

Making sense of Daesh in Afghanistan: A social movement perspective

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SUMMARY

So-called Islamic State (IS or Daesh) in Iraq and Syria is widely interpreted as a terrorist phenomenon. The proclamation in late January 2015 of a *Wilayat Khorasan*, which includes Afghanistan and Pakistan, as an IS branch is commonly interpreted as a manifestation of Daesh's global ambition to erect an Islamic caliphate. Its expansion implies hierarchical order, command structures and financial flows as well as a transnational mobility of fighters, arms and recruits between Syria and Iraq, on the one hand, and Afghanistan-Pakistan, on the other. In this *Working Paper*, we take a (new) social movement perspective to investigate the processes and underlying dynamics of Daesh's emergence in different parts of the country. By employing social movement concepts, such as opportunity structures, coalition-building, resource mobilization and framing, we disentangle the different types of resource mobilization and long-term conflicts that have merged into the phenomenon of Daesh in Afghanistan. In dialogue with other approaches to terrorism studies as well as peace, civil war and security studies, our analysis focuses on relations and interactions among various actors in the Afghan-Pakistan region and their translocal networks.

The insight builds on a ten-month fieldwork-based research project conducted in four regions—east, west, north-east and north Afghanistan—during 2016. We find that Daesh in Afghanistan is a context-specific phenomenon that manifests differently in the various regions across the country and is embedded in a long-term transformation of the religious, cultural and political landscape in the cross-border region of Afghanistan-Pakistan. The direct links between Daesh in Syria and Iraq and its branch in Afghanistan are relatively weak, mostly indirect and largely symbolic, being performed through public displays of allegiance. Daesh appears to mobilize resources mainly through translocal social networks established in the past and connect the Afghan-Pakistan border region with Gulf Arab countries, not Daesh's headquarters in Raqqa. The ideology of Jihadi Salafism derives from longer-term processes and provides a new framework for actors in Afghanistan that is there to stay. Jihadi Salafism is a small but ultra-violent part of the large-scale spread of Salafism manifest in the mushrooming of Salafi mosques and *madrassas*, particularly in the east, north-east and north of Afghanistan. The *Paper* suggests that, while Daesh in Afghanistan is not the extended arm of Raqqa, it certainly has to be taken seriously. For it is precisely this relative autonomy that makes it likely to survive the fall of Mosul and Raqqa.

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Main findings

Daesh is a context-specific phenomenon that manifests differently in various regions of Afghanistan

All regional case studies indicate the popularity of Daesh's symbolism (clothing style, black flag, head bands, images of horsemen) and propaganda material (video clips, songs, images circulating in social media) which, after the initial expansion of Daesh in Iraq and Syria, was broadly adopted by Afghans in different locations and with different backgrounds. Beyond this, Daesh in Afghanistan is not a homogenous entity but a complex phenomenon that has manifested itself in different forms across Afghanistan, depending on the particular local political dynamics, historical path dependencies and the conditions and context under which respondents describe and interpret its appearance. Daesh's political ambition extends to all the lands it includes within the *Wilayat Khorasan*¹—today's Afghanistan, Pakistan and adjacent countries—but by 2016 the group's success in setting up institutions characteristic of states, such as courts, prisons and a basic bureaucratic administration (incl. tax levying) had only been seen in Nangarhar, and to a lesser extent in Kunar province, where there are features of a rational, bureaucratic administration. As part of its larger communication strategy, Daesh's FM radio *Voice of the Caliphate* was combined with an extremely violent reign of terror, with the latter leading to an erosion of local popular support.

In other areas of Afghanistan, Daesh failed to consolidate its rule. In north-eastern Afghanistan's Kunduz, Takhar and Badakhshan provinces, local respondents described Daesh as a covert presence rooted among

armed and militant Salafis who had fought under the umbrella of the Taliban's Islamic Emirate before the emergence of Daesh. In western Afghanistan, especially southern Herat and Farah, Daesh was described in relation to local strongmen and changing opportunity structures resulting from rifts within the Taliban after the announcement of Mullah Omar's death. In Jawzjan and Faryab, it was linked to the opportunism of local strongmen embroiled in a protracted rivalry between Junbesh and Jamiat, two political factions that have been competing since the 1990s. Here, just as in Sar-e Pul, Balkh and Ghor, local officials again described Daesh in terms of a future threat potential ('Daesh is coming'). These could be attempts to seek security resources from central government authorities or to distract from the failures of the local government to maintain local order and security in their area of responsibility.

A long-term transformation of the local religious, cultural and political landscape in Afghanistan–Pakistan has prepared the ground for Daesh's local manifestations

The emergence of Daesh has its roots in a militarized environment and infrastructure that has supported violent jihadist groups² in the Afghanistan–Pakistan region for thirty years, since the start of the anti-Soviet jihad. Concurrently, the religious landscape, particularly within the Sunni community, has been in an ongoing process of transformation. This context created a fertile ground for the appearance, partial consolidation and partial expansion of Daesh from mid-2014 until today. However, the case of Afghanistan is very different from Iraq and Syria where Sunni tribes have been mobilized alongside Daesh against the Shia and Alawite/Baathist governments of Iraq and Syria respectively.

1 \ *Note on orthography*: The report contains a large variety of local terms from four languages: Pashto, Dari, Arabic and Urdu. To ensure a reader-friendly presentation, the authors used a simplified form of Arabic transcription without diacritical characters (except for 'ayn and hamza [though not at the beginning of a word] following the IJMES transliteration system) for all Arabic words. Pashto, Dari and Urdu words were transcribed following existing Persian transcription systems with some minor adaptations. Especially names of persons, organizations and locations are documented as recorded during interviews. Topographic names that have a proper and known counterpart in English (e.g., Jalalabad, Achin, Kunduz) and terms designating ethnic group-belonging (Hazara, Uzbek, Tajik) or local concepts, but likewise with common usage in English (mujahidin, jihad, Taliban), have been written in line with the United Nations Editorial Manual. The plural of local terms has been anglicized (e.g., mawlawi to mawlawis).

2 \ The use of the word jihadism, or jihadist, is controversial since jihad has a variety of violent and non-violent meanings. In this report, jihadist is used in relation to violence and armed struggle.

Daesh's presence in Afghanistan is facilitated by foreign fighters

Daesh's presence in Afghanistan is in many ways a reversal of the situation which set in following the US attacks on the Taliban regime in 2001, a time when many foreign fighters supporting the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan fled across the border into the Federally Administrated Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan. Pakistani Army operations in different FATA-Agencies, especially North-Waziristan, Khyber and Bajaur since 2009, accelerated existing organizational fractures within the Pakistani Taliban umbrella organization Tehrik-e-Taliban-e-Pakistan (TTP) and other jihadi groups such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and pushed them into Afghan territory.

Resource mobilization relies on trans-local and domestic madrasa networks

Beyond the effects of Pakistani military operations which pushed militants from FATA into Afghanistan, cross-regional and cross-border as well as trans-local links play a significant role for resource mobilization (recruiting and financing). A complex landscape of religious schools (*madrassas*) propagating violent jihad in Afghanistan links people on both sides of the Afghan and Pakistani border areas and provides for a crucial supporting infrastructure. Reflecting the absence of a centralized religious clergy and hierarchy among Sunni Muslims, *madrassas* propagating extremist violence are not part of a unified, coherent institutional structure. Jihadi Salafism constitutes the dominating force of influence driving the emergence and expansion of Daesh in all study locations, but extremist violence is also propagated by groups which, while sharing many of Daesh's criticisms and expressed grievances, are not Salafist (e.g. Panjpiri who are Deobandi). Furthermore, while Salafists agree on common foundations of belief, they differ in the extent of their political engagement and are not necessarily interconnected.

Madrasa networks overlap with business ties, NGOs and charity organizations

Of the multiple Salafi networks that exist, few sojourn at the surface and become visible to some degree because they have formal political wings or are run by famous religious scholars (*ulama*). Others operate silently but likely no less efficient in their teachings and propaganda. Importantly, adherence to a Salafist creed partly overlaps with tribal, marriage and business links. These overlapping networks connect Salafi *ulama* of different ranks, their *madrassa*- and mosque-networks and various forms of charity organizations. The latter complement the network in two dimensions: (1) They form the link between well-known local clergy and their respective mosque- and *madrassa* networks with (2) foreign donors, such as private persons, businessmen, bankers/money changers, international Islamic charities/ foundations/ NGOs, living primarily in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Gulf Arab countries.

International sponsors finance Afghan charity organizations, madrasas and mosques.

While relations between Daesh in Afghanistan and the IS-headquarters in Raqqa do not appear to be strongly institutionalized, private donors living in Gulf Arab countries appear to play a more prominent role in supporting Daesh in Afghanistan—in particular with regard to funding and the popularization of Jihadi-Salafist and Wahhabi ideological doctrines. These types of funding have a long tradition since resources were mobilized *en masse* for jihad in the 1980s. Local resource generation relies mainly on taxing of valuables according to Islamic law. However, evidence from the different research locations provides a heterogeneous picture of taxation practices in accordance with the differences of Daesh-presence and actual consolidation of its rule. The role of Afghan and Pakistani businessmen in fundraising is not to be underestimated as is the nexus of Salafi religious authority and business. cursory evidence from looking at some

of the main organizers of trans-local Salafi networks suggests a strong correlation of business and religious networks. Funds destined for Daesh in Afghanistan that are not raised locally are said to be transferred mainly in two ways: through money and value transfer services such as the *hawala* system or from person to person (cash couriers). From Pakistan, a few such *hawala* operators send money to Afghanistan.

States that are home to private donors of Salafi networks are, at the same time, at the forefront of combating terrorism

Many donors and non-state charities are connected to individuals situated primarily in Gulf Arab countries and Pakistan. At the same time, these same states are at the forefront of countermeasures against the financing of terrorism. This complicates international relations with states and individuals pursuing entirely different policies.

Jihadi-Salafism provides a new narrative that is there to stay

The combination of violent jihad and Salafism is central to Daesh's ideology albeit not exclusively so since there are other armed jihadist groups—such as Lashkar-e-Islam and TTP—that propagate similar views without necessarily being Salafists. Salafism is a relatively recent phenomenon in Afghanistan and has thrived visibly since the toppling of the Taliban regime in late 2001 after the US-led intervention. Only in the provinces of Kunar and Nuristan did Salafism have local roots which go back to the 1980s and even the 1960s. There, similar to FATA and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in Pakistan, Salafism had been influencing the curriculum of *madrassas* and mosques. An increasing influence of Gulf Arab countries in the religious landscape of the north-east and east of Afghanistan since 2001 resulted in a 'quiet' Salafization, which has manifested itself in the mushrooming of Salafi mosques and *madrassas* throughout the countryside as well as in urban centres. Given the demographic structure of the Afghan

population (more than 46 per cent are below 15 years of age), increasing numbers of the population and especially youths are exposed to Salafi education. However, Daesh's narrative goes beyond mainstream Salafism, as practiced for example by the monarchy of Saudi Arabia, towards the millennial prophecy of establishing the caliphate. By portraying itself as the force anticipated in the primary religious sources (Quran and/or *hadith*) that will establish the caliphate according to prophecy, Daesh is providing a master frame that introduces a new jihadi narrative to its Afghan audience.

Daesh's communication strategy combines narratives on geopolitics and extreme brutality

Daesh's local FM radio *The Voice of the Caliphate* is an important medium and plays a key role in spreading Daesh messaging about the Islamic State's political project as well as geopolitical themes but also poetry and chants (*nasheed*) into urban areas of Nangarhar, in particular the provincial centre Jalalabad. But Daesh's communication strategy also includes 'shock and awe' strategy through public acts of extreme violence and brutality of Daesh in Nangarhar. Daesh also employs intimidating language for its declared enemies (media, ANSF, Taliban of the Islamic Emirate) or deviants (*ulama*, tribal elders) and uses examples of spectacular violence in its broadcasts to impress its audience. This distinguishes Daesh from other jihadist groups such as al-Qaeda but also the Taliban.

Lacking counter-narrative to Daesh and the larger transformation of the religious landscape

Daesh's success and the larger transformation of the religious landscape in Afghanistan and Pakistan coincides with the lacking persuasion of alternative frames provided by the government, other jihadi groups, the Taliban or independent *ulama* linked to the traditional religious authorities including the large Sufi networks which played a major role in pre-war Afghanistan. Simultaneously, the government of

Afghanistan and the international community did not formulate an effective policy to engage with the country's religious establishment and failed to enforce an official religious doctrine and religious education reforms. Western development aid organizations have meticulously avoided funding community mosque buildings in the course of the civil intervention and reconstruction period since 2002. Gulf-Arab-funded NGOs have stepped in, constructed mosques and *madrassas*, brought books and hired mullahs and teachers of a Salafist orientation.

Introduction

When Daesh³ appeared in Afghanistan in 2014, their emergence seemed to be a logical consequence of the proclaimed vision of Daesh in Iraq and Syria, with its plans to expand into all the lands conquered by Muslim armies in the 7th and 8th century of the C.E. The label ‘Islamic State Khorasan’ makes this explicit as it refers to the lands between the Caspian Sea and India with Bukhara, Balkh, Samarkand, Nishapur and Merv as its major cities (Miquel & Laurens, 2004). During Daesh’s quick territorial expansion and institutionalization in the Middle East, rapidly reaching a size greater than Great Britain by 2013, so-called Islamic State in Iraq and Syria was widely perceived as a highly potent political formation. Its initial success, obvious organizational capacity and professional propaganda created an image of efficient rule, indicating the existence of top-down command and response structures. Moreover, the ambition to establish a global caliphate made it only seem rational that Daesh in Iraq and Syria was seeking a strategic expansion towards other world regions, among them to the Afghanistan-Pakistan region, where its Khorasan Province was established in January 2015.

The seemingly unstoppable initial expansion of Daesh—according to a UN report of September 2015, widely cited by news agencies (AFP, 2015), Daesh ‘flags’ had been raised in 25 out of 34 Afghan provinces between summer and autumn 2015—was paralleled with acts of unprecedented violence. Observers quickly came to speak of ‘IS-Khorasan’ (here further ‘Daesh-Khorasan’) as of ‘a new kid in town’—another jihadi⁴ organization besides the existing ones that would undermine peace and proliferate further harm through armed militancy and terrorist acts. Importantly, this interpretation suggested that Daesh in

Afghanistan was a novel phenomenon that had come from outside the region, imposed by the potent Daesh headquarters in Raqqa, Syria. As such Daesh-Khorasan appeared to be largely autonomous from domestic developments related to jihadism and militancy in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region.

The emergence of Daesh in Iraq and Syria and Daesh-Khorasan in Afghanistan and the rampant violence it unfolded with highly symbolic terrorist acts and gruesome public executions have led analysts to rely mainly on the terrorism lens for their explanatory frameworks. Under this lens, several strands can be distinguished. One approach in political science and international relations focuses on organizational models (Mendelsohn, 2016; Giustozzi, 2016a,b) or state(hood) (Napoleoni, 2014) to explain how jihadist organizations (including so-called Islamic State, al-Qaeda) evolve and expand within a broader global jihadist movement (Byman, 2015). Another strand embeds terrorist groups and new traits of violent action within a larger historical approach, articulated as a theory of ‘waves’ with generations of extremist groups rooted in political movements (Rapoport, 2001; Neumann 2016). Another approach emphasizes a grievance rationale in its search for underlying motivations for the emergence of armed militant groups and their use of violence including terrorist acts (Demmers, 2012, based on Collier & Hoeffler, 2004). This approach does not emphasize organizational structures and terrorist groups’ expansion but focuses on repression, deprivation and marginalization as factors contributing to radicalization, understood as a precursor to forms of militancy which may include features of terrorism.

In this *Working Paper*,⁵ we argue that these approaches to the interpretation of Daesh have analytical limitations. The authors have coordinated a ten-month empirical research project on the

3 \ Note that ‘Daesh in Afghanistan’ is used throughout this *Paper* to signify (so-called) Islamic State Khorasan (by historical-geographical definition comprising at least Afghanistan and Pakistan). The semantic limitation to the territory of and actors in Afghanistan was chosen because the Pakistan dimension of Islamic State Khorasan was not subject to the research underlying the argument of this study and is thus not equitably addressed. The preference to Daesh is due to the popular usage of the name Daesh for Islamic State (vernacular also: Dawlat ul-Islam, Khilafat ul-Islam) in Afghanistan itself. ‘Daesh in Iraq and Syria’ is used when speaking about so-called Islamic State in Syria and Iraq.

4 \ The use of the word jihadism, or jihadi/st, is controversial since jihad has a variety of violent and non-violent meanings. In this *Paper*, jihadi/st is used in relation to violence and armed struggle.

5 \ We would like to thank all those colleagues who have contributed to the data collection and analysis and who, given the sensitivity of the topic, have to remain anonymous due to security considerations. It goes without saying that data collection depended on the trust and willingness of the respondents to share their insights into the various topics of our research. The analysis owes most to them. Special thanks also goes to Christoph Blumert, who assisted with the compilation of the initial report and the colleagues at BICC who provided valuable feedback on a first draft, in particular Elke Grawert, Marc von Boemcken and Conrad Schetter.

phenomenon of Daesh in Afghanistan, which was conducted between March and December 2016 (see 2.1). Based on the findings of this study, we argue that to make sense of Daesh in Afghanistan, a social movement research perspective is useful and allows us to generate valuable analytical insights. This perspective understands Daesh as a transnational movement which partakes in contentious politics constructed around processes of claim-making (Tarrow & Tilly, 2007) oriented towards the realization of a contemporary utopian political order, the caliphate, rooted in the model of the early days of Islam. Social movement theory broadly speaking provides useful concepts which can be used to analyse Daesh and other terrorist groups and which allow us to go beyond the limitations of the terrorist lens. However, our approach also implies a number of modifications to social movement theory which operates with a classic separation between state and non-state actors and where actors intend to change government policy (Tarrow & Tilly, 2007). Daesh is not interested in changing government policy but to replace the existing framework of rights and social contract with the political model of the caliphate rooted in the model of the early days of Islam.

To make this point, the next section of this introduction will now summarize the above-mentioned analytical approaches to the study of Daesh (state of the art). We shall discuss them critically and identify analytical shortcomings and heuristic limitations, not least in light of our new data. By contrast, the sub-section on methodology highlights the methodological approach of the empirical study on Daesh that we coordinated. It demonstrates the critical importance of the empirical base for employing analytical tools from social movement analysis and thus making sense of Daesh. The second chapter introduces how, from the standpoint of theory, political violence and militancy can be analysed from a (new) social movement perspective. In the third chapter, we apply the four dimensions of social movement analysis—opportunity structures, coalition building, resource mobilization and framing—to the empirical findings of the study and discuss the added value of this approach, i.e. what the social movement approach

tells us about Daesh's lifecycle in Afghanistan. In the Conclusion, we reflect on the different approaches to making sense of Daesh and armed militancy in a wider sense, suggesting that they are characterized by genuine complementarity rather than contradiction.

State of the art: Analytical approaches to interpreting Daesh in Afghanistan

This section briefly introduces the work of eleven authors with their attempts to analyse the emergence and expansion of terrorist organizations. While some address Daesh in Afghanistan explicitly, others have a broader purview, for example by focusing on al-Qaeda or the emergence of Daesh in Iraq and Syria, although their findings are also applicable to Daesh in Afghanistan. These lenses can be grouped into three broad approaches with emphasis on (1) organizational models of terrorism, (2) describing the IS-specific form of armed militancy as a particular development of older forms of terrorism that are based on a different ideological quality and subsequent violent radicalization (wave-model), and (3) grievances fuelled by repression and marginalization that underlie the emergence of militant ideology, subsequent radicalization, and rebel governance. The brief review that follows is guided by the question of how the different approaches can help to explain or make sense of the establishment of Daesh in Afghanistan. Thereafter we will present our own approach to Daesh rooted in the framework provided by studies on social movements and contentious politics (Tarrow & Tilly, 2007).

Organizational models of terrorism

Several authors approached the question of terrorism and violent extremist groups by scrutinizing the relation of Daesh in Iraq and Syria to Daesh in Afghanistan and Pakistan. They debate on whether this relation is best understood through the 'franchise model', as an insurgency along the lines of a patronage model, or in terms of aspiration to statehood. The Franchise Model as an explanatory framework for this jihadist group became popular with *Peter Bergen's* description of al-Qaeda (2001). Although Bergen's

account is largely descriptive rather than analytical, the central idea of his framework is that al-Qaeda can be understood as an international organization or company that operates on the model of a franchising business. A central feature of this model is that the franchisee (in this case Daesh in Afghanistan and Pakistan) operates largely independently of the franchisor (Daesh in Syria and Iraq).

Arguing against this approach, Kilcullen (2005) understands jihadist groups as part of a global insurgency best explained through a model of traditional patron-client relationships. According to Kilcullen, the jihadist group is more akin to a tribe, an extended family, a criminal syndicate, or a mafia clan, where a “web of traditional authority structures, family allegiances and tribal honour” (2005, p. 14) is central. As Kilcullen states,

Many analysts have tended to see the marriage relationships, money flows, alumni relationships and sponsorship links in the jihad as weakly subordinate to a military core of terrorist activity. Rather, this analysis would argue, the military activity is actually subordinate, being merely one of the shared activities that the network engages in, while the core is the patronage network (Kilcullen, 2005, p. 14).

In a localized variation of this reading, Giustozzi and Mangal’s account of Daesh in Afghanistan and Pakistan adopts a view similar to Kilcullen’s patronage model as it operates with an implicit model of the Pashtun tribal structures (Giustozzi & Mangal, 2016a, b). They interpret Daesh in Afghanistan in terms of the segmentary system of Pashtun tribes that constitute rivalling sub-groups and engage in a politics of balancing one tribe off against another. By focusing on the impact of targeted killings, particularly drone strikes, on the local Daesh leadership, organizational structure and factions (and factional rivalries), the authors highlight the importance of internal struggles, visible in the leadership challenges and struggles over leadership succession resulting from targeted strikes. This perspective also suggests that Daesh’s (in Afghanistan/Pakistan) local leaders are not religious authorities (such as Mullah Omar, the late leader of the Taliban of the Islamic Emirate) who can transcend tribal or ethnic divides.

Mendelsohn’s analysis on the expansion of different terrorist organizations is an attempt at systematising what seems to be a collection of heterogeneous approaches (2016). He distinguishes four main organizational models: branching out (‘franchising’), unification, absorption, and umbrella group. Accordingly, he argues that al-Qaeda follows the ‘branching out’ model, because the organization created a two-tier structure with a central command and lower branches responsible for different geographical areas. While the centre sets the ideological orientation and broad political goals and determines strategy, the affiliates enjoy organizational and operational autonomy. In the unification model, the relevant organizations enter into an equal power sharing agreement with a high level of institutionalization. Daesh in Iraq and Syria is portrayed as example of the absorption model in which an organization expands across borders without politically dividing its arenas. “Its association with other organizations is based on its complete dominance, and the organisations that join it get swallowed, losing their corporal structure and identity” (Mendelsohn, 2016, p. 8). This is in contrast not only to the interpretation by Bergen, above, and Napoleoni (2015), below, but also to that of Giustozzi and Mangal, who—besides emphasizing the tribal dimension of Daesh in Afghanistan—claim that Daesh in Afghanistan and Pakistan comprises several quasi-autonomous groups, which are *de facto* more akin to the umbrella model, which envisages different fronts connected through loose organizational arrangements. Although these groups appear to maintain *de facto* autonomy, the members of several groups belonging to Daesh in Afghanistan and Pakistan, including Tehreek-e-Khilafat-e-Pakistan, Lashkar-e-Islam, and further “three Baluchi organizations, another Pakistani group led by Mullah Bakhtiar, five Afghan groups and one Central Asian group” (Giustozzi & Mangal, 2016a, p. 8), have pledged oaths of loyalty to the self-proclaimed caliph Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and have in turn been recognized as part of the Islamic State. In this reading, those who join shed their prior group identity, at least as a matter of public display even if they do retain *de facto* operational autonomy.

Napoleoni (2015) is among those analysts who argue that Daesh in Iraq and Syria is best analysed as a mutation of older forms of terrorism and, crucially, in terms of criteria and qualities of statehood. According to her, Daesh in Iraq and Syria is better equipped than any other jihadist group in terms of resources and has a strategy directed towards the aspiration of realizing statehood in the form of a caliphate. This analysis is based on the observation that Daesh in Iraq and Syria controls territory and taxes millions of people, which forms the basis of its autonomy from the agendas of foreign patrons, be they states or private charities. Furthermore, Daesh cadres are largely composed of former Baathists who worked in Iraq's police, army and secret service, with all their experience of administering a state. *Napoleoni* (2015) argues that Daesh's desire to resurrect the caliphate is not a new idea but was already proposed by Hizb ut-Tahrir in the 1950s.

Wave model

The approaches grouped under the wave model see terrorism primarily as a generational problem embedded in political movements and employ an issue-based, rather linear evolutionary interpretation. *Rapoport* (2001) distinguishes four waves of terrorism, starting from the anarchist wave (1880–1914), which was followed by a nationalist wave from 1920 onwards, then the New Left terrorist activities from the 1960s, and the religious wave since 1979. Extending this model, *Neumann* (2016) has identified a so-called fifth wave of Jihadi-Salafist terrorism, including Daesh, the origins of which he locates not in the 1979 Iranian revolution and Afghan war of the 1980s, which were at the root of the fourth wave of terrorism, but in the Arab Spring. For the Afghan context and the Islamic State Khorasan, the argument of the Arab Spring falls short. However, there is another justification for speaking of a fifth wave which has less to do with the specific events but different qualities of al-Qaeda and Islamic State. Whereas al-Qaeda had a more intellectual and an almost legal-rational register of justification for its actions (anti-imperialist messages, attention not to kill Muslims, political choice not to attack Shia), the Islamic State's *modus operandi* is guided by an approach which combines

rational bureaucracy with affects (Beifuss & Scheuermann, forthcoming). Complementing these perspectives through the terrorist lens, representatives of the wave model also place Daesh within the broader global jihadist movement. For example, *Gerges* (2014) takes the case of Daesh to identify a new (third) wave of jihadism. Although this contextualization of the ideology of Daesh must be acknowledged; the analytical value of merely identifying successive waves of a phenomenon (whether militant/terrorist or quietist/religious) is still limited.

Grievances, marginalization and rebel governance

The third set of authors is concerned with looking into the reasons for jihadist radicalization and the rise of militancy. The spectrum of works fitting this category ranges from classic writings such as the Huntington (1993) thesis on the clash of civilizations, which assign responsibility for the growth and expansion of Daesh to a complex framework of geopolitical alliances between 'the West and the rest', through to recent literature on jihadist insurgencies (Rich, 2016a, b). However, religious ideology does not necessarily play a prominent role in generating such grievances. For example, *Rogers* (2016) describes Daesh as a "most dramatic expression" of "revolts from the margins, driven by widening economic divisions, rising global elites and dangerous environmental constraints". He suggests that inequality in the international economic system and climate change-induced environmental stress have given rise to Daesh in Iraq and Syria. With this view on the broader international context, *Rogers*' interpretation is distinct from *Gerges*' view, who—besides contextualizing the rise of Daesh as part of a global jihadist movement—also points to the significance of the local political environment. He locates the social origins of Daesh in Syria and Iraq in "an unholy union between an Iraq-based al-Qaeda offshoot and the defeated Iraqi Baathist regime of Saddam Hussein" (*Gerges*, 2014, p. 339).

Stressing the religious factor, *Woltering* (2002) argues that Islamism signifies an 'ideology of protest' against Western imperialism. *Kalyvas* (2015) also takes up the notion of protest and rebellion arguing that Daesh in Iraq and Syria can be seen as a revolutionary

armed group because of its ambition to transform society in a deep and radical way. According to him, combat, organization and governance constitute the key dimensions of revolutionary rebels. He links the phenomenon of Daesh to the recent emergence of a research focus on rebel governance within the academic field of comparative civil war studies—a background that makes him at the same time doubt the exact role of religion in Daesh’s ideological worldview. Placing Daesh in Syria and Iraq in the context of other revolutionary groups throughout history, especially revolutionary insurgencies during the Cold War, Kalyvas cautions against interpretations that point to an overly exceptionalist or unique nature of Daesh.

This review of the main approaches to making sense of Daesh’s rise, organizational structure and expansion illustrates the various authors’ preoccupation with an external viewpoint and an outsider’s positionality. Their position is distanced in two respects: On the one hand, their writings reflect a positioning in the paradigm of the War on Terror, that is, their arguments are state-centric—not only in their institutional and intellectual links to national security projects—and feature a problem-solving orientation (Jackson, 2007). On the other hand, they write from the position of the academic observer whose angle is determined by disciplinary parochialism. This means that as specialists on counterinsurgency (Kilcullen, Giustozzi & Mangal), terrorism and counterterrorism (Mendelsohn), professors of Political Science (Kalyvas), Peace Studies (Rogers) and Security Studies (Neumann), experts on transnational terrorism (Napoleoni), co-founders of terrorism studies (Rapoport), think tank executive cum journalist and security analyst with academic assignments (Bergen), they are all inclined to a certain bird’s eye view on local developments. Their comparative perspective tends to shield them from grasping some of the grassroots political and social developments in the various contexts in which militancy arises, not least due to lack of local access and the relevant cultural and language competencies that area studies specialists or anthropologists would be able to employ.

While the angle of the authors discussed above is valid in all (political and academic) respects, we

should nevertheless carefully scrutinize their theoretical approaches and methods used. For instance, representatives of the recently evolved field of critical terrorism studies (Jackson, 2007; Breen Smyth, Gunning, Jackson, Kassimeris & Robinson, 2008; Heath-Kelly, Jarvis & Baker-Beall, 2014) have introduced a critical theory approach to the study of political violence and terrorism, posing, for example, the question of how we know what we know about terrorism and counterterrorism (Heath-Kelly et al., 2014, p. 1). By introducing new perspectives on discursive fields, narratives of legitimation, and performativity into the debate, they have highlighted how a researcher’s own positionality can matter in the study of insurgencies, terrorism and the rise of jihadi militancy.

We acknowledge the value and incisiveness of the above studies for comparative political science, peace and terrorism studies. However, we argue that in-depth studies of local developments, here the dynamics surrounding the phenomenon of Daesh in Afghanistan, are able to contribute another reality that can complement our understanding of non-state armed groups, their organization, expansion and motivation. As we have seen, existing studies overly focus on typologies and categorizations of insurgent/terrorist groups. They present status descriptions and ex-post explanations of their emergence and expansion. As such, they tend to be rather static, with limited explanatory value when it comes to the internal dynamics of the groups in question because they neglect the interface of Daesh and local communities which is important to understand Daesh’s evolution in Afghanistan.

Main argument and methodology

In this *Working Paper*, we employ conceptual strands from new and classic social movement studies to the analysis of Daesh’s emergence and evolution in Afghanistan. With this approach, we second Kalyvas’ point (above) that Daesh can alternatively be seen as a ‘revolutionary’ armed group but subject it—for heuristic purposes—to classical movement analysis. From a social movement research perspective, political violence, radicalization, armed militancy and terrorism can be interpreted as forms, manifestations and

outcomes of contentious politics. This view yields several advantages, which are analytically fruitful. The added value here is that it allows us to capture the complexity of movement (Daesh's) trajectories by analysing framing, opportunity structures and resource mobilization structures in their overlapping and reciprocal effects. It opens up a process perspective that can take account of long-term change—protracted 'revolutionary' processes—from which significant social, political and cultural changes have derived. Besides grasping 'the bigger picture' in temporal terms as well as the dynamics on a rather micro- or local level, new social movement theory's consideration of the transnational dimension and networks has an added value for investigating the link between Daesh in Iraq and Syria and in Afghanistan.

Empirically, our argument builds on the results of a field research-based study on the phenomenon of Daesh in Afghanistan, conducted jointly by BICC and its partner organization in Kabul, The Liaison Office (TLO) between March and December 2016. The ten-month research was financed by Germany's Federal Foreign Office and resulted in a comprehensive report on the findings, including policy recommendations for the Department for Crisis Prevention, Stabilisation and Peacebuilding (So3) at the Foreign Office. Its methodological approach relied on extensive field research across eleven provinces over a period of seven months and a grassroots approach with the aim to collect interview data in areas under real and alleged Daesh rule. For this purpose, we did not choose territorial entities, with a focus on particular districts or provinces as our point of departure, but followed up reports (news analysis, rumours, etc.) of Daesh presence or 'appearance' (real or symbolic) in any location and worked there with locally appointed interviewers. This mobile approach of 'following Daesh' reflected the fluidity of Daesh in Afghanistan at the beginning of 2016 and the dynamics of its appearance, enabling us to trace and track Daesh activities and the movements of its followers geographically.

The objective of this research was to investigate the reasons for local Daesh's attractiveness, strategies of rule, funding sources, recruitment patterns, relations with other groups and with Daesh in Syria and Iraq as well as the group's local manifestations which

range from a consolidated presence with state-like institutions to ephemeral appearance. Due to the sensitivity of the topic and the risks involved, we relied on qualitative methods, mainly semi-structured interviews⁶ with men and women living in or having fled areas under real or putative control of Daesh.⁷ Besides interview accounts, the sources for the study comprised other primary data, such as recorded radio broadcasts by Daesh FM radio aired over different time periods throughout 2016 in Nangarhar, audio and video material popular with Daesh followers and distributed in part through Daesh in Iraq and Syria's media outlets, and several original documents (certificates, cards, etc.) issued by Daesh in Afghanistan. Moreover, secondary data sources included a literature review, e.g. of reports on Daesh published during the research period and an analysis of local media reporting related to Daesh (in Pashto and Dari)⁸, including social media sources.

6 \ The type of flexible approach chosen for this research implied that question guidelines and follow-up always had to be tailored, as much as possible, to the local context in the different regions and districts. Data collection in each research site began with a general/scoping questionnaire tailored to the particular research context. After the initial fact-gathering period of about two weeks, a separate question guideline was elaborated for each data collector and research stage. Respondents were chosen based on their proximity and knowledge of Daesh-related activities in the respective local context. Overall, twelve detailed question guidelines were developed for data collectors in the field, including two that separately targeted women and religious scholars. Each detailed questionnaire was followed by two or even three rounds of follow-up questions. As a result, some of the interviews totalled around 80 follow-up questions. Also, expert interviews with informed individuals (journalists, analysts, and members of security, intelligence and jihadi organizations) were conducted by the research coordinator in Kabul and via skype from Bonn.

7 \ Wherever possible, the team aspired to data triangulation, cross-checking multiple sources. Semi-structured interviews with residents in Daesh-activity areas, for instance, were cross-checked with other interview data, such as from interviews eventually conducted with Daesh-members/sympathizers, with external informed observers ('experts' and focal points) in the area/province of Daesh presence, and also with security analysts in Kabul. Furthermore, the local surveyors were asked to report observations, which were discussed during the debriefing in Kabul. Most importantly, the gradual increase in study sites/cases for the project provided opportunities for comparison and generated additional questions and incentives to cross-check contents across regions.

8 \ The media analysis included taand.com, Pajhwok, Khaama, Tolo, Nun-website (Pashto, "Today"), Benawa (Pashto) from Kandahar, Tol Afghan, SITE, Long War Journal, Jane's Intelligence Network, Reuters, CNN, AP, BBC different language services, twitter, facebook and YouTube.

Political violence and militancy from a (new) social movement research perspective

Social movement studies combine several theoretical strands that were developed to explain the emergence, organizational capacity and structure of social movements. Thereby the concept of social movement is not narrowly defined but evolved with the real-world phenomena it has sought to explain over the last decades. One common denominator of the concept is the network structure of durably mobilized non-state groups sharing a joint identity around a common issue and seeking some type of fundamental social change with claims voiced publicly. They characteristically stage public protests to make their particular message/s heard. Taking into account the evolution of so-called 'new social movements', Martin (2015, p. 5) distinguishes two types of phenomena studied by social movement analysts: conventional movements, whose activities aim at the integration of previously excluded issues and groups into the 'normal' political process, thus being (state) polity-centric; and movements that strive to be autonomous of the political system and are more concerned with identity politics and post-materialistic values.

A majority of movement scholars are concerned with protest movements that belong to the first camp and view them as manifestation of politics from below. This involves classical civil society engagement aimed at political participation to bring about some sort of positive change and improvement in democratic political systems or fuel a transformation from authoritarian to democratic political order. In such a framework, armed violence and actions that can be qualified as terrorist as instrument in a repertoire of contention is hardly of significance, because the cost of mobilising and organizing violence are too high compared with alternative forms of protest (Zimmermann, 1998, p. 59). Terrorism, although in the abstract acknowledged as tactic of social movements, has not been prominent among these strands of social movement scholarship. Studies on state terror (Petras, 1989) and escalating political violence evolving from movement protests against the state (Morris, 1993; Kerbo & Schaffner, 1986) are an exception. The followers of the second camp also miss out on violence as an effect of mobilization or a form of protest in

new social movements. Nor have they, on another note, engaged in researching Islamist movements, for example, as one type of identity-based movement.

We argue that the question of identity, a process of self-and other identification (Brubaker, 2012), is crucial to understand Daesh in Afghanistan and Pakistan and other extremist violent groups and terrorism. Analyses of Daesh should not solely focus on questions of organizational structure but the claims, values and ideas which inform the aspiration to realize a utopian political order rooted in the caliphate of the early days of Islam. As Atran (2010, p. 5) put it, "terrorists aren't nihilists, starkly or ambiguously, but often deeply moral souls with a horribly misplaced sense of justice."

Overall, what can be observed in social movement scholarship is a striking neglect of movement phenomena outside the realm of democratic and transitional statehood, combined with a certain ethnocentricity, not least because the development of theory on social movement formation and structure has taken place exclusively in the Global North. In addition, violence is met and treated as an exceptional phenomenon and has thus remained under-conceptualized. So what is to be made of radical Islamists like al-Qaeda, the Taliban and Daesh in Syria and Iraq, which all exhibit an extraordinary amount and quality of violence and employ terrorism as part of their repertoire of contention? This brief summary of the telos and objective of movement studies as they have developed up to this day—along with parochialism described above—exposes a reluctance to view such jihadist groups as social movements in the narrow academic sense. Nevertheless, the Taliban have been described in social movement terms. In one account, they are interpreted as consisting of four separate movements sharing a transformative political agenda (Abou Zahab & Evans, 2009). Similarly, Goldstone (2016) characterizes Daesh in Iraq and Syria as a revolutionary state-building movement. He argues that because of its statehood aspirations, administrative performance and global ideology it cannot just be called a terrorist organization.

By recognizing how civil war, terrorism, revolutions and social movements interlink and cannot be treated as disparate phenomena, political violence and militancy now appear as an essential repertoire of contention—albeit not studied as such in traditional social movement scholarship but as an outgrowth of contentious politics elsewhere (see State of the art, Section 1). On the other hand, there are increasing calls for cross-pollination and more interdisciplinary exchange of conceptual frameworks of social movement, civil war and terrorism studies.

For the purpose of our analysis, we borrow from four theoretical strands of movement theory—coalition-building, political opportunity structures, resource mobilization and framing—to interpret our empirically derived insights into the emergence, structure, ideological underpinning and (non-)expansion of Daesh in Afghanistan. Although the four theory strands constitute disparate fields in movement studies, they are closely interrelated and represent complementary mechanisms that explain⁹ collective action dynamics. We shall now elaborate the main traits of each field and point out their overlapping and reciprocal effects (at the theory level, before being applied to the empirical data in Section 3).

Coalition-building

Based on the assumption that collective action is formed around common interests, social movements can be understood as actor coalitions, often featuring only a modest level of organization and organizational capacity and held together by an abstract collective identity (Kern, 2008, p. 121). In particular, new social movement theories emphasize networks of collective actors as actor coalitions. The common interest is derived from some sense of deprivation and thus has its roots in certain grievances. These can be real, constructed and/or manipulated. However, as endured repression, social inequality and marginalization in

⁹ In their complementarity, the four strands can be seen as interdependent mechanisms with no single one being found to have a direct causal relationship, meaning for example that neither framing nor resource mobilization would explain the emergence or a particular dynamic of the group or network in question. Instead, the mechanisms connect certain causal factors with outcomes in an indirect way. (See Mayntz, 2003, also Sayer, 2010, pp. 113–17).

many real-world contexts show, grievances alone are insufficient rationale to account for political violence and radicalization. Other necessary conditions have to apply for protest and violent action to occur. It is opportunity structures, resources and frames that provide the organizational impetus.

Political opportunities

The key idea of political opportunity theorizing is that movements—or in our case different types of mobilization, i.e. for violent action, recruiting, commitment and resource aggregation—are shaped by a wider political environment or socio-political and cultural context. Accordingly, the openness or closedness of a formal political system (Martin, 2015, p. 41) or even global geopolitical constellations will influence the choice of contention instrument (strategy) by a group or social movement. Moreover, the success of, for example, an ensuing mobilization for protest, violence or other actions will additionally depend on the group's organizational capacity. For recognizing opportunities, effective communication plays a crucial role, thus, successful mobilization also depends on framing. As pull-factor behind social mobilization in movements, political opportunity structures are never static and vary over time. This allows dynamic patterns of emergence and (re-)definition of movements or other (revolutionary) collective action groups because new donors (resource mobilization) might appear after a change in political context, or different frames might become available. Thus, political opportunities affect the movement's organizational structure because a group might perceive opportune conditions and decide to strengthen its efforts to mobilize material resources and upscale recruitment in line with a planned strategy for interest articulation, whether in the form of protest, terrorist acts or similar. In this regard, it is pertinent to note that even the perception of an opportunity may motivate collective action. Beck (2009) has pointed out that transnational terrorism and radical militancy are affected by specific changes in opportunity structures, such as the innovation of modular collective action and movement diffusion.

Resource mobilization

Resources of different types are deemed crucial for the emergence, structure and dynamics of social movements and insurgencies. Whether material or social in nature, internally or externally generated, they can empower (movement) groups and enable mobilization and collective action (Zimmermann, 1998, p. 55). The spectrum of resources comprises money/finances, human resources (followers, experts, trainers, communication specialists, fighters, etc.), labour, specialized knowledge, information, communications infrastructure, legitimacy and moral resources, including collective memories and myths. The latter are articulated and most efficiently employed through successful framing. The mobilization of resources is dependent on both, framing and political opportunity structures. On the flipside, it is decisive in determining the trajectory (structure and lifecycle) of a social movement. Recruitment and the commitment of followers to the cause of a movement will depend on the availability of resources (incentives), be they an appealing ideology, a salary or other benefits. In this logic, the diminishing of resources would cause groups to compete harder over the remaining resources available and potentially result in radicalization (manifested in political violence and increasing militancy) if that is what qualifies them in the eyes of donors.

As resource mobilization depends on organizational capacity and opportunity, many authors stress the role of political entrepreneurs who are able to generate material resources for redistribution and, in this way, recruit large numbers of followers. Moral authorities, for example religious scholars, recruit through indoctrination that can be either based on an appealing political vision (caliphate) or just on respect or even fear (passive support). Especially the appeal of collective identity frames—like the Muslim community of believers (*umma*)—helps to recruit and to establish commitment. Likewise, social networks based on some collective identity trait, for example tribal belonging, kinship, shared education or army service, will play an important role in recruiting and, more generally, in building mobilization/participation/commitment.

Resource mobilization theorists debate the extent to which one type of resource can be substituted by another (e.g. ideological commitment by paid, ideologically unattached recruits, for instance mercenaries) or whether they yield mutually amplifying effects (Zimmermann, 1998, p. 55). This point is indirectly related to the question of hierarchies and political entrepreneurs (see above). Evidence from terrorist and insurgent groups as well as modern social movement organizations shows that they tend to have a professionalized core that masterminds the strategy and attacks, generates external resources, and provides overall leadership to a broader base of followers. The latter's motives for joining the group might significantly differ from the core group members' interests. In this regard, movement scholars have investigated the processes of stimulating and influencing emotions (e.g. anger triggered by deprivation and perceptions of inequality) for mobilization purposes. This means that success in stirring up emotions can change the preference sets of potential joiners and increases their readiness to protest or contributes to their radicalization.

Framing

Framing is crucial for resource mobilization, recruitment and the recognition of political opportunities by movement leaders. Framing can be described as a process and pattern of interpretation through which actors categorize and organize situations, events or experiences (Goffmann, 1974). Actors frame situations through a process of self- and other identification including collective self-identifications (“we”) which serves to identify others and oneself and to speak about and for others (Brubaker, 2012, p. 2). Similarly, cultural interpretation models are produced and reproduced through effective framing. These models prove most effective in mobilizing if they optimally resonate with the existing cultural dispositions of potential followers. It is by producing and reproducing compatible meaning that collective actor groups and social movements actively construct realities (Berger and Luckmann 2001). Among

different networks one master frame might exist that represents a common ideological denominator.

Movement actors articulate their goals to the public through media. Thus, communication and agenda setting are key dimensions of framing. Insurgent groups, terrorist organizations or other movement actors spend much time and effort in explaining their actions. Increasingly, social media is taking on a key role in dissemination across affiliated networks. Framing not only comprises verbal action but also symbolic action as the impact of high profile attacks and performative violence (Juergensmeyer, 2003), or success in the form of, say, territorial expansion by Daesh in Iraq and Syria, have shown. The public display of violence and the use of religious ideological frames serves to self-empower the respective group, for example by mobilizing recruits.

A social movement reading of Daesh in Afghanistan

In what follows, we interpret the findings of our 2016 research study on Daesh in Afghanistan through the conceptual lens of actor coalitions, opportunity structures, resource mobilization and framing.

Many Daeshs in Afghanistan: The significance of political opportunity for emergence and expansion

As outlined in the methodology section, our research investigated the phenomenon of Daesh in Afghanistan by ‘following Daesh’, that is, we traced the appearance of Daesh wherever evidence of its presence or emergence appeared from first-hand accounts, media reports and rumours. This resulted in research activity in eleven provinces of Afghanistan, which can be described as four regional clusters: The east (Nangarhar, Kunar and Nuristan provinces, which all share a border with Pakistan), the north-east (Kunduz, Takhar and Badakhshan provinces), the west (Herat and Farah provinces) and the north (Jawzjan, Faryab, Sar-e Pul provinces¹⁰). The main finding, that Daesh in Afghanistan is a highly localized phenomenon manifesting differently in different areas, shall be elaborated here as a first step to illustrate the different trajectories of Daesh’s putative appearance and disappearance, short-term expansion and consolidating presence in the four focus regions. As will be shown, political opportunity structures largely created the scope for Daesh to go beyond an ephemeral appearance and consolidate its presence by setting up local structures of authority with pretensions to statehood.

Daesh appeared in Afghanistan in the summer of 2014 as a force led by Hafiz Saeed, a member of the Pashtun Orakzai tribe and former leader (*amir*) of the Tehrik-e-Taliban-e-Pakistan (TTP) in the Orakzai Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan. By December 2014, Daesh had pushed the Taliban of the Islamic Emirate out of some areas of southern Nangarhar Province. In early 2015, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi recognized Hafiz Saeed as the ‘Khorasan

10 \ On the situation in two other northern provinces, Balkh and Ghor, we carried out a few additional interviews but did not follow-up with actual field research.

governor”¹¹, “just three months after reports that senior elements of the Taliban in both Afghanistan and Pakistan had pledged allegiance to the Islamic State and Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi” (Panda, 2015). By February 2015, groups apparently affiliated to Daesh manifested themselves in several other areas of the country, such as Kajaki (Helmand), Farah/Herat, Khak-e Afghan (Zabul) and Logar (Osman, 2016c), with Kunduz, Takhar, Kunar, Nuristan, Faryab, Jawzjan, Ghor, and Sar-e Pul soon to follow.

East: Nangarhar–Kunar–Nuristan. Presence and statehood ambition of Daesh

Daesh’s move from Pakistan’s Tirah Valley into Nangarhar seems to have anticipated Pakistani military operations in Khyber Agency in March 2015 (Ali, 2015) after the area had become a gravitational centre for militants fleeing the prior operations in North Waziristan. Pakistani military operations in Khyber Agency then pushed militants across the border into Afghanistan (Osman, 2016c). First, Daesh was able to gain and then hold territory in Nangarhar’s south-eastern districts located on the northern slope of the Spin Ghar Mountain Range bordering Pakistan (Osman, 2016a). From December 2014 to December 2016, Daesh held territory in a highly dynamic context with military victories against and defeats suffered primarily by the Taliban linked to the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan in combination with an effective campaign of Afghan air force and US drone strikes. By the end of November 2016, the territory controlled by Daesh had expanded and then shrunk from a maximum of eight to four districts in Nangarhar, and the

11 \ By default, Daesh Khorasan was established as the province of a caliphate without (national) borders, i.e. a unified Islamic state based on *sharia* law in accordance with the prophetic model of Salaf al-Salih. This proposition already entails more than one contradiction: A province is an administrative-territorial entity whereas the caliphate, which it is part of, is imagined to be borderless—in no need of territorial (and social) boundaries. At the same time, it is supposed to be an Islamic state of Salafi adherents, but until its final establishment when all non-adherents have either converted or been killed, it will necessarily have to engage in territorial boundary drawing. These interventions aside, the motivation of Daesh in Iraq and Syria to accept the Orakzai TTP commanders’ pledge of allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi in January 2015 was a logical consequence in their long-term ambition to consolidate Daesh and gain a foothold outside its core area of Syria and Iraq.

population under Daesh control had fluctuated concurrently (leaving aside the fact that many residents have fled the area). Daesh first established a presence in the Mamand area of Achin district and, by early September 2015, had expanded into other parts of Achin, Nazian, Deh Bala (Haska Mina), Shinwari (Ghanikhel), Kot and Chaparhar (Johnson, 2016). In the autumn of 2016, this territory had shrunk to Achin, Deh Bala, Nazian and parts of Kot.¹² As of June 2017, Daesh has lost much territory in Achin and Kot but pushed further west and, in a large-scale assault, captured the famous Tora Bora mountain fortress constructed by Osama bin Laden.¹³

In parts of southern Nangarhar, Daesh has set up a basic but well-organized administration and bureaucracy with commissions, courts, prisons and various departments including education, justice, security and taxation. Local respondents also referred to a Council (*shura*) akin to the Amr Bil Maruf (Department for the prevention of vice and promotion of virtue) and the so-called 'Oghaz Shura'. The Oghaz Shura is reportedly responsible for deciding death sentences and other penalties and is composed of, among others, local and non-local Salafi religious scholars. Daesh's governance structure is not run by functionaries comparable to Iraq's Baathists who form a backbone of ISIS and who dominated the police, army and secret service under Saddam Hussein and have extensive experience in the ways of administering a state. Nonetheless, where Daesh has installed itself durably, it does exhibit a rational, bureaucratic administration of its extremely violent reign of terror, currently concentrating on local capacity building and training and aided by its FM radio *Voice of the Caliphate*.

12 \ When Daesh initially emerged in Nangarhar in late 2014 and 2015, the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) did not engage in direct fighting. However, since February 2016, the Afghan government and the US military have significantly stepped up their war efforts and have begun to attack Daesh with drone strikes and ground operations (O'Donnell, 2016). As a result, Daesh supporters have concentrated their forces in four southern Nangarhar districts but also shifted to new areas, particularly in Kunar province and attempted to infiltrate the Nangarhar provincial capital Jalalabad. Respondents indicated that after the Nangarhar operations, targeted killings in and around Jalalabad city were on the rise.

13 \ See *The Guardian*, 14 June 2017.

In areas controlled by Daesh, a system of judges and courts has been installed and seems to operate on the level of villages or clusters of villages. The judges were described as having an Islamic education, with most of them having graduated from the Ganj Madrassa in Peshawar. Conflict resolution has so far mainly entailed punishing offenders, listening to complaints about Daesh fighters or solving family and money-related disputes. The thornier issues of land conflicts have not been tackled systematically, likely due to a highly dynamic conflict situation that includes population displacements and redistribution of lands from the government to Daesh supporters.

In areas under their durable control, Daesh levies taxes on all valuables taxable under Islamic law (live-stock, agricultural produce, gold, silver, jewellery), including some war tax on wood stripped from the houses of people who have left the area because they had links to the Afghan government. The cultivation of hashish and poppy is prohibited. Daesh also seeks to regulate the social sphere, including religious worship and prayer practices, drinking, smoking, gambling and communication by mobile phone. Many shrines have been destroyed. It prescribes the wearing of hijabs, prohibits women from working in the fields, and bans certain local practices related to dowries. Public schools have been shut down, and the local people are ordered to send their children to *madrassas* for 'true' Islamic education. Daesh has introduced its own Islamic curriculum and installed loyal mullahs in areas under their control; these may be locals or outsiders, but they have to be Salafis.

Allegations of misconduct by Daesh members have been frequent. For example, wealthy people are accused of being spies as a pretext for confiscating their assets and valuables. In particular, after drone strikes, Daesh proceeds to undertake harsh interrogations of locals to identify potential spies, resorting to corporal punishment to extract information. The system of institutions described above seems to be very organized, but the information provided by local respondents suggests that in practice the ways in which Daesh works are more *ad hoc* than centrally

controlled. Commanders are reported to judge and execute sentences on the spot without always going through the court system, an observation which is likely linked to the fluid and dynamic situation of war.

Initially, Daesh introduced itself to communities with the message that they would root out and deal with the Taliban of the Islamic Emirate, which they considered spies of Pakistani Inter-Service Intelligence (ISI). Part of the local population was susceptible to this message, and the first beheadings of people were deemed to be punishment of Taliban loyalists. Increasingly, however, Daesh seems to have moved towards beheading soldiers of the ANA who had come to visit their families during their leave. Thus, fear spread and the narrative on Daesh conduct turned from 'punishment of Taliban loyalists' to 'killing innocent people'. This has since turned into opposition, visible for example in the tribal Uprising Forces in Kot district of Nangarhar.

The interviews with women who had fled areas controlled by Daesh revealed that Daesh fighters attempted to kidnap female family members (wives, daughters, sisters) of pro-government elders or men active in the Uprising Forces or other people with relatives in the government and/or ANSF in a move to force the government to release arrested family members of Daesh followers. For example, Daesh fighters kidnapped thirteen females of local Uprising Forces' members in Sepai village of Kot district in autumn 2015 and negotiated with the government on the release of their wives from government custody. Under pressure from the local Uprising men, the Afghan government reportedly accepted the deal, and after a week, females of both sides were exchanged.¹⁴ The interview accounts suggest that the government forces strategically arrested wives of Daesh followers to stop them from taking action against the government and that the Daesh kidnapping and abuse of females was a reaction to this government 'policy'. Moreover, Daesh have also kidnapped wives of non-involved men to generate additional pressure on the government to release the Daesh-related womenfolk.

¹⁴ \ According to the women interviewed for this research, women released from Daesh custody often either commit suicide upon their return to their own families, or they are killed by their families for shame (in local perception/tradition to re-establish the family's honour).

In a few cases, women of government-related families were apparently captured to enforce the release of Daesh fighters in government custody.

However, Daesh have also abducted women from influential local families to pressure those families into not fighting Daesh and leaving the area in question to them. Women in the custody of Daesh were sometimes temporarily married (with *nikah*) by force to one or several fighters, in most cases raped, beaten, malnourished and otherwise abused, if not killed. In several cases, Daesh fighters killed their husbands in front of them before taking them to a Daesh compound. Another often-reported practice is the raising of white flags by Daesh members on houses inhabited by girls/ women of marriageable age or widows. In some cases, a Daesh follower would then formally ask to be married to the woman/girl; if this offer is rejected, he or somebody else might simply abduct her, and she would become a sex-slave for several fighters before giving birth in custody or dying due to maltreatment. In one case, where a woman refused to marry a Daesh commander, he returned and threw acid on her face before killing her.

The public beheadings of tribal elders and the disregard for the lives of civilians, including women, has led to the erosion of support among many locals who, regardless whether they were Salafis or not, welcomed Daesh initially. Many of them had sought material gain or the opportunity to take revenge on Islamic Emirate loyalists who had harassed them.

Initially, the main bulk of Daesh in southern Nangarhar consisted of Pashtuns from the FATA tribes (Orakzai, Afridi, Mehsud, see also Johnson, 2016) of Pakistan. During the time of Hafiz Saeed's leadership, the Orakzai greatly influenced Daesh structures, but since then many of them have been killed on the battlefield or in drone strikes. Shortly after Hafiz Saeed was killed on 26 July 2016, most of the Orakzai families living in Laghergy and Standar villages of Kot and the Mamand area (*manteqa*) of Achin started to leave those areas and moved back across the border into the Tirah Valley. Drone strikes were at a peak, and they feared to be the primary targets of these attacks.

By autumn 2016, Daesh's largest social base of support consisted of so-called Kunaris, individuals and families originally from Kunar who either live in Kunar or Nangarhar province. Over the last few decades of war, many Kunaris have moved to Nangarhar for a variety of reasons including war, drought and economic opportunity. Some Kunaris have lived in Nangarhar for decades, while others have arrived only recently. Many Kunaris are of Salafi religious orientation, which has a longstanding tradition in the area going back at least to the 1970s, and which is of importance since most former Taliban commanders who switched to Daesh also happen to be Salafis. Daesh supporters in Kunar include Afghans and Pakistanis. Among the latter, there are many former affiliates of the TTP from Bajaur Agency, Kurram Agency, Swat and Dir. Among the Afghans there is a similar pattern: Daesh's main support base in Kunar province has been built around Salafi Taliban commanders and their loyalists who broke away from the Islamic Emirate and pledged allegiance to al-Baghdadi. Initially, Daesh appeared in the mountainous border areas of Kunar, such as Tegha in Khas Kunar, Shengaray and Maya from where it expanded successively into other districts of Kunar province. By the end of 2015, Daesh had a clear presence, visible in public declarations of allegiance and the raising of the black flag in the districts of Watapur, Sarkano, Marawara, Nurgal, Shigal aw Shultan, Tsawkey and Khas Kunar. Respondents from Kunar suggested that out of 22 major Taliban commanders in Kunar's Pech Valley only two were considered to be ardent supporters of the Taliban's Islamic Emirate, while the others leaned towards Daesh. This is linked to the heavy presence of Salafis among all the Kunari tribes.

In Nuristan, Daesh emerged visibly in late 2015/early 2016 in the districts of Waygal and Bargi Matal. From then on, the group officially announced its presence, sent night letters to people and attracted attention with wall chalkings in Arabic. In the two districts, they became the strongest armed opposition group as many people joined them, leaving the Taliban unable to prevent Daesh from gaining a foothold. Similar to the dynamics in Nangarhar and Kunar,

Daesh support in Nuristan was built around Taliban commanders who had broken off from the Islamic Emirate. Most of these commanders were Salafis, but some 'converted' when switching. Nuristan also has a longer tradition of Salafism than the other areas of Afghanistan, going back at least to the 1960s. More recently, in the years before Daesh publically declared its rule in Nuristan, local supporters had been preparing the ground for its reception on arrival. Respondents described how several young people who had returned from Islamic studies in *madrassas* in Peshawar and Swat would advocate Daesh. Others were happy with the progress of Daesh in Iraq and Syria, who they considered initially to be a purely Islamic and 'honest' group. Local advocates of Daesh would argue against the Afghan government, police and military, calling them apostates (*murtad*) and slaves of the Americans and declaring that working with them was forbidden by Allah (*haram*). Besides financial and religious motives, fear has also been a significant factor in strengthening Daesh in Nuristan. Mullahs accept Daesh's orders and share their message regardless of whether they are convinced or consent to the order, simply for fear of being punished or even killed. Hence, they asked people to join Daesh. Members have been recruited from Nuristan, Kunar and Nangarhar (Achin) as well as among Pakistanis from the areas of Dir, Swat, and Orakzai Agency.

In all three provinces, Daesh emerged in a specific context. The political and military weakness of the Afghan government, the Taliban of the Islamic Emirate and local tribal structures alike was a key condition for Daesh's success in capturing and holding territory in southern Nangarhar. Besides a weak government presence in the areas where Daesh first gained a foothold, the Taliban and local elites had suffered from infighting and as a result were highly divided and fragmented. This had—prior to the arrival of Daesh—facilitated the ability of various militant groups to establish themselves locally as a powerful force. Most prominently, Lashkar-e-Islam and Tehrik-e-Taliban-e-Pakistan (TTP) had a strong presence.

The research results suggest that Lashkar-e-Islam was important as an entry point for Daesh into

southern Nangarhar, because it operated strongly along the lines of a patronage model and had sunk its roots there by building on pre-existing marriages, business and cross-border trade networks between specific Shinwari and Afridi subtribes living in southern Nangarhar and the Tirah Valley in Khyber Agency of Pakistan. Thus, when Lashkar-e-Islam's Mangal Bagh was chased out of Bara as a result of tribal warfare with other Afridi subtribes (as a result of the destruction of shrines and beheadings of local tribal elders) and Pakistani military operations (Sirat-e-Mustaqem) from late June to early July 2008, he fled to the Tirah Valley and then moved into southern Nangarhar. In 2014, after a vast influx of TTP militants into Tirah from Waziristan and Orakzai as a result of Pakistani military operations there, Lashkar-e-Islam facilitated the move of the emerging Daesh into Nangarhar. Some of Lashkar-e-Islam's members are Salafist and while its leader Mangal Bagh is not, he does share many of Daesh's inclinations, particularly its violent anti-Sufism directed at religious practices such as visiting shrines.¹⁵ Since 2007, Lashkar-e-Islam has practised some of the things in the Khyber Agency of Pakistan that Daesh would later do in Nangarhar. Notable examples are the destruction of shrines and threats against and physical attacks on local political, economic and social leaders, including the traditional authority of tribal elders, the Sufi brotherhoods and Sufi masters (*pirs*).¹⁶ In this way, Lashkar-e-Islam and the TTP, which likewise operated in Waziristan, provided models that Daesh could adopt and build on.

Besides the described proximity to areas in Pakistan with a distinct jihadi landscape—Tirah Valley, Khyber Agency [Lashkar-e-Islam] and Orakzai Agency [TTP])—Daesh's emergence and initial expansion could rely on a strong Salafist social support base. In particular, Kunar and Nuristan had been traditional Salafi strongholds from the 1980s. The existing Salafi networks mainly facilitated the expansion of Daesh in Kunar and support in Nuristan we have outlined

here. Moreover, the fact that many Kunaris came to settle in Nangarhar also extended the Salafi influence to Nangarhar, where the presence of a variety of Salafi networks provided, voluntarily or under pressure, local fighters (Osman, 2016; Johnson, 2016; Baczko & Dorronsoro, 2017). As described in more detail in the section on the transformation of the jihadi landscape, a complex cross-border landscape of religious schools (*madrassas*) propagating violent jihad in Afghanistan turned out to be crucial in this regard. It links the eastern provinces of Nangarhar, Kunar and Nuristan with the north-eastern provinces of Kunduz, Takhar and Badakhshan on the one hand, and FATA and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan on the other.

North-east: Kunduz, Takhar, Badakhshan. Covert presence of Salafi/ Daeshi Taliban

In the north-east alone, we observed different manifestations of Daesh across the various locations that reported Daesh presence. According to interview data from all three provinces, a creeping influence of pro-Daesh preaching and propaganda had been tangible since March 2014. Support was driven by the news about growing expansion of Daesh in Iraq and Syria and the spreading of propaganda, about and by Daesh, of the group's exploits in the Middle East and the activities of like-minded groups on a global and local scale. Young men started sharing video clips about the war in Syria and Iraq and about training and listening to online sermons and songs of praise for the Islamic caliphate and its followers. Especially youngsters were, reportedly, engaged in emotional discussions of the latest events in Iraq and Syria (or what they knew of them). Across generations, the appearance and successful expansion of Daesh in Iraq and Syria, including the prospect of the establishment of an Islamic caliphate, became topics of everyday conversation from mid-2014 onwards. In Dasht-e Archi district of Kunduz province, this popularity manifested itself in a change of fashion in clothing, as people started to dress in black clothes, cover their faces and wear wide headbands featuring the *Kalima Taiba* (the Word of Purity¹⁷). Some would

15 \ Respondents estimated that about 40 per cent of Lashkar-e-Islam's members are militant Salafis while the others are militant Deobandi-style Hanafis, both of which advocate and practice violent jihad.

16 \ Baczko & Dorronsoro (2017) highlight the same process of violent social revolution launched by the TTP in Waziristan, which consisted of physically eliminating tribal leadership.

17 \ "There is no god but Allah, [and] Muhammad is the messenger of Allah".

decorate their vehicles—mostly motorbikes—with black banners of different sizes. At some point, the uniforms (*palangi* clothes) of Daesh fighters in Syria were copied and came locally into fashion, too. In several locations, the flag of Daesh was raised, e.g. in Chahar Saraka area of Dasht-e Archi for four days in spring 2015, in Takhar province’s Darqad district in the summer of 2015 and in Eshkamesh district at the end of September 2015.¹⁸

Reportedly, this gradual impact of a symbolic Daesh presence was accompanied by the send-off of youngsters from Kunduz for training to Nangarhar province and Pakistan. By the time these youths came back to Dasht-e Archi they were—in the words of locals—looking like Wahhabis” and completely “brainwashed into the ideology and mentality of Daesh”.¹⁹ Moreover, they would no longer pay respect to the elders’ authority and their fathers’ guidance, even regarding their father, a figure who usually enjoys the utmost respect in every Afghan family, as an unbeliever and non-Muslim (*kafir*). They also started calling non-Salafis innovators (*bidatyan*).²⁰ While the change in fashion and the active distribution of propaganda by locals represents an expression of support for Daesh as a new global power contender (‘revolutionary’) with a ‘Muslim face’, the effects of training brought the first tangible signs of the major impact Salafi ideology might yield on everyday life in the local communities.

The data indicates that aspects of Salafi ideology (as observed among returnees from training camps) and active admiration, as well as imitation, were most strongly proliferating among local Taliban. For instance, in summer 2015, sympathies with Daesh in Iraq and Syria were openly discussed in Dasht-e Archi among, above all, the local Taliban as Salafi practices continued to spread. Interview accounts are consistent in recounting how more people started to say ‘Amin’

loudly in the mosque, how prayer practices changed, funerals started following different rules, and visits to the Sayed Zaino Agha shrine in Dasht-e Archi’s centre were prohibited. These developments peaked when the Daesh-sympathizing Taliban asked other Taliban to announce their full support for Daesh. Several Taliban commanders and appointed shadow administrators of Dasht-e Archi are reported to have pledged allegiance to the Khorasan Shura’s leader Hafiz Saeed after the news of the Shura’s establishment spread between February and August 2015. The rise of Daesh in Dasht-e Archi and Kunduz from among the Taliban rank and file is unique in that, first, they set up several groups and found agreement among them before going public and taking the oath (*bay’a*) to Hafiz Saeed, the *amir* (leader) or *wali* (governor) of Daesh’s proclaimed Khorasan Province.²¹ One individual, a thirty-year-old highly educated veterinarian who had been working for an educationist NGO in the past, besides being one of the known al-Qaeda and later Taliban affiliates, went to Achin after the proclamation of Daesh’s Khorasan branch to pledge allegiance to Hafiz Saeed. Reportedly, his oath (*ba’ya*) in front of the Khorasan Shura was video-recorded to use this as a recruiting tool for other Daesh sympathizers from Kunduz province. In the same meeting, this person was announced as a representative of the Khorasan Shura for Kunduz province and given the authority to accept others’ oath to Daesh and accord joiners a ‘membership’ status. Respondents emphasized the role of this video clip in attracting many followers to Daesh in Kunduz and Takhar province.

For several weeks before the takeover of Kunduz by Taliban militants on 28 September 2015, this accession to power by Daesh did not seem to have any particular effects or to create conflicts of interests with the Taliban leadership at the provincial level or beyond. The data shows very clearly that Daesh at this point

18 \ According to interview accounts, ‘Daesh’ flags were seen once in Jurm district’s Khastak Valley in Badakhshan in 2015, attached to vehicles that passed through the main valley. However, according to Obaid Ali, it was a Jundullah flag, which looks similar, the same black but has a different logo (personal communication, 13 November 2016).

19 \ Interview in Kunduz, November 2016.

20 \ Such as those who were not adhering to their idea of strict Wahhabi/Salafi Islam, e.g. who continued to pay alms at funerals etc.

21 \ Looking at this in hindsight, it is not entirely clear how this was possible then and why it did not meet with resistance from other, higher, charges of the Taliban. One plausible explanation may be that the Taliban were busy preparing the Kunduz operation for September 2015, and that the local Taliban leaders did not counter or necessarily openly contradict Hanafi/Taliban norms, practices and programmes, etc. Thus, an open clash was not visible.

of time operated under the umbrella of the Taliban and was consequently nurtured on Taliban funds and infrastructure. However, once the Taliban leadership became more aware of the growing Daesh constituency in Kunduz, the Daesh followers fled to Nangarhar.

Cleavages between Salafi/Daeshi and Hanafi Taliban—in the form of ideological divisions, perceived competition about legitimacy and followers and practical everyday interactions—became apparent only after the Taliban insurgents withdrew from Kunduz city in early October 2015, having captured it for several days. This ‘victory’—manifested in the capture of substantial war ‘booty’, including vehicles and weapons—seems to have emboldened, in particular, the Daesh followers among the Taliban (‘Salafi Taliban’). They arguably now felt confident enough to enforce Salafi ideas openly. For example, Jundullah—a Salafi organization trying to break free from the Taliban umbrella—denounced and condemned the Taliban behaviour towards the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) in Chardara district and Zabul province.²² The ban on visiting the popular Sayed Zaino Agha shrine of Dasht-e Archi was fully enforced; the shrine was closed and even came under threat of destruction. According to one interviewee, Daesh’s black flag was raised over the shrine. Recruiting for Daesh became even more widespread and open, indicating that the Taliban’s ‘success’ in Kunduz was mainly interpreted as a further step towards gaining more influence and approaching the final battle against ‘the armies of the Western crusaders’ as announced by the propaganda channels of Daesh in Iraq and Syria. Rumours were spreading that a massive inflow of Daesh in the province would be imminent. Moreover, ideological differences became manifest in Salafi thought-infested sermons and preachings in several mosques across the province. According to our interview accounts, Taliban-supporting Hanafi *mawlawis* increasingly lost attendees in their mosques. After some mullahs reportedly started to openly oppose the Taliban in their sermons only a few days after the ‘fall of Kunduz’ and quickly gained popular support, the Taliban decided to retaliate.

They banned Salafi ideological content, such as talks about *bid‘a* and *shirk*, and prohibited loud proclamations in sermons at mosques and all kinds of Daeshi propaganda, such as video clips, music, or trailers from mobile phones. Several *madrassas* were closed, especially those which were known as springboards for locals, especially young people, to go to Nangarhar and enlist in Daesh’s ranks of fighters. According to one version of the accounts, this caused widespread discontent among Salafi Taliban sympathizers and triggered the conflict between Hanafi and Salafi/ Daeshi Taliban that escalated in a split. Salafi Taliban were henceforth intimidated, exiled and purged by the Taliban leaders. Those who did not agree to be disarmed and subject themselves to house arrest in Dasht-e Archi escaped to Nangarhar and joined Daesh; some went to Kunar, others were killed immediately. Reportedly, one cohort of Daeshi Taliban, under the leadership of their Daesh-appointed local leader, went from Dasht-e Archi via Nangarhar to Syria. Among the housebound Daeshis were several previously high-ranking Taliban. They had been disarmed and could not go anywhere as, should they escape, the Taliban would intimidate and harm members of their family who had stayed behind in Dasht-e Archi. Given that the Taliban had been able to gain unforeseen strength over a period of roughly 18 months until November 2016, they were able to counter and subdue the Salafi sympathizers and Daeshi Taliban among their ranks completely. Throughout 2016, they strictly enforced sanctions and bans on travelling, preaching, Salafi madrassa activities, training camp activities, military training in local madrassas or the spread of propaganda.

As a result, the Taliban established themselves as a hegemonic actor throughout Kunduz province in 2016. Daesh activities were largely sized down, although strong connections apparently do exist between exiled Daesh followers, including those fighting far away in Nangarhar and Syria, and their friends and family members in Dasht-e Archi. They maintain real-time contact through phone/ Viber, the Internet, facebook and skype. Syria-based family members and friends,

22 \ This support for IMU is rooted in ethnic solidarity because both groups have a majority Uzbek constituency.

but also the Daesh ‘governor’ of Kunduz, who resides in Achin/Nangarhar, were actively but secretly recruiting among their close relatives and friends via social media (sending clips, telling about the greatness of Daesh or sharing songs) up to the end of the research period (December 2016). A second cohort of Salafi Taliban and Daesh sympathizers was reportedly preparing to leave Dasht-e Archi for Syria via Nangarhar in September and October 2016. According to interview accounts, their preparations involved heated and lengthy discussions about whether individuals should be allowed to leave their families behind or take them along.²³ Reportedly, the Khorasan Shura ended the debate by deciding that going alone would also be allowed. However, by the time the preparations for leaving had apparently progressed, another notification arrived from the Khorasan Shura in late October 2016, ordering its followers to stay in Dasht-e Archi and ‘start activities’ there.²⁴

While the emergence and popularity of Daesh in Kunduz was largely facilitated through personal networks linking individuals with Salafis in Nangarhar, it also has strong roots in a longer Taliban presence in the province (for more background on this, see the Section on the transformation of the jihadi landscape). The comparative lack of progress of Daesh’s expansion into Takhar and Badakhshan is mainly owed to the comparative young history and lesser degree of maturation of Taliban (‘Talibanization’) there, which only intensified after 2015.

The appearance of Daesh in several districts of Takhar (Khwaja Ghar, Darqad, Baharak, Dasht-e Qala, and Yangi Qala) and Badakhshan (Warduj, Yurm, Yamgan) is similar to the trajectory laid out for Kunduz above. However, regarding intensity (in quantity and

conduct/actions carried out by supposed Daesh members or followers) and thus presence, Badakhshan seemed to be less affected than Kunduz and Takhar²⁵ by the end of 2016. This can be ascribed to the dynamics of the Taliban insurgency in Badakhshan’s districts from 2012/13, especially the ability of the Taliban provincial shadow governor to thwart the efforts of his (Salafi) deputy and main contender to gain more influence and institutionalize his Salafi group (as of November 2016). In contrast to Kunduz, the subsequent ousting of Daesh (sympathizers/followers) from Takhar took place without large-scale violence, because Daeshi Taliban and Jundullah reportedly followed the call of Salafi authorities in Takhar and voluntarily moved to Nangarhar to ‘do jihad’ for the Islamic caliphate.²⁶

In Badakhshan, growing Salafi influence correlates with a reported Daesh presence, possibly even more significantly than in Takhar and Kunduz.²⁷ In Takhar, religious Salafi influence was reported to have come mainly via Badakhshan. Interview accounts pointed out how several Salafi scholars who initially hailed from Badakhshan and had received their religious education in Saudi Arabia or Pakistan began settling in Takhar’s districts fifteen years ago and established mosques and madrassas with Saudi funding. By roughly 2012, they had not made effective inroads into local areas, mainly populated by Uzbeks and Tajiks. However, since then observers have noted the allegiance of locals from the most diverse political group backgrounds (e.g. Hizb-e Islami or Junbesh) to ‘the Taliban’ and their involvement in anti-government

23 \ The issue of core family members being disconnected from their kin evolved into an important issue because not only were those who stayed behind vulnerable to Taliban pressure once they found out that their close relatives had left to join Daesh. They also had to witness wives and children of members of the first cohort who left Dasht-e Archi being left stranded after their husbands had been killed in Syria.

24 \ While this could be interpreted as reaction to Daesh’s losing ground on the battlefields in Aleppo, Mosul, etc., it is not inherently rational from the Daesh perspective as Daesh should welcome more fighters ready to become martyrs of the caliphate. So we can deduce that the Daesh-related events in Syria and Iraq do not actually influence the dynamics related to Daesh in Afghanistan.

25 \ The first-time appearance of Daesh in Eshkamesh in summer 2015, before the fall of Kunduz, is undisputed and mentioned by interviewees as well as documented by Ali (2016b). Given that there is in-depth Afghanistan Analysts Network-coverage of Jundullah’s turning-in-to-Daesh in Ishkamish and Burka (see previous sections on Kunduz), this study did not follow up the case of Eshkamesh. The report’s assessment does consider Eshkamesh-events, but this regional section is solely based on empirical data collected specifically for this study.

26 \ Reportedly, only in Baharak district (key Taliban members were discharged from their positions and left) and in Yangi Qala Salafi Taliban were particularly intimidated.

27 \ It is important to mention that the Salafi organization Hizb ut-Tahrir enjoys huge popularity among educated Badakhshanis, especially among university teachers and students. Hizb ut-Tahrir aims to establish an Islamic caliphate by non-violent means. Latest reports also indicate a strong presence of Hizb ut-Tahrir in Takhar’s provincial capital Taloqan. See: “Hizbut Tahrir turning youth . . .”, 2017.

operations ‘as Taliban’, i.e. under the ‘umbrella’ of the Taliban of the Islamic Emirate. Given this heterogeneity of origin, it would be misleading to see the ‘Taliban’ in Takhar or Badakhshan as a homogeneous or coherent group. Instead, they comprise several different groups, and their putative members are also politically active in their other affiliations. This includes Salafi sympathizers from Hizb-e Islami Gulbuddin (Pashtuns, Tajiks, Uzbeks) and Junbesh²⁸ (Uzbeks) or Salafi-sympathizers who had not previously belonged to any of the traditionally dominant groups (Jamiat-e Islami, Hizb-e Islami, Junbesh).

Consequently, the rise of a heterogeneous Taliban movement in the various districts facilitated a hybridization of the local insurgency in the name of the Taliban. It also included the presence of foreign fighters from Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, said to belong to the IMU, who had lived among and operated jointly with the Taliban in previous years. The concentration of a large number (hundreds) of foreigners in Khastak (Jurm) with unclear affiliations to Daesh and apparently controlled by the local Taliban, distinguishes the situation in Badakhshan from that in the other north-eastern provinces. According to local accounts, foreign fighters with their families—mainly from Tajikistan, Uzbekistan or with an Uyghur background, and fewer from Russia and Turkmenistan—settled in Badakhshan after they escaped the Pakistan Army operation in North Waziristan in 2014. They are likely to belong to numerous smaller insurgent groups, such as the IMU (Tahir Yuldash/Juma Namangani group)²⁹ and al-Qaeda, but it is unknown to what extent they have lately pledged allegiance to al-Baghdadi or Daesh.³⁰ It is also unclear whether they are actively

trying to subvert the local Taliban leadership, as seems the case with the deputy provincial governor of the Taliban.³¹

West: Herat and Farah. Opportunistic flirting with Daesh came to an end

In the western region, Daesh presence was followed up by our field research in Shindand district in southern Herat province and adjacent areas of northern Farah province on the one hand, and Obeh and Koshki Kohna districts in north-eastern Herat province with spillovers into Badghis and Ghor provinces on the other. The local context involves significant political, military and social (tribal) connections to Kandahar and Helmand provinces. Regarding the emergence of Daesh, three observations stand out:

First, as opposed to other areas of Afghanistan, Daesh’s emergence in early 2015 in Shindand district of southern Herat province did not follow the breakaway of Salafi commanders operating under the Taliban umbrella. In this area of Afghanistan, the number of Salafis among the Taliban ranks was negligible. Taliban members in Shindand district of Herat province and neighbouring parts of Farah province were educated in madrassas of Kandahar or Quetta, Pakistan, which are not Salafi in orientation but follow the legal school of Imam Abu Hanifa (Sunni Hanafi school of thought). The significant influence of Salafi thinking is restricted to Herat city where Salafi *madrassas* and mullahs exist. A second observation, which makes the case that western Afghanistan is distinct from other areas of Afghanistan, is that Daesh’s emergence and strengthening have been primarily linked to the opportunism of local commanders. This is not to suggest that opportunism is absent elsewhere but that it

28 \ One interviewee suggested that many previous Junbesh commanders become Taliban-supporters only on the surface. By aligning with Salafis they, reportedly, actually intend to eliminate the Taliban. One anecdote corroborating this theory refers to reports that Junbesh Taliban commanders (sic!) confiscate land by force in Yangi Qala to establish a pool for land distribution to Salafis who arrive from Badakhshan in order to attract more Salafis to their area.

29 \ Respondents for this study denied that the Uzbek foreigners operate as IMU but instead claimed they work under the name Dawlat-ul Islam (Islamic State) and Taliban.

30 \ In his publication of September 2015, Obaid Ali cites one respondent stating that the foreigners in Khastak would strongly isolate their families, which suggests that they are likely Salafis (p. 7).

31 \ What is interesting, however, and would contrast with the evidence of close links maintained by putative Daesh on both sides of the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, as described in the section on East Afghanistan, is that there are reportedly no Pakistanis and Arabs among the foreign residents. The possibility that the foreign residents are not related to Daesh could indicate that the local Daesh group as such may not have the viability and Arab support commonly ascribed to it, or that we have ‘several Daeshes’ in Afghanistan and that Daesh is a very localized phenomenon showing, again, an entirely different face. All interviewees denied that anybody from Badakhshan had left for Syria or Iraq to join Daesh in Iraq and Syria.

has been more central in the local dynamics of southern Herat. A third finding is that Daesh emerged in a context where the Afghan government, the Taliban of the Islamic Emirate and local tribal structures were weak. A fourth point here is that Daesh's emergence in southern Herat was significantly slowed down because of a growing working relation between the Taliban of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan and Iran, based on the common perception of Daesh as a threat.³²

For empirical illustration, we shall now present the case of southern Herat and adjacent areas of Farah Province. This region is quite remote, and the Afghan government seems to focus its attention on protecting the most vital infrastructure, such as the Shindand air base, without having much wider control in the districts. The situation here resembles other situations in which (putative) Daesh finds entry points where the presence of the Taliban is weak. In Shindand, the weakness of the Taliban was primarily due to internal disagreements and rivalries over leadership and resulting fragmentations. Three local leaders quarrelled over the question of who should be the Taliban's primary leader in Shindand, and this weakened their overall position, providing such entry points for Daesh. This came after it was announced, in 2015, that the leader of the Taliban of the Islamic Emirate, Mullah Omar, had already died two years back. The subsequent infighting among the Taliban leadership played into power struggles among local Taliban groups. Thus, in Shindand, divisions appeared between the two rival Taliban factions: the Mansoor and Rasool followers. The commander following Rasool raised the black flag of Daesh to symbolically signify the physical presence of fighters loyal to Daesh and to express his group's opposition to the newly dominant Taliban faction led by Mullah Mansoor, the one chosen to succeed Mullah Omar. The raising of the flag was thus a statement of his local ambition and power. He was symbolically aligning himself with the new potent jihadi patron that was believed to be stronger and more adept to the jihadi cause than the Taliban who had once followed Mullah Omar and were now led by

Mullah Mansoor.³³ After local infighting forced the Rasool group to either escape the area or surrender to the government, whatever presence and rather opportunistic local support Daesh had in southern Herat evaporated. The Taliban of the Islamic Emirate (Mansoor faction) have since been able to consolidate their ranks. Also in Farah, following a similar situation, the two main opposing Taliban commanders declared their loyalty to the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan.

North: Jawzjan, Faryab, Sar-e Pul. Claims of Daesh presence as surrogate for effective governance

Despite reports of a Daesh 'presence' in the northern provinces of Faryab, Jawzjan and Balkh, the research carried out for this study was unable to find such evidence. Local conflicts over access to any possible type of resource, be it posts in government, (grazing) land, the right to levy taxes locally or others are common in the northern provinces. In a context of overall resource scarcity, high unemployment, lack of public services and general insecurity, the various little fiefdoms of strongmen, group leaders and warlords with various (pro- and anti-government) affiliations have established themselves over the last decade. The ensuing rivalries between Junbesh and Jamiat-e Islami over resources and local power as well as a simultaneously expanding Taliban insurgency—not least facilitated by the latter's disunity—contributed significantly to insecurity and uncertainty throughout the north. The local representatives and commanders of the established Jamiat and Junbesh parties pursue their personal interests at any cost, including siding with anti-government groups such as local Taliban against another when needed, until some other arrangement promises to be more opportune, and allegiances shift again.

There are enormous numbers of armed forces in Faryab, Jawzjan and Sar-e Pul, among which the irregular (*arbakee*, private paramilitary units of commanders) and anti-government forces (mostly various local Taliban groups) clearly outnumber the ANSF

32 \ See: "Afghan Taliban's top dissident Mullah Rasool ...", 2016.

33 \ One major point of contention among the Taliban factions was their strategy vis-à-vis Pakistan whose involvement in protecting the leader of the Islamic Emirate was now apparent to all. Mansoor strongly rejected any Pakistani influence.

(ANA, ANP and ALP) and National Uprising units.³⁴ The provincial governments' inability to control the security situation and the armed groups, on the one hand, and the predatory criminal behaviour of many of the armed groups, on the other, have created an anomic situation where all kinds of weapons and ammunition are widely available at local bazaars³⁵, arbitrary violence is common, and underlying conflict dynamics are highly complex. Especially in Sar-e Pul, Taliban fighters join the peace process and regularly defect again because the Afghan government is unable to keep its material promises. In this context, ascribing insecurity incidences to a putative Daesh presence presents a welcome scapegoat for local officials that distracts from actual causes of violence and local conflict—and their inability to prevent those. Reference is made to a particular 'idea of Daesh' without any sign of real relations, let alone physical presence. After the state of insecurity and arbitrary violence in the three provinces had provoked large-scale public protests in October 2016, Vice-President Abdul Rashid Dostum—in what could be interpreted as a move to distract from his failures to provide security—publicly warned that Daesh is planning to bring 7,000 fighters to northern Afghanistan.

Foreign fighters in Jawzjan (Darzab and Qoshtepa district) and Faryab (Almar and Qaisar district) are largely operating as or with local Taliban. They are likely to belong to IMU-cells and thus share a Salafi outlook with Daesh. In March 2015, Uzbeks of a local IMU group reportedly pledged allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi (Ruttig, 2015a); however, this was possibly a reaction to local Uzbek women being arrested and the government's refusal to release them. Nevertheless, particularly foreign Taliban are often labelled as Daesh followers in the perceptions of ordinary people. Clashes between Daesh sympathizers and the Taliban were reported along with rumours that preparations had been underway in Nangarhar to provide a fully-fledged and organized Daesh presence

in Jawzjan. It was, however, reported that the heavy pressure exerted on Daesh after the ANSF and US forces intensified their operations and drone attacks against Daesh in Nangarhar had prevented these preparations. Irrespective of whether such accounts are true or not, they hint at low-level relations between Jawzjan and Nangarhar/Daesh. But these accounts still do not furnish sufficient evidence for us to speak of a Daesh 'presence' in Jawzjan or Faryab, at least by the end of 2016.

Similarly, in Sar-e Pul, the research followed up news about Daesh's emergence in Kohistan district and the central Sar-e Pul district from late 2015. According to interview accounts, in both cases, influential local commanders—a Tajik affiliated with Hizb-e Islami in Kohistan and an Arab described as Salafi Taliban—had independently 'invited' Daesh to their respective area to increase their power base. The information that the Hizb-e Islami commander's guest/s came from Zabul while the Taliban contact arrived from Kunduz province indicates that not even a link had been created with Nangarhar and the Daesh Shura because neither came from there. Moreover, it is entirely possible, that a contact from Zabul belonged to remnants of the dispersed IMU group³⁶. As to the motivation for extending the invitations, the data points to a compelling rationale given by one of the interviewees. According to the interviewee, the main reason was that Daesh is considered one of

34 \ On paramilitary forces in Faryab, see for example, Pannier & Sarwar (2016), or Human Rights Watch (2016).

35 \ In Faryab and Sar-e Pul, government-commissioned forces are reported to sell their ammunition and guns to Taliban and illegal armed groups or whoever is ready to buy them. Local weapon markets are thriving.

36 \ In November 2015, the IMU leader Usman Ghazi, who had pledged allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, recognizing him as valid leader of the faithful (*amir al-mu'minin*) instead of Mullah Omar, was killed in Zabul—together with his followers and the aligned separatist Taliban faction of Mullah Dadullah—by those Taliban who were loyal to Mullah Omar's appointed successor Mullah Mansoor. Analysts often mention this Zabul massacre as the incident in which IMU was completely crushed. However, if one considers that the IMU members and their leader killed in this incident represented only those mainly foreign Uzbeks trying to make their way up north into areas of Uzbek settlement—after having been pushed out of North-Waziristan as a result of the Pakistan Army operation Zarb-e Azb—it does not seem unlikely that separate IMU groups existed and still operate in the northern and north-eastern areas of Afghanistan. This is also supported by news surfacing in the media since June 2016 that IMU operations have not stopped; IMU admits its former leader's oath to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, yet says he is not the caliph of all Muslims, rather amir of Daesh in Afghanistan/Pakistan. This quasi-withdrawal of the previous oath was followed by an announcement on 10 June 2016 about the new IMU's loyalty to the Taliban, al-Qaeda and other traditional jihadist groups operating in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Central Asia.

the wealthiest groups. In this reading, the main attraction for establishing contact was, in one case, the economic incentive and, in the other, the role Daesh could play as part of a local commander's business plan. This seems particularly plausible because Taliban resources are very slow to reach Sar-e Pul and they only arrive as a trickle because of its geographical distance from Pakistan where the Taliban leadership is based. The interaction is reported to have ended when the guests ('Urdu-speaking Pakistanis') left the province again after about a month (destinations unknown), reportedly after high-ranking Taliban commanders of the Islamic Emirate had declared that there is no place for Daesh in Afghanistan.

Although two other northern provinces, Balkh and Ghor, were not covered in the research, selective interviews hint at a very similar situation there. A respondent from Balkh spoke of 'fake Taliban', that is, of armed groups conducting illegitimate activities that would usually only be ascribed to Taliban fighters but would legitimate processes the initiator of the 'fake Taliban' could benefit from (e.g. instigating insecurity to then present yourself as the only guarantor of security). Ata Mohammad Noor, the governor of Balkh, used the same strategy when he alluded on several occasions to a Daesh presence.³⁷ In complete contrast, in Ghor, local officials used the label Daesh to attract the government's attention.³⁸ Thus, the opportune usage of the label Daesh by government and security officials is very common. By claiming a presence or 'advance' of Daesh, they allude to potential or real insecurity that has to be contained with the help of those in power and local government officials. Alternatively, they intend to shift the responsibility for certain developments, notably security incidents,

to a vague proxy with sufficient deterrent potential to excuse their own non-action or inability to deliver and govern well.

To sum up, this outline of case studies of Daesh appearance illustrates an uneven and non-simultaneous process. It varies between consolidated presence, appearance and mere symbolism. In many cases it would thus be more correct to speak of sympathy towards, imitation of and sporadic allegiance to Daesh instead of a full-scale 'emergence' or durable presence of Daesh. By reflecting on the opportunity structures that facilitated the emergence of Daesh's presence, its mere 'appearance' or just its symbolism, we can identify four factors which have shaped the overall context in which Daesh's real or putative presence emerged. The individual factors strongly intersect with each other and overlap with other mobilization motivations, which will be elaborated in the relevant sub-chapters further below.

- 1\ The rise and initial success of Daesh in Iraq and Syria in 2013-14, where the group gained territorial control and established state-like structures, paired with an aggressive global propaganda outreach that proclaimed the goal of establishing a global Islamic caliphate resonated with Salafist sympathizers hitherto operating under the Taliban umbrella. The symbolism of Daesh was adopted by locals in different locations and of different backgrounds particularly among Salafi communities.
- 2\ The advance of Pakistani Army operations in various Agencies of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), especially North-Waziristan, Khyber and Bajaur since 2009, accelerated existing organizational fractures within the Pakistani Taliban umbrella organization of the Tehrik-e-Taliban-e-Pakistan (TTP) and other jihadi groups in Pakistan. As a result, TTP, Lashkar-e Islam, sections of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) along with several other jihadi groups sought refuge on Afghan territory.
- 3\ After the death of the unifying figures Mullah Mohammad Omar as leader of the Taliban of the Islamic Emirate and TTP-leader Hakimullah

37 \ Sources suggest the evidence of Daesh presence in Balkh in March and April 2016: "Daesh surfaces in Balkh: Atta Noor", 2016; "Daesh expands activities in Afghanistan: Noor", 2016; "ISIS rapidly expanding activities in Afghanistan, . . .", 2016.

38 \ During events in Ghor province in October 2016, more than 30 people were killed by local criminals with Taliban and government-links; however, local officials and the media (e.g. TOLO and Pajhwok news agencies) linked the incidence to an unverified Daesh presence. Osman (2016b) is correct in his assessment that this claim is an intentional act to mislead the public. Most of the media agencies, rather than verifying the claim of a sudden appearance of Daesh in Ghor, took it up and even magnified it.

Mehsud in 2013, leadership struggles aided the popularity of Daesh and the Khorasan Shura that promised new prospects in ideological but also material and practical terms. The changes in opportunity structures were accompanied by a geo-politically informed narrative framing the Taliban and the Afghan government as puppets of foreign masters, principally Pakistan and the United States.

- 4) Finally, the limited capacity and likely unwillingness of Afghan government forces to tackle Daesh and other jihadi groups on its territory have opened inroads that explain the persistence, contraction or expansion of Daesh within its territory. After the large-scale withdrawal of international military support to the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) at the end of 2014, jihadi fighters were able to establish local strongholds in 'open spaces', particularly in Nangarhar, where both the Afghan government and the Taliban of the Islamic Emirate lacked influence and legitimacy.

Transformation of the jihadi landscape: Path dependencies and coalition building

To examine many of the described opportunity structures elaborated in the previous section, we shall focus in the following paragraphs on the underlying transformations of the local religious, cultural and political landscape that are not only limited to Afghanistan but concern the historical constellation in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region with the respective external influences of foreign actors. We will analyse how long-term transformations in the Sunni community have led to a fragmentation of the jihadi landscape and triggered the emergence of violent jihadi groups whose fluid alliances add a great deal of complexity to contemporary coalition building.

Since the outbreak of war in Afghanistan at the end of the 1970s, Afghanistan's society has been shaped by an increasingly militarized environment and infrastructure supporting violent jihadist groups and a concurrent ongoing transformation of the

religious landscape. The rise of Salafism in Afghanistan over the last fifteen years seems to be only the latest manifestation of these developments, which are not only linked to more long-standing and widespread developments in Pakistan since the 1980s but are also rooted in religious ideological traditions that have developed in the Indian sub-continent since late 19th century (Reetz 2001).

In the Afghanistan-Pakistan region, Salafism as an idea manifests itself in several currents, the lowest common denominator of which is their accordance with creed (*ʿaqida*) and shared educational networks (Wiktorowicz, 2006, pp. 208, 213). Up to the 1970s, the Salafi current of thought was dominated by a purist faction, apolitical and conservative in nature, focusing on non-violent religious mission (*daʿwa*), purification (*tazkiyya*) and religious education (*tarbiya*) (Wiktorowicz, 2006, p. 217). Isolation from the corrupted elements of society was preferred over any political activism, and there was no automatic connection between *daʿwa* and attempts to form an Islamic state (Mousalli, 2009). Jihad was restricted and bound to certain conditions in Salafi thought and tended to take the form of defensive jihad. During the Soviet intervention of Afghanistan in the 1980s, Salafis internationally, and particularly those from Saudi-Arabia, left the sphere of quietism and turned to practical jihad.³⁹ Wahhabi influences and activities by the Muslim Brotherhood resulted in the politicization of Salafism and the Salafization of politics, i.e. political Islam became salafized (Hassan, 2016). Accelerated by subsequent events that further delegitimized purist Salafi thought, a fairly coherent ideology of Jihadi-Salafism formed only in the post-9/11 and post-2003 Iraq invasion period.⁴⁰

39 \ According to Kepel (2002, pp. 219–220), Jihadi-Salafism was born in the wake of the Afghanistan insurgency in the 1980s as a “hybrid Islamist ideology” that consisted of a puritanical approach to religion combined with “an absolute commitment to jihad.”

40 \ According to Hegghammer (2009), terms like Salafism or the neologism Jihadi-Salafism only encompass theological aspects but do not tell us anything about a political agenda. Various characteristic forms exist within the Salafi label that might even be opposed to each other. Since the appearance of Jihadi-Salafism it has become obvious that an increasing hybridization of theological doctrines and political ideas and an overlapping of orientations is taking place within militant Islam. Ideas from political Islam act as a complementary cornerstone alongside transformed and radicalized Salafi doctrines. Together they build a hybrid political ideology (Hassan, 2016).

The hybridization processes against the background of increasing Wahhabi⁴¹ influences and the evolution of Jihadi-Salafism have made the relationship between Salafism and the political project of Daesh highly complex. Some Salafi groups and schools of thought see violence, also against other Muslims, Shias or Sunnis, as a legitimate means to establish the Islamic caliphate, while other Salafi currents refuse political engagement and renounce violence altogether (e.g. Hizb ut- Tahrir). Some Salafi organizations, such as Jama'at al-Da'wa (full name Jama'at al-Da'wa ila al-Quran wa-l-Sunna), have publicly distanced themselves from Daesh. Moreover, besides the purely Salafi tendencies that base their reasoning solely on Quran and Sunna (*hadiths*), the heterogeneous cross-border *madrassa* landscape comprises various ideological hybrids that evolve from the presence of other religious movements, such as the Panjpiri, Pirparast and Tablighi schools. Of particular relevance to the Afghanistan context is the Panjpiri school, because it gave birth to the pioneer Salafi movement in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region. Several well-known militants and heads of movements who 'flirt' with Daesh to various extents were educated at Panjpiri *madrassas*. They include Mangal Bagh (head of Lashkar-e-Islam) and key Pakistani Taliban

commanders such as Mawlana Fazlullah (TTP), Mawlana Faqir Mohammad (TTP) and Mawlana Sufi Mohammad (Tehrik-e-Nifaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohammadi).

Panjpiri *madrassas* in Pakistan and Afghanistan are linked to the Dar ul-Quran seminary in the town of Panjpir in the Swabi district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, located east of Peshawar, Pakistan, but they do not have a Salafi orientation. In terms of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), the Panjpiri *madrassas*, as do the Afghan Taliban of the Islamic Emirate, follow the legal school of Imam Abu Hanifa, which Salafis/Wahhabis do not accept.⁴² Hanafism is the oldest and most widespread school in matters of Islamic jurisprudence today. In practical terms, the so-called Panjpiris and Salafis/Wahhabis oppose each other on questions of prayer style (*raf ul-yaddain*, pointing with hands in prayer or saying the word "Amin" with a loud voice) or on how many wives one may marry. The former often accuse the latter of introducing new things into religious practices and thus creating social strife, while the latter claim to have returned to the origins of Islam. This said, several positions also point towards common ground between Panjpiris and Salafis, in particular, the opposition to a certain number of religious practices which they consider to have no basis in the Quran or the *hadiths*, thus representing an innovation (*bid'a*) or idol worship (*shirk*). From the point of view of Panjpiris who practice a Deobandi-style Hanafism and Salafis, such practices are largely due to the influence of Sufism in local culture and religious practice or to a Hindu conspiracy (see Gul, 2009, on the latter point). As will be shown below, Salafis also consider Pashtunwali and local cultural traditions to be generally responsible for such 'deviations', suggesting they have distorted and spoiled Islam.

41 \ Wahhabism is a one type of Salafi current, but Salafism does not necessarily follow the Wahhabi doctrine. The concept of *takfir* ('excommunication') plays a more aggressive and significant role within the Wahhabi creed (though varying through time [Firro, 2013; Crawford, 2011]), which indicates that Wahhabism can be seen as a stricter variant of Salafism that differs in form and degree from other Salafi currents, but not in content. Daesh in Iraq and Syria presents itself as a guardian of the Wahhabi mission and constantly refers to the Wahhabi creed while using the Wahhabi doctrines as a basis for legitimization of its actions and strategy. Formally, Wahhabism is considered to belong to the Hanbalite school, the most literal and scriptural of all four Sunni schools of law and therefore does not reject Islamic jurisprudence. Wahhabism emerged and continued as a revolutionary jihadi movement until the 1920s and altered drastically with the formation of the modern nation state of Saudi-Arabia, which turned Wahhabism into an institutionalized *da'wa* movement. Jihadi-Salafism (as an idea) increasingly sees itself in the Wahhabi tradition because through merger and hybridization with radical Islamism, Wahhabism has been re-discovered as revolutionary jihad ('Neo-Wahhabism') (Moussalli, 2009). As a result, Jihadi-Salafi groups or movements identify themselves with Wahhabi teachings and rely on the scholarly work of Wahhabi Salafis (Bunzel, 2015, pp. 9-11). In Afghanistan, Salafism and Wahhabism are discursively conflated and designate the same ideological content.

42 \ The discrepancy between the legal school founded by Imam Abu Hanifa and Salafism revolve around which corpus of texts can be used as legitimate sources for legal rulings. The Hanafi school of thought is based on a compilation produced by Abu Hanifa and his students, who documented thousands of cases and judgements by a companion of the Prophet Mohammad, Hadra Abdullah ibn Masud, and the fourth Caliph of Islam, cousin and son-in law of the Prophet Mohammad, Imam Ali. In addition, several companions of Imam Abu Hanifa produced books on Islamic jurisprudence that are taken as references for reasoning in legal matters (*ijtihad*).

A Panjpir-educated mullah, Sheikh Jamil ur-Rahman (aka Mawlawi Hussain), established the first Salafi proto-state ('Islamic Emirate') in Kunar's Pech Valley in 1985.⁴³ He began to purge the area under his control of what he considered un-Islamic influences. Such campaigns, albeit in a more radical and extremely violent fashion, would later be implemented by others, including the TTP in Waziristan (Baczko & Dorransoro, 2017), Mangal Bagh's Lashkar-e Islami in Khyber Agency, and Daesh. Rubin (1995) writes: "He [Jamil al-Rahman] engaged in a campaign to remove flags and raze monuments erected over tombs, icons that he claimed were un-Islamic, as had that archetypal tribal puritan Mohammad ibn Abdul Wahhab before him" (p. 261).

However, Jamil ur-Rahman's split from Hekmatyar's Hizb-e Islami Party and his foundation of Jama'at al-Da'wa also signalled a desire to break with the corrupt Afghan mujahidin parties. The phenomenon of Jama'at al-Da'wa is an interesting entry point for disentangling some of the links between Salafi groups or organizations, the madrassa networks on which they are built, and the particular political project of Daesh. Jama'at al-Da'wa is also important because it set a historical precedent of a Salafi proto-state and displays several elements that are relevant for understanding Daesh's relationship with the Taliban of the Islamic Emirate. Although Jama'at al-Da'wa exists to this day as an organization by the name Jama'at al-Da'wa ila al-Quran wa-l-Sunna (JDQS), it was largely defeated as an organized military force in 1991, after a bomb attack by the Hizb-e Islami of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar killed the core of Jama'at al-Da'wa's leadership. Shortly thereafter, in the summer of 1991, Jamil ur-Rahman was assassinated in Peshawar by an Egyptian national (Ruttig, 2010, p. 3), and many (but not all) Jama'at al-Da'wa commanders later joined the opposition to the Taliban in the 1990s, before purportedly pledging allegiance to Mullah Omar, the Taliban's leader, in 2010 (Ruttig, 2010, p. 1).

43 \ Interestingly, Jamil ur-Rahman never moved his proto-state government's headquarters into Kunar or Nuristan but remained in Bajaur, provided for by Jama'at ul-Mujahidin the roots of which go back to the early 19th century jihad movement of Syed Barelvi. For further details, see Rana & Gunaratna, 2007, pp. 31f.

Jama'at al-Da'wa was rooted primarily among the Pashtun Safi tribe in Kunar province's Pech Valley and the Nuristani people of Nuristan province. These areas subsequently became the main centre in Kunar for various groups resisting the Taliban during the time they governed Afghanistan and the first decade after that. Jama'at al-Da'wa never accepted Mullah Mohammad Omar as the leader of the faithful (*amir al-mu'minin*) in those years. Much of this division can again be seen today in the emerging schisms between Salafi Taliban commanders as they switch to Daesh and pledge allegiance to Daesh.

Hence, parts of Kunar and Nuristan⁴⁴ have a longer history of interaction with Salafi ideas and people—ever since the jihad against the Soviet Union—than most other areas of Afghanistan. As Rubin writes:

[...] Jamil al-Rahman, a Panjpir educated mullah from the Safi tribe, left Hizb-Hikmatyar in 1985 to form a strict Salafi party, the Jama'at al-Da'wa. With extensive support from private Saudi and Kuwaiti sources, Jama'at al-Da'wa grew to be even more powerful in the area than the seven parties [Peshawar seven]... Jamil al-Rahman received large Arab donations, and many Arab volunteers joined him (1995, pp. 242, 261).

A different Salafi influence with some tradition in Afghanistan stems from al-Qaeda's presence in various parts of the country. In contrast to Jama'at al-Da'wa though, al-Qaeda recognized Mullah Omar and his successor, the late Mullah Mansoor, as well as the 2016-appointed Mullah Haibatullah as leader of the faithful (*amir al-mu'minin*).⁴⁵

The Taliban of the Islamic Emirate—like the majority of the Afghan population (excluding Shias)—follow the Hanafi School of Islamic law. The Hanafi school has deep roots within the Central Asian

44 \ In Nuristan, the second Salafi proto-state was established by Mawlawi Afzal in the 1980s. Called Islamic Revolutionary State, it opened consulates in Saudi Arabia and Pakistan at that time.

45 \ Al-Qaeda rejected the authority of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi who proclaimed himself as leader of all Muslims (*amir al-mu'minin*) thereby contesting the claim of Taliban leader Mullah Omar at that time. This rejection by al-Qaeda also signified its separation from Daesh in Iraq and Syria and its entering into global competition with so-called Islamic State. In 2016, al-Qaeda intensified its activities beyond the Middle East and established, for example, a regional sub-chapter called 'Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent'.

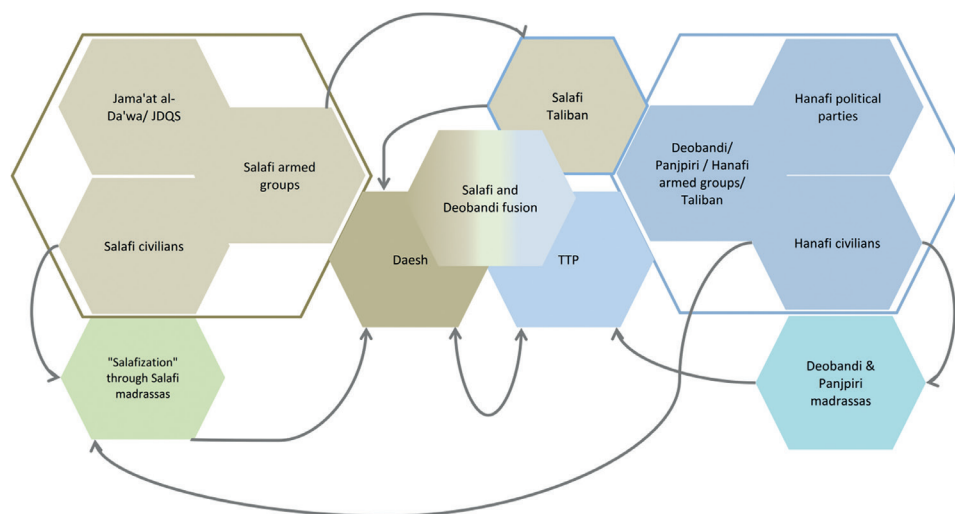
societies. Up to the 1980s, ever since Islamization took a foothold in the mid-8th century BC in the regions that constitute Afghanistan nowadays, the Hanafi school combined with Pashtun cultural markers and pre-Islamic traditions was a hallmark of social evolution and undisputed in theological affairs. By contrast, Salafism is a recent phenomenon in Afghanistan, dating back to the 1980s. Part of the Hanafi school is the revivalist Deobandi movement which emerged from the 1860s onwards, primarily in India, as a counter- concept and reconciliation with modernity and colonialism. Gradually expanding into the Afghan borderlands, the Deobandi movement gained momentum from the 1980s when international Wahhabi-Salafi supporters provided financial backing during the time of the Soviet intervention in the context of a Cold War proxy war. The Deobandi School happened to be an effective vehicle for promoting Wahhabi ideology, which allowed the Hanafi school to be penetrated with Salafi thought. In principle, the Hanafi school with its emphasis on reasoning and elaborating legal opinions (*ijtihad*) in theology adopts a rather 'cautious' approach to the issue of excommunication (*takfir*) and reflects religious and societal development; this is diametrically opposed to what Salafism promotes on the basis of its core ideology.

The complexity of today's Islamic landscape in Afghanistan and adjacent areas stems from the historical, issue-based and opportunistically motivated intersecting of Hanafi and Salafi actors. Figure 1 maps their primary relationships and overlaps. It departs from the observation that armed and civil groupings can be distinguished among Salafis and Hanafis alike. For example, all Sunni political parties in Afghanistan, except for JDQS, can be subsumed under the Hanafi political parties cluster. The non-political, ordinary Sunni population can be grouped under 'Hanafi civilians'. Moreover, the Deobandi influences described above were instrumental in establishing specifically Deobandi-style madrassas and Deobandi-influenced armed groups, such as the Taliban. As stated previously, not all Salafis take up arms or lean towards violent extremism. Yet, Daesh thrives on both tendencies, Taliban who sympathize

with Salafi ideas (so-called Salafi Taliban) but are active under the Taliban umbrella, which is *per se* Hanafi in outlook, and armed Salafis without a Taliban past or background serving as members of an extremist Islamic group. An often-overlooked phenomenon is, however, the Salafi and Deobandi fusion that manifests itself in the Pakistani Taliban (TPP) who were socialized and educated in Deobandi *madrassas*, joined the TTP and have successively moved to Daesh in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The graph below (Figure 1) represents an attempt to visualize the complexity of overlapping influences, ideological path-dependencies and loyalties in the religious landscape of Afghanistan/Pakistan. In this context, it is insightful to remember that Jamil ur-Rahman, who founded the strict Salafi Jama'at al-Da'wa, was socialized as a student of the Panjpir School. Moreover, this student of Sheikh Ghulamullah Rahmati, who runs the leading Salafi *madrassa* (Taleem ul-Quran wa-l-Sunna) in Kunduz, is said to have a Panjpiri background, as do most of the Lashkar-e-Islam members and, allegedly, their leader Mangal Bagh.

What this points to is actually an even higher complexity that the graph (Figure 1) cannot capture. On the one hand, we observe cleavages among jihadi groups on both sides of the border, especially with conflicts between Taliban of the Islamic Emirate, TTP and Daesh. On the other hand, the evidence presented so far illustrates strong overlaps and intersections in terms of personnel continuity among the various groups. Thus, we would caution against equating ideology with organizational affiliation, as the frequent shifts in allegiances point to a dynamic that does not reflect changes in "mental programming". Put differently, coalition building revolves more around opportunities for resource mobilization than ideological premises. This can be gleaned in exemplary fashion from the targeting of Shias by various jihadi groups. Although anti-Shia attitudes are usually attributed to purist Salafi and Wahhabi ideology, Deobandi religious scholars have been much more vociferous in their proclamation of takfir against Shiites, and affiliated groups such as TTP and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi have spearheaded the violence against Shiites.

Figure 1
Hanafi-Salafi intersections in Afghanistan/Pakistan



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More recently, as illustrated in the previous section 'Many Daesh in Afghanistan', the jihadist landscape has been shaped by fissions and fusions of groups following the deaths of Mullah Omar (Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan) but also of TTP leader Hakimullah Mehsud in 2013.⁴⁶ This shows that the fragmentation of the jihadi landscape has to be seen not only as a long-term process but as one that is continuing. The whole notion of religion has been under debate in Afghanistan society and has arrived at a crossroads today. Consequently, Daesh in Afghanistan has not evolved in a vacuum. Rather, it has built on the institutional, motivational and personnel continuities/legacies of other jihadi groups and Salafi religious-ideological path dependencies. As will be further corroborated in the next section, which will focus on translocal social networks and identities, it is the long-term transformation of the local religious, cultural and political landscape in Afghanistan-Pakistan that has prepared the ground for Daesh's local manifestations.

Between presence, appearance and symbolism: Resource mobilization and social networks

We have seen how the expansion of Daesh into different locations across Afghanistan, most significantly in southern Nangarhar's districts where it has established a stronger presence to date, has obviously been facilitated by different types of social network. This section presents an overview of the most obvious connections between some of these Salafi networks. After this first step, we shall look at the material underpinnings of Salafi mobilization and analyse what is known so far about local and transnational generation of funding by these networks. Thirdly, we shall discuss recruiting efforts that do not primarily involve either Salafi missionary activity or financial inducement.

Salafi clergy (*ulama*) and networks

The research confirmed that a complex cross-border landscape of religious schools (*madrassas*) propagates

⁴⁶ See Iqbal & De Silva (2013) for a case study on the terrorist lifecycle of the Pakistani Taliban umbrella organization (TTP).

violent jihad in Afghanistan. It links the eastern provinces of Nangarhar, Kunar and Nuristan with the north-eastern provinces of Kunduz, Takhar and Badakhshan, on the one hand, and FATA and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan, on the other. While tribal affiliations and marriage networks play a role, Salafi networks constitute a unifying factor of influence and determine the emergence and expansion of Daesh in all the locations we studied. Besides, they largely overlap with tribal, marriage and business networks. Despite this evidence, next to nothing is known about a recognized Salafi *ulama* that is clearly affiliated with Daesh. Anecdotal evidence of a ‘Daesh mufti’ issuing a *fatwa* against the Afghan Taliban, or unverifiable tales from the field, including name dropping, do not suffice for the presence of a certain Daesh-related *ulama*, let alone THE Daesh *ulama*. Most likely, a Daesh *ulama* does not exist in a manner amenable to analysis by outsider researchers. For it does not correspond to the usual frames through which a clergy is envisaged, i.e. organized in line with clear (administrative or other) principles and hierarchies. If anything, the data points to a very fragmented, rhizome-like structure that does not comply with hierarchical, regional or even individual sponsor-induced⁴⁷ rationalities of organization.

What can be gleaned from the range of replies from the different types of interlocutors is a hunch that, of the multiple Salafi networks that exist, only a few operate at the surface and become visible to some degree by having formal political wings or being run by famous *ulama*. Others operate silently but are probably no less efficient in their teachings and propaganda. These networks integrate Salafi *ulama* of different ranks, their *madrassa* and mosque networks and various forms of charitable organization. The latter complement the network in two dimensions:

- 1\ They form the link between relatively well-known domestic *ulama* individuals and their respective mosque and *madrassa* network, and/or

47\ Even charitable organizations cannot be clearly affiliated to one or the other donor and client because usually donors diversify their portfolio of charitable organizations into separate branches with mostly different names to evade restrictions and sanctions.

- 2\ they connect with foreign donors, such as governments (Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, etc.), businessmen, bankers/money changers, international Islamic charities/foundations/NGOs, and so on.

While all Salafis agree on common foundations of belief (besides ‘*aqida*’), they not only differ in the extent of their political engagement or—by contrast—their concentration on the search for religious purity but also, more importantly, they are not necessarily connected and do not consider it relevant to position themselves among their numbers. Thus, we have an indeterminate mass of Salafi schools and *ulama* (with their networks of students, charities, links to donors, madrassas and mosques) who do not relate to each other beyond ‘being Salafi’ (adhering to the Salafi creed). So although they may come together in support of a particular jihadi current, it is more a question of overlapping interests than any structural cohesion.

Thus, what follows from our research is a tentative and to date highly incomplete insight into different Salafi networks encountered during the survey. Our findings by no means reflect the *de facto* image of the Salafi landscape either in Afghanistan or across the border with Pakistan. The analysis is limited to few outstanding sections of the Salafi landscape at the cost of neglecting others. Nevertheless, the pattern that emerges from looking into the connections between various nodes in the networks allows us to deduce several insights into the scale of Salafization in some areas of Afghanistan and the crossover between Salafi ideas and militancy.

From our data, the primary nodes in the network comprise

- 1\ on the Pakistani side:
 - \ the Ganj (Jamia Taleem ul-Quran-wa-l-Hadith) Madrassa, formerly under the leadership of Sheikh Aminullah at the fringe of Peshawar;
 - \ the Madrassa of Sheikh Ghulamullah Rahmati in Peshawar;
 - \ Badhbeer (Dar ul-Tafseer Jamaya Arabiya) Madrassa in Peshawar;
 - \ Anayat Kilay Madrassa in Bajaur (FATA);
 - \ Jamil ur-Rahman Madrassa in Toor camp area of Bajaur (FATA).

2\ on the Afghan side:

- \ the JDQS headquarters in Jalalabad, under the leadership of Rohullah Wakil Najibi;
- \ the Naranj Bagh Madrassa in Jalalabad, led by Mawlawi Ahmad Shah;
- \ the Madrassa Taleem ul-Quran wa-l-Sunna in Kunduz;
- \ an undefined number of local *madrassas* mushrooming in Dasht-e Archi district of Kunduz.

Each of these *madrassas* or nodes must be considered as having cross-border and domestic ties with several other *madrassas*, mosques and charities. Of particular importance is the Ganj Madrassa in Peshawar (official name Jamia Taleem ul-Quran-Wal-Hadith Madrassa)⁴⁸, which has popularized and advocated violent jihad and Salafism in eastern Afghanistan. An estimated 20 per cent of Salafis in Nangarhar have attended the Ganj Madrassa, and most of the *ulama* related to Daesh have received their education in Ganj. Sheikh Aminullah headed the *madrassa* until he was arrested in Saudi Arabia following the inclusion of the Ganj Madrassa on the US terrorist list and the imposition of sanctions by Washington and the United Nations in 2009 on those supporting terrorism through the facilitation of flows of finances or fighters from Gulf Arab countries.⁴⁹ On 20 August 2013, the US Treasury added Ganj Madrassa to the designation list, noting that it an institution supporting “al-Qaeda, the Taliban, and Lashkar-e-Taiba [... that] serves as a terrorist training center where students, under the guise of religious studies, have been radicalized to conduct terrorist and insurgent activities” (Joscelyn, 2013). Hailing from Kunar’s Khas Kunar district, Sheikh Aminullah is highly regarded as a religious authority across Kunar, even among non-Salafis. *Madrassas* in all Afghan provinces are linked to the network he established from Ganj Madrassa. In several other Kunar districts, Marawara, Tsawkey, Shigal aw Shultan, the emergence of local groups pledging allegiance to Daesh was due to relations that former Salafi Taliban commanders have or had with Sheikh

Aminullah, and some of them he had actually taught at the Ganj Madrassa. As described in the section ‘Many Daeshs in Afghanistan’, such networks facilitated Daesh’s move from Nangarhar into Kunar.

For the north-east and north, Sheikh Ghulamullah Rahmati emerges as the most important figure and famous influential scholar according to interview accounts. He hails from Dasht-e Archi (Kunduz Province) and emigrated with his family to Pakistan during the Soviet invasion. He has until now resided in Peshawar (with reportedly no plans to ever return for good) where he runs a famous Salafi *madrassa* by the name Dar-ul Quran al-Hadith al-Salafiyya at which hundreds of students are enrolled. He attracts mostly Afghan students because of his reputation as a famous religious scholar all over northern Afghanistan. Respondents suggested that he is the head of a vast *madrassa* network inside Afghanistan that comprises *madrassas* in Nangarhar, Kunar, Nuristan and Kunduz. He is said to be the founder and patron of the main Salafi *madrassa* in Kunduz city by the name Taleem ul-Quran-wa-l-Sunna, which is run by one of his students and another local counterpart. Reportedly, this *madrassa* serves as the informal centre of Jama‘at al-Da‘wa ila al-Quran wa-l-Sunna (JDQS) in northern Afghanistan. According to some accounts, Rahmati had studied in Saudi Arabia; others stated that he and his student have visited Saudi Arabia numerous times. The fact that his seminary is presented in Arabic-language online videos points to funding links with Saudi Arabia or other Arab countries. Rahmati’s lectures are also available online in Pashto. He is known to have been the teacher of Sheikh Abu Yazid Abd al-Qahir Khorasani (locally aka Mawlawi Abdul Qahir), mentioned as the main Daesh ideologue. The information available online on Qahir Khorasani says that he is an Islamist preacher and a website proprietor from Kunar Province, known for his online sermons in praise of jihad and martyrdom. He is also the author of books that reaffirm Jihadi-Salafi interpretations of *Sharia* law. His books and his *fatwas* (which are available online) consider all Muslim states as apostate and those working with them as legitimate targets that can be killed.

48 \ See: “US sanctions Islamic school in Pakistan, ...”, 2013.

49 \ The blacklisting occurred after he had published a book that argued that jihad against foreign forces in Afghanistan is legitimate. Aminullah ranks as the central advocate of militant Salafism in eastern Afghanistan.

The JDQS, a successor organization to Jamil ur-Rahman's Jama'at al-Da'wa was properly registered as a political party in 2004. After Jamil ur-Rahman was killed in 1991, his nephew Haji Rohullah, aka Rohullah Najibi or Wakil Rohullah⁵⁰, shared the Jama'at al-Da'wa leadership in Nangarhar with Samiullah Najibi, a close friend of late Jamil ur-Rahman from Nangarhar's Kot district. After Rohullah was arrested by US forces in 2002 and detained at Guantanamo from 2004 until 2008 for allegedly helping key al-Qaeda figures to escape Afghanistan in 2001, Samiullah⁵¹ continued to head Jama'at al-Da'wa alone and formed JDQS. In 2005, JDQS participated in the parliamentary and provincial council elections, winning one seat in parliament. JDQS key figures are allegedly involved in illegal resource extraction (especially precious stones) in Kunar and Nuristan (specifically Rohullah Najibi) and together with TTP control the Bajaur-Kunar-Nuristan corridor to channel fighters, equipment and goods across the Pakistan-Afghanistan border (Khougary, 2016, p. 253). JDQS and Rohullah himself are said to have close relations with Saudi Arabia and Kuwait—inherited from Jamil ur-Rahman who had garnered massive support among Saudi and Gulf region Salafis for setting up the first Salafi state. In 2010, the military wing of JDQS joined the Taliban, swearing loyalty to Mullah Omar. One of the leadership figures of JDQS, Mawlawi Abdul Qahir (allegedly the leading Daesh ideologue in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region), is said to have announced his allegiance to Daesh in Syria and Iraq in August 2014

50 \ Today, besides leading JDQS, Rohullah is also head of the Kunar Shura in Nangarhar, i.e. representative of all the people from Kunar in Nangarhar. It would be insightful to look more in detail into the personal business and organizational network of Rohullah; he had—among others—apparently close relations to TTP, LeT and Arabs in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. Regarding his detention by the United States, Michael Semple (2010) of the Telegraph (UK) argues that Rohullah was the target of falsely leaked information about his putative links with ISI by his tribal opponents. According to other sources, including many in Afghan government, he is not linked with insurgent activities. After his release, Karzai met him and apologized for his detention. According to his own accounts, Rohullah was arrested when a civilian was killed by US forces and he went there to negotiate a solution to avoid this from happening again, but instead he was arrested along with the people who accompanied him.

51 \ Sheikh Samiullah has reportedly close links with the Salafi movement in Pakistan and a visiting relationship with the Badhbeer Madrassa in Peshawar.

(Khougary, 2016, p. 252), about the same time that Abdul Rahim Muslimdost pledged his oath to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. Muslimdost had been a high-ranking member of JDQS in the past before he joined TTP.⁵²

During a public conference organized by JDQS in its Jalalabad office on 11 October 2016, the group distanced itself officially from Daesh in a move to refute the widespread public perception that they supported the Islamic State group materially. According to local respondents invited to the conference, the current leader of JDQS, Samiullah Najibi, stated that while it was true that members of Daesh were Salafis, it was not true that JDQS was supporting them with recruits or equipment. To date, the party runs offices in Badakhshan and Nangarhar only. At the October convention of JDQS, the organization announced that Rohullah would formally take over as acting head of JDQS from Samiullah and that JDQS would engage in the construction of more mosques, *madrassas* and orphanages.⁵³

The second leader of the Kunduz Madrassa, Taleem ul-Quran wa-l-Sunna, is said to have close relations with Kuwait, heading a Kuwaiti NGO that digs water wells and builds mosques in the countryside. Although he was reported to have lashed out at Shias for being non-Muslims during one of his Friday sermons at a Kunduzi mosque, he was described as a rather non-militant person by most interviewees. Rahmati⁵⁴ and the Kunduz chapter of JDQS under the leadership of his student and his counterpart are the patrons of numerous *madrassas* and mosques across Kunduz province, especially in Dasht-e Archi. Interviewees traced the beginning of massive Salafi mosque and *madrassa* establishments across Dasht-e Archi, Imam Sahib and Chardara to the early Karzai government years (2002/04 onwards).

52 \ In all likelihood, his relationship with Rohullah is not good after having publically claimed in his book "Chains of Guantanamo" that Rohullah was complicit in Jamil ur-Rahman's killing in 1991 (Muslimdost was detained in Guantanamo from 2002 to 2005).

53 \ Interview in Jalalabad, 21 November 2016.

54 \ His own formal involvement with JDQS at this point of time is unclear. However, he is known to have been with JDQS in the past.

Most of the Salafis in Kunduz and particularly in Dasht-e Archi are so-called 'Bajauris'⁵⁵. Through their socialization while living in Bajaur (FATA, Pakistan), but also through their genuine tribal links (as Safi, Salarzai, Mamund, Meshwani, etc.), they are very closely interlinked with Kunaris and the network of Jamil ur-Rahman from the past. The tribal relationships can be traced back even to the first half of the 20th century when Pashtun tribes from Kunar and Nangarhar were included in the government's internal colonization policy that shifted individual families and sub-tribal sections to the northern areas, particularly the various districts of Kunduz. Many of the Bajauris who run above-listed *madrassas* were educated in two Bajauri Salafi seminaries, i.e. the Madrassa of Anayat Kalay near the station in Bajaur and the Madrassa Jamil ur-Rahman in the so-called Toor camp area of Bajaur. The Salafi *madrassas* and mosques in Dasht-e Archi and Kunduz province seem to work under the umbrella of the main Salafi *madrassa* of Taleem ul-Quran-wa-l-Sunna in Kunduz city. Interview data indicates that the Taliban are trying hard to shut down those *madrassas* that used to conduct military training for Taliban cadres but are now considered a threat to local Taliban control and rule because they form the primary recruiting pool for Salafi Taliban.

Several *mawlawis* hailing from Dasht-e Archi Salafi *madrassas* are reportedly employed as teachers in Kunduz' Taleem ul-Quran-wa-l-Sunna Madrassa. The research traced one particular *mawlawi* who—having family relationships with one of the leading figures in JDQS and hailing from a traditional Salafi family in Kunduz—emerges as one of the central nodes in the radicalization landscape of Kunduz and Dasht-e Archi. This is for two reasons: He not only maintains active links with Salafi seminaries in Dasht-e Archi in the form of secretive nightly meet

ings to mobilize local Salafis and recruit students but he is reportedly also related to and keeps strong connections with one of the key figures from Dasht-e Archi who joined Daesh and now resides in Syria. He stands for several *ulama* who traverse the Salafi landscape throughout Kunduz province and around whom the bridging between Salafi religious activity and militancy currently seems to evolve. It is not clear exactly how the Khorasan Shura connects with political Salafis, especially the Kunduz *ulama* of JDQS or whether the reported nightly meetings of some *ulama* with the armed Salafis (*nezami*) is part of a strategic plan. There is some indication that certain Kunduz Salafi *madrassas* had acted as recruiting institutions for Daesh in the past. Now, with the Taliban exercising control, these *madrassas* have either been closed or are kept under strict control by the Taliban. However, the Taliban are not able to close or control the *madrassas* outside of their realm of influence, in particular in Kunduz city.

Among the Bajauris are many individuals who received stipends for studying in Saudi Arabia during the 1980s and 1990s, and who became ardent Salafis. Currently, according to one respondent, there are at least thirteen people living in Dasht-e Archi who graduated in religious studies in Saudi Arabia, mostly Medina.⁵⁶ In other cases, students originally from Kunduz province settled in Saudi Arabia and some of them still return for regular visits. In one example, a native of Imam Sahib district of Kunduz province now occupies a senior position in the Hajj wa-Awqaf [Pilgrimage and Islamic Endowments] Department of the Saudi government. He is said to visit Imam Sahib once a year and engages in charitable activities, such as funding for wells and mosque. It is thus evident that some of the cross-regional and cross-border links originate from or involve Kunduz.

The Naranj Bagh Madrassa in Jalalabad under the leadership of Mawlawi Ahmad Shah figures prominently in the Salafi landscape of eastern Afghanistan. Ahmad Shah is said to be the most influential Salafi figure in Nangarhar, and the *madrassa* is suspected to have links with Daesh, supplying money

55 \ The designation 'Bajauri/s' is used as surrogate for tribal affiliation; however it is not in the narrow sense of resembling a tribe. Rather, the term designates families of different tribal backgrounds who had emigrated to Bajaur during the Soviet intervention and settled down in Bajaur or even neighbouring areas, such as in Malakand (Swat, Jandol, Lower and Upper Dir) or Mohmand Agency and Peshawar/Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province, Pakistan.

56 \ Interview with resident from Dasht-e Archi, Kabul, 28 October 2016.

and with recruits.⁵⁷ One ‘expert’ respondent with a Taliban background who was interviewed in Kabul⁵⁸, described how the Naranj Bagh *ulama* had allegedly complained to him about the threefold pressures they are facing: from Daesh, the Afghan government and the Taliban. While Daesh are urging them to recruit and send fighters, the Taliban are threatening them on ‘sectarian’ grounds due to the differences between Salafi and Hanafi religious and ideological content. Moreover, government efforts to prohibit any links with insurgent groups are increasing, although an explicit policy to cut such connections through persecution is strikingly absent. This said, it must be stressed that there is no evidence of formal links between Naranj Bagh and Daesh, although indirect links do possibly exist, for example via former students who joined the ranks of Daesh after graduation.

Financing

As the analysis of some key figures above indicates, personal connections to donors and network relations are crucial for the procurement of financial resources. Translocal and domestic charities, NGOs, and businessmen play a critical role in connecting donors and recipients of financial flows that support *madrassas* and mosques in Afghanistan. These types of funding have a long tradition, having first flourished in the 1980s when resources were mobilized en masse for jihad. While the money would usually be collected for missionary activities (*da‘wa*) and relief purposes, e.g. food and basic provisions for refugee camps in Peshawar, a certain amount of the donations would go to training camps and armed groups. The line between humanitarian and military assistance is traditionally blurred (Benthall & Bellion-Jourdan, 2003, pp. 69–85). Local charities and donations at Eid and Friday prayers, quite similar to the pre-Christmas charity drives of Western churches and relief

organizations, have been an important source of funding for various jihadi groups since the 1980s. Such practices continued through the years of Taliban rule and have continued to this day. For example, militant groups in Pakistan have established private welfare wings and resurfaced as charity organizations that avoid prosecution by regular name changes (e.g. Lashkar-e-Taiba became Jama‘at ud Da‘wa in Pakistan). They generate considerable funds through regular fundraising campaigns during Ramadan and around the two Eid festivals (Rana, 2009, p. 15).

It is generally assumed that a lot of this funding was redirected from the Taliban towards Daesh after 2014, while the overall level of donations declined following the withdrawal of international troops from Afghanistan. Nevertheless, money for building *madrassas* and mosques seems to exist in abundance. One mullah who was interviewed pointed out that, “The Salafis build a mosque within a year and provide a salary for the hired mullah,” insinuating that ordinarily the collection of money and the building of a mosque or *madrassa* would take much longer and progress gradually.⁵⁹ He also explained that only 20 per cent of the Salafi *madrassas* would hire Afghan Salafis as religious instructors (*mawlawis*, mullahs); the remaining 80 per cent would come from Pakistan—especially Salafis from Bajaur, Orakzai, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, most of whom received their education from the Ganj and Badbeer *Madrassas*.

Many donors and heads of non-state charities are individuals situated primarily in Gulf Arab countries and Pakistan, but also abroad in the diaspora. These same states are simultaneously at the forefront of countermeasures against the financing of terrorism. For example, above-mentioned Sheikh Aminullah, as well as a son of Jalaluddin Haqqani, were arrested in Saudi Arabia while fundraising. The latter was handed over to Afghanistan where he is still in custody. This contradictory situation complicates international relations with states and individuals as they pursue entirely different policies.

57 \ Recurrent attacks on the madrasa are connected with sectarian motives, e.g. the attack on 11 October 2016. See Osman (2016a). In a public statement, Ahmad Shah accused ‘enemies of *tawhid* (monotheism)’ to be behind the killing of his younger brother—Sheikh Rahmat Shah, also a preacher at Naranj Bagh Madrasa—while on his way home in February 2016.

58 \ Interview in Kabul, 23 October 2016.

59 \ Interview with a madrasa representative in Jalalabad, Nangarhar, October 2016.

Besides these conduits, the Afghan and Pakistani labour migrant community is also used for channeling money from Gulf Arab countries for distribution to religious scholars in Salafi *madrassas* in FATA, Afghanistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. However, while some of the wealthier labour migrants may earn enough to make substantial contributions, the income of the average labour migrant is not high enough to transfer anything that would even compare with the donations (*zakat*) of Gulf Arab sheikhs and charity organizations.

Respondents also emphasized the role of NGOs in funding militant activities. For example, an NGO from a Gulf Arab country involved in constructing mosques and basic infrastructure in the refugee camps of Jalozai, Shamshato, Khazani and others in Peshawar was allegedly channelling the funding. The NGO has been active in Peshawar since the 1980s and has been sending locals to Saudi Arabia for religious education ever since. As mentioned above, there are several people in Dasht-e Archi alone who graduated from religious institutions in Saudi Arabia. They form part of a network that can access funds for *madrassas*, mosques and allegedly humanitarian work, such as well-digging and other activities. While the importance of NGOs in promoting Salafism, in general, deserves highlighting, a note of caution is necessary, because only a few NGOs from Gulf Arab countries, and maybe only certain individuals within them, are directly linked to militant extremism.

Non-local funds destined for Daesh that are not raised locally are said to be transferred mainly in two ways: through money and value transfer services such as the *hawala* system⁶⁰ or from person to person (cash couriers). From Pakistan, there are a few such *hawala* operators sending money to Afghanistan. Respondents pointed out, for example, that Mangal Bagh received money from the moneychangers (*sarafs*) in the Marko Bazaar of Ghanikhel/Shinwar district. Proof of this was that the treasurer of Mangal

60 \ According to various estimates, 50 to 90 per cent of all transactions inside Afghanistan and across its borders are being conducted via money or value transfer services operations. Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates are the main transaction centres for Afghanistan in this regard. See: Financial Action Task Force (2014, pp. 11, 15).

Bagh was targeted by a bomb in the Marko Bazaar in 2013 when he was reportedly trying to take PKR 20 million (about EUR 150,000) to Nazian district (Nangarhar). When the bomb hit him, the money was scattered everywhere, and people on the street grabbed whatever they could and escaped. In other interviews, local respondents pointed out that the government had arrested several people in Torkham who were transporting money from Pakistan to Achin.

Local resource generation relies mainly on taxing valuables according to Islamic law. However, evidence from different research locations provides a heterogeneous picture of taxation practices, with differences depending on Daesh presence and the extent of actual consolidation of its rule. Thus, for example in Herat province's Koshki Kohna and Obbeh districts, respondents insisted that self-proclaimed 'Daesh' did not tax locals and that they did not even ask locals for food. Daesh was reportedly only able to do this because they were understood to have access to other sources, including the marble mines in Koshki Kohna and coal mines in the local Bandi Sozak area, not to mention their external funding.

Until the organization's exposure, Daesh (Salafi Taliban) in Kunduz and Takhar Province mainly operated under the Taliban umbrella, that is, Salafi Taliban financed and managed their activities with resources generated locally as Islamic Emirate (taxing wheat and other produce) or sent as such from the Taliban's purported headquarters in Peshawar or Quetta. *Madrassas* and mosques in Kunduz and Takhar are funded by individuals who enjoy close relations with donors in Gulf Arab countries, through having studied in Saudi Arabia, or though having been granted residency in Arab countries or by networking while on visits in the 1980s in the context of jihad fundraising.⁶¹

61 \ Especially for Kunduz and the north of Afghanistan, 'Daesh' funding should be understood separate from funding of local Salafi *madrassas*, mosques and instructors (teachers, trainers) because we cannot make a clear-cut generalization to the effect that all Salafi religious institutions are recruiting centers for Daesh. Rather, the relationship between Salafi education and religious institutions, on the one hand, and Daesh (armed Salafis), on the other, needs further investigation.

In Nangarhar, Kunar and Nuristan, Daesh takes taxes in the form of *zakat* and *'ushr* on all valuables (livestock, agricultural produce, gold, silver and jewellery) that are taxable under Islamic law. The Quran does not prescribe the rate directly, but it is derived from past rulings and opinions by religious scholars. In areas of Nangarhar where Daesh has control, it mainly levies taxes on wheat and livestock (sheep, goats, cattle). For sheep and goats, the rate of *zakat* is one animal for a herd of between 40 and 120 animals. It does not impose any tax on herds smaller than 40. The calculation for cattle is slightly different, the rate being calculated at one animal for a herd of 30 to 40 animals. As is common in Islam, the agricultural (*'ushr*) rate is ten per cent for crops from land irrigated without great effort, whereas for harvest yields from land needing a more labour-intensive infrastructure, it can be five per cent (Sato, 2000). Furthermore, interviews indicated that Daesh also has an in-kind 'war tax' by cutting trees and taking the wooden beams from houses whose inhabitants had links to the Afghan government. It also allows Daesh supporters and sympathizers to cultivate the land of those who have left the areas and are thus considered *de facto* disloyal to Daesh.

In Kunar and Nuristan, respondents reported that, in areas under Daesh control, the group taxes timber and precious metals or minerals that are smuggled to Pakistan. Taxation on precious minerals and metals (*rikaz*) is governed by Islamic law and subjected to a rate of 20 per cent⁶² (Zysow, 2000). The tax arrangements for timber are not clear to the authors, but respondents stated that the tax is measured by the load a horse can carry. Here, a tax of PKR 1,500 (approx. EUR 13⁶³) is levied per horse.

Kidnapping has also become a source of income. Respondents reported several such instances where tribal elders were taken hostage and were later released against payment. In one case, the sum paid was PKR 500,000 (around EUR 4,270) for one person.

62 \ According to Zysow (2000, p. 413), *zakat* on mines (*ma'din*) and treasures (*rikaz*) is set differently by the various Islamic schools and even varies between Hanafi and other Sunni schools. While Shafi'i assess *zakat* at the rate of 20 per cent, others use 2.5 per cent.

63 \ Currency converted with estimated mid-range exchange rate of 2016, i.e. rate of 13 July 2016.

In Kot district, Daesh fighters kidnapped ten tribal elders in June 2015 under the pretext of them having asked the government to send more ALP to the district. They were in Daesh's custody for 45 days in the Mamand area of Achin, and Daesh announced that it would only release them after payment of seven Kalashnikovs along with 28 magazines of bullets or PKR 100,000 (EUR 855).

Recruiting

Given the reported cruelties of Daesh in Nangarhar during its inception phase there, in particular the videos released by Daesh itself and related propaganda and counter-propaganda efforts, the subsequent recruitment of followers outside of Nangarhar has become a primary challenge for Daesh. The Kunar and Nuristan data show that Daesh, being aware of their bad and deterring reputation, reacted with a rather 'delicate'—i.e. non-violent—approach to reach out to local communities.

For example, in Kunar's Nurgal district, Daesh 'envoys' first appeared as animal traders to scope out the possible reaction of locals to an eventual appearance of Daesh in their district. According to an interviewee, locals only later understood who these animal traders were when they returned with the black flag of Daesh and directly addressed locals, asking them to join Daesh. In other districts of Kunar and Nuristan, a typical pattern was that individual former Taliban commanders aided Daesh's local expansion after they had been away for some time and upon return had obviously been charged by Daesh with the task of recruitment in their districts (e.g. in Marawara, Shigal, Watapoor). Other reports indicate that many Daesh recruiters had joined because of monetary incentives and only a few for reasons of religious conviction. As a rule, communities were addressed by letters to a district's tribal leaders (*maliks*) in which they were asked to pledge allegiance to Daesh, or the malik was approached personally and provided with recruiting material (*da'wa*-cards). Recruits themselves were encouraged to recruit in their communities for Daesh. Where possible, recruits were sent away for Daesh training after which they would be

assigned to a Daesh leader in the district and participate in operations. In another case, from Sarkano district, it was reported that a mullah recruited youths directly to the front lines in Batikot and Achin, luring them to join Daesh with promises of high rank and a good salary.⁶⁴

In the north and north-east of Afghanistan, Daesh's covert recruitment strategy again seems to have been not to arouse suspicion of the Taliban leadership. At times, this proved an extremely sensitive task, requiring a sure instinct given that Daesh was also targeting figures in the top Taliban leadership in its recruitment drive. For example, several interviewees reported how key actors of Daesh in Dasht-e Archi tried to recruit the commander of the Taliban reserve corps in Dasht-e Archi or the Taliban district governor of Khanabad, who was also a resident of Dasht-e Archi, in April 2016. In the latter case, however, the target already had family relations with Daesh supporters. The strategy of Daesh followers in Kunduz appears to have been to set up a secret network and to expand local support before challenging the Taliban openly and risking an escalation of large-scale violence among the jihadi factions. This strategy weakened after the fall of Kunduz and the Taliban's expulsion and purges of Daesh sympathizers and followers among its ranks.

In another version of the 'soft' approach to recruiting local followers, Daesh sympathizers and Salafi Taliban were reportedly distinguishing themselves from ordinary Taliban and jihadis by their appearance and manners. Interviewees admired their handsome looks (clean and smart), their fashionable clothes and modern equipment (computers, mobile phones and the latest weapons), and their language skills (Arabic) and education (computer literacy). Accounts described them as modern, civilized, honourable and respectful, yet uncompromising regarding the rules and regulations dictated by Islam and their Salafi organization. Besides fulfilling the ordinary

obligations of every Muslim, they were reported to fast two days a week, never to perform their prayers in a rush and much more. Sympathizers of Daesh painted a propagandistic picture of Daesh, stating they would not collect food from locals, not request taxes or cash but, instead, bring Islamic justice, resolve conflicts without asking for payment, provide security and put an end to robberies, killings and plunder.

The process of voluntary 'joining Daesh' was reported by a respondent from Takhar:

*If somebody wants to join Daesh, he has to be introduced by a trustworthy person who is already known to Daesh or the Taliban. Complete information about the one willing to join is needed, i.e. taskeera [ID card], passport or some other identity document, and his friend needs to verify that the candidate is a loyal and trustworthy individual and ready for jihad. Only then will Daesh accept this person into its group.*⁶⁵

As described in the previous chapter, the professional propaganda of Daesh in Iraq and Syria appealed to people from all walks of life. In Nangarhar, the FM radio run by Daesh was a valuable tool for spreading propaganda (see section 'Framing the caliphate at home'); in other parts of the country, video clips and songs were apparently strategically distributed through music centres (shops) at local bazaars and passed on via USB. For example, a music centre owner in Taloqan, Takhar province, stated that the Taliban and Daesh would provide him with all the clips and ask him to copy them (secretly/without the client asking for it) along with whatever the client had requested and paid for.⁶⁶

As several examples from different regions (see section on 'Many Daeshs in Afghanistan') have shown, the appeal of joining Daesh and the effect of its propaganda are not necessarily a matter of ideology. Instead, a more important motivation for switching to Daesh seems to be the prospect that affiliation with this new jihadi organization will yield local

64 \ According to interview accounts, salaries were not immediately paid to any 'follower' of Daesh. Only those who graduated from one of the Daesh training centres would be entitled to a salary of PKR 50,000 (around Euro 425 in July 2016). In a region that lacks general employment and income opportunities, such a salary is deemed highly attractive.

65 \ Interview conducted in Darqad district of Takhar, 6 September 2016

66 \ Interview with music shop owner in Taloqan bazaar, Takhar province, 17 August 2016.

power and money at some point (moral and financial resources). Nevertheless, it is remarkable that—according to interview data—a considerable number of those who were ideologically motivated to switch from former Taliban and non-Salafis to Salafism and Daesh did so while in prison. Examples include late Daesh Khorasan deputy governor Abdul Rauf Khadim (Guantanamo detainee) and a local Taliban figure from Dasht-e Archi who had been jailed in Kunduz city for ten months. On another note, informed respondents also stated that the imprisoned wives of Uzbek foreign fighters would actively preach Salafism, for example in Kabul’s Pul-e Charki prison.

Framing the caliphate at home: Shadow of violence and revolutionary social justice

*Your wounded and injured go to the hospitals in Peshawar, but mine are just dying at the edge of Spin Ghar*⁶⁷

With the focus on framing, this section analyzes the strategies with which Daesh in Afghanistan employs to shape opportunity structures and mobilize resources—in particular recruits and support, even if only tacit and passive—and the narratives it employs to legitimate itself as a superior jihadi option among its contenders in the increasingly fragmented politico-religious landscape of Afghanistan. The analysis relies largely on a content analysis of recorded radio broadcasts by Daesh’s FM radio service, *De Khalefat Ghag* (Voice of the caliphate), aired in Nangarhar⁶⁸ and includes print and online material used or issued by Daesh in Afghanistan (and Syria/Iraq). We shall first introduce the ambition articulated by Daesh, before looking into different legitimization narratives.

67 \ Daesh poetry addressing the Taliban. FM radiobroadcast “*Da tseray suri ta*” [Under the wild tree], 5 May 2016.

68 \ The radio went on air for the first time in October 2015. It was destroyed twice by US drone strikes (on 1 February 2016, and 10 July 2016) and re-started airing first in May and recently in late October 2016. For this study, recordings of Pashto broadcasts were made from 5–11 May 2016, and Dari as well as Pashto broadcasts were covered from 30 May until 4 July 2016. In this second recording period, three days are missing however, because either the radio was not on air or the data collector was not able to record the broadcasts, i.e. 22–23 June; 1 July). In the latest broadcasting period, the Pashto programmes of 17 and 19–22 November 2016 were recorded.

What is the lure of Daesh?

On the emotional level, one major appeal of Daesh stems from its ambition to establish an Islamic caliphate without borders as home of the Muslim community of believers (*umma*) and its initial successes in doing so. The interview data from Kunduz (see ‘Many Daeshes in Afghanistan’) is especially insightful in this regard. It illustrates the workings of Daesh (Raqqah)’s propaganda aimed at popularizing its aims and putative Islamic values. Propaganda has swept all areas of Afghanistan through the dissemination of trailers, songs and video clips that feature the preaching of Daesh followers, along with video clips of training, battles and songs via social media (facebook, twitter, real-time communication in chats, via vyber and skype) and flash devices (USBs). Videos and pictures seem to have particularly contributed to a wave of popularity among people of all walks of life, irrespective of whether the imitators (mostly in dress and clothing style) had a Salafi inclination or not. One could even claim that Daesh’s style partakes in global youth pop culture and gained popularity when the groups was making significant territorial gains in Iraq and Syria throughout 2013 and 2014.

The public discourse of Daesh in Iraq and Syria and Daesh in Afghanistan relies primarily on Islamic eschatology to legitimate itself and mobilize followers. Communities are approached with the message of the caliphate’s establishment (see ‘Transformation of the jihadi landscape’—recruiting), stressing that the emergence and expansion of Daesh resembles the fulfilment of a prophecy described in the Quran and/or *hadiths*. Alternatively, Daesh propaganda speaks of a hadith that mentions a group holding black banners which believers should join because it will appear near the time the Imam Mahdi will arrive.⁶⁹ The

69 \ As featured, for example, in one broadcast of the Daesh FM Radio The Voice of the Caliphate titled “Warning” on 7 May 2016. “The *hadiths* suggest that the Islamic caliphate will spread before the appearance of the Mehdi. (...) We are the *lashkar* [tribal armed group] that is prophesized to appear before the arrival of the Mehdi. We will fight for years with the hope of bringing about the caliphate. We will fight until the time when we have finished with all these non-Muslims across the world. And we will fight until the time when we will raise the black flag everywhere across the world.” Interestingly, several *mawlawis* interviewed in the course of the research project mentioned the same *hadith* (in the holy book Meshkat) to legitimize their acquiescence towards Daesh propaganda because, according to them, it actually says something like “... in the last age of the world, people with long hair holding black banners will perform lengthy prayers. They will propa-

significance of Khorasan is not clearly communicated and a reference to Khorasan in the *hadith* or Quran is contested by non-Salafi *ulama*. One *mawlawi* interviewed for this study stated that there is a *hadith* (Meshkat book, part 2, Kitabul Fitan) that says “Imam Mehdi will appear in Khorasan”.⁷⁰ Similarly, two respondents said the *hadith* did not speak of a province (velayat) Khorasan, but that “violence will start from Khorasan...”, with one variation adding that “Dajal [the deceiver, devil] will appear in Khorasan with 7,000 Jews behind him.”⁷¹ One interlocutor who had undergone religious higher education denied that Khorasan was mentioned in any *hadith* and had any significance in Islam, suggesting it is only referred to in history books. Miquel & Laurens’ (2004) classic book on the history of Islam, refers to Khorasan as a region, not a political entity, including the lands between the Caspian Sea and India with Bukhara, Balkh, Samarkand, Nishapur and Merv as its major cities. Likewise, in his interview with the former Daesh propaganda magazine *Dabiq*, Daesh governor of Khorasan, the late Hafiz Saeed, assigned Khorasan alone a geopolitical significance, speaking of it as the gateway to conquering neighbouring lands that had once been Muslim and thus expanding the caliphate. In fact, Khorasan was only ever marginally addressed in the pages of *Dabiq*.

A Daesh scholar explained the borders of the caliphate in one of the *De Khalifat Ghag*’s radio broadcasts to include Spain, North Africa, Indonesia, East Turkistan, arguing that their occupation by infidels (*kafirs*) justifies the pursuit of obligatory defensive jihad by every Muslim to liberate these lands from “*kafir, murtadeen* [‘puppets’, lit. apostates], *kufree nizams* [laws of the nonbelievers], constitutions and secularism.” In the same speech, he also describes Pakistan and Saudi Arabia as occupied. Moving along in his litany, the speaker emphasizes that occupation should not only be seen in a territorial sense but, decisively, as the implementation and rule of ‘law’ (constitution, religion) in every place. Under this definition, the scholar can

gate the caliphate but you people should stay away from them.” Interviews with *ulama* representatives in Nangarhar, October 2016.

70 \ Interview with *mawlawi* in Mamand area of Achin district, Nangarhar, October 2016.

71 \ Interview with *mullah* in Jalalabad City, October 2016.

declare Muslims in or from occupied and *kafir* countries to be brothers and call on them to reject nation-state thinking (*watan*) and ‘false patriotism’.

*For example, if those Americans who are in Afghanistan become Muslims and accept the Sharia completely, they will be our brothers according to Islamic Law. They should not go back to America, and if they have the ability, we may accept them as our commanders. But the idea of patriotism would mean you are not allowed to accept them because they are considered as foreigners.*⁷²

The allusion to the acceptance of foreign Muslims in leadership positions of the caliphate is subtle but most likely chosen to reconcile doubts among Afghan Daesh-followers about the Pakistani-origin leader of Daesh (ordinary people would not know anything about Khorasan Shura and that most of its members are also Pakistani citizens) or the role of foreign fighters among the ranks of Daesh and its allies (IMU, Jundullah).

A further cornerstone of Daesh’s ideology is the idea that infidels—‘occupying’ foreign forces—and their law need to be removed from Muslim lands at any cost. Another is the idea of raising future generations of followers purely in accordance with the Quran and Sunna (*hadiths*), not exposing them to any of the four schools of Muslim jurisprudence, let alone secular education. Secularism is called an illness and its allegedly spread via the common education system. It is said to be not only against Islam but is also viewed as a cover for false education and indoctrination of the future generation in the caliphate.⁷³ This has implications for the teaching of girls and curriculum development. Regular school education is seen as a risk and a starting point for girls to deviate from Islamic values (see section on women and *parda* below).

72 \ Broadcast of short speech, 1 June 2016.

73 \ One programme also announces consequences: “... they should wait for the heavy explosions in schools and universities”. Broadcast “Mominno Olasono Ta pegham, Mortadeno ta Akhtar” [Message to pious people and warning to those who have diverted from Islam], 3 June 2016. In hindsight, this reads like a threat come true in the Kabul attack on the American University of August 2016. However, even though there is a general rivalry between Daesh and Taliban to take responsibility for different attacks, both were silent on this attack. It is unlikely that Daesh was behind it.

The reasoning in another radio broadcast highlights the mixing of concerns about women's education and putative Islamic values:

*So if a girl sits in school for 12 years and is exposed to all these pictures [of faculty, coeducation, female parliamentarians], she will be ready to accept coeducation in the university if not at school. So a girl goes for 12 years to school, then she is ready to allow her daughter to attend university. When she graduates from the university she receives a scholarship and then goes to America, the UK or some other country. They go there and they do not dress in accordance with Islam because they are half-naked.*⁷⁴

Interviews showed that Daesh has indeed closed schools for both, boys and girls in the districts of Nangarhar where it has control. However, this seems to be more due to fighting. For, at least in their radio broadcasts, they fiercely reject the allegation of being against education and knowledge.⁷⁵ Yet, it seems that the type of education they have in mind is a mix of Quranic and Sunna/*hadith* studies on the one hand and Arabic subjects on the other. The radio broadcasts mention that Daesh has already developed its own curriculum that is being taught with specially compiled books.

In the course of the survey informing this *Paper*, the research team was able to detect four books that Daesh is reportedly using for school education in Nangarhar. Of these four books, three are printed and published by the Ministry of Islamic Affairs, Endowment, Da'wa and Guidance of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (in 2003, 2011, 2010).⁷⁶ They instruct pupils on how to perform prayers, on questions of pilgrimage

(*hajj*, *'umra*) and on 'huge sins', such as 66 types of *shirk* (idolatry and polytheism). The content of these books is not outright extremist or Salafi; for example, one of the sins mentioned in the "Book on huge sins" is to call Muslims infidel—which runs counter to the *takfiri* approach usually expected from hardline followers of Salafism.

The FM radio service is an important propaganda tool for Daesh in Nangarhar and its neighbouring areas (districts of Kunar and supposedly areas across the border in Pakistan). It became increasingly popular in and beyond the areas controlled by Daesh, as people began to discuss the content of its programmes in the provincial capital Jalalabad and in other districts of the province. Some respondents explained that the radio channel was highly effective in building Daesh's popularity since it 'explained everything', including their own actions and those of others with reference to the Quran or the *hadiths*. The defining feature of the propaganda transmitted via the FM radio service is its attempt to indoctrinate without offering any logic or reason. It recalls one of Hannah Arendt's definitions of totalitarian propaganda as the art and ability to establish power without having the means to do so.⁷⁷ In this respect, the speeches and interviews, for example with late Daesh leader Hafiz Saeed, demonstrate totalitarian qualities (according to Arendt, 2006) because they pick selected elements of Salafi ideology and Daesh advances to construct a fictive world that does not correspond to 'reality'.

The radio broadcast seven days a week and included a daily output of one hour of Pashto and 30 minutes of Dari programming.⁷⁸ There have been no live broadcasts, and all programmes were pre-recorded. At times, breaking news was announced to make the programme appear more dynamic. The pre-recording was likely due to security concerns of the presenters. With regard to the programme schedule, the *The Voice of the Caliphate* broadcasts included a number of

74 \ Broadcast "Momini mermani" [Pious Women], 20 June 2016.

75 \ Fragments of an emotional speech aired on 6 June 2016 highlight that functional professions are deemed desirable; "You say the caliphate has closed the door of the schools, you say they are the enemy of education and knowledge. No never! We do not want to or let our children acquire the ideas of the infidels [*kafir*]. Come and see what kind of education we are giving our children. My son will be an independent mullah not the slave of the *kafir*. My kid will be an intelligent mujahid doctor, not to serve the *kafir*; my sweet child will be a mujahid engineer, not an engineer who adopts the ideas of the East or West."

76 \ According to the Saudi Arabian government website, this ministry is responsible for Islamic affairs other than the *hajj* (pilgrimage). "Included in its remit are the building and maintenance of mosques throughout the Kingdom, as well as the administration of land held by religious trust." See <http://www.saudinf.com/main/c6q.htm>.

77 \ "Totalitäre Propaganda hat ihr Ziel nicht erreicht, wenn sie überzeugt, sondern wenn sie organisiert. Sie ist die Kunst der Machtbildung ohne den Besitz der Machtmittel" (Arendt, 2006, p. 762).

78 \ Local media reports suggested that the radio station featured programme sections also in other languages, e.g. Pashai, English, Arabic, Uzbek and Urdu. However, this was not encountered in the programmes recorded for this research and could not otherwise be followed up.

standard features, such as religious teachings on the Quran, the *hadiths* and prohibitions, poetry, specific programmes targeting women, special programmes for schoolchildren, and speeches from Daesh's late leader Hafiz Saeed and the then spokesperson for Daesh in Iraq and Syria, al-Adnani. A few minutes (4-10) were usually devoted to local and international news with a news bulletin called *Khalefat Ghag Khabari Gary* (News hour of *The Voice of the Caliphate*). The news as such was usually kept brief, but the items were complemented by pre-recorded interviews with Daesh commanders and fighters from different districts of Nangarhar where they gave an account of their progress in the battlefields. The broadcasts recorded for this study show that the focus gradually shifted over the course of 2016 towards more news from Afghanistan. The new emphasis on local issues aimed to demonstrate the battlefield strength of Daesh against the Taliban, foreigners and ANSF in Nangarhar. Attacks—such as the killing of Afghan Parliamentarian Shirwali Wardak on 7 June 2016 in Kabul or the attack on the private FM radio *Enekas* and TV channel *Afghan Cable* on 9 June 2016 in Jalalabad—were embellished as great successes and exploited for propaganda purposes. News from outside of Afghanistan and particularly the Daesh core areas in the Middle East was shared without further explanations or interviews. Exceptions were made, however, for news about major Daesh attacks in the West. For example, the attack carried out by Omar Mateen in an Orlando LGBT nightclub that killed 49 people on 12 June 2016, was discussed disproportionately. It fitted the ideological frame because the victims were not only members of the LGBT community, but the attack was carried out by a Muslim US national and took many lives.

Stepping outside the 'shadow of violence'

Research on irregular armed groups (Schlichte, 2009; Jung & Schlichte, 2016) has highlighted how any such group with the ambition to establish local rule faces the challenge of legitimizing itself beyond the execution of brute force ('shadow of violence'). The primary challenge Daesh faces in its expansion is the perception among locals that it has been

extremely violent and oppressive. So Daesh in Afghanistan now employs a range of legitimization strategies to counter propaganda and to reshape unfavourable local opinions about Daesh actions. The Voice of the Caliphate serves as a major tool in these efforts and airs several programmes designed to reject hostile propaganda by locals through the voice of other locals.

Besides features that seek to present reports about Daesh violence as propaganda, Daesh has also been trying to counter the widespread belief among Afghans that the main motivation for people to join Daesh lies in material benefits, as reflected in the widespread rumours about the wealth of Daesh and its ability to offer salaries as high as US \$ 500 to 600 per month. Thus, in one broadcast, a number of Daesh fighters are interviewed about their motivations for joining Daesh with the bottom line being that nearly all of them stated that they had joined after carefully studying the Islamic State's messages and actions and embracing the essence of its teachings, i.e. the duty to do jihad and establish the caliphate. The message is intended to distinguish Daesh from other jihadi organizations and to counter the idea that the Daesh fighters are essentially mercenaries who could shift their loyalty to the highest bidder at any time.

Daesh's legitimization strategy relies largely on othering and boundary drawing vis-à-vis declared enemies. The main bogymen targeted by Daesh propaganda can be listed as follows: first and foremost the CIA, the Pakistan Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) service, followed by the Afghan Taliban and the Afghan *murtad* ('puppet', lit. apostate) government, Saudi Arabia, Iran, all Shias, the political parties (*tanzim*), Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Mohammad, anti-Daesh media and *ulama*, as well as pro-government forces of every kind (condemned as being in the pocket of the CIA), such as the tribal uprising units, *arbakees* (tribal militia), the ANA and more. Americans and foreigners, in general, come under blanket criticism and are all branded as enemies. Radio speakers also denounce wider ideas, such as 'secularism, communism, nationalism, patriotism, and democracy', and institutions such as NGOs, parliaments and constitutions, etc.

Of particular relevance for the intra-Afghanistan power dynamics is the foe image of the Afghan Taliban, referred to as the ‘nationalist Taliban movement’. In an interview with the Daesh magazine *Dabiq*, Hafiz Saeed states “... they rule by tribal customs and judge affairs in accordance with the desires and traditions of people, traditions opposing the Islamic Shari’ah [citation appears as original typeset]” (Interview with: The wali of Khurasan, 2016, pp. 49–50). Asked about the late Taliban leader Akhtar Mansoor’s relationship with Pakistani intelligence, he alludes to the existence of “strong and deep ties” (p. 50), claiming the Taliban reside in Islamabad, Peshawar and Quetta. Saeed goes on to state that, “The war between us and the Taliban carries on” (p. 50), and he makes a reference to the Zabul incident in November 2015 in which he condemns the killing of the Uzbek brothers’ “defenceless women and children” (p. 51). Furthermore, he decries the Taliban’s role in the opium economy,

There is no doubt that the nationalist Taliban movement has permitted farmers and merchants to grow and sell opium. Rather, the matter has reached the point that the movement itself harvests opium, and even worse than that is, that the Taliban themselves transport opium and heroin in their personal vehicles, charging a fee to the sellers and the addicts! They also take a 10% cut as well as taxes from them. Akhtar Mansour himself is considered as being from the major dealers of these narcotics [citation appears as original typeset]. (Interview with: The wali of Khurasan, 2016, p. 51.)

Daesh in Iraq and Syria, as well as Daesh Khorasan, have frequently accused the late Taliban leader Mansoor of being an agent of the ISI and the movement as such to be working for the ISI. Another issue taken up against the Taliban is their explicit non-sectarianism⁷⁹, or ‘softness’, against Daesh’s other major enemy, the Shias. Salafism is fiercely anti-Shia and considers Shias to be non-Muslims. In the *Dabiq* interview, Hafiz Saeed is asked about the presence of Shias

79 \ How serious this anti-sectarian attitude of the Taliban must be can be gleaned from one of the dispatches of Osman (2016a, p. 8); he writes, “AAN knows of generous funding offers to Taliban/Emiratis from Arab Gulf to embark on anti-Iran and anti-Shia projects in Afghanistan” but the Taliban reportedly consistently turned such offers down.

(Arabic: *rafidah*) in Khorasan and whether military and security operations are conducted against them. He answers:

There have been Rāfidah in Khurāsān, sadly, for a long time, and they are far from our areas of control. We have fought them and we regularly conduct operations against them, such as the operation conducted in the beginning of Muharram in the city of Kabul. We likewise conducted a major operation in Karachi against the Ismā’īli sect in which 48 of the evil Rāfidah were killed [citation appears as original typeset]. (Interview with: The wali of Khurasan, 2016, p. 53)

While this comes from Daesh in Iraq and Syria, Daesh’s radio service—in the recordings that could be obtained during the research period (see footnote 67 above)—is conspicuously silent when it comes to explicit anti-Hazara (Afghan Shias) rhetoric, although anti-Shia attitudes are explicitly expressed in the abstract.⁸⁰ After the Taliban had consoled the families of the victims of the Kabul attack of 23 July 2016, referring to the Hazara as brothers, a Daesh *mufti* reportedly issued a *fatwa* castigating the Taliban for this response. As of yet, inter-sectarian differences between Sunni and Shia are not the primary driver of support for Daesh in Afghanistan. Instead, intra-sectarian (i.e. intra-Sunni) fault lines seem to be deeper than those between Shia and Sunni. One dimension of the warfare raging between Taliban and Daesh throughout 2016 was the targeted assassinations of religious scholars of both sides. Despite the violently anti-Shia rhetoric by Daesh in Iraq and Syria, the recent attacks on Shia shrines and mosques as well as on the Hazaras’ TUTAP protests in July 2016 in Kabul (for which Daesh claimed responsibility) are not rooted in the same political grievances as in Iraq and Syria.

Besides the hostility towards Taliban and Shia, the members of three other institutions—the *ulama*,

80 \ However, this might be because the major attacks on Shiites—the TUTAP protestors on 23 July, and the shrine visitors on 11 October 2016—took place when the radio was off air. Likewise, the suicide bombing in the Shia mosque in Kabul of 21 November 2016 was not reflected in the recordings until 22 November 2016 (the last day of recording for this research). However, the story was possibly picked up later, given that no live and real breaking news would enter any programme on the same or even the next day.

Afghan government forces and the media—are specifically targeted as part of a counter-propaganda effort. The media is presented as having introduced ‘an American form of Islam’ by claiming it was ‘real Islam’. Daesh’s warning follows suit: “...if they do not stop their enmity with the Islamic caliphate, then the next attack will be very heavy”.⁸¹ ANA officers (‘servants of the *kafir*’) and the lower ranks are addressed in an emotional speech and asked why dozens of Afghan forces were escaping and joining the caliphate despite all the perks they receive as members of the ANSF. The speaker says,

*Hey, ANA fighters, I know you are deceived by your commanders with promises. But tell me the truth; have you never wondered who the mujahidin of the caliphate are? Now you know that the leaders of the Emirate [Taliban] are the labourers of the ISI. You are the kids of the Americans, and the Emirate is the grandkid of the Americans. (...) This country is the earth of our Allah, playing with our heads. Anyone playing against this law of Sharia will be killed.*⁸²

The Islamic scholars (*ulama*) are provoked in the radio broadcasts with the question of why they continue to live in areas under control of *kafir* and do not migrate to the area of the Islamic caliphate. The radio presenters are suggesting here that those *ulama* who do not make this decision (although they “live very close”) cannot be ‘true’ *ulama* and are possibly just too complacent to give up their wealth and status.

Many programmes of *The Voice of the Caliphate* exploit local values and norms for legitimation purposes. For instance, Daesh recognizes the importance and status of poetry in Afghan society and espouses poets and their works in its propaganda.⁸³ Moreover, rather than seeking to root the legitimacy of Daesh purely in religious sources, programmes court the listener by claiming Daesh’s high respect for social and cultural values. This might include the convening of a Jirga for conflict resolution or exhortations for appropriate conduct towards women.

81 \ Broadcast of 8 June 2016.

82 \ Broadcast of 10 June 2016

83 \ The longest programmes on *The Voice of the Caliphate*—sometimes up to 50 minutes—are devoted to Daesh-oriented Pashto poetry. The verse at the beginning of ‘Framing the caliphate at home’ is exemplary for this type of messaging.

Daesh propaganda deliberately targets women with the promise of the rights they are entitled to according to the Quran—rights they have been deprived of allegedly because of local customs and tradition (‘culture’) and Western influences. In an introduction to the women’s programme, for example, Daesh presents itself as advocate of women’s rights, saying that local cultural values such as Pashtunwali were denying women their rights. The transcript is given here in full because it illustrates the worldview espoused by Daesh, which is in complete contradiction to its treatment of women in practice (see ‘Transformation of the jihadi landscape, Nangarhar):

Our Muslims are also unaware of Islam and behave towards women like non-Muslims. For example, women do not receive their inheritance share of any property. Women do not receive their bride price. They do not have the right to participate in decision-making processes. There is even the idea that a woman does not have the right to eat with her husband. And she cannot talk in front of men, even about her needs. Women cannot buy or sell anything. When a woman dies, she is part of the inheritance of her husband’s family. Who a woman is married to is decided by male family members without asking the woman herself. The women are completely deprived of the rights that are given to them by Islam. They are like slaves and have to work hard. If someone is soft with his wife, it is considered a fault (...). They are exchanged and sold like animals. If a husband pressurizes his wife, she does not have the right to object. Women are hidden from public view by parda. This kind of cruelty to women comes from society. In addition, the enemies of Islam, European researchers/Orientalists (mustashriqen), and others seek to use women as a means against Islam by involving them in un-Islamic activities, such as employment in NGOs, encouraging them to go out of their houses, deceiving them with the name of civil society. In other cases, women are encouraged to sit with men in parliament or other shuras. They are encouraged to travel abroad on scholarships and take part in other kinds of trips to make them ignorant. So Daesh has

*a thought for you that the Prophet Mohammad introduced 1,400 years ago. Its purpose is to liberate you from the cruelties of so-called Muslim honour and to protect you from being used by the Western invaders against Islam. So in the following lesson, you will learn about women's rights. The Islamic caliphate will give you these rights; you are entitled to any right of Allah. So listen to the programme, and we ask all those women who live in areas under government control to join in the life in the lands of Daesh.*⁸⁴

The lesson following this radio broadcast is devoted to explaining *parda*—the social norm of physical and social exclusion of females in society beyond their core family. Wherever women meet men who are not their brothers, sons or husbands, *parda* is violated. According to the presenter, the main causes for violating *parda* lies in cultural practices that predominate in the rural areas and areas of Western influence. Such practices are, he claims, propagated by the Afghan government or civil society, mainly in urban areas. As mentioned above, in the section speaking on education, regular schools are seen as a starting point for removing *parda*, even in the countryside. Daesh believes that even where no co-education is practised, regular school-educated girls will stop observing *parda* by the time they enrol in university.

It is striking how Daesh exploits social and cultural norms to delegitimize the Afghan government and vague Western influences, on the one hand, while condemning cultural practices stemming from 'folk Islam' and Pashtunwali, on the other hand. They argue that women have been deprived of the rights the Quran foresees for them because of impure cultural deviations in Islamic society, most tangible in Pashtunwali. However, they do not explain how a woman observing strict *parda* can then take part in decision-making processes, obtain an education, stand up for her interests and 'speak in front of men'. Another such contradiction is the way they allude to the necessary respect for elders but also blame elders for misguiding local communities and accuse them of

84 \ Broadcast titled "Mominee Mermani" [Practical pious women], 9 May 2016.

merely following their personal interests rather than truly representing their local community (see below). It is a typical pattern in Daesh propaganda that such blatant contradictions are never resolved or no attempt is made to address them. This aspect is very much in line with the above findings concerning the parochial totalitarian outlook of Daesh's propaganda.

Women are just one group of several that Daesh claims to look after. Other groups in need of support are ordinary men, 'poor farmers', sharecroppers and all those who are being 'deceived' by tribal/local leaders. This, again, is reflected in the radio broadcasts and informs the presenters' narrative strategies. The broadcasts target listeners who already live in or near areas controlled by Daesh as well as those who are as yet outside its realm in a bid to convince them to join Daesh. Thus, Daesh presents itself as an organization that takes care of its followers and fighters if only they "come to live in the territory of the caliphate where they can enjoy all the benefits of the Islamic caliphate".⁸⁵

One of Daesh's main propaganda messages is the abolition of all social and status/power differences among its followers. As one Kunduz respondent stated, they have the idea that all people are becoming one, all other groups will be eliminated.⁸⁶ In a radio speech, this message is elaborated:

*This is the pure soil of the caliphate. (. . .) Here, there is no discrimination based on tribes, languages or regions. Yes, here, no-one is superior, neither Arab to non-Arab ('ajam), nor Black or White. But those are superior who have honesty and virtue. Here, commander (amir) and poor person (faqir) are standing in the same queue to get their rights. (. . .) This is the Islamic caliphate. Here, people of different tribes, colours, nations, and areas came together under the shadow of the black flag and live in peace.*⁸⁷

It is never articulated to which existing grievances this ideological paradigm responds. Obviously, social and socio-economic inequalities are alluded to,

85 \ Interviewees reported land and property allocations to fighters and their families who arrived in the districts under Daesh control.

86 \ Interview, Kunduz, September 2016.

87 \ Radio broadcast of 9 May 2016.

while holding out the prospect that these will be overcome and no longer exist in the Islamic caliphate. From the radio, two types of social justice topics can be gleaned. One is the access to resources (redistribution and access to services); the other is the abandoning of the *malik* (tribal/local leader) system. Both aim to convince listeners of Daesh's pro-poor social activities and win people's hearts and minds. Regarding access to resources, one of the programmes reports on the redistribution of wheat—collected as *zakat* (Islamic tax)—to the poor. Interviews with receivers of *zakat* focus on the neediest people and transmit two main messages: First, it is subtly agreed that wheat as a permissible (*halal*) alternative to poppy crops brings the same monetary gain; second, that paying the agricultural tax (*'ushr*) of 10 per cent of the harvest is a matter of course and honour—it is not collected by force.

A separate discussion⁸⁸ serves to suggest that traditional local leaders (*maliks*) cannot be trusted because they are not honest and have links with intelligence agencies, receiving money from the latter. A religious scholar invited to speak claims that *maliks* are liars and that people are always disadvantaged and occur losses because of the *maliks*' decisions. Through their links with intelligence and international agendas, *maliks* do not act in the interest of ordinary people; and whoever obeys a *malik*'s decisions will lose his higher level of belief (*iman*). The assertion is that a *malik*'s conflict resolution practices have proved detrimental. The *malik* tend to decide in favour of a bribe-giver, so the two conflict parties will later start fighting, thus creating long-lasting enmities as a result of which both sides will lose their houses, property and honour. Further on in the programme, the religious scholar asks a rhetorical question: "How long do you still want to be deceived by these *maliks*? You know them. They are not from some other place; they are from this area," which could be read as an invitation to take action against any *malik* or as legitimisation for Daesh's use of brute force against tribal leaders. The presenter adds, "They are the *maliks* who

took thousands of dollars to encourage people to stand against Daesh, while at the same time living in Kabul or other places now that they have destroyed the local people and communities."

To sum up, by portraying itself as the force anticipated in the primary religious sources (Quran and/or *hadith*) that will establish the caliphate according to prophecy, Daesh provides a master frame that introduces a new jihadi narrative to its Afghan audience. This narrative communicated for example through the broadcasts of its FM radio *De Khalefat Ghag* is persuasive to some. The radio broadcasts reportedly enjoy high popularity beyond the areas of its local rule and resonate with certain segments of the population. On some issues, the narrative appears to be more persuasive than alternative frames provided by the government, other jihadi groups or independent *ulama*. The radio is thus an efficient vehicle to persuade the larger public—if not to join as fighters—to sympathize with Daesh's goals and create identification with its political vision. Daesh uses intimidating language for its declared enemies (media, ANSF, Taliban of the Islamic Emirate) or deviants (*ulama*, tribal elders) to impress its audience. It frames its enemies in terms of geopolitical and moral categories as puppets of foreign regimes, Pakistan and the United States, or drug dealers transgressing Islamic land and with a corrupting influence on society. Moreover, it uses examples of spectacular violence in its broadcasts, such as the US-bombing in an LGBT-nightclub, as opportunity to reconfirm its agenda.

The empirical evidence in this section also points to a number of contradictions or tensions between what Daesh communicates through the radio broadcasts of its FM radio *De Khalefat Ghag* and what Daesh communicates through its direct interactions with the local population. One tension includes the actual treatment of and violence against women versus its claim to be an advocate of women's rights true to Sharia. Another example is their expressed attitude on education which contradicts the fact that schools in the territory under Daesh rule were not operating

88 \ Broadcast, "Discussion" with two guests from Shinwar district on the tribal Uprising Forces, 11 June 2016.

at the time of data collection. Daesh prohibits opium poppy and hashish cultivation and regularly refers to the Taliban as drug dealers but respondents suggest that some of the narcotics confiscated were sold by traders close to Daesh on markets in Tirah Valley. Daesh is also walking a tight line between addressing local issues and culture (e.g. Pashtunwali) and the need to impose Islamic Law as they see fit.

Emerging picture: What does this tell us about Daesh's lifecycle in Afghanistan?

The section 'Many Daeshs in Afghanistan' showed that Daesh is not a homogenous entity but a complex phenomenon that manifests itself in different forms across Afghanistan, depending on the particular local political dynamics, historical path dependencies and the conditions and context under which respondents describe and interpret its appearance. Only in Nangarhar, and to a lesser extent in Kunar province, does Daesh exhibit a clear ambition of statehood and has set up government-like institutions such as courts, prisons and a basic bureaucratic administration. In other areas of Afghanistan, this is not the case. In north-eastern Afghanistan's Kunduz, Takhar and Badakhshan provinces, Daesh was described as a covert presence rooted among armed and militant Salafis (*nezami Salafiyyan*) who had fought under the umbrella of the Taliban's Islamic Emirate before the emergence of Daesh. In western Afghanistan, especially southern Herat and Farah, Daesh was described as an opportunity structure used by local strongmen and linked to rifts within the Taliban. In Jawzjan and Faryab, it was linked to the opportunism of local strongmen in Junbesh and Jamiat. Further, the growing popularity of Salafi ideas among Taliban who recently established a broader presence in the north, and the presence of foreign fighters have played a role in the 'appearance' of Daesh in these two provinces. There, and in Sar-e Pul, Balkh and Ghor, a vague threat perception of Daesh ('Daesh are coming') was being used by local officials to either seek security empowerment from government authorities or to distract from the failure of the local government to maintain local order and security in their area of responsibility.

This account of a highly uneven presence—differentiated further between presence, appearance and symbolism—and non-simultaneous evolution highlights the substantial impact of locally derived opportunity structures. Thus, the propaganda of Daesh in Syria and Iraq that had led to an initial popularizing of Daesh in Afghanistan is crucial but insufficient to understand the emergence of Daesh in different locations. Instead, the 'weakness' of tribal, government and/or Taliban structures have proven crucial in Nangarhar for Daesh's expansion. Similarly, in the west, it was leadership struggles among the Taliban that allowed Daesh to be proclaimed. Regarding the emergence of Daesh in Afghanistan, it is striking that the assumed leadership and command centre of Daesh in Afghanistan—the Khorasan Shura headed by the late Hafiz Saeed—obviously does not play a significant role in the question of how Daesh fares locally.⁸⁹ Moreover, neither does Daesh in Syria and Iraq seem to be of importance for local affairs in Afghanistan; nor does the death of Hafiz Saeed resulting from a drone strike on 26 July 2016 and the (non-)appointment of his successor seem to have had an impact on locally observed dynamics of Daesh in Afghanistan.

The section 'Transformation of the jihadi landscape' highlighted how the current Salafi 'turn' has evolved out of long-term cultural, social and religious transformations in the Afghanistan-Pakistan borderland. It is important to recognize that Salafism did not arise with Daesh in the region but has roots that are much older than those of Salafi ideas coming from the Najd on the Arabian Peninsula. We have shown how Daesh in Afghanistan built on socialization and radicalization in Wahhabi-financed institutions as well as personnel from existing armed groups which led to a growing influence of Salafism. The latter does not represent a unified and coherent political

⁸⁹ \ It is likely that this phenomenon can be ascribed to the research project's bottom-up approach (in contrast, for example, to Giustozzi & Mangal, 2016, whose data seems to be largely from insider and intelligence sources) and thus may signify a limitation of their research. This, however, does not explain that the Daesh-radio The Voice of the Caliphate is also largely silent on the governance structure of Daesh. Only one of the recorded broadcasts is devoted to the administrative bureaucratic structure of Daesh in Iraq and Syria, not Daesh in Afghanistan. Radio broadcast of 19 November 2016.

formation but is composed of different factions resulting from rivalries between and the fragmentation of various jihadist groups. Thus, Daesh merely mobilized locally existing currents of Salafi persuasion, which is in stark contrast to the idea of a Daesh headquarters in Raqqa exporting Jihadi Salafism to its proclaimed province.

Indeed, we saw in the resource mobilization section above that funding for mosques, *madrassas* and charities etc. takes place largely through traditional channels, that is, by jihadi fund raisers visiting the Gulf Arab countries or the latter's donors allocating money to charities and NGOs working in Afghanistan. From this perspective, the role of Gulf Arab countries and Saudi Arabia in supporting Daesh in Afghanistan-Pakistan is much more significant than in the case of Daesh Raqqa. Taken together, these factors do not indicate strong order and command structures between a potent Daesh central command headquarters, as in Raqqa (Syria), and a client organization, branch or franchise, as Daesh Khorasan is normally perceived. Nor do they allow us to conclude that inside Afghanistan a consolidated organizational structure exists. Except for training activities, which interviewees unanimously stated would take place in Nangarhar districts⁹⁰ (or previously also in North Waziristan, Pakistan), there is little evidence of a central and Khorasan-wide coordination of Daesh's activities in the areas studied. Human mobility between Nangarhar and Syria and Iraq seems to be limited, and not in the thousands as Giustozzi & Mangal (2016a, p. 5) suggest.

Finally, framing narratives in Nangarhar differ from those in Iraq and Syria, where, for example, anti-Shia sentiments form a cornerstone of Salafi thought. Although Jihadi-Salafism formed in the context of the Afghan wars and 'travelled' to Iraq and Syria via al-Qaeda to become the Islamic Caliphate's central doctrine, sectarianism has not played a similarly crucial role in Afghanistan compared with the Middle East (or Pakistan). In Afghanistan, intra-sectarian (i.e. intra-Sunni) fault lines seem to be more dominant than between Shia and Sunni. Throughout

2016, Taliban and Daesh engaged in warfare as well as targeted assassinations, one dimension of which is the reciprocated killing of religious scholars. As yet, inter-sectarian differences between Sunni and Shia are not the primary driver of support for Daesh in Afghanistan.

As Afghanistan mostly lacks this inter-sectarian dimension it would be a gross misreading to attribute Daesh's emergence to Sunni oppression by Shiites on the local or national level. Nonetheless, the flow of Hazaras living in Iran to Syria to fight for the Assad regime as part of the Afghan Shia Fatemiyoun Brigade has been widely publicized in videos, which spread quickly through social media in Afghanistan and have led to strongly critical reactions by Sunnis, who have come to see the Assad regime as violent repressors of their coreligionists. Such critical reactions need to be seen against the backdrop of a more general increasing assertiveness of Shias in Afghanistan's public space, including the display of religious symbols—for example the black, red and green flags commemorating the Imam's Hussein or Ali—brought back from Iran by returning Afghan refugees. Such symbols displayed in the public space of Shia-dominated neighbourhoods are a reminder to Sunnis of a growing cultural influence of Iran in Afghanistan. While this has not led to widespread sectarian violence, the potential of a growing feeling of resentment by Sunnis against Shias in Afghanistan should not be underestimated. The recent targeting of Shia symbols and Hazaras in cities like Kabul and Mazar-e Sharif also indicates a diversification of Daesh's activities, now comprising rural and urban areas (Jalalabad, Kabul, Kunduz).

The lack of clear-cut direct or hierarchical relations with Daesh in Iraq and Syria, the dominant role played by regional Salafi networks for funding, and the weak order and response structures within Afghanistan are all factors that suggest the phenomenon of Daesh in Afghanistan is not likely to disappear along with Daesh in Iraq and Syria. The emergence and presence of Daesh in Afghanistan and the

90 \ For example, interviews in Dasht-e Archi suggest that approximately 70 people from Dasht-e Archi underwent training at one of Daesh's training camps in Mamand, Spin Ghar and Achin.

combination of Salafism with violent, militarized jihadism is not simply an extension of Daesh in Syria and Iraq. The actions and modus operandi of violent extremist groups against or outside Taliban and Afghan government control is not necessarily controlled from Raqqa. Local groups can find inspiration without being closely integrated or coordinated by a central leadership structure, which also means that Daesh in Afghanistan is likely to survive the fall of Mosul and Raqqa. Jihadi-Salafism in its local manifestation is mainly financed and supported by Gulf Arab patrons and will continue to shape Afghan society even if Daesh itself should perish or rebrand itself under a different name and with different symbolism after the fall of Daesh in Iraq and Syria. The ongoing increasing Salafization of Afghan society and increasing signs that quietist Salafis are becoming politicized and mobilizing for offensive jihad points to the possibility that the 'coming' insurgency wave will be more inspired by Salafi (radical) thought, signifying a break with previous insurgent dynamics, in particular with the insurgency of the Taliban of the Islamic Emirate.

Conclusion

The manifestations of Daesh across Afghanistan and its socio-sectarian and political background in the context of the Afghanistan–Pakistan region clearly distinguish it from Daesh in Iraq and Syria and justify the view of Daesh in Afghanistan as a unique ‘phenomenon’. As such it escapes several conventional categories usually used to describe Daesh (terror organization vs. territorial entity with statehood markers), and its interpretation is multi-faceted: It features elements of a franchise of Daesh in Iraq and Syria (at least from the perspective of Daesh’s global headquarters in Raqqa); it can be read as an insurgency playing the role of a local client obedient to a powerful global patron, but also as a mutation of older forms of terrorism with statehood aspirations; and it can be understood as a ‘majority margin’ phenomenon or a revolt from the margin, symptomatic of the relative marginalization and perceived deprivation of most people across the world. Yet Daesh in Afghanistan must also be understood as a process—that is, in a state of ‘becoming’ characterized by expanding and contracting territorial gains and influence, in particular as part of the creeping Salafization. Daesh’s regional manifestations are a product of underlying dynamics, including longue duree developments like the internal colonization by Pashtuns, path dependencies from jihad politics and exile trajectories since the early 1980s. From another perspective, given the imitation of the Islamic Caliphate’s symbolism, Daesh in Afghanistan can also be seen as a performance.

Our research has highlighted the power of local agendas and related incentives, such as financial support, as key factors in understanding Daesh’s initial attractiveness for many Afghans. This illustrates that Daesh in Afghanistan is not a negligible phenomenon but has to be taken serious – not only for its putative potency and the new quality of its violence, but as a continuation of much longer trends of religious and societal transformations in the region. In this sense, Daesh in Afghanistan can no longer be regarded as a surprising or exceptional phenomenon. Rather, tactics, ideology and framing change with the wider socio-political environment and available opportunity

structures. Our identification of a new jihadi narrative as a master frame makes it clear that Jihadi Salafism deserves much greater attention as an ideology in the Afghan context than it has so far received.

In this analysis we have employed theoretical strands from the corpus of social movement theory in an effort to make sense of Daesh in Afghanistan. By focussing on political opportunity structures, coalition building, resource mobilization (including identity and networks) and framing we are able to show how different types of mobilization and long-term conflicts merge in the manifold representations of Daesh in Afghanistan. We have built on existing approaches of terrorism, peace, civil war and security studies and added a crucial perspective from contentious politics and social movement studies, basing our analysis on the latter’s theoretical underpinnings and taking a grassroots approach to qualitative empirical research. This perspective has allowed us not only to focus on relations and interactions among various actors in the Afghan–Pakistan region and their translocal networks. We have also gained vital insights from the implicit constructivist approach of recent social movement theorizing with its emphasis on the role of identity. This has enabled us to analyze the claims, values and ideas which inform the aspiration of Daesh followers to realize a utopian political order rooted in the idea of the caliphate. It underpins the grievance narrative. In this sense, our analysis complements existing conventional approaches to comprehending Daesh, for example, those representatives of the ‘wave’ theories who interpret the latest manifestations of terrorist waves and the emergence of terrorist groups as an outcome of political movement processes but do not analyse the dynamics of transformation as such.

The social movement lens has proven heuristically fruitful by providing a multi-angled contextualization of existing explanations of the emergence, structure and organization of Daesh.

ANNEX

Glossary of local and Arabic terms⁹¹

| | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><i>‘aqida</i> (A.): creed, doctrines dealing with the principles of faith, a certain perspective of (a group of) Muslims on essentials of Islam</p> | <p><i>halal</i>: permissible</p> |
| <p><i>‘ushr</i>: tenth in Islamic law, not strictly defined term, elaborated by Islamic law as a tax on agricultural produce and commercial activities, regarded as a component of <i>zakat</i></p> | <p><i>haram</i>: forbidden</p> |
| <p><i>amir al-mu’minin</i> (A.): “Commander of the faithful”—the term <i>amir</i> encompasses some form of authority/legitimacy but is not necessarily linked to the title of Caliph</p> | <p><i>hawala</i>: informal money transfer system which is based on networks of trusted traders and family as well as regional affiliations. Although the <i>hawala</i> system operates openly, it is considered to be outside of the traditional field of financial businesses and therefore is not part of the Islamic Banking system</p> |
| <p><i>arbahee</i> (Pa.): tribal militia</p> | <p><i>ijtihād</i> (A.): independent reasoning on the sources of Islam in order to form legal/jurisprudential opinion</p> |
| <p><i>ba‘ya</i> (A.): pledge of allegiance to a ruler</p> | <p><i>iman</i>: belief (in Islam)</p> |
| <p><i>bid‘a</i> (A.): heretical innovation in religious matters</p> | <p><i>jirga</i>: assembly which serves as an institution for decision-making and enforcement of Pashtun tribal norms/laws in Pashtun tribal society</p> |
| <p><i>da‘wa</i>: proselytizing, refers to both Muslims and non-Muslims</p> | <p><i>khawarij</i> (A.): sect, which had its roots in the first <i>fitna</i> (division) in early Islam and became the first movement to make radical use of the <i>takfir</i> concept. Today, Salafis and militant Islamists are labeled as <i>khawarij</i> by those who oppose their ideas in order to stress the heretical and deviant character of their teachings.</p> |
| <p><i>eid</i>: most high-ranking feast in Islam, fast breaking at the end of Ramadan (Eid al-Fitr)</p> | <p><i>kuffar</i> (A., plural of <i>kafir</i>): persons who are designated as unbelievers</p> |
| <p><i>fatwa</i>: non-binding, legal opinion in Islamic jurisprudence</p> | <p><i>madrassa</i>: religious school</p> |
| <p><i>fiqh</i> (A.): generic term for the multiple sectors and components of Islamic jurisprudence</p> | <p><i>malik/khan</i>: the original Arabic meaning is “king”, in its Pashto variant the term is commonly used to identify a chieftain position (“tribal elder”) which has its roots in the tribal structure and is not religiously legitimized</p> |
| <p><i>hadith/s</i> (A.): the Prophets teachings, sayings, actions and traditions which are matched to the Prophet. The acknowledged authenticity and therefore the corpus of the hadiths varies in Islam</p> | <p><i>manteqa</i>: area, village, valley, neighbourhood, home</p> |
| <p><i>hajj</i>: pilgrimage, one of the five pillars of Islam</p> | |

⁹¹ \ If not otherwise indicated - A. = Arabic, Pa.= Pashto - local terms have the indicated meaning as depicted in all local languages, i.e. in Dari, Pashto, and Arabic

mullah/ mawlawi: Islamic clerics or religiously trained persons. Usually, no formalized assignment exists, therefore purview, significance and validity of this title is often vague in many regions. A mullah is often the head of a mosque; a mawlawi has higher religious education.

murtad (A.): apostate

mustashriqen (Pa.): orientalist

nezami (Pa.): military or pertaining military, also ‘armed’

nikah (A.): Islamic marriage

nizam (A.): system, regulation, man-made law with no link to Islam or Sharia

parda: social norm of physical and social exclusion of females in society beyond their core family

pashtunwali (Pa.): orally passed on code of tribal Pashtun social norms and “way of living”, tribal Pashtun law (tribal customary law of Pashtuns)

raf ul-yaddain (Pa.): raising hands during prayer

rafida (A., collective plural): derogatory term for the Shia by Salafi and partly non-Salafi people. Derives from the rejection of three of the four righteous Caliphs (Abu Bakr, Umar ibn al-Khattab, Uthman ibn Affan) by followers of the Shia creed

rikaz (A.): form of *zakat*, levied for mined natural resources (precious stones etc.)

saraf: money changer, hawala dealer

shirk (A.): equal to polytheism, opposite of *tawhid*

shura: council, literally “consultation”, ill-defined body for joint decision-making in Islamic history, mentioned in the Quran

siyasi: political

sunna (A.): corpus of hadiths, as such one of the two most important sources (Quran and Sunna) in Islamic theology

takfir (A.): excommunication of fellow Muslims and declaring them to be outside of Islam

taqlid (A.): following legal opinions derived by religious authorities (without knowledge of the process of reasoning by the person who practices taqlid)

tarbiya (A.): education, for quietist Salafis training/cultivation in religious knowledge in order to get closer to the core of ‘aqida

tawhid (A.): the Oneness of God, foundation to the Islamic system of belief and central to the Salafi doctrinal corpus

tazkiyya (A.): purification of the soul to be capable of serving Allah solely; *tazkiyya* is closely linked to the concept of *nafs* (lit. soul, desires by the human ego)

ulama: Islamic religious scholars and clerics as institution

umma: community of all Muslim people (disregarding borders and ethnic boundaries)

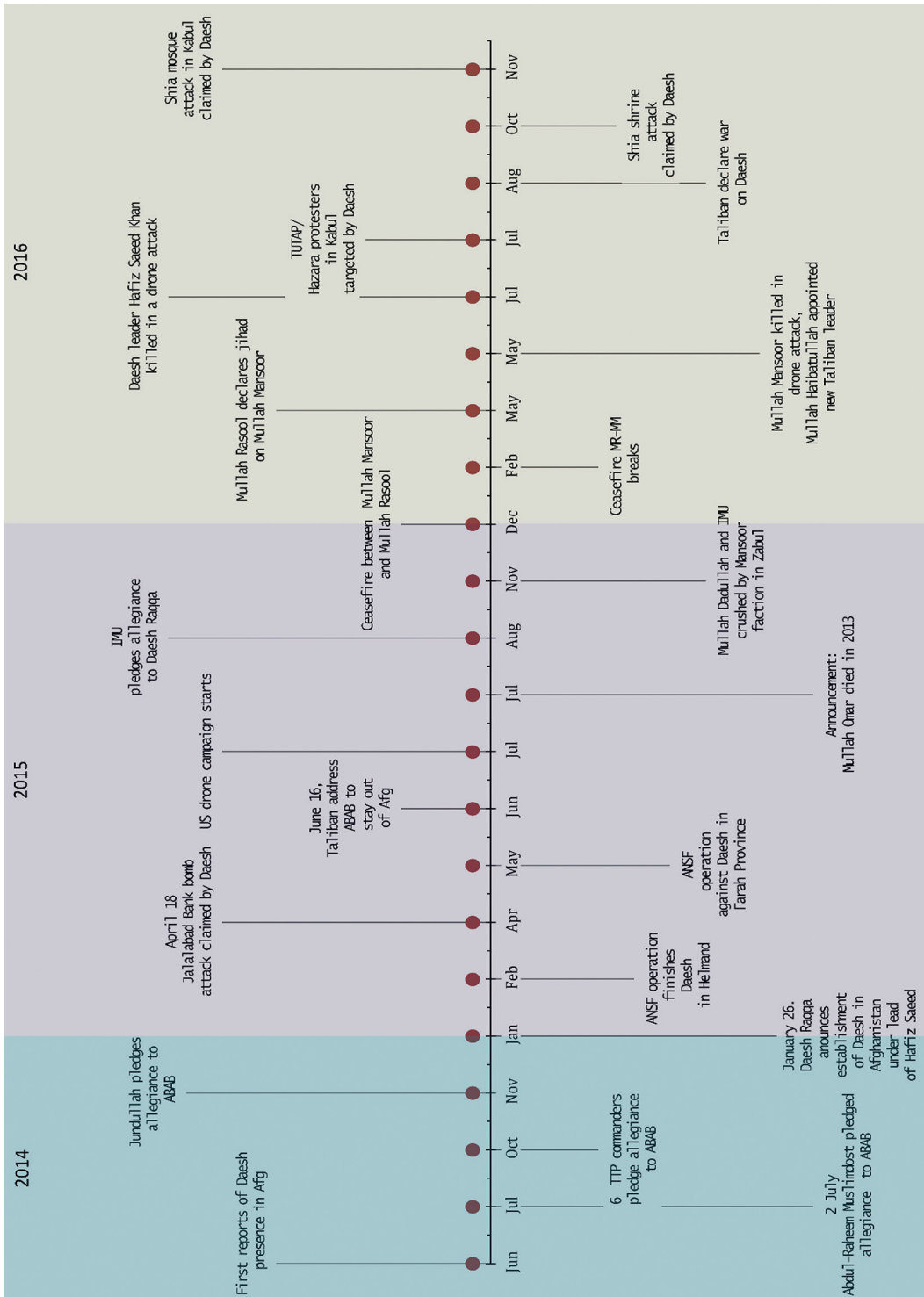
wali: governor of a province

watan: home country; refers to the meaning of “homeland” or “nation” is strongly connected to the idea of a modern state or statehood

wilayat (A.)/velayat: administrative division, ‘province’ in Afghanistan

zakat: alms, one of the five pillars of Islam and therefore an obligation

Overview of chronological events related to Daesh occurrence in Afghanistan



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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

| | | |
|-------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| ALP | Afghan Local Police | ALP |
| ANA | Afghan National Army | ANA |
| ANP | Afghan National Police | ANP |
| ANSF | Afghanistan National Security Forces | ANSF |
| CIA | Central Intelligence Agency (USA) | CIA |
| FATA | Federally Administered Tribal Areas | FATA |
| IED | Improvised explosive device | IED |
| IJMES | International Journal of Middle East Studies | IJMES |
| IMU | Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan | IMU |
| ISI | Inter-Services Intelligence (Pakistan) | ISI |
| JDQS | Jam‘at al-Da‘wa ila al-Quran wa-l-Sunna | JDQS |
| LeT | Lashkar-e-Taiba | LeT |
| LGBT | Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender | LGBT |
| NGO | Non-governmental organization | NGO |
| TTP | Tehrik-e-Taliban-e-Pakistan | TTP |
| TUTAP | Turkmenistan-Uzbekistan-Tajikistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan (electricity project) | TUTAP |

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