a distinct status amongst Muslim fundamentalists. This was a monolithic and unitary structure, which functioned very much on the basis of personal acquaintance, but which, over time, has become a catalyst for newer and currently less globally-capable regional groups. The first regional group that sprang from under the patronage of original Arab mujahideen fighters, the so-called Afghan Arabs, was associated with the fighting in Bosnia. Numerical estimates by the BND put the original group at approximately 30,000 operatives, with the second generation numbering slightly less at 20,000. Here it should be noted that the majority of terrorist arrests made on the territory of the European Union since 9/11 have involved individuals in their 30s, most of the suspects having combat experience from the Balkans, and Bosnia in particular.

In the last few months, an even newer sub-set of terrorists which could be identified with al-Qaeda, or which identifies itself with the broader aims of the original group, has emerged. These Islamists are in one way or another tied to the fighting in Chechnya, or to the former Soviet Republic of Georgia. Usually in their 20s, they are not linked by any particular campaign or by having trained together in one of the original al-Qaeda camps. Rather, these Islamists have shared experience at certain universities dotted across the Arab and Muslim world, universities that are home to the more virulent strains of the fundamentalist interpretations of Islam. Most often, these are establishments located in Pakistan. Very interestingly, in the case of some of the individuals that have been successfully identified or apprehended, these terrorists and potential terrorists are in

fact the sons or sons-in-law of first generation members of the original al-Qaeda network. This is first and foremost an intellectual network, less reliant on the person-to-person contact so common to the original group. As a result, these cells have been found to be even more autonomous than was previously posited. They represent a broad outer circle, far more diverse than the original al-Qaeda network.

Aspects of the New al-Qaeda

The new generations of fundamentalist terrorists do not share the same group history as the ones the U.S. and its allies have been fighting most frequently since 9/11. The non-aligned nature of many of the new cells established in Europe and Austral-Asia, for example, have a more international identity, greater independence and looser structures. Almost all the 9/11 hijackers were of one nationality, Saudi Arabian. Today, however, law enforcement agencies are, more often than not, apprehending or learning of cells with an extremely heterogeneous make-up. Good examples of this are the group that attempted a gas attack on the Paris metro in 2003 and those responsible for the simultaneous bombings in March of the Madrid railway.

In fact, we now know that, contrary to the government line, the Hamburg cell which had provided logistical support to the 9/11 leader Mohamed Atta was not effectively dismantled after the attacks. Instead, it reconstituted itself in the months following in order to play a crucial role in the Madrid bombings more than two years later. Likewise, more and more cells have been unearthed, the members of which are from North Africa and Asia. This led one senior European intelligence specialist to state that: "It is not al-Qaeda that is the problem anymore. The next generation sees the original one as gone soft, or too vulnerable."

Furthermore, a pattern seems to be emerging in regards to how these new iterations have managed to sustain themselves. Training facilities have moved from Central Asia to Asia: particularly Indonesia (the Sulawesi region especially), the Philippines, Bangladesh and Nepal. And more often, it appears that operational planners have begun isolating specific Islamic centers, mosques or madrassas for operational targeting and recruiting. They take control of an existing facility, typically with the assistance of a radical Imam with a suitably fundamentalist or Salafi message, then turn this facility into a recruiting center for those that will be later sent to one of the new training camps. The creeping takeover of these centers reflects, in a methodological sense, the way in which the original Bureau of Services subsumed previously innocuous charities and organizations all over the globe before al-Qaeda was actually created.

Conclusion

While the wider world now busily dissects the findings of the 9/11 Commission, it seems that many of the recommendations touted as new and innovative responses to al-Qaeda may in fact already be out-of-date. Policymakers and practitioners will need to invent new tools to address the reality that the target has moved. We have effectively disabled the original organization, at least for the time being. However, the truth may be that, we are on the verge of witnessing the eruption of many more diverse groups on the world stage, groups which are less restricted by geographical and national ties than were their patrons.

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A New Journal for Algerian Jihad

By Stephen Ulph

At a period of uncertainty and fragmentation for the Salafist movement in Algeria, a new publication has made its appearance on the internet. In May, the first issue of *Al-Jama'a* (The Group) was posted on the website of the Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédication et le Combat (GSPD). [1] The journal is in imitation of eastern models such as Al-Qaeda's online magazines for the jihad in the Arabian Peninsula, *Sawt al-Jihad* (Voice of Jihad) and *Mu'askar al-Battar* (The Al-Battar Military Camp) — indeed the similarity of the production style and standard immediately calls to mind these eastern forerunners. That there should be editorial links is, of course, unsurprising, given the history of the foundation of the GSPD, and the close links maintained between these groups. Edition 6 of *Sawt al-Jihad* excerpts an article on the Algerian Jihad urging its readers to draw lessons in the Arabian Peninsula from the experience of their mujahideen in the West:

We should learn from the example of Algeria, that democracy is a fiction...designed to distract the energies of vigorous youth...Algeria teaches us that the peaceful solution is a deficient one...and teaches us that hastiness for results causes reverses, and that progressing too soon from guerrilla warfare is a lethal mistake. [2]

The 38-page long *Al-Jama'a* describes itself as a “periodical magazine on Algerian jihad affairs” and comes:

Amid such decisive moments in the history of the Nation, to present one of the vanguards of Jihad, one of the fighting outposts that is still, after 12 years, raising the standard of Monotheism and Jihad atop the heights of Muslim Algeria. [3]

The tone of the publication can be gauged by the essay *Take up the Weapon for Life*:

From Afghanistan comes the kernel of the Nation; it was the beginning...proud Iraq was not the end...for those infidels and the apostate agents in our lands there are not enough graves...it is high time that Rome had its Cross uprooted and the city decked out for the arrival of the new conquerors, passing through Al-Andalus [4] and the Pavement of the Martyrs [5], and Vienna [6] and Constantinople, to which we are yet drawn by a longing that grows in our breasts day by day. For our Prophet (who does not lie when he speaks, being the most truthful of speakers) did promise: “God hath set aside for me the world, and I beheld its east and western lands, and the dominion of my Nation shall reach unto that which was set aside for me.” [7]

Unlike its sister publications in the Arabian Peninsula, *Al-Jama'a*, at least for this first edition, is short on specifics, and long on generic homilies on jihad. A lot of space is taken up with issues of legitimizing the current leadership. Having recently undergone some seismic shocks with the deposition of Hassan al-Hattab (later rumored to have been executed by his former colleagues), the GSPD journal devoted seven pages of dense print to *Questions on Legitimacy*, outlining the background to the deposition of Hattab and the legal support for the leadership of Abu Ibrahim Mustafa. Documentation on his election is included, along with an extended interview with him, introducing his views and his curriculum vitae. [8]

As part of its stated purpose “to remove confusion and clarify the facts,” the magazine's intention appears to be to serve as much as a morale booster as a communications vehicle.

Each of those who follow the rolling march of ponderous events, notwithstanding all the heavy costs, heavy sacrifices made in blood and limbs and pain, now may deservedly declare in resounding, optimistic shout: “Hold fast, O Mujahideen! Be patient O Murabitin! And hold to the blessed path, for signs of the coming victory are already on the distant horizon!” [9]

Abu Ibrahim Mustafa, himself, outlines the reasons for the GSPD's refusal to accept the amnesty in *Denial Communiqué*. Mustafa also contributed three other essays to the publication: *Islam's Alienation, A Discussion*, and *Election Communiqué* (dated 18th Jumada II 1424). Among the other essays included in this addition is *The Fountain Pen... and the Bullet Word* by Abu al-Hasan Gharib: a generic, exhortative discussion on the aims of the Jihad in Algeria. A page of uplifting quotes from Sayyid Qutb [10] entitled *Al-Jama'a Recreation* rounds out the issue. The concluding section, Final Word, is a request to distribute copies of *Al-Jama'a* and a direction to look out for the next edition.

The one element of the *Al-Jama'a* dealing with contemporary events, and which is clearly the source of some anxiety, concerns the government amnesty and the potentially demoralising effects of claimed negotiations in progress for the surrender of some 300 GSPD members. Under the rubric Viewpoint on Events, *Al-Jama'a* devotes five pages to the GSPD's rejectionist position, and is at pains to deny that there has been any substantial take-up of it by the militant group's members. The essay *Storm in a Teacup - Standpoints on the So-called Heathen Truce* pours scorn on the Algerian media reports:

It appears that peoples' mental simplicity has sunk to its lowest this year in Algeria, and I do not know how to describe the rumours concerning communications with the Salafist Group, "the impending group surrender of the Mujahideen (God forgive them)" and "ongoing talks with some of the leadership of the Mujahideen" and other such like various headlines which make me almost pass out merely to think of them. I don't know how to describe them other than that they are a Storm in a Teacup." [11]

The mujahideen, the author insists, are steadfast. The author points to how the red map of jihad is now enveloping the Muslim world, and that, therefore, there is no room or need for truces with the "Tyrants":

We say: relax, use your head and have faith in the victory of God, for indeed atop the Auras mountains and the hills of Kabylie and the southern Sahara there are still many who despise the Jews and the Christians and their dogs, such as Bouteflika and Lamari [12]...

Despite the disillusionments and the many infiltrations and plots... they did not consider even for a moment to sell their Jihad for a base price... they discarded [the efforts of peace doves] like the stone from a fruit, and

shunned it like some pollutant that would defile the purity of their Jihad.

The author reserves his highest scorn for members of the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), who have entered into negotiations with the Algerian government and announced their participation in the political process.

So what sort of Algerian crisis is this that they wish to resolve? The true crisis which the Islamic nation has fallen into since the fall of the Caliphate is the abandonment of Jihad and the replacement of brigades and razzias with ballot boxes, "parties" and "elections."

What shocks us to the core, O "Men of Salvation" is that your brothers are besieged by the enemy while you are eating and drinking and enjoying the pleasures of life. Indeed, some of you the while have made things worse by whole-heartedly collaborating with that dwarf Bouteflika and have given legitimacy to his election. Do you not have any feelings left in your soul? God knows that I wish to write these words and shout at the top of my voice: "Help me O mountains, and save me O stones, since the men of 'Salvation' have lost their manliness!"

Given the advances made by the Algerian military in the war against the insurgency, the publication of the *Al-Jama'a* magazine would seem to parallel the publication of al-Qaeda's *Mu'askar al-Battar* and *Sawt al-Jihad* magazines—that is, the construction of a virtual arena for training and indoctrination following the loss of the territorial arenas in Afghanistan. Its fantastic, apocalyptic tone also parallels the peninsular publications:

You shall see, God permitting, the Place des Martyrs in the capital [Algiers] turn into a fearful arena of massacres for you after we have finished slapping your face and kicking your backside. "And in that day the Believers will rejoice in Allah's help to victory." [13]

However, just the one edition of *Al-Jama'a* has been published to date. Two months having passed since its appearance on the web, it will be interesting to see whether this will remain the only issue, now that the leader of the GSPD, Nabil Sahrawi (Abu Ibrahim Mustafa), has been killed. Given the resilience of its sister productions in Saudi Arabia, which have continued to publish even after the killing of 'Abd al-'Aziz bin Muqrin and the raiding of its publishing base at the end of June, it is possible that *Al-Jama'a* will reappear after the group has had time to reorganise.

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Notes:

1. First issue: Rabi' al-Thani 1425 (May 2004). The *Al-Jama'a* web magazine can be found on the GSPD's website at <http://www.jihad-algeria.com>.
2. The excerpt is from Abu 'Abdallah al-Sa'di's *Abatil wa-Asmar* ('Myths and Idle Prattle'), pp.11-12.
3. Editorial comment, p.2.
4. The historical Islamic term for Spain, preserved in the present day province of Andalucía. The author is recalling 'unfinished work.'
5. Balat al-Shuhada: the village near Tours in France where the Muslim conquerors led by Abd al-Rahman al-Ghafiqi were halted by the Merovingian Charles Martel in 732 AD, marking the furthest point of Muslim expansion in western Europe.
6. The Ottoman army was halted at the gates of Vienna in 1683, marking the high-water mark of Islam in eastern Europe.
7. *Al-Jama'a*, p.12.
8. August 17th 2003. The Bayan Tansib appears on p.28.
9. Editorial comment, p.2.
10. Sayyid Qutb, 1906-1966, a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, was a prominent Islamist (revivalist) figure and was one of the chief ideologues of the modern jihadist movement.
11. Article *Zawba'a fi Finjan*, by Salah Abu Muhammad, *Al-Jama'a*, p.7.
12. Chief of Staff, Lieutenant General Mohammed Lamari, the eminence grise of the Algerian military, who has declared victory in the war against Islamist insurgents.
13. *Al-Jama'a*, p.9. Concluding quotation: Qur'an, XXX, 4,5.

* * *

Syria and the Birth of Pan-Arab Extremism

By Georgiy Mirsky

In the aftermath of the Iraq war, Syria captured the headlines of the world press, as the international community asked, "Will Syria be next?" Though it quickly became clear that no such attack was imminent, Syria, nevertheless, has come under intense American pressure aimed at radically diminishing the threat Damascus allegedly presents to the West through its support of terrorist organizations. In order

to comprehend the reasons for this support, it is necessary to deal briefly with Syria's position within the Arab world.

There is a well-known Arab saying: "Egypt is the head of the Arab world and Syria is its heart." Syria has always been regarded as the bulwark of the Arab unity movement; it is on Syrian soil that the idea of pan-Arabism originated, in the late Ottoman period. Arab nationalism, encompassing the concepts of Arab revival, liberation, and unity, was born in Syria at the time when Egypt did not even regard itself as part of the Arab world. [1] One of the groups that emerged from the Arab nationalist sentiment in Syria was the Ba'ath party, which became prominent in Damascus during the early 1960s. With slogans such as "Unity, freedom, and socialism" and "One Arab nation endowed with an immortal mission," the Ba'ath vehemently rejected the idea of separate Arab countries. The party instead proclaimed its unshakeable belief in one and only one Arab nation that had been artificially split by imperialist invaders and must be reunited in a single state. Claiming to be an all-Arab political organization, rather than a local one, it came to be regarded as the main champion of Arab unity, a vehicle of national and social revolution fated to eliminate all the traces of foreign domination, which included, of course, the establishment of a Zionist state in the Arab world.

As the prospects for Arab unity and the creation of a single Arab state appeared to be waning by the mid-sixties, Ba'athism was transformed in practice into a doctrine of "Arab nationalism in one state." Its ideology, however, remained staunchly revolutionary and Pan-Arabist, increasingly focusing on the liberation of Palestine. In 1970, General Hafez al-Asad seized power in Syria through a military coup. His mission of making Syria the "Hanoi" of an Arab revolution led him to help arm and train Palestinian fedayeen operating against Israel. His regime even tried to mobilize Syrians for a "protracted mass armed struggle" in support of the fedayeen. As if to compensate for the failure of Arab unification, the Ba'athist regime intensified its anti-Zionist propaganda during this time, hardening its stand on the Palestinian issue. In the eyes of the Ba'ath party, Israel became an embodiment of the hateful imperialist West, a springboard for neo-colonialist aggression against the Arab nation. To this day, the word "Israel" is never mentioned in the Syrian media; "Zionist entity" is used instead.

In addition to the Pan-Arab nationalist ideology of the Ba'athists, the regional policy of Damascus has been shaped by a powerful realpolitik rationale: Asad's high ambitions for playing a major role in Arab politics have simply not been matched by Syria's capabilities. Neither Syria's economic and military potential nor its political weight is sufficient to

ensure the country a leading role in the Middle East. Syria has just two trump cards in the game: Palestine and Lebanon. Syria has long postured as the self-appointed protector of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), despite a less than friendly relationship between Asad and PLO leader Yassir Arafat. But following the peace agreement between Israel and Egypt in 1979, Syria was the only country in a position to provide concrete military aid to Palestine, as both Iraq and Saudi Arabia were too far removed from the actual area of conflict. With regard to Lebanon, Syria's successful role as arbiter of the protracted civil war in that country gave Asad a good deal of leverage in Arab politics. Since the cessation of open hostilities in 1976, Syrian military forces have occupied major areas of Lebanon, establishing a kind of de-facto protectorate.

At that time also came Iran's Islamic revolution. At first, it would seem that there is little in common between Asad's regime and that of Ayatollah Khomeini. The former is secular and rules over a predominantly Sunni population, while the latter established a theocratic form of government in an overwhelmingly Shi'a country. However, the bitterly anti-Western and anti-Zionist stance of both regimes draws attention to a whole set of shared ideological values and political aims that can be summarized in one word: Jerusalem. Both leaders see the restoration of Arab rule over the Holy Land as their historic mission and sacred duty. And by doing everything possible in order to achieve this goal, both hope to deal a crushing blow to their eternal enemy, Western imperialism. The motivations may be different, a triumph of Islam for Tehran clerics on the one hand and a victory of Arab nationalism for Ba'athists on the other, but the overall goal is the same.

The Iranian revolution gave a powerful boost to the Lebanese Shi'a community, which had traditionally been subordinate to their Sunni and Christian counterparts. Lebanese Shi'a experienced a full-fledged coming of age. The emergence of Shi'as on the Lebanese political scene soon proved to be an extremely important phenomenon, with far-reaching effects. It was Shi'as who came to the forefront of the struggle against Israeli and Western intervention in Lebanon; the first Arab *shuhada'* (martyrs) were Shi'a militants, who blew themselves up together with hundreds of American and French soldiers in 1983.

The most radical and intransigent Shi'a political organization, created under Iranian auspices, was Hezbollah (The party of God). Founded in 1978, Hezbollah reemerged in 1982 with cells in the Beirut area and its headquarters in the al-Biqa' valley. These strongholds still remain: on a visit to Lebanon a few years ago, this author saw Hezbollah militia in their

yellow uniforms very much in evidence on the road from Beirut to Ba'albak.

Damascus was quick to appreciate the significance of the Shi'a revival in Lebanon. The prominent American expert on Lebanon, Augustus Norton, wrote that Syria "fostered the development of radical Shi'a groups...In July 1982, Syria permitted the establishment of a 1,000-man Iranian *Pasdaran* (Revolutionary Guard) contingent in Ba'albak and the simultaneous fixing of a Pasdaran headquarters in the Syrian border town of al-Zabadani...Ba'albak would come to be seen as at least one of the critical junctures in the terror network that appeared so sensationally in 1983." [2]

Since then, the alliance between Syria and Iran has proven the single most important factor in keeping Hezbollah afloat. There is no doubt that ending Syrian support for Hezbollah is the principal American demand at this time. The United States has added Hezbollah to its list of international terrorist organizations, the reason being its systematic attacks against Israeli military, and sometimes civilian, targets in the frontier zone between Lebanon and Israel. Whether this kind of activity can be justly qualified as international terrorism aside, Israeli authorities regard Hezbollah as the most dangerous extremist group directly threatening the security of the Jewish state. Syria has also been rumored to be lending support to Palestinian organizations such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad. Though hard evidence of this is difficult to ascertain, it would not be out of character for Damascus to aid the most active and militant groups of the Palestinian resistance.

Syria's reasons for backing extremist Arab groups have remained more or less the same over the last few decades: doing so allows Damascus to play a role in Arab politics. Add to this the fact that Syria has so far failed to achieve the supreme national goal of restoring sovereignty over the Israeli occupied Golan Heights. If negotiations on the Palestinian issue prove successful (i.e., peace is ensured and a Palestinian state is established), Israel may lose any incentive to settle the Golan issue; it may be forgotten altogether, in which case Syria will have emerged as a big loser in the half-century-long Arab-Israeli conflict. To prevent this, Syria must do its best to convince the world community that no final settlement of the conflict is possible without taking into consideration Syrian national interests. For Damascus, the Palestinian issue must be linked to the question of a territorial settlement between Syria and Israel. Therefore, it must be capable of disrupting the peace process if its national interests continue to be ignored – hence Syria's support for Arab extremists.

Of course, as vital as the Golan issue undoubtedly is for Syria, it is not the only reason for its support of extremist forces. As mentioned above, the two principal assets of the Ba'athist regime are its Palestinian and Lebanese connections, which give Damascus an opportunity to figure prominently on the Middle Eastern scene. By exerting its influence, Syria has been able to increase or diminish the degree of internal struggle in both of these areas. Now, however, Syria's role seems to be significantly reduced. No matter how successful the current talks on a peace settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict prove to be, Syria is hardly in a position to exercise much leverage on behalf of the Palestinians. The outcome of the crisis is likely to be decisively influenced by other players, particularly the United States. Furthermore, the political situation in Lebanon appears fairly stable. The main causes for the civil war have been more or less settled, and there are few signs of renewed internal strife. Accordingly, calls for the withdrawal of the Syrian peacekeeping forces have lately been intensified. The bulk of the Lebanese population increasingly regards their presence as pure occupation, infringing Lebanon's sovereignty. Thus, Syria appears relegated to the sidelines of Arab politics, its capacity to influence the course of events in the Middle East greatly reduced. In fact, Syria is faced with the prospect of becoming a regional lightweight. This situation presents a great challenge to the young President Bashar Asad who cannot afford to be accused of squandering the legacy of his charismatic father.

As Binyamin Netanyahu, the Israeli finance minister regarded as the most likely successor to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, said recently: Since America had defeated Iraq, Israel no longer needs to make any concessions to the "isolated backwater" that Syria has now become.

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Notes:

1. Only much later, under Gamal Abdel-Nasser, did Egypt succeed in capturing the slogan of Arab unity and becoming the champion of pan-Arabism.
2. "Amal and the Shia," by Augustus Richard Norton, University of Texas Press, 1987, p. 100.

* * *

Pushtun Politics and Violence in Afghanistan

By David C. Isby

Violence in Afghanistan in the past few months has been largely cross-border in nature, originating in Pakistan and carried out by individuals of multiple nationalities who return to Pakistan after striking. Examining the location of recent incidents supports such an analysis. [1] While no part of Afghanistan has been untouched by attacks in recent months, the vast majority of the incidents have occurred close to the Pakistani border. The threat, literally, is a peripheral one. When violence has erupted away from the Pakistani border, it has occurred mainly in remote areas, where other conditions have contributed to the persistence of the Taliban and their allies. Border attacks appear to be motivated by a desire to prevent reconstruction and election participation in these areas, thereby demonstrating that Pushtuns are being denied their fair share of aid by Kabul, which would be seen as alienated from the population if votes were withheld.

The peripheral location of the incidents also provides strong evidence that the violence in Afghanistan does not represent the action of Afghan Pushtuns alienated from the government in Kabul by the presence of other ethno-linguistic groups – especially Panjsheris – and by foreign influence and troops on the ground. If this were the case, it would be likely that attacks would correspond to the Pushtun heartland, the swath of territory near the traditional road networks from Kandahar to Kabul and Jalalabad. However, outbreaks of violence among Pushtuns have been limited to geographically remote areas such as the Oruzgon province, Zabul and Helmand, where there are local motivations. In Oruzgon, for example, violence has been motivated by maintaining opium cultivation against government efforts to suppress it. [2] Even in areas where there have been long-standing inter-ethnic tensions involving Pushtuns – such as in Konduz, a largely Pushtun city in the midst of a mainly Tadjik area, or in Jowzjan, where competing land use practices have created tensions with Uzbeks – violence has been limited.

Since 2001, both Afghans and Pakistanis have used the argument that unless more Pushtuns were placed in positions of power in the government – and Panjsheris kept from them – there would be a groundswell of opposition against Kabul. [3] The strongest Afghan advocates of this view were urbanized individuals returning from a lengthy exile in the west, shocked at seeing Panjsheris in positions of authority rather than the ethnic status quo *ante bellum*. Among

Pakistanis, the view represented a tendency of in some elements of government, especially the security services, to see conflict in Afghanistan primarily through an ethnic prism and hence as a subset of Pakistan's internal politics. In many cases, the tension between Afghans returning from exile and those that had remained in-country results from the former's sense of entitlement to power and influence which dismisses the claims of their competitors as illegitimate. In reality, no group is willing to accept the status of a "junior partner" in today's Afghanistan.

Each of these views reflect a critical misunderstanding of the political perceptions in Afghanistan's Pushtun heartland and the nature of Pushtun politics. As long as an informal ethnolinguistic balance is ensured in Kabul, the legitimacy of the government is not likely to be undercut. [4] The average Pushtun may not like Panjsheris, even if he has never encountered one, but without the Taliban to demonize their ethnic opponents, Pushtuns are unlikely to take up arms against them. Rural Pushtun leaders, unlike their urbanized cousins, are more interested in the realities of local power than in the ethnic breakdown in Kabul; demands by tribes that justice requires them to have their own man in government in Kabul have so far largely been absent.

In the Pushtun heartland, most of the ethnic resentment is not aimed at Kabul but rather at rival Pushtun tribes or groups. There is a long-standing expectation that, given the importance of patronage in traditional Afghan politics, any official will support first his own village or clan; senior officials are therefore viewed with suspicion by those who do not share ties with them. Thus, rivalries between tribes remain a significant cause of violence. Personal rivalries are yet another cause. For example, the fighting between Hadji Zaman and Hazrat Ali in Nangarhar in December 2001 and between Pacha Khan Jadrani and Hadji Saifullah Ahmedzai around Gardez in January 2002 often produced intra-Pushtun violence. Panjsheris were not targeted at that time, despite the fact that their influence in Kabul was at its height.

This situation reflects the weakness of Pushtun leadership in Afghanistan. Its focus has been local or tribal rather than national. Even where major tribes have re-asserted their hegemony in loyalty to the Kabul government, as with Gul Agha in Kandahar province, outside support was required. Many local Pushtun leaders are subject to the same questionable level of local support and legitimacy as other Afghan sub-national leaders. No one has elected them. Although the reality of Afghan politics is that leaders remain home town heroes as long as they are viable, few of the figures that exercised state authority in the Pushtun homeland in the Taliban's name from 1994-2001 seem

able (or willing) to build on this in organizing resistance to Kabul. This suggests that the Karzai government's attempts at individual reconciliation with former Taliban and Hezbi-Islami figures are more likely to be effective than seeking to win over the whole Pushtun political structure. Indeed, the shortage of identifiable Pushtun leaders able to play a productive role at the national level remains a shadow over Afghanistan's political future. It is likely that in the future, with the rebirth of an Afghan national economy and through participation in national politics, Pushtun attention may turn away from a local or regional focus. While the major Pushtun political leaders of recent decades have been foreign-supported (Mohammad Najibullah, Mullah Mohammad Omar, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar), this says more about the failed policies of their outside supporters than of any inherent Pushtun political limitations.

The vision of traditional Pushtun *lashkars* (armies) assembling in the heartland and marching on Kabul has, of course, not taken place. Rather, the cross-border nature of the violence in Afghanistan has been underscored by the declining size of the forces carrying it out. There have been no encounters with over 100 armed combatants since Operation Anaconda in spring 2002, and only a handful of operations since March 2003 in which there were more than a few dozen, one or two trucks full. [5]

That the roots of these attacks are cross-border does not make them a less serious threat. While there is no broad based support for the terrorists, they can claim the support, active or passive, of a semi-clandestine network of sympathizers on both sides of the Durand line. News reports of Pakistani military operations against training camps in Waziristan are outweighed symbolically by the idea of senior Taliban leaders living openly in Quetta. As long as these leaders remain, however great Pakistani efforts against terrorist facilities elsewhere may be, the message being sent by Pakistan to the "Taliban culture" is that Islamabad does not see it as a threat. [6] However, this culture and the religious practices that sustain it still have the potential to upset peace and security in Afghanistan as long as it thrives in Pakistan.

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Notes:

1. "Creation of the Joint Management Center is an Objective Step Towards Complete Security in the Country", *Anis* (Kabul), 4 July 2004. Translated at FBIS-IAP-20030705001. Maps issued by the UN for briefing reconstruction organizations on security issues show this graphically.
2. "Narcotics Seized in Central Afghan Province of

Oruzgon”, Kabul Radio Kelid report in Pashto, 1230 GMT 3 April 2004. Translated at FBIS-IAP 20040403000054.

3. One example of many is: “AFP: Tajik Domination of Afghan Power Causing Frustration to Pashtuns”, AFP Report 5 October 2003 reprinted at FBIS-JPP 2003100500008.

4. A recent review of the state of ethnolinguistic factors in the political balance in Kabul is found in the interview with Mohammed Mohaqqueq in *Sada-ye Mardom* (Kabul), 20 March 2004, p.2. Translated at FBIS IAP 2004032600042.

5. Dr. Sean M. Maloney, *Afghanistan: From Here to Eternity?*, Parameters, Spring 2004, pp. 4-15, p.

6. A recent example is: Khalid Hassan, “Pakistan Backing Away from Promise to Dismantle Madrassas”, *Daily Times* (Pakistan), 20 July 2004, Internet ed.